

Reaching Millions of Teens Nationwide

# Teen Ink

26 Years  
JAN 2015  
TeenInk.com

\$8.95

**Juvenile Injustice**  
Why are kids in adult prison?

**Hollaback Girl?**  
Calling out street harassers





sobelieve.com

new zero calorie  
naturally sweetened.  
try our three delicious flavors.



# Teen Ink CONTENTS

JANUARY 2015 | Vol. 26, No. 5

## TEENS, GET PUBLISHED!

Submit online at [www.TeenInk.com](http://www.TeenInk.com)

### THE FINE PRINT

▪ **How to submit.** We no longer accept submissions by mail or e-mail. All submissions of writing and artwork through TeenInk.com are considered for publication in print and online, and are also automatically entered into any relevant contests.

▪ **Plagiarism.** Teen Ink has a no-tolerance policy for plagiarism. We check the originality of all published work through WriteCheck.

▪ **Editing.** For space and other reasons, we reserve the right to publish our edited version of your work without your prior approval.

▪ **Anonymity.** If, due to the personal nature of a piece, you don't want your name published online or in print, we will respect that request, but we must still have accurate name and address information for every submission.

▪ **Complimentary copy.** Teens published in the magazine will receive a copy of the issue containing their work.

▪ **Submitted work becomes the property of Teen Ink.**

By submitting your work to us, you are giving Teen Ink and its partners, affiliates, and licensees the non-exclusive right to publish your work in any format, including print, electronic, and online media. However, all individual contributors to Teen Ink retain the right to submit their work for non-exclusive publication elsewhere, and you have our permission to do so. Teen Ink may edit or abridge your work at its sole discretion. To prevent others from stealing your work, Teen Ink is copyrighted by The Young Authors Foundation Inc.



## SUBSCRIBE & SUPPORT TEEN INK IN OUR 26TH YEAR!

### \$45 INDIVIDUAL SUBSCRIPTION

One copy per month for 10 months (we don't publish in July or August). Please enclose a check or credit card information.

### \$99 EDUCATOR SPECIAL

One copy per month for 10 months, plus three 30-copy boxes (Fall, Winter, Spring).

### \$135 CLASS BOX SET

30 copies of Teen Ink every month from now to June.

Prices include shipping & handling.

Purchase order # (if available): \_\_\_\_\_

MC  VISA Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School name (for Class Set): \_\_\_\_\_

Address:  School  Home \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIL TO: TEEN INK • BOX 30 • NEWTON, MA 02461

WW/PP  
1/15

- 4 Feedback
- 25 Art Gallery
- 18-19 College Directory

### Nonfiction

- 6-8, 16 **MEMOIRS** *Happiness is contagious* • *Why did I do it?* • *Call me Gossip Boy* • *I Need a Ride to the Pharmacy: a sestina* • *Paralyzed, but not a burden* • *One stupid text* • *Wasting myself* • *Lather, rinse, repeat*
  - 10-15 **FRIENDS** *It's not about olives* • *Dear Jane* • *Meddlesome matchmaking* • *Lazy* • *Hidden talent* • *I don't say ...* • *Wrecking ball* • *Return to Blowing Rock* • *Contagion* • *Sage the chameleon* • *Mismatch*
  - 20 **INTERVIEWS** *Holocaust survivor* • *Tibetan activist*
  - 21 **EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR** *Nominations for our annual educator contest*
  - 22 **COMMUNITY SERVICE** *Special needs camp* • *Disadvantaged kids*
  - 23 **PRIDE & PREJUDICE** *Could I be gay?* • *Redefining my Jewish faith* • *Melting pot*
  - 24 **HEALTH** *Concussion* • *Bilious birthmark*
  - 26-27 **POINTS OF VIEW** *Calling out street harassers* • *Are we good or evil?* • *Juveniles sentenced to adult prisons* • *The Heisman controversy*
  - 28-29 **TRAVEL & CULTURE** *Holocaust memorial in Israel* • *According to my Mexican upbringing* • *Thai New Year* • *Peru* • *Times Square*
- ### Reviews
- 30 **COLLEGES** *Princeton University* • *Endicott College*
  - 31 **MOVIES & TV** *Chef* • *Game of Thrones* • *Romeo and Juliet*
  - 32 **MUSIC** *Ed Sheeran* • *Fiona Apple* • *Anberlin*
  - 33 **BOOKS** *The Mozart Season* • *Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore* • *Someday, Someday, Maybe* • *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*

34-39 Fiction

40-47 Poetry



## ON THE COVER

### Hollaback Girl

"From being told 'you look good to me,' and even being flashed, street harassment can make victims feel anxious and unsafe in their own neighborhoods. Still, many people claim that it is harmless fun."

Points of View, page 26

### Juvenile Injustice

"When children as young as 10 are sentenced as adults and enter adult prisons, they are five times as likely to be sexually assaulted, and eight times as likely to commit suicide compared to children in juvenile facilities."

Points of View, page 27

Cover art by Carly Kaufmann, North Myrtle Beach, SC



# FEEDBACK

To submit your feedback or find the articles mentioned here, go to [TeenInk.com](http://TeenInk.com)

## A Letter to Icy

"You told me I could never turn you cold, but you should know that sometimes it snows in Texas." Just five lines – one sentence – is all it takes to get Kayla Markwell's message in the amazingly eye-opening "A Letter to Icy." We've all had the situation: you get out of a friendship, relationship, or whatever, and you resent or despise the person. They think they're better than you or they're more popular ... Been there! Done that! Kayla makes it clear to whom she's writing: the icy, the cold, the mean, the haters – people everyone has had the misfortune of stumbling across. This poem is telling these people, "You think you're so cool, but don't get ahead of yourself because I will get you."

The poet uses a beautiful metaphor of ice and snow to depict personality traits, but also uses Texas as an example. You know, they say "Don't mess with Texas," but those cold, hard egos need to be messed with just like snow messes with Texas. Overall I think that Kayla's poem "A Letter to Icy" is unusual because it directly goes after the people who have hurt her. It is really well written and makes the reader think.

*Nicole Zlatokrasov, Brooklyn, NY*

## Rules for NYC Tourists

Cyd Sacks has hit all the right marks when writing her "Rules for NYC Tourists." This guide is full of satire but perfectly describes the many questionable actions of tourists who would do anything, including standing in the intersection "when the light is green for the throng of cars, buses, and bikes that will be speeding around" – just to snap a few pictures of a skyscraper.

I would really like to have a copy of her article to hand out the next time I'm in New York, and congratulate some tourists for being a natural.

*Eileen Deng, Livingston, NJ*

## Teen Ink, My Buffet

Teen Ink, you are everything to me. You are my meals, my nutrition, my sustenance. I savor each article and poem like scrumptious bites of a gourmet dinner, tasting every word on the tip of my tongue. I make sure to eat every bite: I read every last poem printed in your delicious magazine, often more than once. This food is too good to be wasted. I am not picky: I taste every article, even if I doubt it will interest me. Often the most interesting food is the dish you have not dared to try yet. After hungrily devouring the magazine, I am refreshed and re-energized, yet anxious for the next meal.

Thank you, Teen Ink. I will never go hungry.

*Alicia Marzolf, Cupertino, CA*

## My Boys

The poem "My Boys" by Angel Dye is excellent because it talks about the problem of black boys getting killed off or put away in prison for 100 years. Angel writes about the "black mothers who every day breathe a sigh of relief that their boy just made it to eighteen." She is speaking the truth about how black youth are still being treated as less, even to go as far as being treated as slaves.

Referring to recent events, Angel writes about "black boys with Skittles and Arizona tea in Sanford and New Orleans and D.C. and Chicago and Memphis and Detroit just trying to survive in a world not tailored to their destiny."

As a young black man myself, even though I agree with some of Angel's points, I have hope that things will change and I will be able to find success in this world.

*Anonymous, Phoenix, AZ*

## Beaches and Brothers

"Beaches and Brothers" by "Sylvia" is such a beautiful, light-hearted piece. She writes about the day her brother was born and tells the story in a unique, vivid, quirky way. The piece is bright and warm, and is told with a childlike innocence. I can feel Sylvia's excitement at having a baby brother, her eagerness and joy. I can hear her talking, her voice clear and distinct in my mind, saying in that funny way eight-year-olds talk, "And he better have a lot of hair. I didn't like bald babies."

Sylvia's story is one of the few pieces in *Teen Ink* that made me laugh. It is different from the other writing in the magazine – just as excellent but so much happier and full of a simple joy. Sylvia made me feel as though I was right there next to her, seeing life as she once did. She made me remember what it was like to be eight, what it was like to delight in the smallest of things. The story is brief but compelling, with bits of back story cleverly placed here and there.

"Beaches and Brothers" is the perfect story to pick up after reading something sad. It will tug at your heartstrings, make you giggle, and remind you that there is a different way of looking at the world.

*Paulina Klubok, Brooklyn, NY*

## Silence Is Golden

I wholeheartedly agree with Kiana Blount in her article "Silence Is Golden." She writes about her experience of being quiet in school and having everyone else share their thoughts and opinions and tell her to speak up. Everyone is expected to be talkative and outgoing, and when there is a quiet student they want them to talk but don't bother to help them or put them in a communication aid class.

Just because someone doesn't speak up, it doesn't mean they don't listen most of the time. As Kiana writes, "it's not in my nature

to share my thoughts on a regular basis."

Kiana suggests instead of telling quiet students to speak up, we should help them express their thoughts.

*Andreyia Wise, Phoenix, AZ*

## What If ...

Teen Ink is just simply awesome. It has added beauty and spice to my life even though my work hasn't been published and I can't spend much time on the site due to my studies. Every time I submit something, my heart starts fluttering and my daydreaming begins.

I dream of my work being published and I imagine myself receiving a copy of *Teen Ink* magazine and my hands running over the new pages (the feeling is beautiful) while the scent of magazine pages seems so sweet! Yes I know, that's just a desperate dream. Oh my God! Teen Ink is a heartthrob!

After two weeks, I realize how desperate my thoughts and imagination were while my mind laughs at me. But there is one thought that haunts me, and when I think of it I don't hear a thing – not a sound of annoying dishes being washed, not the voices of my siblings. Everything freezes for a moment when this scary thought hits me hard:

"What if in one or two years my work never gets published? I will become an adult and spend all my life believing I was stupid!"

*Hafsa Ahmed, Karachi, Pakistan*

*Editor's response: Hafsa, banish the What Ifs and keep on writing. As long as you enjoy putting your thoughts into words on paper, it doesn't matter if you are ever published. Time spent reading and writing is never time wasted!*

## Teen Ink

Box 30 • Newton, MA 02461  
(617) 964-6800  
Editor@TeenInk.com  
www.TeenInk.com

|                           |                                     |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Publishers</b>         | Stephanie Meyer<br>John Meyer       |
| <b>Senior Editor</b>      | Stephanie Meyer                     |
| <b>Editor</b>             | Emily Sperber                       |
| <b>Production</b>         | Susan Gedrick<br>Katie Olsen        |
| <b>Associate Editor</b>   | Cindy Spertner                      |
| <b>Book Devel. Editor</b> | Adam Halwitz                        |
| <b>Advertising</b>        | John Meyer                          |
| <b>Interns</b>            | Natasza Gawlick<br>Jonathan Halpern |
| <b>Volunteer</b>          | Barbara Field                       |

### CIRCULATION

Reaching millions of teens in junior and senior high schools nationwide.

### THE YOUNG AUTHORS FOUNDATION

The Young Authors Foundation, publisher of *Teen Ink*, is a nonprofit corporation qualified as a 501(c)3 exempt organization by the IRS. The Foundation, which is organized and operated exclusively for charitable and educational purposes, provides opportunities for the education and enrichment of young people.

### FREQUENCY

Ten monthly issues, from September to June.

### ADDITIONAL COPIES

Send \$6.95 per copy for mailing and handling.

### NOTICE TO READERS

*Teen Ink* is not responsible for the content of any advertisement. We have not investigated advertisers and do not necessarily endorse their products or services.

### EDITORIAL CONTENT

*Teen Ink* is a monthly journal dedicated to publishing a variety of works written by teenagers. Copyright © 2015 by The Young Authors Foundation, Inc. All rights reserved. Publication of material appearing in *Teen Ink* is prohibited unless written permission is obtained.

### PRODUCTION

*Teen Ink* uses Adobe InDesign to design the magazine.



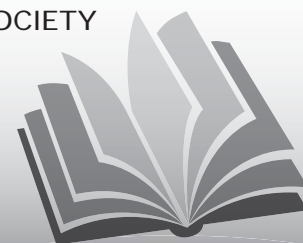
**NEHS** | NATIONAL ENGLISH HONOR SOCIETY  
for High Schools

For the LOVE of English,  
the LOVE of literature,  
the LOVE of writing

## INVESTIGATE


### NATIONAL ENGLISH HONOR SOCIETY

- Scholarships
- Leadership
- Academic Engagement
- Camaraderie



Visit [NEHS.US](http://NEHS.US) and select Join Now!

**Alfred University**  
**Creative Writing SUMMER INSTITUTES**



These exciting institutes provide an introduction to four of the most important and powerful genres: poetry, short fiction, creative non-fiction and drama. High school students from all over the country come to Alfred University each summer to participate in these fascinating programs.


Experience academic excellence and the joy of discovery at Alfred University this summer!

**Office of Summer Programs**  
**Alfred University**  
 Alfred, NY 14802  
 Phone: 607-871-2612  
 Email: [summerpro@alfred.edu](mailto:summerpro@alfred.edu)  
[www.alfred.edu/summer](http://www.alfred.edu/summer)

**Not just pre-college.  
 Real college.**


For the exceptional pre-college student, Yale offers over 200 courses packed into two intensive five-week sessions. These are not abridged or watered down for younger students. You'll take two courses with Yale and other college students for full college credit.

Full Yale University credit.  
 Two five-week sessions:  
**June 1 - July 3 or July 6 - August 7**

 **Yale Summer Session**

See website for details and application requirements.

2015 *experience Yale* } [summer.yale.edu](http://summer.yale.edu)  
 email: [summer.session@yale.edu](mailto:summer.session@yale.edu)  
 203-432-2430




**Between the Lines**  
 creative writing & cultural exchange

An exciting two-week program that brings together students ages 16-20 from the U.S. and abroad. Improve your writing, make international friends, and have fun in Iowa City, IA a UNESCO City of Literature.

**TWO SESSIONS IN 2015:**  
 RUSSIA/ARABIC WORLD: JUNE 21-JULY 5 [AGES 16-19]  
 ARMENIA/TURKEY: JULY 18-AUGUST 1 [AGES 17-20]

**WANT TO LEARN MORE?**  
 Details about the program, tuition, and how to apply:  
[www.iwp.uiowa.edu/programs/between-the-lines](http://www.iwp.uiowa.edu/programs/between-the-lines)  
[www.facebook.com/btlwriters](https://www.facebook.com/btlwriters)  
[lisa-daily@uiowa.edu](mailto:lisa-daily@uiowa.edu)  
 319-384-3296

APPLY ONLINE DEC. 1, 2014 - APRIL 1, 2015!


**iwp** International Writing Program 

**ART ON THE FARM**

Painting, Drawing & Photography  
 Ireland: Summer 2014

**COW HOUSE STUDIOS™** 1 800 677 0628  
[www.cowhousestudios.com](http://www.cowhousestudios.com)

**WRITING AND THINKING WORKSHOP**  
 at Lake Forest College  
 Chicago's national liberal arts college



June 14-27, 2015

Discover words ...  
 community ... yourself

[www.lakeforest.edu/wtw](http://www.lakeforest.edu/wtw)

**CREATIVE WRITING**  
 Summer Programs at  
 Yale, Stanford, UC Berkeley




[www.educationunlimited.com](http://www.educationunlimited.com)  
 (510)548-6612  
[campinfo@educationunlimited.com](mailto:campinfo@educationunlimited.com)

**NORTHWESTERN COLLEGE PREP SUMMER 2015**

- EXPERIENCE COLLEGE LIFE AT NORTHWESTERN.
- TAKE A REAL COLLEGE COURSE AND EARN COLLEGE CREDIT.
- EXPLORE IMPORTANT TOPICS IN AN *IN FOCUS* SEMINAR.
- HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!

**APPLY ONLINE**  
[northwestern.edu/collegeprep](http://northwestern.edu/collegeprep)  
 847-467-6703



NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

➤ GET READY. GET SET. GO! ◀



**Cornell University Summer College**  
 Programs for High School Students


*"An unforgettable, life-changing summer."  
 —Martha Glodz*



Experience the excitement of college life during our 3- and 6-week academic programs.

[summercollege.cornell.edu](http://summercollege.cornell.edu)  
[summer\\_college@cornell.edu](mailto:summer_college@cornell.edu) • 607.255.6203

Scan to go to  
 Teen Ink's online  
 Summer Programs Guide  
[teenink.com/summer](http://teenink.com/summer)





# Happiness Is Contagious

by Georgia Gray, Los Lunas, NM

I have only one gift to offer as a friend. It's not loyalty; that's a rare quality for people to appreciate. I am patient, yes, but that is hardly a noticeable trait. And I can't give wise advice; I have the life experience of a 10-year-old. Were it not for my one talent, I might have few friends.

I am an expert in happiness. I know it better than any other emotion, and I love everything about it. I enjoy watching it spread across angry faces, I like to find the smile lines on older people's skin, and I take pleasure in making people happy. Something few people understand about happiness is that it's a disease, a contagious disease with universal symptoms. The most common symptom is a smile.



Photo by Wumi Amokeodo, London, England

Through years of observation I have come to an important conclusion: the easiest way to infect others with happiness is to be happy yourself. The key to spreading happiness is a mixture of extreme optimism, laughing and smiling, and using as many exclamation points as possible. I do this as often as I can in order to balance out the pessimists and so-called "realists" of the world.

I find exclamation points the most effective method. Whatever the mood of my sentence, whether I'm writing, texting, or speaking, I add one. I have become so accustomed to using them that I often find it necessary to take them out of my essays or remove them from the ends of my passwords.

I know what I'm doing when I add exclamation points. I'm telling people not to worry. I'm showing them that everything is all right, and that even if it isn't, it will be soon. I'm helping them look on the bright side, to read their troubles from a different point of view. When I say I'm "okay" you might worry, but when I'm "okay!!" you probably won't think twice. The power of exclamation is something I take advantage of whenever I can.

There was a time, however, when I lost my exclamation points.

As soon as my phone's screen lit up, my face would too. I smiled with delight. Someone I liked very much had texted me. I replied as rapidly as I could, employing a plethora of exclamation points. This person was

someone I believed deserved all of the happiness I could give.

"Can I ask you a question?" my source of happiness texted.

"Of course!!" I replied.

"Why do you use so many exclamation points?"

I didn't tell him it was because I wanted to infect others with my happiness. The spread of happiness is less effective when people know what you're up to.

"I dunno. I just like them!!"

"They seem a little excessive to me," he wrote. "It's so unnecessary."

*I wanted to infect others with my happiness*

I began to doubt the data I had accumulated on happiness. If the person who made me happiest believed that my methods were ineffective, maybe I needed to reevaluate.

It's clear to me now that I shouldn't have been so quick to accept his opinion. This person didn't even realize what he had done to me, and at first, I didn't either.

Thus began the great downfall of my favorite punctuation mark. Exclamation points disappeared from my neutral texts and even from my sad ones. They began to appear only when I was truly happy, which, as the year progressed, was less often. Most of my friends couldn't handle this sadder version of me, and it made sense; it wasn't really me at all. I started to spread a different disease: depression. Other friends became unavailable because they had their own problems and couldn't deal with mine.

Eventually the very person who'd

started this stopped talking to me, and I was fully abandoned. No one wants to feel like they are being pulled under by a friend. I had transformed from a little ball of sunshine into a lead weight, and the change was far too dramatic and sudden to be dealt with by others. I spent much of my time alone, with no one to comfort me and no one to confide in. I had lost the part of me people liked most.

I may have hated losing my exclamation points, but I don't regret it. Experiencing what I did made me realize how much they meant to me. I needed to understand the emptiness at the end of a sentence without exclamation. I needed to realize how heavy I had become without it.

I finally emerged from the depths of this episode through an explosion of exclamation. I was infected by my favorite disease again, and I felt light. I am thankful to the person who told me I didn't need them. Because of him, I now know that I needed them more than anything.

I believe in adding exclamation points to the end of all my sentences. I do it to remind others of the positive side, to show my excitement about what they say. I even do it to make sure they realize that I enjoy talking to them. I use them in writing and aloud. I accidentally use them all the time. I use them in part to reassure myself of my own happiness. But most importantly, I use them because they are a part of me. They are one of many things that define me, and thanks to my past experiences, no one will ever take them away from me again! ♦

## Why Did I Do It?

by Kate Foray, Waxhaw, NC

I looked around at the brightly colored motivational posters that poorly attempted to cover the austerity of the gray wall. My plastic chair squeaked and groaned under the weight of all the faces staring at me with masks of compassion to hide their disappointment. The heavy silence that had fallen over the room was broken by the sniffing of a scowling boy wedged between his parents. He clutched his bruised arm and glared. I almost smiled. His expression was the only thing not attempting to hide the truth, which gave me a great deal of comfort despite my racing heart and sweating palms. I had never been in such big trouble.

The principal leaned forward. "Sweetie, would you like to tell us why you did it?"

Second grade is more important than people think. Studies show that it is the first time you get to develop your own identity and are fully capable of choosing who you want to be and what you want to do. It is a time of trial and error to find out your likes and dislikes, only to have them change with slight variations in later years. You establish personality, memory, and

personhood. You choose the foundation of who you are through whatever defines the world as you see it.

As for me, I chose books.

To me, books were another world away from reality. The words had a certain magic that would be otherwise impossible to say out loud. Every thoughtful phrase brought a deeper understanding to a world that

*He had declared a war on who I was*

answered complex questions with vague responses. Life was so much more clever and beautiful on paper. Everything had a rhyme and a reason, with no misplaced actions or unnoticed deeds. There was no homework to be done or violin to be practiced. Books were a lifeboat on a sinking ship. So I read anything and everything I could. During recess, lunch, and math when the teacher wasn't looking.

But someone else saw.

The boy with flat brown hair and eyes too close together teased me constantly. He was fairly creative with his insults, and I learned quite a few variations on the "bookworm" label. He would follow me around as I tried to find a quiet place to sit, calling

me names and stealing my book. In the mornings, I could rival the Easter Bunny with my ability to hide my possessions in the depths of my cubby. When I complained, adults would dismiss me with a wave of their hand and a smirk. They told me not to tattle – that he simply had a crush on me, and if I ignored him he would go away.

I couldn't ignore him, though. He was insulting who I'd chosen to be and what I'd chosen to like. I was perfectly comfortable being the quiet kid in the corner as long as I had a book to keep me company. I was at peace, coping with the problems of the real world by immersing myself in the problems of a fictional one. The boy with flat brown hair and eyes too close together tried to take that away from me. He had declared a war on who I was, and that was not something to be ignored. If I let him win, it would start me on the path of sitting passively as every bully and critic belittled what I valued most.

I refused to kneel to the boy fulfilling himself by destroying me. And that's why I pushed him off the top of the jungle gym. ♦

# Call Me Gossip Boy

by Madhi Junior Koite, New York, NY

memoirs

It was a sunny Sunday afternoon when I decided to create a Tumblr blog. At first I was only planning to post a bunch of photos of cute outfits and pretty models, but I decided a basic fashion blog wasn't original enough for me. I had another, more interesting, idea. Inspired by my love of the show "Gossip Girl," I decided to write about the scandalous and drama-filled lives of the people in my school. Little did I know that the blog I'd created with just the click of a button was going to change my life.

My first article was about a new couple in our grade. I wrote that they'd been spotted making out next to school, and I commented on how "adorable" they were. I also wrote articles about friends becoming enemies and couples breaking up – childish stories that weren't drama-filled or very exciting. Only a few friends visited my blog, and I was excited to get five or six hits a day.

Then one Tuesday morning I had the idea of writing my blog URL in pink ink on little pieces of paper. I made twenty or so and scattered them around the ninth-grade locker area, stuffing a few inside random lockers. By the end of the week, every ninth grader was talking about my blog. Everywhere I went, peers yelled "Gossip Boy!" I didn't even have to search for stories to write about; I'd started receiving tons of anonymous tips.

But as my blog became more popular, people in my grade also began to send me anonymous messages bashing and

insulting each other. These made me realize how mean people could be, and gave me a whole new view of some of my classmates. Sometimes I'd get hate mail too, but despite the negative comments, my need to keep writing was almost uncontrollable. My blog made me happy, and it also made me feel like I had power over others. Just by writing an article, I could make or break someone's reputation.

People I had never talked to before would come up and tell me how much they loved "Gossip Boy." Some of the people who complimented my blog became my close friends. At first I had some doubts about their sincerity; maybe they were only using me in order to get the latest gossip. But soon I realized that wasn't the case at all. They just loved this sassy and exciting side of me I had never shown before.

I lost a few good friends, though, who thought my new hobby was a horrible idea. They told me it'd become a source of chaos, drama, and fights in our school, and they were right: my blog did create a lot of tension. For instance, I once wrote about a guy who had cheated on his girlfriend, but I had no idea that the girl wasn't aware of her boyfriend's infidelity. The next day, after learning about it through my article, she broke up with him in front of everyone. It was dramatic!

## Every ninth grader was talking about my blog

Sometimes I wrote things that were too harsh and insensitive, and after the fact, I'd feel guilty. After I described how a popular girl had lost most of her friends, I didn't dare look her in the eye. I remember feeling sick when I heard people talking about the post the next day. My article had been nasty, and I couldn't hide behind anonymity. Everyone knew I was Gossip Boy. I spent hours debating whether to keep the post up or delete it. Eventually, I took it down. When I created my blog I promised myself that I'd express my thoughts without being a bully. But that post definitely crossed the line. That experience made me realize that words do hurt and I had to be really careful about the content of my blog. In the end, writing about someone losing her friends wasn't gossip; it was just mean.

Generally, though, there was a big difference between the cruel messages I received and the posts I'd write. Malicious, hateful gossip made up three-quarters of my inbox, but I chose not to spread it. "Gossip Boy" made me feel good about myself, not because I was writing about people's personal lives, but because I managed to prove that gossip doesn't have to be hurtful to be exciting. One of my most popular posts was about an accomplishment a girl in my grade had achieved: getting into a prestigious dance school in Manhattan. After its success, I started to

adopt a new style of writing, creating positive articles that were still entertaining and successful.

Many of my peers never understood my blog and still speak negatively about it. They don't look past the silly content of my articles to acknowledge how much time and effort it took to write them. What they don't understand is that I write for fun and amusement. My blog is a way for me to develop my writing skills and share my love of journalism with the world. Even though sometimes I exaggerate in my writing and don't write the real truth, it's only to add some dramatic effect and keep people coming back.

The negative feedback from some of my peers only made me stronger. It taught me not to worry so much about what people think of me. Now, thanks to my blog, I am seriously considering a career in journalism or news reporting. Who knows – maybe I'll be the next Perez Hilton. I've learned that I have a passion for sharing news with the world, and I've loved how I've learned to express myself through my articles. Gossip Boy wasn't my alter ego; it was me.

I still have my infamous "Gossip Boy" blog. It contains over 250 articles and has racked up more than 80,000 visits since it was created. Not too bad for a hobby I started on a boring Sunday afternoon. ♦

# I Need a Ride to the Pharmacy

a sestina by Celestine Ames, Telluride, CO

Dad says to Mom, I need a ride to the pharmacy  
The car is too hot, maybe we should walk.  
I'm left to watch my brothers and sisters discuss  
teenage melancholy rumors and cigarettes.  
I sip green tea out of a white cup with a broken  
handle, watching the world through the window

Mom and Dad look into the cracked window  
of the run-down pharmacy  
where Dave the pharmacist complains about his broken  
car. Mom and Dad just want their pills. They walk  
to the counter and talk to Dave, who wishes he had a pack  
of cigarettes  
right now. Dad says to Dave, I want my pills, and they  
discuss

Zoloft, Prozac, Valium. After Dad has his pills, Dave wants  
to discuss  
his car troubles. Mom and Dad pretend to care but can't  
stop looking out the window,  
where they see a big rainstorm starting to form. Everyone is  
trying to keep their cigarettes  
from getting wet. Mom and Dad leave the pharmacy.  
They talk about what they will have for dinner as they walk  
back home in the rain. In silence, Mom and Dad think about  
their broken

hearts. They come home to us, and Mom starts fiddling with  
the broken  
faucet. Dad calls his old college buddy to discuss  
politics. My brother is bored, pacing, he walks  
barefoot across the stiff carpet, looking ahead at the wall,  
not the window.  
Dad is about to swallow his pills when he realizes  
the pharmacy  
gave him the wrong ones. He yells, curses, tries to calm  
his nerves with a cigarette.

I go outside to enjoy the rain and discover a crushed  
cigarette  
lying in the flower beds. I sit on the pavement, looking at  
the broken  
glass on the road. All roads lead to the pharmacy.  
At the table with turkey and peas, I watch my family discuss  
college and careers. I've heard that the eyes are the window  
to the soul, but I see nothing. I walk

out of the room, I need space, can't get it here, decide to  
take a walk  
in the perfect sunset, under the pink clouds and invisible  
stars. Dave finally gets his cigarettes,  
I breathe in the fresh air and he breathes in the smoke. I  
look in the neighbors' windows  
and see blue flickering TV screens, silence, broken

promises. Fathers tell their daughters that men are dogs,  
and they discuss  
this for a while. Daughters say in soft sweet voices,  
could you give me a ride to the pharmacy?

The next day, Mom and Dad walk back to the pharmacy  
On the way, they discuss the dangers of cigarettes  
They look at the cracked window again and realize that  
everything is broken ♦



Photo by Naomi Yung, Millbrae, CA



# Not a Burden

by Brandon Moseley, Maplewood, MO

With enough hard work and persistence, we're told, one can render any barrier nonexistent. Unless, of course, that barrier is your own body. No amount of perseverance will rid your brain of a tumor or cure your body of HIV. If you're paralyzed, nothing you do will reconnect your nerves or allow you to walk again. You are forever someone else's obstacle, doomed to be a burden.

I am only semi-paralyzed. I am not even a paraplegic, because I can move my legs and lower body. I cannot, however, regrow muscles in my legs or reconnect nerve endings. I am not asking for sympathy, and I hardly need a pity party. My situation is entirely my fault.

I attempted suicide as a freshman in high school. I doped up on a wide variety of painkillers and God knows what else, then leapt off a roof. I should have died on impact – or a few minutes later. Somehow I survived long enough to be rushed to the hospital. I shouldn't have made it out of surgery, either, but I did.

I lived, but my doctors said I'd never be able to move my legs again, let alone walk. That was three years ago, and I'm able to walk with crutches. So I don't think I have a right to complain.

The year following my injury was

filled with depression, occasional prescription drug use, and a complete lack of effort in school. I barely made it to tenth grade. However, by the end of sophomore year I had actually found something that interested me: theater. I performed in various shows the following year. This was extremely exhausting and challenging, but I did it, with many adaptations made to accommodate me. The work that other people were forced to do on my behalf made me feel like a liability, and I considered quitting theater many times.

Having decided to stick with it, I tried out for "Of Mice and Men" and got the part of Candy. Rehearsals began, and I faced challenges, but nothing that I hadn't managed in the past. When it was time to use the set, though, I was faced with a horrible dilemma. I couldn't even get on it. The entire stage was a contraption, one that the other actors found difficult but that I found impossible.

When I brought it up with the set designer, he looked at me incredulously and asked why I wouldn't be able to step up onto the stage. I don't blame him for being shocked. The steps were no larger than average stairs, but I couldn't manage them. I

wasn't so much upset I couldn't get onto the set as I was that, yet again, adaptations would have to be made so that the cripple could participate.

Sure enough, the set crew was forced to build two ramps and a railing on one of the stairways for me. I felt horrible. I was a burden.

The week of dress rehearsals, I fell several times on stage. Each fall was another gash in my self-confidence.

By opening night, I still hadn't made it through the show without falling. I was absolutely terrified. Not only would I embarrass myself, but I would let everyone else down.

As the minutes ticked down, my stomach turned into a cluster of knots. I felt my legs weakening under me. There was no way I could go on stage. A mere ten minutes stood between me and total disaster.

Before I knew it, I was walking up the ramp onto the stage. I managed to get through the first scene without incident. By the next scene, my confidence was growing. The show was going great, and I hadn't fallen yet. When I went on stage again, I made it past the point that I had fallen every other time during rehearsals. From that point on, I wasn't even thinking about falling. My only concerns were

*I thought I'd never be able to move my legs again*

the concerns of my character. What had seemed like a nightmare was going as well as anyone could have dreamed, and I was playing a major role in making the show a success.

As I exited the stage after the show, I was stopped by an older woman I had never met. She asked me if she could give me a hug, and of course I consented. When she released me, she continued to hold onto my arm.

This woman was in tears. She kept thanking me. She told me what an inspiration I was to her and everybody else. She said that seeing me up there meant so much to her. By this point I was tearing up too, and then we were hugging and crying together.

And then she was gone. I have no idea who she was. All I know is that she made all the anxiety, all the pain, and all the guilt for the trouble I had put others through worth it. I had made an impact on someone; if I'd stopped trying and given up when my body became an obstacle, I would have missed out on an opportunity to make a difference.

While nothing can prevent me from needing others' help, from that moment on I knew that I had my own special set of abilities that made me an asset, not a burden. ♦

# One Stupid Text

by Sophie Lamm, Flower Mound, TX

The message is everywhere, on the radio, on billboards, from our parents: Don't text and drive. Of course, when we are new drivers, texting behind the wheel sounds like the worst idea, and we swear we'll never do it. At first it's both hands on the wheel, eyes always on the road. That lasts a month or so, and then we think we know how to drive. Two hands on the wheel turns into one hand. Both eyes on the road now includes many distractions: changing the radio station, eating, drinking, talking to a friend, or the worst: texting.

My friend got her freedom before I did. By

freedom I mean her license, which also meant more freedom for me. We could finally go wherever we wanted, whenever we wanted. At first she was very careful behind the wheel, but after eight months, her driving habits began to change. Her attention was on everything except the road. She'd swerve into lanes or hit curbs because the wrong song had come on the radio and she *had* to change it immediately. But her favorite distraction was her phone. She'd glance down at it and up again every two seconds. I regret now that I never told her to put it away. I wasn't driving, and I didn't want to nag her. I wish I had.

That one text – that one left turn – could have been the end for us. We were in the left turning lane, and she was texting someone. I was on my phone too, but I remember feeling the car begin to turn. When I glanced up, she wasn't even looking at the road, though she was turning. I heard a horn blare and jerked my head to the right just in time to see the white Suburban slam full speed into my side of the car. We spun around and crashed into a pole.

The next thing I remember is waking up to the sounds of sirens and people shouting. I slowly lifted my head. The door was pushed into my side and the front of the car was wrapped around a pole. An awful smell was filling the car, and smoke was coming from the engine.

Crying hysterically, my friend grabbed my hand and began to apologize. A firefighter yanked open her door and lifted her out. My door would not open, but I was able to crawl out the driver's side. Immediately I was attended to by paramedics, but I wasn't able to answer their questions.

My friend had already disappeared in an ambulance when the shock of what had happened began to sink in. I spotted her cell phone lying beside the car, and my whole world began to spin. I couldn't believe that a stupid text message had caused this mess.

I was placed on a stretcher and taken to the hospital. My chest and arms were bruised and cut from the glass and airbag. I had a gash on my forehead from the window breaking; there's still a scar today. Thankfully, my friend and I and the other driver suffered only minor injuries. It could have been so much worse.

The cars were totaled. Hospital costs piled up. Physical therapy seemed never-ending. We are very lucky to have survived the crash, but it could have been avoided entirely if my friend had been paying attention to the road instead of texting. That day she put my life, her life, and the other driver's life on the line – all for one stupid text. If someone had died in the accident, her life would be over.

No text message is worth losing everything. ♦

*After eight months, her driving habits began to change*



Photo by Sophia Corridan, Phoenix, AZ





**Juniper**  
Institute for Young Writers

**WRITE HERE. WRITE NOW.**  
Poetry Fiction Bookmaking Performance  
June 20-28, 2015  
Scholarships Available

www.umass.edu/juniperyoungwriters  
413-545-5503



**Public Speaking Institute**  
Summer Programs at  
Georgetown, Brown, Tufts, Stanford,  
UC Berkeley, UCLA, UC San Diego



www.educationunlimited.com  
(510)548-6612  
campinfo@educationunlimited.com

**The Putney School**   
Summer Programs  
Putney Vermont

offering workshops in:  
Creative Writing  
Visual Arts  
Performing Arts  
Farm & Culinary Arts

summer.putneyschool.org  
802-387-6297

**Teen Ink**  
online creative  
writing classes

Classes start February 3, 2015

Students will receive a free one year  
subscription to Teen Ink magazine.  
Only teenagers ages 13-19 are eligible.

►► Go to [teenink.com/writingclasses.com](http://teenink.com/writingclasses.com)  
or call 800-363-1986

Summer Science and  
Engineering Program  
July 5–August 1

Young Women's  
Writing Workshop  
July 5–18

Hidden Lives:  
Discovering Women's  
History  
July 5–18

Field Studies for  
Sustainable Futures  
July 5–18

College Admission  
Workshop  
July 19–25

**2015**  
SUMMER AT SMITH

Precollege Programs  
for High School Girls  
Open to girls entering  
grades 9 through 12  
in fall 2015.  
www.smith.edu/  
summer  
Precollege Summer  
Programs  
scraig@smith.edu



Individual. Global. Exceptional.

**Duke** | Duke Youth Programs  
UNIVERSITY

**Where Summer Never Ends!!**

Providing summer academic enrichment camps for  
academically motivated youth for over 25 years!


- Low teacher-student ratio
- Professional, qualified staff
- Challenging, creative and fun learning opportunities
- Experience campus life

Variety of camp options offered from  
June 14 - July 31, 2015

(919) 684-6259  
www.learnmore.duke.edu/youth



**NEW YORK IS MY CAMPUS • FORDHAM IS MY SCHOOL**




ARE YOU COMING TO ROSE HILL TO DAY?  
MEET ME IN FRONT OF MCGINLEY.

YOU WANNA RUN TO SHEEP MEADOW IN CENTRAL PARK?

CAN YOU HELP ME HANG MY SHOW IN THE GALLERY?

I HAVE MY CHINESE CLASS AT LINCOLN CENTER TONIGHT

OFFICE OF UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSION  
(800) FORDHAM | enroll@fordham.edu | www.fordham.edu



**FORDHAM UNIVERSITY**  
THE JESUIT UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

**PRATT INSTITUTE**  
**PRE-COLLEGE**  
SUMMER 2015: JULY 6–31

Develop your portfolio in Pratt's Pre-College summer program and earn four college credits in four weeks.


Pratt Institute's Pre-College Program, offered by the Center for Continuing and Professional Studies (CCPS), introduces high-school students (ages 16–18) to the professional world of architecture, art and design, or creative writing.

[www.pratt.edu/precollege](http://www.pratt.edu/precollege)

PRATT INSTITUTE  
200 Willoughby Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11205  
T: 718.636.3453 | F: 718.399.4410 | preco@pratt.edu



See Over 100  
Summer Programs  
Online  
[teenink.com/summer](http://teenink.com/summer)



# It's Not About Olives

by Jake, West Branch, IA

I had been sitting on a bus for almost five hours, listening to music and occasionally sneaking glances at the seat across from me. Its occupant had his eyes closed, with his feet sprawled across the aisle, resting on the edge of my seat. It was a long ride back from Earlham, Indiana, and we were about to take our first pit stop. I really had to use the restroom and also wanted to eat.

Our trip advisor stood up and raised his hand to silence the bus. I unplugged my earphones and looked up. I could tell from the snoring to my right that my neighbor had not realized an announcement was being made, so I kicked his feet off my seat, hoping the shock would get his atten-

tion. Sure enough, he opened his eyes and looked at me, bemused. I pointed toward the front of the bus and he sat up, stretching his arms and making that adorable noise he always does when he stretches. Of course, I say that now; when I heard it, all I wanted to do was hurl things at him. I resisted the urge.

*Why was he being all pleasant?*

"I know it's been a long ride, but now we get to have a nice lunch. You and the person next to you will be buddies," our trip leader explained.

I rolled my eyes. "When you get off the bus you will be given fifteen dollars to purchase lunch for the two of you. This rest stop has two options: Subway and McDonald's. Please try to make up your mind now so we don't waste time there."

He and I don't usually talk. After I told him I loved him and he said he would never love me, we didn't really have anything to say. I wanted to be his friend; I tried for a while, until I realized it wasn't working, so I just stopped. I would be lying if I said I didn't resent him for it. Let's just say that the idea of being alone with him for the next hour made me lose my appetite.

He turned to me and said, "Where do you want to eat?"

I ignored him, pretending to listen to music.

"Hey?" He waved his arms in an attempt to get my attention, then finally reached over and pulled the earphone out of my ear.

"Yes?" I said.

"Where do you want to eat?"

He eats healthy. In fact, when I met him, I don't think he had ever eaten at a fast food restaurant. I had originally found this fact foreign and attractive. Now it just seemed obnoxious.

"Do you plan on eating at McDonald's?" I said, in a tone that I was hoping would make him feel stupid for asking.

"No, not really."

"Well, then, I guess Subway it is."

I enjoyed my solitude for the next half hour until our bus stopped. We were parked outside McDonald's, and Subway was across the highway. The aisle became a sea of teenagers stepping on each other's toes. I was in no rush to get off, and so, finally, it was just the two of us.

"Ready to go?" he asked.

"Yeah."

I did feel kind of bad. The

way I was treating him was unfair; it really wasn't his fault. But he'd told me we couldn't be friends, and to me, that made him the enemy.

We walked toward the highway and waited a couple of minutes until there was a lull in the traffic. Then we ran as fast as possible across the lanes, both panting. I went right to the restroom and took an extra long time washing my hands. As I left, he nearly ran me over trying to enter.

When he came out of the restroom, he sat across from me and asked, "What are you going to order?"

"The veggie delight."

"Oh, cool. I was thinking about the meatball marinara. You ever tried it?"

"Nope, I'm a vegetarian." I couldn't believe he'd forgotten. I'd been a vegetarian when I met him two years ago.

"Oh yeah. You ready to order?"

Why was he being all pleasant? Maybe he had remembered how good a friend I was back in the day and wanted me back, or maybe he was just in the mood to rebuild some burned bridges. Either way, it was going to take a hell of a lot more than common pleasantries to fix this. It was like he'd turned back into the person he was when we first met – shy, timid, but fun to talk to. But so much had changed, there was no way for that to be the case now.

We both got in line. The woman behind the counter asked me what I wanted, and as I began to order, he interrupted.

"Wait, I'm not that hungry. Want to split a sandwich?"

"Well, don't you want meat on yours?"

"No, whatever you want."

"So what will you be having?" the woman behind the counter asked impatiently.

"Hold on," I said, "give us a sec." I held up a finger and turned to him. "What the hell has gotten into you?"

"What?"

"Three days ago you wanted nothing to do with me. Now you want to share a sandwich – so, I repeat, what the hell has gotten into you?"

"Do you really want to do this here?"

"Yes, I do."

"Can you guys decide what you want on this sandwich and argue afterward?" the woman asked.

"You pick," I said to him.

"What kind of bread?" the woman asked.

"Honey oat," he said, then turned back to me. "I'm tired of fighting with you. We used to be good friends."

"What kind of cheese?"

He was still looking at me. "Cheddar jack."

"Well, I've wanted that for years, but you said you couldn't be my friend," I retorted.

"Do you want it toasted?" the woman asked.

"Yes," he said, then, "I know what I said, but then I realized that except for that whole you-loving-me thing, you were a great friend, and I think that maybe I should forgive you and give you another chance."

"Well, 'maybe' isn't good enough for me. I don't want you to give me a second chance. You hurt me really bad, and you think you should give me another chance?"

"Do you want olives?" the woman asked.

"Do you want olives?" he asked.

"I don't care about olives," I screamed. Tears were welling up in my eyes.

I turned to the woman, plastering on the fake smile I'd gotten so good at recently. "We would like to make this a combo, with an extra drink," I said. When I handed her the money, my hands quivered.

I walked back to the booth and rested my head on the table. I couldn't believe this was happening. The pain he had caused me was so great – the worst I'd ever felt. I had really loved him, and he had cut me off so quickly, so easily. I didn't know if I could trust him. I'd just made a scene in a Subway over him rejecting me. I couldn't imagine the damage I might sustain if he did it again.

I felt the table shake as he sat down. "I got you a root beer."

As I looked up, I suddenly felt a surge of embarrassment.

"Thanks. I'm sorry I yelled at you."

He smiled. "It's okay."

This was a lot to spring on you."

"I would love to try to be your friend again, but I need something from you first," I said.

"And what would that be?"

"I want us to start with a clean slate. No more anger, no more yelling. A fresh start."

I closed my eyes, waiting to hear him say that that wasn't possible, that too much had happened.

"Sounds good to me," he replied.

"All right. Let's eat." I grabbed my half of our sandwich and took a bite. He sat staring at me, waiting to see my reaction.

"How do you like the olives?" he asked, half smiling, half laughing.

I returned the smile. "They're the best damn olives I've ever had." ♦

*We couldn't be friends, and that made him the enemy*



Photo by Amy Jorgensen, Harvard, MA

## Dear Jane,

In seventh grade, we traded our braces for bubble gum. We slicked on films of red lipstick that grazed our teeth and chins, and stuck our bony ankles into our mothers' stilettos.

Cement sidewalks became our runways, the graying curtains our shining swathes of silk. We ate pizza with our pinkies raised achingly high, liked the way we sat with our legs crossed over. We let our hair hang loose.

You liked to pinch the side of your belly, frowning at the little piece of humanness gathered between your fingertips. I watched you try to make it disappear. Your eyes never met mine in the bathroom mirror when you touched your collarbone and told me that it was better.

But Jane, don't you know? All we wanted to do was grow up. You forget that you're pinching a piece of yourself. Why get rid of it when it's just you? I'm going to miss that little piece of Jane when it's gone.

by Alice Deng, Ann Arbor, MI



# Meddlesome Matchmaking

by "Bianca," Manhasset, NY

I was at a three-week summer class when I experienced my first real dilemma in the area of romance and sex. No, I wasn't vacillating between possible partners or trying to figure out whether I'm gay, straight, or bisexual; the issue was my friends' attempts at matchmaking. While I was fine with a few jokes about my freezing cold libido, my friends wouldn't leave it at that. They seemed determined to warm up my love life – whether I wanted their help or not.

A couple of weeks into the summer class, a new friend of mine invited his friends from home to join a few of us at a movie theater. Not being outgoing or good with new people, I had planned on avoiding eye contact with the strangers and staying within my little sphere of comfort. This, however, was not going to fly; my friends decided to boost my social interaction skills by having me sit next to someone I didn't know. His name was Brian Porter, but his friends called him Porter, while the rest called him Brian. There was my first issue: what to call him. Was "Porter" too intimate and reserved for his close friends, or would "Brian" be weird since he wasn't called that very often? I decided to play it safe and refer to him as "you."

The AMC couch theater we were visiting was decked out with huge red leather recliners that went back so far you were in a literal bed. Being forced to sit next to Porter (Brian?) on one of these was a terribly awkward situation, made all the more obvious by my squishing all the way to one side. When Porter decided to pull up the armrest that separated us, I could hear giggles from my friends. Then he turned to me in the darkness of the theater and asked, "Do you want to sit closer to me?" I nearly choked on my soda as I mumbled something incoherent.

I had my reasons for responding with word vomit. One: I had met the guy five minutes before, so his sudden hitting on me was a bit unexpected. Two: I had absolutely no idea how to say no in a nice way. I think he got the hint. He didn't say anything more and turned back to the movie. The awkwardness, at this point, could have been cut with a knife.

When the movie ended, I met back up with my

friends in the girls' bathroom and frantically explained what had happened. Instead of reacting the way I thought they would ("Oh my God, he'd just met you!" "That's sooo weird, but hey, take it as a compliment." "Woo-hoo, getting it on, I see?"), my friends responded by asking me why I hadn't said yes and just "got with" him. Apparently snuggling with and potentially kissing a stranger in a couch theater was perfectly normal to them.

The more I thought about it, the more I realized that my friends' questions were not completely unexpected. I'd once read something on a website about a recent trend of my generation: teenagers drinking at parties and "hooking up" with each other. I felt totally out of place because I had no desire to do that.

When I expressed this to my friends, they took it as a sign that I liked Porter but just wanted to get to know him first. Later that night they had Porter text me, and then they proceeded to text him, on my behalf, flirty messages with sug-

gestive emoticons. Believe me, I fought this – but eventually I resigned myself to the fact that they were going to set me up with Porter whether I liked it or not. (Call me crazy, but something about that sentence sounds very wrong to me.)

After my initial annoyance at my friends for texting Porter, I began to feel bad. Now he believed I was really into him, and it was going to be difficult to let him down again. When I told this to my friends, they were shocked that I was planning on saying no a second time.

"Bianca, you have to take this opportunity. If you don't, you'll regret it for a reeeeeeally long time."

"I don't understand why you won't just hook up with him. He's nice."

"Not every guy you get with is going to be someone you find attractive. You can't have such high expectations in life."

Needless to say, the texting continued. I cringed in the corner while my friends giggled over my phone. They were much more into my budding "relationship" than I was.

I did not find Porter attractive at all, but with everyone around me insisting that he was, I began to wonder if something was wrong with me. I'd kissed a boy once when I was thirteen – and yet I had absolutely no desire to kiss Porter. My friends couldn't believe that any teenage girl who hadn't been kissed in three years would reject an invitation from a boy who they thought was good-looking.

I, Porter, and the others I'd met that night were invited to another movie the last night of the program. I was really nervous. Naturally, I would be sitting next to Porter, and naturally, he would make another move on me. I couldn't decide whether to just kiss him to shut everyone up, or to say no because I wasn't comfortable. I knew what kind of reaction I would get from my friends if I said no: eye rolls, sighs, and teasing about how I was too prudish.

At the movies, Porter put his arm around me just like I had predicted. I knew I was probably coming off as cold, but I crossed my arms tightly and turned my head so that I wasn't looking at him at all. I had no idea if he was going to pop a question like last time or just swoop in unexpectedly for a kiss. I

*I had no idea how to say no in a nice way*

*They were more into my budding "relationship" than I was*



Photo by Leah Choe, Burke, VA

couldn't decide which option I'd dislike least.

Eventually Porter took the question route. Halfway into the movie, which was surprisingly enjoyable, he turned to me and asked possibly the most cringe-worthy question ever to be uttered by a human being: "Wanna hook up?" At this point in the movie, Hercules had just bludgeoned a guy's head off and flipped the horse he was riding on.

"Uh ... u-um ... well, I ... I just, uh, hmm ..." was the intelligent response I started to give. I hadn't decided whether I was going to kiss him, so I was essentially thinking on my feet as the words poured out of my mouth. But in that moment I found the decision easy to make. They say to flip a coin when you are stuck between two choices. When the coin is in the air, you will suddenly know which option you truly want.

"Listen, I would," I started (despite the fact that the "I would" part was a total lie), "but I'm a very shy person, and I don't feel comfortable doing that in front of my friends. But you can ... um ... kiss me, if you want."

I don't know why I said the last part – perhaps because I saw the look of disappointment on his face. It wouldn't be the worst thing in the world to plant a small peck on him. But apparently a kiss was too measly a consolation prize for him; over the course of the next ten minutes, he awkwardly retracted his arm from around my shoulders.

I know that I wasn't in the wrong for saying no, despite the disapproving looks from my friends. I had no obligation to kiss Porter, no matter how upset he looked or how bad I felt for turning him down a second time.

I was content with my decision, which is a rarity for little indecisive me. I like the old-school way of developing a relationship: friends first, kiss second. I wouldn't go so far as to say that I'm interested in full-on courting, but I definitely long for something sweeter and simpler; hooking up is not my idea of fun. For now, I'm fine with taking it slow until I meet someone meaningful, even if it means annoying a few friends and would-be suitors along the way. ♦

## Lazy

Thumbs cramping for days, texting my friend across the room – too lazy to get up.

by Kelsey Manock, Hartland, WI



Photo by Ruth Oppenheimer, Castro Valley, CA

# Meddlesome Matchmaking

by "Bianca," Manhasset, NY

I was at a three-week summer class when I experienced my first real dilemma in the area of romance and sex. No, I wasn't vacillating between possible partners or trying to figure out whether I'm gay, straight, or bisexual; the issue was my friends' attempts at matchmaking. While I was fine with a few jokes about my freezing cold libido, my friends wouldn't leave it at that. They seemed determined to warm up my love life – whether I wanted their help or not.

A couple of weeks into the summer class, a new friend of mine invited his friends from home to join a few of us at a movie theater. Not being outgoing or good with new people, I had planned on avoiding eye contact with the strangers and staying within my little sphere of comfort. This, however, was not going to fly; my friends decided to boost my social interaction skills by having me sit next to someone I didn't know. His name was Brian Porter, but his friends called him Porter, while the rest called him Brian. There was my first issue: what to call him. Was "Porter" too intimate and reserved for his close friends, or would "Brian" be weird since he wasn't called that very often? I decided to play it safe and refer to him as "you."

The AMC couch theater we were visiting was decked out with huge red leather recliners that went back so far you were in a literal bed. Being forced to sit next to Porter (Brian?) on one of these was a terribly awkward situation, made all the more obvious by my squishing all the way to one side. When Porter decided to pull up the armrest that separated us, I could hear giggles from my friends. Then he turned to me in the darkness of the theater and asked, "Do you want to sit closer to me?" I nearly choked on my soda as I mumbled something incoherent.

I had my reasons for responding with word vomit. One: I had met the guy five minutes before, so his sudden hitting on me was a bit unexpected. Two: I had absolutely no idea how to say no in a nice way. I think he got the hint. He didn't say anything more and turned back to the movie. The awkwardness, at this point, could have been cut with a knife.

When the movie ended, I met back up with my

friends in the girls' bathroom and frantically explained what had happened. Instead of reacting the way I thought they would ("Oh my God, he'd just met you!" "That's sooo weird, but hey, take it as a compliment." "Woo-hoo, getting it on, I see?"), my friends responded by asking me why I hadn't said yes and just "got with" him. Apparently snuggling with and potentially kissing a stranger in a couch theater was perfectly normal to them.

The more I thought about it, the more I realized that my friends' questions were not completely unexpected. I'd once read something on a website about a recent trend of my generation: teenagers drinking at parties and "hooking up" with each other. I felt totally out of place because I had no desire to do that.

When I expressed this to my friends, they took it as a sign that I liked Porter but just wanted to get to know him first. Later that night they had Porter text me, and then they proceeded to text him, on my behalf, flirty messages with sug-

gestive emoticons. Believe me, I fought this – but eventually I resigned myself to the fact that they were going to set me up with Porter whether I liked it or not. (Call me crazy, but something about that sentence sounds very wrong to me.)

After my initial annoyance at my friends for texting Porter, I began to feel bad. Now he believed I was really into him, and it was going to be difficult to let him down again. When I told this to my friends, they were shocked that I was planning on saying no a second time.

"Bianca, you have to take this opportunity. If you don't, you'll regret it for a reeeeeeally long time."

"I don't understand why you won't just hook up with him. He's nice."

"Not every guy you get with is going to be someone you find attractive. You can't have such high expectations in life."

Needless to say, the texting continued. I cringed in the corner while my friends giggled over my phone. They were much more into my budding "relationship" than I was.

I did not find Porter attractive at all, but with everyone around me insisting that he was, I began to wonder if something was wrong with me. I'd kissed a boy once when I was thirteen – and yet I had absolutely no desire to kiss Porter. My friends couldn't believe that any teenage girl who hadn't been kissed in three years would reject an invitation from a boy who they thought was good-looking.

I, Porter, and the others I'd met that night were invited to another movie the last night of the program. I was really nervous. Naturally, I would be sitting next to Porter, and naturally, he would make another move on me. I couldn't decide whether to just kiss him to shut everyone up, or to say no because I wasn't comfortable. I knew what kind of reaction I would get from my friends if I said no: eye rolls, sighs, and teasing about how I was too prudish.

At the movies, Porter put his arm around me just like I had predicted. I knew I was probably coming off as cold, but I crossed my arms tightly and turned my head so that I wasn't looking at him at all. I had no idea if he was going to pop a question like last time or just swoop in unexpectedly for a kiss. I

*I had no idea how to say no in a nice way*

*They were more into my budding "relationship" than I was*



Photo by Leah Choe, Burke, VA

couldn't decide which option I'd dislike least.

Eventually Porter took the question route. Halfway into the movie, which was surprisingly enjoyable, he turned to me and asked possibly the most cringe-worthy question ever to be uttered by a human being: "Wanna hook up?" At this point in the movie, Hercules had just bludgeoned a guy's head off and flipped the horse he was riding on.

"Uh ... u-um ... well, I ... I just, uh, hmm ..." was the intelligent response I started to give. I hadn't decided whether I was going to kiss him, so I was essentially thinking on my feet as the words poured out of my mouth. But in that moment I found the decision easy to make. They say to flip a coin when you are stuck between two choices. When the coin is in the air, you will suddenly know which option you truly want.

"Listen, I would," I started (despite the fact that the "I would" part was a total lie), "but I'm a very shy person, and I don't feel comfortable doing that in front of my friends. But you can ... um ... kiss me, if you want."

I don't know why I said the last part – perhaps because I saw the look of disappointment on his face. It wouldn't be the worst thing in the world to plant a small peck on him. But apparently a kiss was too measly a consolation prize for him; over the course of the next ten minutes, he awkwardly retracted his arm from around my shoulders.

I know that I wasn't in the wrong for saying no, despite the disapproving looks from my friends. I had no obligation to kiss Porter, no matter how upset he looked or how bad I felt for turning him down a second time.

I was content with my decision, which is a rarity for little indecisive me. I like the old-school way of developing a relationship: friends first, kiss second. I wouldn't go so far as to say that I'm interested in full-on courting, but I definitely long for something sweeter and simpler; hooking up is not my idea of fun. For now, I'm fine with taking it slow until I meet someone meaningful, even if it means annoying a few friends and would-be suitors along the way. ♦

## Lazy

Thumbs cramping for days, texting my friend across the room – too lazy to get up.

by Kelsey Manock, Hartland, WI



Photo by Ruth Oppenheimer, Castro Valley, CA



# Hidden Talent

by Christian Baer, Park Ridge, IL

As he climbs onto a brightly lit stage, all of his focus is poised on a single note. The journey up these steps is a routine that he is used to. They are in a place of fortitude and confidence – a fortress. He knows that as long as he walks up the steps, he will succeed in any endeavor that he may face on the stage. He hears the reassuring voice inside his head, telling him that no one will judge him unless he lets the walls of his fortress break down, allowing doubt to pour in like a vast ocean of a single thought: *I'm doing the wrong thing*. He must resist this thought and step to the middle of the stage.

The applause is a tumult of ecstasy, something no one could understand until they have attempted to show a crowd of hundreds exactly what they can do when it comes to the thing they love.

*I worked  
to keep a  
reputation*

## I don't say...

"I'm not going to begin with introductions because I don't like my age."  
 "It reminds me of how old I am."  
 "When do you become old? – I was thirteen."  
 "Who made this bus yours?"  
 "Don't 'f\*\*\* school'; it's unsafe."  
 "I'm broken."  
 "I do mind, actually."  
 "Sorry."  
 "You broke me."  
 "I don't want to grow up."  
 "I'm clever."  
 "What's the point in learning to find the area under a curved line graph?"  
 "Do I know you?"  
 "I'm scared."  
 "I'm scarred."  
 "Why don't facts make sense?"  
 "How are 21 percent of teens obese when I know more people with anorexia than obesity?"  
 "Why is the color blue attractive?"  
 "Are you actually qualified to teach history?"  
 "Or anything?"  
 "I didn't think so."  
 "I prefer books that hurt me."  
 "I tell lies."  
 "Very well."  
 "Am I a bad person?"  
 "I have never revised in my life."  
 "I'm screwed."  
 "I'm glad you have such misplaced faith in me."  
 "Stop dying your hair."  
 "We were best friends at age seven, remember?"  
 "You do remember – you just don't like remembering."  
 "I'm scared of dying."  
 "And of living."  
 "My sides are splitting."  
 "I hate my own sarcasm."  
 "I love you, Mum."  
 "And you."  
 "And you."

In fact,  
 Now that I think about it,  
 All my poems are just the words I don't say.  
 by Catherine Sleeman, Horsham, England

In my private middle school I never had an issue singing publicly. I guess it's easy to be comfortable with the same twelve people you've known since you were six. However, I knew that this small-town feeling of knowing and being comfortable with everyone around me couldn't last forever.

As a freshman in high school, I knew only four kids in a class of hundreds. When you're already that isolated, it's pretty easy to keep to yourself and do activities that most high school students would think of as out of the ordinary.

Every day I walked down the steps to the performing arts wing and then back up after the bell rang without a glance of embarrassment or apprehension. No one cared who that random private-school kid was or what he did with his time – at least, that's what I told myself. After all, I had made no friends by the time winter came.

Luckily, snow and congested vocal chambers are not the only things winter brings; wrestling season was my chance to finally meet others and begin to enjoy high school. By the time the season ended I was known as the captain of the freshman squad. More importantly, I had gained a handful of friends, an outstanding record of 17-2 – and a leg injury.

"I understand that you really want to continue to wrestle, but due to how we had to repair the tibia plateau and patella tendon, I don't think it will be possible if you want to recover full use of your leg."

Being completely shut out of something that you've done your whole life is an experience that many would find hard to fathom, but it is within the realm of understanding. The only thing that separates those who do and don't understand is the difference between actually going through the problem and simply saying, "That's too bad. I really feel sorry for you." My new friends happened to land on the latter side of that.

After two surgeries, two titanium bolts in my leg, an almost full Xbox hard drive, and countless sympathy cards, I finally realized during sophomore year that I couldn't just sit in the muck that had once been my outstanding wrestling career. I worked on strengthening my leg with lots of physical therapy. I'd never thought that an activity that had once provided me with so much strength could also sap so much of my morale. I decided to enter the world of competitive sports again, and took up lacrosse. I was back, unrestricted from what I wanted to do. In lacrosse, I got the same feeling of accomplishment I'd had from winning a wrestling match. I'd also realized something else: I needed to plug into my other talents if I wanted not only to return to my former level of confidence, but to exceed it.

The friends I made during wrestling season are the greatest group of people I could ask for. We could be ourselves around each other without fear of more than a jokingly aimed comment here or there. I, however, had always been aware of how my peers viewed me, and I worked to keep a reputation that I considered acceptable. So my hidden talent stayed secret – that is, until this year.

At the start of junior year, I had successfully sung around those I deemed unlikely to judge me: my choir class and close family. But my choir teacher, Mr. Hanes, had bigger plans. One day he approached me with a proposition: he wanted me to try out for the extracurricular vocal ensemble called



Photo by Ashish Aman, Patna, India

Vocal Jazz.

"I appreciate the offer. I'll think about it," is what I said. *No, I won't. It's too risky*, is what I thought. I was completely against the idea – not because I didn't think I was capable, but because I didn't think my friends would accept me once they found out I liked to sing.

Before that day I'd had no trouble walking into the arts wing for eighth period. Now, however, everyone was watching me as I walked down the steps to the hallway leading to choir class. That is, I *thought* everyone was.

I beat myself up over the idea of Vocal Jazz. I knew that it would be a change; what I questioned was how much that would affect me. Five days after the proposition, and with much pushing from family and Mr. Hanes, I decided I would find out the answer.

"Practice is 6:45 to 7:35 from Tuesday through Thursday, including gigs at the country club and all around the school."

"Okay, I can handle that." *But can my friends?*

That question would be answered the following Saturday when my friends and I were playing hacky-sack. It happened when I least expected it: halfway through a shoulder-stall, which, by the way, took forever to get down.

Nick said it first: "Yo, Christian, I heard you have a hell of a voice."

Jackson followed up with, "Yeah, I had no idea you could sing. How about a little sample?"

This was the moment I had only thought possible in my worst fears. The secret was out.

The news spread. But my friends – who I had feared would be full of judgment and criticism, using my talent as an excuse to break me down – showed their true colors just as I did. I'd never felt so relieved. I could do what I loved without feeling ashamed, and heading up and down the stairs to the art wing was no longer a walk of fear.

I've learned that if I don't place trust in my friends, I will never trust my own decisions. Vocal Jazz has offered opportunities far beyond what could have been had I decided to let fear make my decisions for me.

Vocal Jazz has ended for the season, which means no more out-of-school concerts, no more staircases leading to a stage, and no more early morning practices. But next year, the ensemble will be performing at Carnegie Hall in New York City, and I will once again have the opportunity to climb a staircase onto a brightly lit stage. This time it will be with a newfound confidence. ♦

*"I heard you  
have a hell of  
a voice"*

# Wrecking Ball

by Kiran Garg, Williamsville, NY

American Eagle Outfitters sells a men's shirt that has green and yellow stripes on a white background. When I saw it, I decided to get it for my brother. While waiting to check out, I saw a man I presumed to be gay wearing the shirt – so I mentally labeled it a “gay shirt” and put it back. Even though I don't consider myself homophobic, I did not want my brother to wear a “gay shirt.” Instead, I picked a black T-shirt that I thought better represented heterosexuality.

I'm in a math class made up of students from all around Buffalo, New York. Every year many new students sign up and drop out, so most of the relationships formed are temporary. I was never close with my classmates.

Then Samuel sat next to me. Our class was three hours long, and within a week we became really bored – and so comfortable around each other that we would constantly tease one another. We relentlessly called the other stupid, ugly, fat, smelly, and gay. Our only intention was to pass those long hours of class and snag a couple of cheap laughs.

For instance, Samuel struggled with test grades. He sometimes said, “Why can't I get good grades?” I would say, “It's just because you're stupid.” Whenever I sneezed, Samuel turned to me and screamed, “Shut up!” Occasionally Samuel would look at me

and pretend to die from my ugliness. We both considered these insults playful, not offensive.

The teasing made our relationship weird, though. We were so sarcastic that being serious was uncomfortable and foreign. Sometimes Samuel and I would try to have a conversation without insulting each other. It never worked out very well, because once one person said something funny or insulting, it would snowball. I assumed that we just weren't really good friends.

Two months into our friendship, Samuel wore the shirt I had seen at American Eagle. Because our friendship was based on mocking each other, I told Samuel that he was wearing a “gay shirt.” He laughed, and we began to call that shirt his “gay shirt.”

For these few months, our conversations consisted only of sarcasm and laughter. Then Samuel and I met for coffee one Saturday and he said, “I have to tell you something.” I thought he was going to tell me to shut up or call me ugly. Instead he said, “I'm gay.” When I looked up I was smiling because I thought he was kidding, but then I saw that he looked tense and a bit pink.

I realized that Samuel was scared of *me*. He had exposed a vulnerable side of himself and had given me a lot of power. He was afraid that I would abuse him with his secret. He had taken those gay jokes seriously, even though he had laughed. He was a

good actor because he'd had a lot of practice. He had rated the girls in our math class along with the other boys. He had played truth or dare at parties, and he had lied a lot. He was scared because now he needed me to be a good actor and a good friend – and he wasn't sure I would be.

There was a moment between when he told me and I began crying. During that pause, I fell in love with him, and I realized that the American Eagle shirt *was* his gay shirt. I cried because I was part of his problem. I had been hurting him for months and now I loved him.

There was a pause between when I started crying and when he started crying. That pause was for him to take a breath of sweet relief. I don't know why he cried, but I think it was because he was so tired – tired of feeling alone.

I think I became a bit more than just a friend. I became his publicly sobbing, emotionally unstable best friend. I think that sometimes his secret was a wrecking ball. It was breaking him.

We cried in silence for about ten minutes. Then he said, “Wow, it's really quiet.” I didn't answer, because by not talking and not laughing for ten minutes, I had become closer to him than I had with most people in my life. Telling his secret had been like swinging the wrecking ball; it had broken down a wall between us.

When he left the coffee shop, he still said that I was ugly. And I still laughed. ♦

*Our friendship was based on mocking each other*

# On Blowing Rock

by Zephyr Allen, Maryville, TN

There's a photo on my dresser that I've often found myself looking at as I begin my last summer at home before college. In it, Cassidy, my friend for more than half my life, and I sit on the edge of a 5,000-foot cliff, both sporting baggy gray sweatshirts, short blonde hair, and the gangly figures of preteens. We were at a place called the Blowing Rock in North Carolina. Despite the mist, we could look out for miles into the surrounding country. There was a cold, buffeting wind that blew up from the gorge below that made you feel as if you were standing on the edge of the world.

While we were at the Blowing Rock, we learned a Native American legend about the place. The story goes that two young lovers found their way there, and the man, caught between his duty to his people and his love for the woman, threw himself off the cliff. But a kind wind blew him back up into the arms of his lover, and it's been blowing up the gorge ever since.

Cassidy and I grew up together, but in doing so, we also drifted apart; despite this, I know there will always be kind winds to blow us back to each other.

As a child growing up with no siblings in an older neighborhood, I often found myself creating imaginary friends or relying on my pets for company. In

short, I was lonely. However, when I turned six, a girl about my age moved into the house just 50 yards from mine. That December, we met each other at the fire hydrant on the corner of North Maple and Caulderwood and exchanged names. And we've been friends ever since.

Over the years, she, being the older (by a year and a third), led the way on all our devious adventures. I remember one in particular in which we found a large sewage pipe that led under a highway. We thought it would be an excellent idea to cross through the tunnel to the other side, which we could not see from the opening. Ten feet into the dark, echoing, cobweb-filled tunnel, I backed away. But, intrepid as always, Cassidy crawled in.

She's been the closest thing I've ever had to an older sister, always there to take the lead and hold my hand. It's even visible in the picture of us. She cut her hair first, and I followed suit. She wore a gray sweatshirt, and so did I. She sat bravely on the edge of a 5,000-foot cliff, and I, in spite of myself, followed.

As a child, sometimes the main reason you become friends with someone

is because you live near her – and as you grow and expand your scope in life, your old friendships become smaller in the face of the wider world. When Cassidy and I were little, we were a world within ourselves, fascinated by whatever nature and our imaginations had to offer. But we began to realize that we were standing on the edge of a world much more immense than we were. We couldn't yet see through the

mist that surrounded us, but we knew that there was more out there – more than the 50 yards we were accustomed to.

It was a world full of things that could tear us apart – love, school, responsibilities – and so, into this larger world we threw our-

selves off the cliff. As is only natural, we lost each other in the mist; we lost sight of where we had come from.

For me, taking that leap was painful; I lost someone who had kept me rooted for so much of my life. In the flurry of schoolwork and preteen drama, I rarely saw Cassidy. And with so many new stressors, I needed a big sister more than ever. But in growing away and less dependent on her, I learned to take care of myself and plant my feet firmly on the ground. I matured.

*She sat bravely upon the edge of a cliff, and I followed*



Photo by Helen Peng, Overland Park, KS

Although Cassidy and I have grown up and drifted apart, our friendship never truly deteriorated. I know there will always be a kind wind to deliver me back to her, just as the man was carried back into the arms of his lover. And the same will always be true of Cassidy – when the wilderness becomes too dark and the mist too thick to see, she will always be able to find solace with me on the Blowing Rock, where we left off. ♦



# Contagion

by Kain Kim, Paramus, NJ

When I am seven and my best friend Ah-Rim is six, a new boy transfers to our homeroom.

Half of his face is ravaged with tiny red dots, pricks of inflamed skin roughly textured like Braille. When he enters through the sliding door, the entire class breaks into excited whispers. Half of me wants to avoid his embarrassed gaze, turn around and pretend he doesn't exist, but the other half can't stop staring. It looks as if he dunked the right side of his head in hot oil.

Our teacher curtly introduces him as Min-Jeong. She says that he'll be with us this semester, and she expects us all to treat him with courtesy and respect.

By the time Min-Jeong has settled into his seat, looking as stiff as a corpse, it's gotten around the whole room that his new name is Disease Boy. Ah-Rim elbows me and snickers. My deskmate leans across and

you're mistaking it for something that happened much later." I wonder if the more we grow, the less we remember, like those memories are captured in sheets of negatives that will keep piling on top of one another over the years, until the original picture is so blackened by what came after that you can't even recall what it was in the first place.

• • •

*"What is he, stupid? Why isn't he running?"*

It's an unusually cold day for May. Min-Jeong stands by the statue, a stone memorial of the school's founder, and waits, bookbag clutched defensively to his thin chest. Disease Boy isn't stupid. He's seen the looks and heard the hissed in-

sults, felt the quick, lithe feet shooting out from beneath the desks to trip his large, clumsy ones, and sensed the unanimous, hushed response from the class. His eyes are like the stones that my dad and I used to skip across the lake: hard and glassy and reflecting the gray sky.

"What is he, stupid?" Ah-Rim mutters to me. "Why isn't he running?"

Already a small throng of kids has gathered around the statue. Nothing is really happening yet, just some minor taunting and name-calling. Min-Jeong is holding his own. A few adults walk by on their commute from work and glare at us. We pull faces and sneer back at them.

My deskmate, the one who gathered us here, steps forward once a crowd has formed. You can tell he's glad to have an audience. He slowly picks up a rock, a solid piece of gravel about the size of my fist. He tosses it in the air and catches it.

Toss, catch. Toss, catch.

We watch the rock as if hypnotized, following its path as it arcs through the air and lands with a smack in his palm. Min-Jeong stares stoically at the ground.

The rock suddenly sails through the air and hits Min-Jeong on the shoulder.

It's like the world was on mute and a switch has now been flipped. The sound rushes back with full force, boys screeching in wild abandon, girls screaming and giggling in excitement. Everyone hunts for rocks on the ground. Pebbles and stones and chunks of gravel hurtle through space and hit or miss Disease Boy, who's not responding; he just stands there, an island amidst the cacophony. The statue behind him smiles down benevolently on the scene.

"Help me look for rocks," Ah-Rim is saying. The tips of her straight

black braids brush the ground as she bends, searching. "Everybody's taking the good ones."

What happened next, I don't remember well. I think I ran away or pretended to help Ah-Rim look for a while. I did not help the boy with the spots on his face.

Throwing rocks at him with the rest of my classmates would have been less cowardly.

• • •

I realize later, much to my unrestrained horror, that Min-Jeong lives in my apartment building. We wait together in interminable silence for the elevator to reach the lobby. The first thing he says to me, quietly and without making eye contact, is, "It's not contagious."

"I never asked," I respond.

Then, in the elevator, feeling as if I've got to say something, as if I have to redeem myself to this boy whom I watched get pelted with stones: "Why didn't you run away? You waited for them like an idiot."

He steps out at his floor without replying. I realize much, much later that the silence was all the answer I needed.

• • •

Slowly but surely, Min-Jeong and I become friends. I do all the talking; he listens. If not for the answers he gives our teacher, and what he said in the elevator, I'd be sure he was either deaf or mute. Sometimes – not often – I get the impression that I'm conversing with a brick wall, and I scream at him to say something, anything, so I don't feel like I'm talking to myself; but he simply looks at me and smiles, and that's enough for me to apologize and fall into shamed silence.

Ah-Rim and I don't hang out anymore. On the rare occasions that we make eye contact, she glares at me and turns to whisper something to the beady-eyed girls who have been following her lately, like faithful pets trailing after their owner.

This is why I'm dubious when she appears at my door one morning and asks me to go rollerblading with her.

"There's something I want to do." "Okay."

My apartment complex is on top of a hill; the buildings slope up on a gradual incline toward the sun. There's only one way to leave the complex: down the main road, which is dangerously steep and flattens into the heavy rush of perpetual traffic. Parents go to great pains to keep their scooter- and rollerblade-loving children off the hill. Once you gather

enough momentum, which doesn't take long due to the hill's steepness, it's almost impossible to turn at the last second into the alleyway to avoid the busy intersection. We've had accidents before – none fatal, thankfully, but enough to establish the hill as a serious hazard.

"We're going to skate down the hill," Ah-Rim declares, eyes shining. "It's easy. Just watch me."

She sails effortlessly down and makes a slow, wide turn into the alleyway. A few minutes later she reemerges, skates in hand, and begins the trek up the hill in her bare feet, face turned toward the sun. She motions for me to skate down too.

I don't move.

She reaches the pinnacle of the hill, standing next to me once again, flushed and bright-eyed.

"Well?" She gestures toward the road. "Are you going to do it or not?"

There's a string coiled between us, taut with tension, worn thin. She's testing its durability, gently tugging. It's up to me to break it completely, I realize.

"Sure." I fasten my helmet. "No big deal."

Skating down the hill is like flying. I feel weightless, buoyant in the whip of the rushing air current, arms spread as if I'm going to take flight. The alley draws up beside me all too quickly. I angle my feet and turn into it, exhilaration and satisfaction plunging through my veins. What I am not expecting, however, is the concrete wall waiting too close at the other end of the alley.

• • •

"Ai-goo," my mother says to me later, "how could you have been so stupid? How many times have I told you not to go down the hill?"

By the time I've struggled back up the hill, one side of my face scraped and bleeding, Ah-Rim has vanished. That stings more than the burn of the salve my mother applies with her birdlike fingers, her delicate touch light and airy.

• • •

Min-Jeong and I wait for the elevator, watching the numbers light up one by one. He thoughtfully contemplates the ragged scars that cover the left side of my face. The doctor says it will be quite a while before they fade completely.

"I didn't run away," I say.

His understanding gaze says enough: *It's not the same thing.* I shrug and grin at him, an expression of joy and recklessness that only a seven-year-old could wear. ➤ ➤

*Ragged scars cover the left side of my face*



Photo by Ashley Tsang, Johns Creek, GA

hisses, "We'll greet him properly at the statue after school. Pass it on."

I laugh. I pass it on.

• • •

It's always struck me as funny how adults assume you can't remember anything from early childhood. These memories are like frames of a film in my head, crystal in clarity and glaring with color and life. "That's not a memory," they'll say, laughing, and pat your head condescendingly. "You probably saw a photograph and

# Sage

by Julianne Hussman, Ellicott City, MD

The day I met Sage, her hair was a long auburn undercut. When we became friends, she had cat eyes drawn on, and her hair had turned black. She'd twisted it into a French braid and flowered it with tiny claw clips. When we'd grown to be best friends, she had her bangs bleached. Caramel was blended into her raven head.

The next week, I walked into her room; the walls were covered with pictures, the ceiling scattered with Asian lanterns, hanging voodoo dolls, and cords of rainbow lights. She sat at her mirror, her hair cropped to her head. A few days later I watched as she drowned it in turquoise dye.

On her eighteenth birthday, I held her hand as she got a tattoo of the plant that shares her name. Last Friday she strode out in a cherry red jacket, and her pixie hair was midnight again. She is a chameleon, but to me, she never changes.

Sage likes to play with her appearance. She expresses herself using hair dye, piercings, tattoos. She is a canvas, and, slathered with color, declares, "This is who I am."

At one point, for me, she was that simple. I met Sage at our friend Isabelle's School of Rock show in Baltimore. After I listened to the blonde fairy Isabelle play way too many Van Halen songs on bass – a colossal instrument compared to her tiny frame – I was introduced to Sage. I instantly thought she was cool; I liked her clothes and jewelry. She talked to me about art. I'm still trying to imagine where this story would have gone if that interaction had been our last. Sage could have stayed this static figure in my brain indefinitely. I'd have one memory as my evidence that she even existed. Her feathery reddish hair, an octopus ring, a septum piercing, a soft yellow hat, black boots, and a trivial dis-

cussion about the most beautiful art form – that is all she would have been to me.

Our friendship didn't end there, but at the time I had no clue how little I knew about her. I see Sage now with different eyes. A stranger sees Sage as a girl with tattoos; he doesn't see a smiling four-year-old who first glimpsed her passion watching the Nutcracker ballet. A stranger waits at a stoplight and looks over at the girl in a Black Flag T-shirt, hardcore punk blaring from her car stereo; he doesn't see her turning in ribbon-laced shoes on stage with a Russian dance company. A stranger

sees neon hair but doesn't see the girl who feels the saddest fact is that "the world we live in has more flaws than anyone could fix." A stranger couldn't see the girl I know, a best friend, a person who made me realize that appearances say nothing; they are superficial shadows of all that someone is.

I've learned that you have to understand a person in order to love them. To strangers, I am only a character. I lack dimension. I am a doll, a puppet, not yet a real girl. They can ascribe qualities to me at will; they can manipulate my strings in their minds. They see only the surface and have no reason to believe their sentiments aren't real.

When you see others for what they are, you discover how they hurt, how the world has been rough with them, how they think, whom they trust and love. You recognize that the image you initially constructed of them is not the truth. It was only an idea. Tragically often, you'll find that your acquaintances' true natures aren't what you hoped for. Their formerly captivating façades are shattered, and you are disappointed. You feel lied to, but it's only you who's been the liar; you cannot genuinely love people for who you wish they were. ♦

*She is a chameleon, but to me, she never changes*



Photo by Amber Rondel, St. Peter Port, United Kingdom

friends

## Mismatch

by Mikayla Amaral, Sparkill, NY

"We can keep doing this," he says as he lifts my chin to kiss me – "and be really close friends," he adds with a smile.

I just take a deep breath, as I always do when he makes a promise like that. I try to focus on the moment and take note of everything. The brown leather couch is comfortable, but not overused. The dim lighting of my living room hints at the darkness of my empty street.

My head rises and falls with each breath he takes. My hand rests on his chest and I can feel his strength through my fingertips. His Under Armor shirt is soft and inviting. His left arm is wrapped around my body, and his left hand holds my right. My ringed hand somehow fits in his, which is calloused from years of catching footballs. It is not a perfect fit; his hand is slightly too big for mine. But for now, it is enough for both of us.

He looks at his phone, checking for a more tempting offer from a prettier girl. Someone taller, thinner, and more athletic. Someone like his ex-girlfriend. But it is 9 p.m. on a Tuesday night, so he settles for me.

He has done that for years. He settles for me when he is single, when he is lonely, when he is bored. I'm smart enough to know that, but optimistic enough to hope that he will change – that maybe one day he will say, "Instead of being my friend, will you be my girlfriend?"

So at 9 p.m. on a Tuesday night, I lie on his chest, hoping that tonight will be different. But after an hour he gives me a kiss good-bye and more promises he won't keep. ♦

He smiles back.

We match, he and I. The scarred sides of our faces are turned toward each other like reflections in a mirror.

I will leave for America in less than a year, as the scratches raked across my cheek are just beginning to fade, and will not tell a soul about my departure. When my parents ask me why, I tell them I forgot. To them it is a small offense, easily forgotten. After all, I am only seven.

I know, however, that what I did – leaving Min-Jeong without a word of explanation – is unforgivable. I will

berate myself in the years to come, but ultimately, this guilt too will pass.

The boy with the spots on his face phases quietly out of my life. He is blotted out as the stills of my memories pile up and blend into one another in their mutual transparency.

My new school has a statue of its own. It peers humbly down through spectacles at the mass of students and faculty that enter and leave the doors each day. I get into the habit of dropping a stone I've picked up on the

way to school at its base, like a sort of offering. It feels a little silly after a while, and by the time I graduate from that school, I have forgotten the routine altogether.

My scars have completely disappeared now. A part of me wishes they had remained, because I know his will never go away.

What I've come to realize, though, is that forgetting doesn't mean never remembering. Writing this was a practice in restraint – a battle against the urge to throw in every spare moment we

*I know what I did is unforgivable*

spent together, to fill in the blanks and gray areas with my own interpretations of what might have happened.

I cannot spend my life in the darkroom of my mind, scrounging up old memories and waiting for them to develop properly. But I'm allowed to recall a reel of events now and then. I will do this, sometimes, when I need to remind myself why my little sister does reckless things, or why I can't run away from the things I fear. I take down a film reel of afternoons walking home from school and remember. I play it back again. ♦



# Wasting Myself

by "Kelly," No. St. Paul, MN

Standing in the bathroom doorway, I studied my mother studying herself. Like a metronome in need of winding, her head tilted slightly to the right, then left. She gently traced the wide contours of her hips while twisting back and forth to find a flattering angle, but no amount of bending or sucking in could eliminate the minor bulge above her Levis. The mirror only saw her grimace, never smile. "God, I'm fat," she always muttered. I saw the way she wrapped herself in tape measures like chains – how her self-esteem was inversely proportionate to her waist size. That is how I learned to hate my body, and I began to destroy it in a junior high cafeteria.

The school day unfolded as usual. At 11:10 the lunch bell shrieked, and I shrank with dread. After grabbing my lunch box from my locker, I headed downstairs to the bustling cafeteria among my peers. Aromas of pizza, ranch dressing, and chicken nuggets harassed my nostrils, wrenching my stomach with desire.

I sat at a round table speckled with crumbs from previous students. While girls around me chomped carelessly, I nibbled on a few apple slices, despite my stomach's greed. I hated eating in public.

"You've gotta try this caramel coconut bar my mom made. It's so good," Rachel exclaimed. She dangled it in front of me. The caramel oozed between layers of chocolate dappled with coconut and crunchy nougat.

"Um, sure," I said, politeness motivating my consent.

*I resolved to stop eroding myself*

Yet I couldn't fathom consuming those calories, so I discreetly spit it into a napkin and stuffed it in my lunch box, to dispose of along with my turkey sandwich and Doritos.

"Did you guys hear that Paula Abdul is bulimic? I read it in *People*," Hanna said. The mention of Paula Abdul caught my attention; "American Idol" was my favorite show at the time.

"What's 'bulimic' mean?"

"She sticks her finger down her throat so she can puke and stay skinny."

The idea had never occurred to me. Desire to physically purge is not inherent, but learned.

"That's kinda dumb," I sputtered.

"Yeah, I know," Hanna said, chomping on beef jerky. "You'd have to be an idiot to do that."

As the squabble of teenage conversation continued, I examined the tan plastic trays all around me, each compartment piled with calories. They were consumed unconsciously, and that was normal. To an eighth grader, nutrition facts should be as meaningless as stock market data.

I was not normal. What they viewed as delicious fuel I saw as digits on a scale, just like my mother. But I had a solution now.

For the remaining three hours of school, food plagued my mind. I could not concentrate on Ms. Hollium's explanation of the quadratic formula or Mr. Barfeld's spirited lecture about Hannibal's military tactics, because my stomach persistently barked its anthem of need.

By the time I arrived home, the appetite I had pinned



Photo by Elina Reime, Nærbø, Norway

down all day rolled over me, too strong to resist. "Mom, I'm starving. When's dinner?" I yelled.

She ran her fingers through her cropped black hair and rolled her eyes. "Dinner will be ready when it's ready. I have a lot to do. Just eat an apple or something to tide yourself over."

The lust for food overrode my willpower. I pillaged the pantry and refrigerator like a ravenous pirate. Standing at the counter, I ate everything I could find. Yesterday's tater tots. Oreos. Cheetos. Gogurt. After I'd consumed it all, a volcano of guilt erupted within me and flushed my cheeks red. I was swollen with regret, terrified that each calorie equaled one pound on my hips. I escaped to my bedroom to distract myself with algebra. An hour later my mom called me down for dinner – chicken breast, Rice-a-Roni, and steamed asparagus. To avoid offending her, I ate, but I couldn't even taste it; it was as if my taste buds had overworked and clocked out for the day. I ate with the newfound prospect of purging my food later.

And that is precisely what I did.

I snuck down to the basement and locked myself behind the bathroom's floral wallpaper, hoping my parents and sisters wouldn't hear me.

Thus began the vicious cycle of starving, bingeing, and purging. It never culminated in a dramatic emergency room visit, nor did it place me on death's doorstep. It was a silent battle that yo-yoed and temporarily provided me with a false sense of control – as if pouring the contents of my stomach into a toilet bowl actually gave me power.

It took two years to realize that I sought catharsis through physical purgation; along with the food, I aimed to purge myself of anxiety and fear of inadequacy or ugliness. It took me three years to realize that when my mother grimaced at her reflection, the mirror could not truly see her. It couldn't see her wisdom or her vast reservoir of love, her humor, her personality, or her talent. It took four years to gather the courage to tell my mother why we had been going through so much toilet bowl cleaner.

I'd been indoctrinated with an unrealistic standard, as if protruding collarbones are more beautiful than compassion or a thigh gap more valuable than courage. Women are besieged with demands. Women are taught to disappear. And young girls never have the chance to autonomously define beauty; it is a bottle-fed poison.

There were moments while hugging my knees on the bathroom floor when I would snicker at the absurdity of my actions. Yet the desire to purge kept shooting back like a malicious boomerang, until gradually my shame escalated into anger, then determination.

One summer evening, four years later, I looked at the medicine cabinet mirror. Staring deep into my bloodshot eyes, I resolved to stop eroding myself. I resolved to teach my future daughter a different lesson – one that didn't demand an apology for taking up space. One affirming that being overweight is not the worst-case scenario, not a fault like being selfish, superficial, or hateful.

Beauty resides in self-love. My daughter will learn this. And she will be dazzling, every pound of her. ♦

# Lather, Rinse, Repeat

by Laura Dallago, Mar Lin, PA

Long. Short. Extremely short. Blue. Pink. Purple. Brown. Gorgeous. Hideous. Most people think of their lives in years; I think of mine in hairstyles. My locks have been dyed, straightened, curled, bleached, and just plain fried. There is nothing I have not tried, and lots I regret. My hairstyles have always reflected my level of maturity – and I find that as I get older, my hair gets shorter.

My early childhood was filled with hair envy. From babyhood to fourth grade, I wore a short, poker-straight bob with bangs. My mom chose it, and I loathed it. I wanted long, thick hair like Rapunzel, my favorite princess, but the only similarity between our hair was the color: white-blond. In elementary school my only goal was fitting in, but my bob refused to let me. Was hair like everyone else's too much to ask for?

Lather. Rinse. Repeat.

When I turned ten, I vowed I would never see my hairdresser again. My hair grew and grew and grew. Every inch was a celebration. Shoulders: cake. Mid-arm: fireworks. Mid-back: tears of joy.

I was dragged back to the malevolent hairdresser when my ends had cracked more than the sidewalks of Market Street. But this cut brought a milestone: my first highlights. Immediately, I was addicted to the rotten yet delightful stench of hair dye. I couldn't get enough of the



Photo by Kimberly Vance, Gilbert, AZ

magic ooze, and soon my hair had purple streaks. The purple morphed to blue, then pink, then orange – practically a crayon box assortment. My hair rebellion lasted throughout middle school, my peak of immaturity. I now see that it was more *oh-no-no* than *ooh-la-la*.

Lather. Rinse. Repeat.

I grew very fond of my hairdresser in high school. Every six weeks I paid her a visit, and each appointment brought a new look. First, my chin-length bangs got hacked down to an eyebrow-brimming fringe. The rest of my hair dwindled away with each visit. One inch, two inches, three inches, four. Eventually I was back to where I had started: a short bob with bangs. I relished the re-


found youth that came with the haircut of my early years.

Lather. Rinse. Repeat.

One fateful day during my sixteenth summer, I sliced it all off. I was lucky to have two inches of hair on any portion of my scalp. It was liberating. I'd never felt more comfortable in my own skin.

It wasn't until I lost almost all my locks that I was pleased at last. For years I'd been searching for something that would make me feel secure. I thought an elaborate cut would provide that for me, but it only made me more uncertain. No longer did I need to hide behind a brush or a comb, a can of mousse or a bottle of dye. Finally I was mature enough to grasp that only I, not a flashy haircut, could make myself feel beautiful. ♦





**Ocean Studies**  
**Acadia Institute of Oceanography**  
 Seeks future biologists, geologists & chemists. Spend 2 weeks on the coast of Maine. Hands-on advanced programs for students 15-18. All marine environments. Co-ed. Professional staff. Since 1975.  
**Contact: Sheryl Gilmore, Director**  
 Seal Harbor, ME 04675  
 1-800-375-0058  
 email: info@acadiainstitute.com  
 www.acadiainstitute.com  
 Located on beautiful Mt. Desert Island, ME

**Earn College Credit**  
 Summer Courses at  
 UC Berkeley



www.educationunlimited.com  
 (510)548-6612  
 campinfo@educationunlimited.com

create. express. explore.



**Buck's Rock**  
 Performing & Creative  
 Arts Camp

A creative haven for ages 9-17 in New Milford, CT  
 www.bucksrockcamp.com

Join our  
 growing  
 community of  
 teen writers  
 & artists

TeenInk.com  
 @teenink Teen-Ink-Magazine

**BARD COLLEGE**  
 at SIMON'S ROCK

**YOUNG WRITERS  
 WORKSHOP**  
 July 12 – August 1, 2015

Three Weeks of Writing, Thinking,  
 Imagining  
*"How can I know what I think till I see what I say?"*  
 -- E.M. Forster

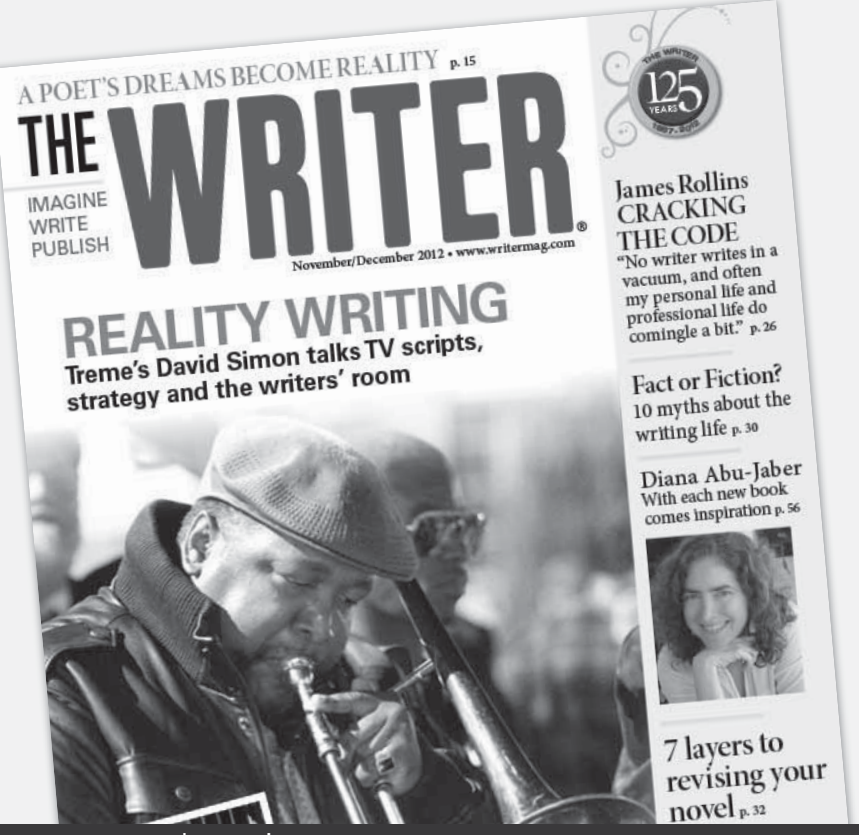
www.simons-rock.edu/young-writers

**Actors Workshop**  
 Summer Programs at  
 Brown University & Stanford



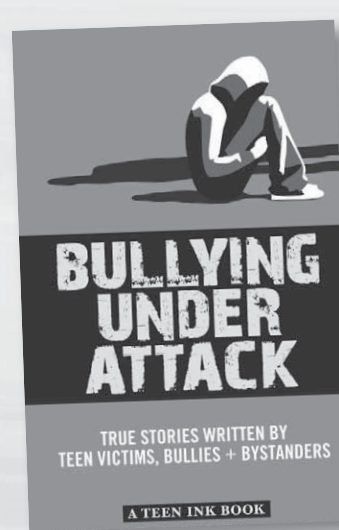
www.educationunlimited.com  
 (510)548-6612  
 campinfo@educationunlimited.com

Get it right.  
 Get *The Writer*.



www.thewritermag.com


**MEET THE BULLY, THE BULLIED,  
 AND THE BYSTANDER.**



“Wow. The only book about the problem of bullying entirely written by teenagers. I know their personal stories will move you, anger you, inspire you—even scare you.”  
 —R.L. Stine, author of the Goosebumps series

Available now at Amazon.com, BN.com & bookstores everywhere!

**WRITE A REVIEW**  
 for Teen Ink's online  
 Summer Programs Guide  
 teenink.com/summer





## THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

**UA has a rich tradition of excellence in academics, student life and sports.**

Ranked in the top 50 public universities surveyed by *U.S. News & World Report*; 9 undergraduate degree-granting schools and colleges; 20:1 student-teacher ratio; all located on a 1,000-acre historic campus.

To learn more, visit [gobama.ua.edu/teenink](http://gobama.ua.edu/teenink)

Box 870132 • Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0132 • 800-933-BAMA



**American Academy of Art**


**Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree Programs:**

- Illustration
- Graphic Design
- Multimedia/Web Design
- 3-D Modeling/Animation
- Life Drawing
- Painting
- Watercolor Painting
- Photography

332 South Michigan Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60604-4302  
312-461-0600

For more information about our graduation rates and other disclosures, please visit our website at <http://www.aaart.edu/disclosures/>

## ASHLAND UNIVERSITY



Ashland University's **creative writing majors** learn the ins and outs of the writing process from inspiration to publication with professors who have extensive publication experience.

[www.ashland.edu/english](http://www.ashland.edu/english)


## ASSUMPTION COLLEGE

Since 1904

- Academic excellence with a rich Catholic intellectual tradition
- Highly regarded faculty and small classes
- Close-knit, very active residential community (90% of students live on campus all 4 years)

500 Salisbury St., Worcester, MA 01609  
**1-866-477-7776**

[www.assumption.edu](http://www.assumption.edu)



## BECKER COLLEGE

- Private New England College founded in 1784
- Welcoming atmosphere, easy to make friends
- Thorough preparation for a career-targeted job
- We place 95% of our students in jobs upon graduation

Office of Admissions  
61 Sever Street, Worcester, MA 01609  
1-508-373-9400 • [www.becker.edu](http://www.becker.edu)

## BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE

A religiously-affiliated liberal arts college located just outside of Philadelphia offering an outstanding and truly personalized academic experience grounded in an environment of faith.



2945 College Drive  
Bryn Athyn, PA 19009  
267-502-6000  
[www.brynnathyn.edu](http://www.brynnathyn.edu)

## CATAWBA COLLEGE

Established in 1851

Salisbury, NC


**1-800-CATAWBA**

[www.catawba.edu](http://www.catawba.edu)

Scholarship. Character. Culture. Service.

## CLAREMONT MCKENNA COLLEGE

Liberal arts college with an emphasis on preparing leaders in business, government and the professions. Best of both worlds as a member of The Claremont Colleges. Suburban location near Los Angeles.



890 Columbia Ave.  
Claremont, CA 91711  
909-621-8088  
[www.mckenna.edu](http://www.mckenna.edu)

## Colby-Sawyer College

Colby-Sawyer is a comprehensive baccalaureate college that integrates the liberal arts and sciences with professional preparation. Take a virtual tour of our beautiful New England campus and learn more about our vibrant, close-knit learning community at [www.go.colby-sawyer.edu](http://www.go.colby-sawyer.edu).



**Colby-Sawyer College**  
541 Main Street  
New London, NH 03257  
(800) 272-1015


## CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Cornell, as an Ivy League school and a land-grant college, combines two great traditions. A truly American institution, Cornell was founded in 1895 and remains a place where "any person can find instruction in any study."

410 Thurston Avenue  
Ithaca, NY 14850  
607-255-5241  
[www.cornell.edu](http://www.cornell.edu)

## Dartmouth


A member of the Ivy League and widely recognized for the depth, breadth, and flexibility of its undergraduate program, Dartmouth offers students an extraordinary opportunity to collaborate with faculty in the pursuit of their intellectual aspirations.



6016 McNutt Hall  
Hanover, NH 03755  
603-646-2875  
[www.dartmouth.edu](http://www.dartmouth.edu)

Preparing students with individual learning styles for transfer to four-year colleges.

15 majors including two B.A. programs in Arts & Entertainment Management and Dance.



## DEAN COLLEGE

Prepare for what's next.


99 Main Street  
Franklin, MA 02038  
[www.dean.edu](http://www.dean.edu)  
877-TRY DEAN

## DELAWARE VALLEY COLLEGE

- 1,600 Undergraduate Students
- Nationally Ranked Athletics Teams
- More than 35 programs of study including Criminal Justice, Business Administration, Small Animal Science, Equine Studies, and Counseling Psychology.

**Delaware Valley College**  
Doylestown, PA

[WWW.DELVAL.EDU](http://WWW.DELVAL.EDU) • 800-2-DELVAL



## DESALES UNIVERSITY

Built on Catholic education values of academic excellence, DeSales University is driven by educators and advisors that inspire performance.

2755 Station Avenue  
Center Valley, PA 18034

**877.4.DESALES**  
[www.desales.edu/teenink](http://www.desales.edu/teenink)



## DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

Duquesne offers more than 80 undergraduate programs, more than 200 extracurricular activities and personal attention in an atmosphere of moral and spiritual growth. Ranked by *US News* among the most affordable private national universities.

600 Forbes Avenue • Pittsburgh, PA 15282  
(412) 396-6222 • (800) 456-0590


[www.duq.edu/admissions](http://www.duq.edu/admissions)

## FORDHAM

THE JESUIT UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Fordham offers the distinctive Jesuit philosophy of education, marked by excellent teaching, intellectual inquiry and care of the whole student, in the capital of the world.

[www.fordham.edu/tink](http://www.fordham.edu/tink)



## global college


LONG ISLAND UNIVERSITY  
experience the world

Earn a BA in **Global Studies** while studying at our centers in Costa Rica, India, China, NYC or with our programs in Australia, Taiwan, Turkey and Thailand!

9 Hanover Place, Brooklyn, NY 11201  
[www.liu.edu/globalcollege](http://www.liu.edu/globalcollege)  
718.780.4312 • [globalcollege@liu.edu](mailto:globalcollege@liu.edu)

Fostering creativity and academic excellence since 1854. Thrive in our environment of personalized attention *and* in the energy of the Twin Cities.

1536 Hewitt Avenue  
Saint Paul, MN 55104  
800-753-9753  
[www.hamline.edu](http://www.hamline.edu)



## HAMLIN UNIVERSITY

## HARVARD

Harvard offers 6,500 undergraduates an education from distinguished faculty in more than 40 fields in the liberal arts as well as engineering and applied science.



8 Garden Street  
Cambridge, MA 02138  
617-495-1551  
[www.harvard.edu](http://www.harvard.edu)



## Hawaii Pacific University

A challenging private university for adventurous students seeking an education with global possibilities.



Get Where You Want To Go

[www.hpu.edu/teenink](http://www.hpu.edu/teenink)

## ITHACA

Located in New York's stunning Finger Lakes region, Ithaca College provides a first-rate education on a first-name basis. Its Schools of Business, Communications, Health Sciences and Human Performance, Humanities and Sciences, and Music and its interdisciplinary division offer over 100 majors.

[my.ithaca.edu](http://my.ithaca.edu)  
100 Job Hall, 953 Danby Road  
Ithaca, NY 14850  
800-429-4272 • [www.ithaca.edu/admission](http://www.ithaca.edu/admission)

An experience of a lifetime, with experience for a lifetime.



## JOHNSON & WALES UNIVERSITY

BUSINESS  
CULINARY ARTS  
HOSPITALITY  
TECHNOLOGY

Providence, Rhode Island  
**1-800-342-5598**  
[www.jwu.edu](http://www.jwu.edu)

## MACALESTER

Academic excellence and global perspective in one of America's most "livable" metropolitan areas.



1000 Grand Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55105  
800-231-7974  
[www.macalester.edu](http://www.macalester.edu)

## WHERE TO?

Academic Quality  
Affordable Excellence  
Award Winning Campus

## Marywood University

[www.marywood.edu](http://www.marywood.edu)

## MOUNT HOLYOKE

Mount Holyoke is a highly selective liberal arts college for women, recognized worldwide for its rigorous academic program, its global community, and its legacy of women leaders.

**MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE**  
50 College Street, South Hadley, MA 01075  
[www.mtholyoke.edu](http://www.mtholyoke.edu)



## NORTHERN

OHIO NORTHERN UNIVERSITY

Ohio Northern is a comprehensive university of liberal arts and professional programs offering more than 3,600 students over 70 majors in the colleges of Arts & Sciences, Business Administration, Engineering, Pharmacy and Law.

Office of Admissions  
Ada, OH 45810  
1-888-408-4668  
[www.onu.edu/teen](http://www.onu.edu/teen)



Join our Student Advisory Board

AT **Teen Ink**.com

**OHIO WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY**

- Nationally ranked liberal arts college
- Self-designed and interdepartmental majors
- Small classes taught by distinguished faculty
- 100+ campus organizations
- 23 NCAA Division III sports
- A tradition of service-learning

61 S. Sandusky St. • Delaware, OH 43015  
800-922-8953 • www.owu.edu

**PACE UNIVERSITY**  
Work toward greatness.

- U.S. News Short list ranked Pace among the top 5 schools in the nation for placing undergraduates in internships in 2012.
- PayScale ranks Pace in the top 12% of U.S. schools that give the best return on your college investment.
- More than 100 majors and accelerated combined degrees programs
- Robust scholarships and financial aid
- Two strategic New York locations

Visit us today and find out more about the real value of a Pace education.  
www.pace.edu/teen • 1-800-874-7223

**degrees that work.®**  
BACHELOR | ASSOCIATE | CERTIFICATE

Choose from more than 100 career fields.  
www.pct.edu/ink

**Pennsylvania College of Technology**  
PENN STATE

**Pratt**

Talent teaches talent in Pratt's writing BFA for aspiring young writers. Weekly discussions by guest writers and editors. Nationally recognized college for the arts. Beautiful residential campus minutes from Manhattan.

200 Willoughby Avenue  
Brooklyn, NY 11205  
800-331-0834 • 718-636-3514  
email: jaaron@pratt.edu  
www.pratt.edu

**Princeton University**

Princeton simultaneously strives to be one of the leading research universities and the most outstanding undergraduate college in the world. We provide students with academic, extracurricular and other resources, in a residential community committed to diversity.

Princeton, NJ 08544  
(609) 258-3060  
www.princeton.edu

**QUINNIPIAC UNIVERSITY**

A picturesque New England campus, offering programs in Business, Communications, Health Sciences, Arts and Sciences, Engineering, Nursing, Education, Law and Medicine. Located midway between New York City and Boston with Division I athletics. Consistently rated among the top Regional Colleges in the North in *U.S. News & World Report*.

275 Mt. Carmel Avenue  
Hamden, CT 06518  
1.800.462.1944  
www.quinnipiac.edu

**ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY**

- Personal attention to help you excel
- Powerful programs to challenge you to think in new ways
- No limits to where St. Mary's can take you

One Camino Santa Maria  
San Antonio, TX 78228-8503  
800-367-7868  
www.stmarytx.edu

**Slippery Rock University**

SRU provides a Rock Solid education. Located just 50 miles north of Pittsburgh, the University is ranked number five in America as a Consumer's Digest "best value" selection for academic quality at an affordable price.

1 Morrow Way, Slippery Rock, PA 16057  
800.SRU.9111 • www.sru.edu

**STANFORD UNIVERSITY**

A distinguished faculty, an innovative curriculum and outstanding undergraduates offer unparalleled opportunities for intellectual growth on a beautiful California campus.

Mongtag Hall - 355 Galves St.  
Stanford, CA 94305  
650-723-2091  
www.stanford.edu

**SWARTHMORE**

A liberal arts college of 1,500 students near Philadelphia, Swarthmore is recognized internationally for its climate of academic excitement and commitment to bettering the world. A college unlike any other.

500 College Ave.  
Swarthmore, PA 19081  
800-667-3110  
www.swarthmore.edu

**University of Pittsburgh Bradford**

Earn a world-renowned degree in a personalized environment. Work with professors who will know your name and your goals. Choose from 40 majors and many research, internship and study-abroad opportunities.

**go beyond**  
www.upb.pitt.edu • 1.800.872.1787  
Bradford, PA 16701

**THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND**

Attention all writers! URI has a great major called "Writing and Rhetoric." Prepare yourself for a career as a journalist, a novelist, an advertising copywriter, a public relations professional, or an English teacher! Located minutes from RI's gorgeous beaches.

Newman Hall, Kingston, RI 02881  
401-874-7100  
uri.edu/artsci/writing/

**Ursuline**  
VALUES • VOICE • VISION

Private, Catholic, liberal arts college founded in 1871 by the Ursuline Sisters. Offers over 30 undergraduate majors and 9 graduate programs. The only women-focused college in Ohio and one of few in the United States. Ursuline teaches the empowerment of self.

2550 Lander Rd. Pepper Pike, OH 44124  
1-888-URSULINE • www.ursuline.edu

**WILKES UNIVERSITY**

Located in beautiful northeastern Pennsylvania, Wilkes is an independent institution dedicated to academic excellence, mentoring and hands-on learning. Wilkes offers more than 36 programs in pharmacy, the sciences, liberal arts and business.

Check out [www.becolonel.com](http://www.becolonel.com).  
www.wilkes.edu  
84 West South Street  
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18766 | 1-800-WILKES-U

**YALE**

Yale College, the undergraduate body of Yale University, is a highly selective liberal arts college enrolling 5,200 students in over 70 major programs. Residential life is organized around Residential Colleges where students live and eat.

P.O. Box 208234  
New Haven, CT 06520  
203-432-9300  
www.yale.edu

**Become a better writer.**

**Sign up for Teen Ink's Online Creative Writing Classes.**

▶▶ Go to [TeenInk.WritingClasses.com](http://TeenInk.WritingClasses.com) or call 1-800-363-1986.

Students will receive a free one-year subscription to Teen Ink magazine.

\*Only teenagers aged 13-19 are eligible.

**Classes start February 3 & 17, 2015**



# Holocaust Survivor Jadia Szyjewicz

Interviewed by Glenn Markman, Needham, MA

Whenever I try talking to my grandma about her past, it is very hard for her. She gets very emotional because talking about it brings back horrifying memories. It is also hard for me to hear, but I am glad that I heard it from her first hand. I am writing this on her ninetieth birthday, a special day for her not just because it's her birthday, but because of how she got to this happy life she lives today.

On May 27, 1923, Jadia Szyjewicz was born to Abraham and Sarah Szyjewicz in Sosnowiec, Poland. She was the youngest of five children – two girls and three boys. They were a Jewish family, like many in Poland. As a child, my



Photo by Helena Mattioli, Little Falls, NJ

grandma liked to do lots of things all kids enjoy.

In 1943, when my grandma was nineteen, she was taken from her job at a factory in a Jewish ghetto, an area of the city that segregated Jews and that the Nazis controlled. She was sent to a concentration camp called Gleiwitz; she never saw her former home or her parents again. First she was kept at Gleiwitz, a subcamp of Auschwitz, then she was taken to Ravensbruck.

In these concentration camps my grandma had to fight for her life. They were prisons with barbed wire where anyone trying to escape would be killed on the spot. They had ovens that were not for cooking but to burn bodies. Worst of all, these camps had gas chambers for killing Jews.

Many died of starvation. My grandma was made to stand for many hours doing hard labor. Because she was young and able to work, the Nazis did not kill her. Despite the horrors she experienced, she was extremely lucky to survive; six million Jews and another five million non-Jews were murdered by the Nazis.

Just before the war ended in 1945, the Nazis abandoned Ravensbruck and my grandma escaped. She then learned that her parents and two of her brothers had died in concentration camps. Her only surviving sibling was a sister with whom she was reunited before the war ended.

She made her way to a displaced persons camp in Heidenheim, Germany, run by the French. A

U.S. army captain in charge of one of the American camps sent a concentration camp survivor to invite my grandma's camp to join them. That survivor was my grandpa. He met my grandma on the bus that brought her to the American camp. They were married on November 27, 1945.

On May 3, 1946, my grandparents and my grandma's sister left Germany for the U.S. They arrived in New York on a ship named the S.S. *Perch*, which was the second to leave Europe with concentration camp survivors. They were met at Ellis Island by my grandfather's cousins, who took them to their home in New Rochelle, New York, where they lived for a year. My grandparents then moved with my grandma's sister to an apartment in the Bronx. During the day my grandma worked in a dress factory in Manhattan. At night she went to school to learn English.

After living in the Bronx, Grandma and Grandpa moved to Queens, and then to Brookline, Massachusetts, in 1991. In 1994, my grandpa died of cancer. My grandparents had been married for 48 years.

My grandma's experiences in the Holocaust ultimately shaped who I am today. Her decisions in life made my existence possible. Now that my grandma is 90, I feel that I am responsible for teaching others the horrors of what she experienced so that it will never be forgotten and no such thing shall ever exist on the earth again. ♦

*Despite the horrors she experienced, she was lucky*

# Tibetan Activist Dorjee Tseten

Interviewed by Sophia Slater, Tokyo, Japan

While working in Dharamsala, India, I spoke with leading members of the Tibetan exile community about the freedom movement and the future of Tibet. Dorjee Tseten is a leader in the Tibetan youth movement.

In 2012, a parody of the Korean "Gangnam Style" video was released with a slightly different theme: the struggle between China and Tibet. Made by International Tibet Network and Students for a Free Tibet (SFT), a Dharamsala non-governmental organization, the hilarious video shows a life-size bobblehead representing Chinese leader Xi Jinping dancing. What many don't know is that the guy in the Ray-Bans jumping into the frame with Xi Jinping is Dorjee Tseten, the 30-year-old national director of SFT. At first the bobblehead is happy that Tseten is dancing the same dance, but when Tseten pulls out the Tibetan flag, he's dragged off by "Chinese guards." He says his intention was "to make fun of the dictator and take away the fear from people's minds, undercutting the regime." Though soft-spoken and unassuming, Tseten is a driving force behind the increased youth involvement in this movement.

## Tell me a little about yourself.

I am a Tibetan refugee born and raised in India. I attended the Central School for Tibetans in Paonta and Mussoorie, and did postgraduate economic and human rights studies at an Indian university.

## How did you get started with SFT?

Having family who escaped Tibet in 1959 when the Chinese military invaded, I heard my parents' stories about how our people have suffered. In college, I was president of the Tibetan Youth Congress chapter, and SFT was a key organization leading the freedom movement. So after college, I joined SFT as a campaign director and later became the national director.

## What is SFT's biggest challenge?

Since its inception in 1994, SFT has created a global network in almost 30 countries. But it is always a challenge to engage non-Tibetans in the movement. At this time when China is perceived as so strong, it is difficult to gain sympathy and support. That's what we're working on.

## What do students bring to the struggle?

*"The way that students engage in activism is so powerful"*

The way that students engage in activism and show such interest from a young age, from high school or college, is so powerful. If we have a chapter in a school or university, they can reach out to hundreds of thousands of students in other schools easily. Students are more eager to learn, to work, and to experience new things. They are really fresh and excited to take part in

the social movement. SFT is one of the most active grassroots networks, and we believe that this approach is important because when students become adults, they will continue with the movement.

## What are SFT's ultimate goals?

SFT's ultimate goal is justice and freedom for Tibet, as well as a safe environment for its people. To achieve that, we follow a policy of non-violent resistance. We want to develop this movement into a strong grassroots movement inside and outside Tibet. That's our 10- to 15-year goal to gain the final goal of independence.

## What are SFT's tactics?

Overall, our strategy is to make China's occupation of Tibet costly enough that one day it will leave. You need a cultural campaign and an economic

campaign, as well as an environmental campaign. These are our different strategies.

We highlight the bad things happening inside Tibet, the human rights violations, the killing. It could be a blockade, it could be a protest, it could be banner-hanging. We are trying to shift the movements from the riskier direct confrontations to a path that involves the larger community. The Internet is very useful because we can engage a lot of people. This is why China is scared of the Internet: it is one of the mediums that it cannot completely control or stop.

## What do you see as SFT's role in the coming years?

SFT has the responsibility of crafting new leaders that are highly skilled and serve as our weapons. When we talk about nonviolence, the weapons are the individuals who will lead through their knowledge and understanding of nonviolence. They have to know the strategies, how the world works, and how to involve Tibetans and others. We now have chapters in some of the most important countries to China: India, the U.S., Japan, and Taiwan; and we need to engage this global community in our movement. This is our strength, it is how we can challenge China, and it is our young network's responsibility. ♦

Drama • Global Leadership Academy

Suiyen Smith by Amy De Raedt, Jeffreys Bay, South Africa

She's not the typical teacher. She combines all her knowledge and years of experience in a wonderfully exciting and entertaining way. Her never-ending insight – and outfits that her students adore – make her special. I wholeheartedly believe she deserves to be an Educator of the Year.

Miss Suiyen Smith became my homeroom teacher in my first year of high school and has remained with me through my third year. She teaches English brilliantly, but Miss Suiyen has always been known as the drama teacher. As tenth-grade drama class began, so did my insight into just how busy, bizarre, and beautiful her life is – and how mine was about to become so.

Educator is a title that minimizes what Miss Suiyen does. Providing her students with an education is a mere speck among the seemingly endless tasks and duties scheduled in her diary. She teaches us the syllabus effortlessly, but for a drama teacher, there's another aspect to class that requires time, patience, and more time: practical work. For exam preparations, Miss Suiyen gives us the opportunity to meet with her so she can help us work through our performance pieces. This often amounts to four sessions – about four hours – for every student in every drama class in the school.

*Her life is busy, bizarre, and beautiful*

These rehearsals can extend into the evenings and weekends with no benefit to her and all the benefit for the students.

What sets Miss Suiyen apart from other educators is more than the “death looks” she shoots across the class or the temporary fear we possess before asking her something. She can just as easily be seen as a mentor, a role model, an actual human being with puffy eyes after no sleep who asks for our opinion when debating whether or not to buy shoes on sale.

On camping trips, for instance, in those moments of free time when my friends and I gather in our tent pigging out on our stash of snacks, Miss Suiyen comes in, plunks down on a sleeping bag, and begins a conversation like an old friend.

She also accompanied us on the most amazing trip to the beautiful city of Cape Town. The week of adventures we had were undeniably the handiwork of this creative teacher: an amazing race throughout the city, finding a local market dubbed a jewel that few people get to experience, and the most colorful and cozy accommodations.

As head of the drama department, Miss Suiyen organizes auditions and acting competitions, and she works on characterization, costumes, transport, accommodations, and encouragement for each student.

Beyond that, she creates a musical. As a participant, I was given a glimpse into her sleepless nights and stress-filled days. If a musical doesn't take place, a talent showcase does. This may require less direction on Miss Suiyen's part, but she still must deal with shy, forgetful, sometimes rude and downright immature students – which is an enormous challenge as well. She also manages the budget and advertising and converts the back of a classroom into a theater for a night, complete with lighting and a backdrop.

For our annual drama camp she managed to pull some strings so we could receive lectures and workshops from the best drama department in South Africa. We got to experience a university in all its glory and take exciting tours. We attended lectures by industry professionals and workshopped with a professional theater company. It took an enormous effort to make this possible.

Above all that, Miss Suiyen inspires aspiring students with her acting, dancing, and singing. She won second place at the World Championships of Performing Arts and received a scholarship to study in New York. She shares knowledge that can only come from experience and success.

She has a passion for teaching and unfading faith and heart. She is a hardworking, inspiring role model who I am proud to call my teacher. ♦

Swim Coach • Lake Country Swim Team, Hartland, WI

Mark Kohnhorst by Amanda Schaefer, Hartland, WI

Since age eight, when I began swimming, I have had the dream of winning a scholarship for the sport. Thanks to one man – my club swimming coach, Mark Kohnhorst – my dream has come true.

If you watch my club during practice, you'll see Mark in a Lake Country Swim shirt and khaki pants, with a beard that wraps around his mouth. He will be doing one of the following: leaning against the backstroke flags, sitting in the lifeguard chair, or yelling to keep us motivated. He is always watching the swimmers for one reason only: he cares.

Every season begins the same way. I have a meeting with Mark and talk about my goals; he then helps me plan out how I will accomplish them. It sounds something like this:

“Okay, Schaefer, what are your goals for the season?”

I tell him a swim time I think I can accomplish.

“No, you can go faster.”

Then he gives me a time that sounds almost impossible. There is usually some complaining. I tell him that the time is too fast and that I can't do it.

Mark takes off his glasses, rubs his eyes, and says, “Schaefer, you can do it. I promise you, I will do everything in my power to help you reach this goal. I believe in you and know by the end of the season you will be at this time.”

When Mark promises he will do everything in his power to help you reach your goal, he means it. Whether you like it or not, he will push you to your limit. He will make you do those extra push-ups, that extra 50 yards, or one more start to make

sure you reach your full potential. He is the voice in your head telling you to keep going when your body is telling you to stop.

Not only does he push you to your limits, he helps you become a better person. If you have a problem with anything in your life, he somehow knows and will help you fix it. He helps with homework and plays therapist when you've had a bad day and need to vent. His office door is always open.

The best thing Mark has ever done for me, though, was fix my mental attitude. I always thought I was just average, never good enough to really get anywhere in my swimming career. Before my races, I would freak myself out thinking about the what ifs. *What if I'm not fast enough? What if I can't hold my pace? What if I lose?* Focusing on these fears would cause them to come true. When Mark found out about the doubts floating around in my head, things began to change. He would

calm me down every time. He'd make me laugh with jokes so terrible I thought they were hilarious. He would tell me that I just need to race – that my body knows what to do and I need to trust it.

Mark has never missed watching one of my heats. He's taught me to become a better person in and out of the pool, and he has helped me overcome my hardest challenges. Not only did he help me get a Division 1 scholarship to Western Illinois University, he gave me the skills to be a top distance swimmer on a college team. I have overcome all my obstacles and achieved what most people only dream about thanks to Mark Kohnhorst. ♦

*He is the voice in your head telling you to keep going*

The 24th Annual

Teen Ink  
Educator  
of the Year  
Contest

Do you have an outstanding teacher, coach, guidance counselor, librarian, or principal?

- 1) Tell us why your nominee is special. What has your educator done for your class, you, another student, or the community? Be specific.
- 2) Essays should be about 250 words.
- 3) Only middle school/junior high and high school educators are eligible.
- 4) Include your nominee's first and last name, position or subject taught, and the school where he/she teaches.
- 5) Submit it online at [www.TeenInk.com/Submit](http://www.TeenInk.com/Submit)

Winners will be announced in the Summer 2015 issue.

Deadline: May 1, 2015



# I Have You

by Kathryn Malnight, Wayland, MA

“Hey, Josh, it’s okay. We’ll see each other next summer.” I pushed my friend’s wheelchair toward his van, trying to act like I wasn’t upset. He turned and stared at me, clutching Moosie, his stuffed moose. The tears I had begged him to hold came pouring down his cheeks.

“I have you,” he whispered. His voice cracked. “You’re mine?”

I smiled at him, tears flooding my eyes too. “I’m yours,” I said, “forever.”

We had reached the van, and his attendant was waiting. “You’re my friend,” Josh said. “You’ve been good to me. You help me out. I love you.”

I nodded. “I love you too. I love you too, dude.” His attendant took his wheelchair from me, and Josh began to break down completely. His body shook with sobs as he reached out for a final hug. I held him, his tears wetting my sweatshirt.

And then I left. There was nothing more I could do to delay the inevitable: saying good-bye.

I’ve had to say a number of hard good-byes in my lifetime: to my childhood best friend, to my grandpa, to a favorite teacher. But none of these hurt as much as leaving Josh.

Last summer I decided to volunteer at a day camp for kids and adults with special needs. I was paired with Josh, who was 33. He used a wheelchair, and although he could speak, understanding him took getting used to.

On my first day, Josh and I had a great time doing camp activities together – yoga, arts and crafts, and

“activities of daily living.” I quickly learned that Josh loved to arm wrestle, and he was good at it. No matter how hard I tried, he would always beat me. Whenever he won, he would smile and say, “I beat you up, *forever!*” Try as I might to change his winning streak, I couldn’t.

The moment I realized that I honestly cared about Josh was the end of our second day. A staff member had told me that Josh’s van had to pick him up early, and Josh was really upset about it. Earlier, he’d told me how much he dreaded returning to his group home. It was boring there, he’d said.

He had proclaimed that camp was his favorite part of the year, instantly making me regret all the times I had complained about how dull my life was. Josh began to cry when I told him the new schedule, but I was able to cheer him up with a bit of arm wrestling and the promise that I would see him the next day.

During camp, Josh and I had a routine. He would hold my hand up to his chest and say, “I have you! You’re mine!” I would try to escape from his iron grip, but – of course – fail, and I’d then reply, “You have me! I’m yours, Josh!” Often this would be followed by an affirmation that we were “friends forever,” complete with a pinkie swear.

Josh didn’t swim with the rest of the campers, so we would often sit together on the beach. That time we spent just talking: about our families, school, and our likes and dislikes. We got to know a lot about each other, just like any pair of friends would.

Which is what we were. Our age difference didn’t impact that. It was just a number, and it meant noth-

*Of course,  
the last day  
of camp had  
to come*

ing. I woke up every day excited for camp. Hanging out with Josh had quickly become the highlight of my summer; I was having a blast.

Of course, the last day of camp had to come. That morning, I told Josh that we weren’t going to worry about what day it was until the very end. I did my best to keep both our spirits high. We sang loudly, went fishing, and arm wrestled with the exact same outcome as always. At our last “swim chat,” we had a mock photoshoot with my camera and took several photos together. At one point I was videotaping us, and Josh interrupted our conversation to do our “you’re mine” routine. It ended up being perfectly captured on film, and it means so much to me.

Then it was time to go. We pinkie-swore to be friends forever, hugged, and arm wrestled over and over again waiting for his van. As it pulled up, I realized what a fantastic friend I’d made and how badly I wanted camp to go on for another few hours.

The worst part of leaving Josh was that there were other cars behind his van, so I was forced to leave to let traffic pass. As I walked away I could hear him being buckled in, and I didn’t dare look back. It would have hurt too much.

There is always next summer. And who knows, I could see Josh before then. But it doesn’t matter. What matters is having to leave someone you care about, knowing that the highlight of their year is six weeks at summer camp – knowing that you get to go places whenever you want, when your friend doesn’t have that option. I don’t understand how anyone could justify the unfairness of that. I certainly can’t. All I can say is that I can’t wait for next summer. Maybe I’ll beat him up then. ♦

# The Children’s Center

by Meital Samin, Netanya, Israel

“Umm ... Rafael bites the tip of his pencil as he stares at the math problem in front of him:  $11 \times 7$ . In my head I’m screaming 77, but don’t say a word. I simply glance at him, smile, and ask, “You want some help?”

He looks up and nods. I pull up my chair to sit beside him. “Okay. So what’s the problem?”

“I don’t know how to solve this.”

“Well, how did the teacher explain these sorts of exercises?”

Rafael begins drawing circles lined up in rows of five, and just as my first-grade math teacher showed me, I help him count the rows. Then I show him a slightly different way and watch him start to get the hang of it.

“You understand now?”

“Mm-hm.” He writes a big, crooked 77 next to the math problem.

“Great. Now how about this one?” I point to a problem that reads  $22 \times 3$ .

Rafael pushes his glasses up his nose and blurts out, “100?”

“Nooo,” I slowly reply. A smile spreads across my face. “Don’t guess. Try to understand.”

Welcome to my Tuesday afternoon: ninety minutes of helping elementary school children who live in an low-income

neighborhood near my high school. I help them with their homework, I watch over them when the woman in charge has to leave for a while, I make sure they eat (and sometimes eat with them), and I play with them.

The first time I visited the children’s center, I was eight. My mother, who taught the kids English, had decided to bring them some of our old books and asked if I wanted to come help. I was a bit confused. What could I do? I was only eight. But, as I learned, you can always help somehow. That particular day I helped a seven-year-old read one of the books we had brought. Ever since, we’ve been good friends.

Now, nine years later, I volunteer as much as I can. There have been a few years that I haven’t visited the children’s center, but the times I’m there I wouldn’t trade for anything. This school year, I plan on volunteering at least once a week.

Kids can drive you crazy and melt your heart at almost the same time. Some fall in love with you instantly, while others have a hard time opening up and letting you into their world – but once they do, you

never want to leave. Their insight on life is incredible, and they need to be heard. A lot of adults think that since these kids are so young, their opinions don’t matter. I couldn’t disagree more. These are the years they need to develop their character and personality. If they are being ignored at home, they aren’t able to do well in school, and that can result in bad life decisions like dropping out and giving up on themselves. Seeing those kinds of situations at my own high school reminds me how important it is to teach kids that they are loved and important while they’re still young.

Even though it might seem insignificant to help kids read stories about farm animals, or show them how to multiply numbers when they could easily use a calculator, those are the things that build them into successful adults. The families of these kids are usually immigrants who aren’t able to help their kids with schoolwork or even give them a warm meal every day. That is why they are there. The center is where someone makes sure they do their homework; it’s where they can draw pictures about their day, play soccer outside, and eat chicken and corn at 1 p.m. The

*Kids’ insight  
on life is  
incredible*

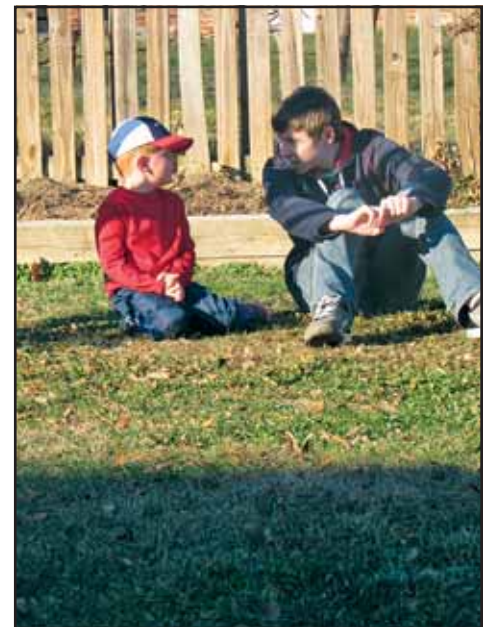


Photo by Megan Brawner, Ledyard, CT

center is where they grow and learn, where they feel taken care of and important. I can’t stress enough how lucky I feel to be a part of that.

Knowing you are helping kids do better in school is satisfying enough, but you would not believe the feeling you get when you open the door of the children’s center, walk inside, and have a little boy with glasses look up from his plate to shout, “Hey! You’re back!” ♦

## It's Possible

by "Talia," Vallejo, CA

There is caffeine in my system. This means that my fingers are not only twitching with their usual anticipation as they hover over the keyboard, but trembling with uncontrollable enthusiasm. The blood is coursing, and I can feel my heart pounding against my chest, begging to be splattered across the pretty white paper that is its true home.

I am constantly assessing and challenging my beliefs. *Do you really believe in the Christian God? Do you actually enjoy listening to Pink Floyd? Do you treat your twin sister with the same respect she treats you with?*

These questions all have something in common: I eventually figure out their answers. (I do; "Comfortably Numb" is one of my favorite songs; probably not.) But in the summer before my junior year, a question arose that I could not discover the answer to through my traditional process of cogitative writing. After desperately attempting to piece the answer together for six months, and experiencing what I can only describe as disheartening writer's block, I became so infuriated by my own flustered thoughts that I decided it was time to gain an objective point of view. So I informed my therapist of two months of my seemingly impossible question:

"Is it possible that I could be gay?"

I didn't even know what "gay" was until I was 12. It's not that I grew up in a sheltered environment or had strict religious parents; the subject just never came up. It wasn't until five years ago that I learned something existed in addition to the sexuality I perceived as mine and everyone else's.

*I didn't know  
what "gay" was  
until I was 12*

Over the next 14 months, my interpretation of what it meant to "be gay" fluctuated from *Okay, this isn't so bad* to *Why does it have to be me who's different from all my friends?* to *I hate this uncontrollable part of myself; I don't want to live if this is what I am*. I spent five months of my junior year contemplating suicide and eventually acting upon these irrational thoughts.

But I survived. I survived, and I finally realized there had to be a reason why. I concluded that I had to come to terms with my identity or else my life would forever be dissatisfying.

I searched for local LGBT youth groups online and eventually found a home at the Rainbow Community Center. Every Thursday and Friday after school, I met with people who were just like me: different, but not truly different at all. Slowly but surely, my perspective changed.

I no longer cringe at the mental image of myself holding another woman's hand in public. I no longer strive to be just like everyone else. I no longer think death is a solution.

Through this excruciating but rewarding revelation, I am now positive that I have the courage to tackle any obstacle with strength and persistence. I hold the ability to not change my morals or my personality but to alter my outlook and attitude.

And now, as my fingers settle down and the trembling ceases, I feel a controlled enthusiasm. The blood is still coursing, but not with the same restlessness. The beating in my chest is slower and calmer. I ask myself, "Is it possible that you could be okay with being gay?"

And, finally, the answer is yes. ♦

## Melting Pot

America is not a melting pot  
Individual colors shine through  
Black and white  
brown and yellow  
racism and discrimination  
condensed to terms a four-year-old could understand  
if we were melted together  
we wouldn't even have labels

we're more of a salad  
parts of different wholes  
divided and torn from each other  
side by side  
vaguely aware of others  
slathered over with a dressing  
of artificial Americanism  
to make us seem like a more perfect union

Can we make the deep hues of bellow?  
Or the beauty of blite?

These are colors you've never heard of  
because you're too used to the words  
that your parents taught you to refer to people –  
but not even that  
in reality you speak of the melanin contents of  
their skin  
like it's the contents of their hearts  
and you affirm your personal prejudices  
based on if I'm  
black or white  
brown or yellow  
or any other color in the rainbow of the population  
like the rainbow salad you ordered from  
American restaurant down the street

by Sam Pal, San Luis Obispo, CA

## Jatheism

by "Gretchen," Dallas, TX

Standing on the bimah, the altar in front of the sanctuary, looking at the massive crowd, I felt so alone. In the minutes before my bat mitzvah began, I knew I was supposed to bask in the moment and relish the end of my Jewish childhood. Instead I wondered, *Why am I here? What do I believe?* These questions hit me just as I began to roll the first "Baruch" off my tongue; I pushed them aside and pulled myself back into the moment. I couldn't let down all of these people who loved and cared about me.

But the questions wouldn't go away, and not long afterward, I became a Jatheist (Jewish atheist), a term I created that accurately describes me.

I had come to the realization that, during the past eight years of Hebrew school, my focus had mainly been on the big day of my bat mitzvah: pronouncing the words of the blessings correctly so that I didn't embarrass myself or my family, and planning a

grand celebration that my friends and relatives would talk about. I knew I loved my temple and all of the people in it, and I relished the idea of leading the congregation in prayer, but the truth was, I hadn't given much thought to what the words meant. It was easier just to accept that this mystical entity called G-d\* existed.

*I loved my  
temple and  
its traditions*

Now that I was being honest with myself, life got hard. I knew I no longer believed in G-d, but I also knew I loved my temple and its traditions. So I started to look more deeply into what I fundamentally believed.

Two words stood out: *tzedakah* (charitable giving) and *mitzvot* (good deeds). Both involve giving back to the community, and both were things I still felt were essential. I continued going to temple and helping out at my local shelter, but now I went not because an adult told me to, but because I wanted to make a difference.

I also had long talks with my rabbi,

who reassured me that Judaism is a religion with tremendous tolerance for a wide range of perspectives. He promised me that even with my Jatheism, I would still be welcome in the Jewish community. If my temple could accept me in spite of my lack of belief in G-d, I knew I could continue to feel at home there.

Though there may not be many practicing Jatheists, I do not feel alone on my journey. Yes, I was 13 when I made this decision, but it did not end there. The morals I was raised with – to be kind and refrain from judging others – did not lose their value when separated from a belief in a supreme being. While Jatheism doesn't define me, it is a guiding principle of my life.

I won't ever again accept something that my faith, government, or community calls the "truth" without a hard and honest appraisal. I feel so fortunate to come from a family and faith that not only supports

but invites tough questions. No longer am I that confused girl on the bimah. Instead, I am able to find great wisdom in the Torah without feeling duplicitous, a truth to which I feel certain my rabbi would offer a warmly familiar "And let us say, Amen." ♦

\* Some followers of Judaism believe that written forms of the name of the creator cannot be discarded, so "G-d" is used instead.

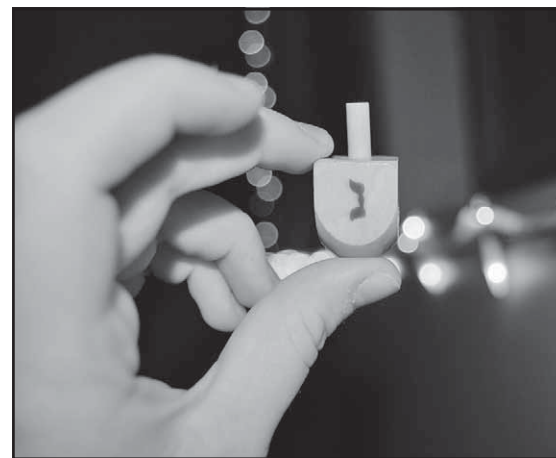


Photo by Julia Lauer, Lafayette, CA



Sponsored by

CVS/pharmacy

# Disaster on Ice

by Michael Sjostrom, Lake St. Louis, MO

It happened so fast. I got up off the ice and knew I had been hit hard, but I didn't think I was hurt. I didn't get knocked out, and I didn't really feel much or know much about what happened. *Oh well*, I thought, *just another hard hit ... let's play!* When I think back, I realize I was stunned senseless. I didn't know what the score was or what period it was, but I knew I was at the ice rink and they were setting up for a face-off, so I went on playing like I always do. No one even questioned it.

After the game, when I walked out of the locker room, my mom was waiting. She came running over to me and wanted to know what was wrong with me. I said, "What do you mean? I'm fine," but I could see she was freaking out. She got right in my face and made me look into her eyes. Then she said, "We are going to the hospital ... now!"

I didn't think that anything was wrong except for the fact that I had a killer headache and felt tired. I didn't realize that I had been playing differently, but my mom noticed. I had fallen a few times, but I didn't think anything of it. I realize now that I was responding slower, was easier to knock down, and

was tiring more quickly – and my mom saw it. I went to the doctor because she made me; I thought she was being ridiculous.

I was wrong. What had happened to me would affect me for a long time. Even as my doctor told me that I had a concussion, I had no understanding of what that meant or what my next year would be like because of it.

By Monday, I was back in school, but still had the worst headache. Any noise made me crazy, and it hurt to hear voices. I was feeling irritated, overwhelmed, and tired. I tried to pay attention but couldn't because of the headache. When I had to take a quiz, I couldn't even focus on the paper – it was so white that it hurt my eyes. I texted my mom to tell her how I was feeling, and it made my face throb just to look at the screen. *Wow, this is not good*, I thought. I left school early and went straight back to the doctor, this time willingly.

While we were waiting, my mom told me to look in the mirror. I had what looked like two deep black eyes. The doctor confirmed that my head injury was serious, and that it would probably take months to recover. He told me that I was to go home, close the curtains, and *sleep*. No TV, no phone, no lights, no reading, no schoolwork – just rest until the headaches and pressure got better.

I had no idea recovery would take so long. It was five weeks before I could return to school, and with my first day back came the realization that I was still not well. My head hurt, and schoolwork made it worse. Loud noises hurt. The overhead projector in class was unbear-

able; I had to leave the room. I couldn't concentrate or get my work done; it was too hard and it hurt too much. I was tired and overwhelmed just being awake, never mind being at school. But somehow I thought I had to get through it without help.

The days turned into weeks, weeks into months. The struggle continued. I was always tired. I had no energy to do anything and no focus for my schoolwork. Noise made it worse, so I stopped going to loud places. I spent a lot less time with my friends and began to prefer my couch, my dog, and the quiet of home. My parents were unhappy with my schoolwork, but I still avoided it and avoided any communication or conflict about it. I felt done with everything and hopeless. I had a short fuse and was quick to go off on anyone and everyone. I didn't care anymore; I just wanted to be left alone.

## The doctor confirmed that my head injury was serious

This is where I remain today: the "just don't bother me" phase. But moms are moms, and mine has been constantly bothering me, trying to help with my work and explain to me what is going on with me – "from the perspective of all the rest of us," she says. It has been 18 months since my injury on the ice, and I have no idea where the time went, why I am about to graduate, or what to do next. She says that not making a choice is unacceptable, that I have to do something. But I can't. I can't seem to figure it out in my head. It's like everything is jumbled, and it hurts to think, so I just avoid it.

So what happens now? I don't know. After my mom's constant feedback and a little research of my own, I now know that I am still hurt, and I also know that I am not myself right now. I feel nothing, I avoid everything, and I can't see the logic in anything, so I am afraid and withdrawn. I don't want to go to school, yet I don't want to graduate because that means I have to move on. I am not ready, because I can't think straight long enough to get ready. I am in trouble, and I think I need help out of this one. ♦



Photo by Addison McTague, Oak Harbor, OH

# Scarred But Not Broken

by Katie O'Malley, Orlando, FL

My father wrapped his arm around my waist and told me to smile. At the time, I was still fascinated with how the wintry London air turned my breath into silver fog. My mother stood behind the camera, struggling to take a photo of me in front of the London Bridge, which, though I was not aware of it at the time, would become one of my most significant childhood memories. I had trouble focusing on the camera; I was very eager to explore the grand and interconnected city of London. My family and I were determined to enjoy the trip, even if what brought us to England was not pleasant.

We went to London after a series of unfortunate medical events. It all started when a doctor informed us that the large birthmark on my left

shoulder could be cancerous. I was four at the time. After this shocking news, my parents took me to Spokane, Washington, for surgery the following year. A medical balloon was implanted in my arm to expand the skin so the growth could be removed and the wound closed. A few months later, however, the medical balloon burst. I lost a large amount of blood, and the balloon's failure resulted in the trip to London, where I was scheduled to undergo another operation.

Strangely, I don't recall any pain when the balloon burst inside my arm. However, to this day, I am unsure whether it was truly painless or whether my brain has simply erased

the pain from my memory.

I also can't remember being afraid when I was whisked into surgery for the second time in that London hospital. Perhaps I was preoccupied with the hospital's many oddities. I remember the rubber gloves and the squeaking of shoes on the hospital's tile floor. Every room smelled of anesthetics and detergent. I was disgusted by the powerful odor of Clorox and cleaning agents, probably used to mask even worse stench. The most powerful smell, though, was that of misery and hopelessness, not of recovery. It was these thoughts that circled through my head as I lay on the gurney in the operating room and drifted slowly out of consciousness.

## My birthmark could be cancerous

"Good morning, cutie." I awoke several hours later to the sound of my father's voice and was informed that the surgery had been a success. The growth on my shoulder was no more; it had been replaced with an equally large, though not as repulsive, scar.

This was another factor that distracted me during the picture in front of London Bridge. While absorbed with the tugboats and ferries floating down the sewage-swelled river, I wondered if I would ever get used to the scar. It seemed like a burden, like something that would weigh me down and work against me. I was under the impression that I could never come to love the scar.

Little did five-year-old me know that, eventually, not only would I love my scar, I would be proud of it. I still am. ♦





Photo by Alissa Nichols, Eldora, IA



Art by Grace Jin, Pittsburgh, PA



Photo by Danika Wagner, Sisterses, OR



Photo by Ethel Nalule, Niagara Falls, ON, Canada



Art by Alyssa Hall, Yelm, WA



Art by Teri Minogue, Madison, NJ

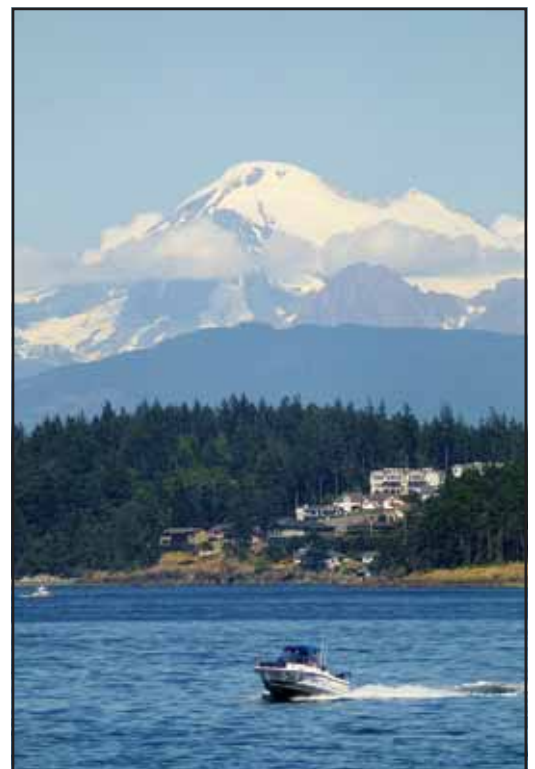


Photo by Nicole Knebel, Fort Collins, CO



Photo by Carolyn Rizza, Ringoes, NJ



# Hollaback Girl

by Yaasmeen Piper, Harrisburg, PA

I'm walking down the street on a bright August day when a car horn blares beside me.

"Hey gorgeous!" The deep voice sends chills down my spine. By now I know to keep looking straight ahead. Reacting will encourage him. I'm only fourteen.

"You in the pink, come here, beautiful."

Out of the corner of my eye, I spot the man. He's old enough to be my father but hangs out his car window staring at my legs like a hungry animal. I squirm.

I cut down a one-way street, hoping I've lost him. A long black car inches toward me. I know it's him. I can feel his eyes lingering on me. There's nowhere to run. He pulls up next to me, scanning me up and down. A smirk is on his face as he takes one hand off the wheel and moves it to his lap. My face burns red, and in my palms I can feel my heart pumping.

"I'm not going to hurt you. How old are you?"

"Eleven," I lie.

His face falls. Slowly, he pulls away, but not before giving me a final lecherous glance.

Street harassment is defined as any unwanted, inappropriate, or threatening catcalling, whistling, or touching. According to Hollaback! ([ihollaback.org](http://ihollaback.org)), 70 percent to 99 percent of women have experienced

*The catcalls,  
the honking,  
and the stares  
continue*

street harassment at some point in their lives. Twenty-three percent reported having been touched, 20 percent had been followed, and 9 percent said they had been forced to do something sexual. Among men, 25 percent reported having been harassed; the majority are gay, bisexual, or transgender, with the most common form of harassment being homophobic slurs, according to Stop Street Harassment ([StopStreetHarassment.org](http://StopStreetHarassment.org)).

From being followed to being told "you look good to me," and even being flashed, street harassment can make victims feel anxious and unsafe in their own neighborhoods. Still, many people claim that this street harassment is harmless fun.

Last year in Florida an adult man offered a 14-year-old girl \$200 to have sex with him. When the girl declined, he grabbed her by the hair, forced her into his car, and choked her unconscious, then left her on the side of the road.

But it's just harmless fun, right?

A man in Philadelphia was brutally assaulted after trying to defend a group of women from catcallers.

Does that sound like harmless fun?

"Street harassment," says a woman in the documentary "Street Harassment: Sidewalk Sleazebags and Metro Molesters," "is almost like a gateway



Photo by Rachel Gearhart, Eden, NC

drug to other more serious acts of violence."

Some in our society use statements like "But she was dressed provocatively" and questions like "Why did she go out alone?" to defend the actions of street harassers. But this places the blame on the victim. Who you are, what you wear, or your sexual orientation should not impact your safety or comfort walking down the street.

Three years later, on another bright August day, nothing has changed. The catcalls, the honking, and the stares continue. I change my path to avoid the inevitable leers, but the feelings of discomfort and hostility remain.

All around the country, your sisters, cousins, mothers, and girlfriends face this harassment on a daily basis. Still think it's harmless fun? ♦

# Are We Good or Evil?

by Kaitlin Thoreau, Pittsboro, NC

Do you believe that humans are innately good or evil?

This question was posed to my class by a substitute teacher. We were discussing whether Hamlet was a good or bad person within the context of his mental state. It was not intended to spark a debate, just to make us think.

Are humans good at birth? Are they evil? Are they neutral? A clean slate awaiting the faded chalk marks of the world's biases?

In my class, discussion is encouraged, even if it leads us away from the main topic. But on that day, only a few people raised their hands with an opinion. One was me. "People are good," I said. "If not good, at the very least neutral. But not evil."

The class's devil's advocate approached me after class. "Do you really believe that people are innately good, or at least neutral?" he asked. I replied that I did, which apparently blew his mind.

On the drive home, I thought about the conversation. It surprised me. I had previously thought that most people believed that people are good.

Later, flicking through Tumblr pages, I noticed a lot of cynicism about humanity. Pictures of war refugees and oppressed people filled my dashboard, with commentary underneath about how despicable mankind must be.

I closed the tab and watched an ep-

isode of "Drop Dead Diva" on Netflix instead. The show made me feel better because the protagonist tries to help people and always succeeds. She is a good person.

I eventually forgot the class debate. I had more on my mind than existential crises. My four-year-old cousin was visiting, and he wanted to watch "My Little Pony" with me; why would I want to think about anything else?

Fast forward a few weeks: I am sitting in a KFC waiting for my order, and the television in the corner is on. The sound is muted, but there are subtitles scrolling across the screen. CNN is reporting on something in Colorado, and at first I think they are rehashing the Aurora movie theater shooting. But then I notice they are talking about a school, and I realize that this is new.

Inexplicably, I remember the conversation I had months before. Just a few words, two minutes of conversation. "Do you really believe that people are innately good, or at least neutral?"

And the thing is, I do. As I stare at the TV, at a crying classmate of the shooter, I think about that conversation. I realize that even in such moments, I earnestly, passionately, and wholeheartedly believe that people are innately

good.

It is no help to think that people are good in good times. It is a nice thought, but an unnecessary one. We know people are not evil: they are our friends and loved ones, our grocers and our sports instructors, our teachers and our accountants. They go to work in the morning and come home at night. They go to school in the morning and come home and complain about homework.

And then, on one horrific day, one person — one painfully human being — walks into a school with a gun. And we cannot believe it. We forget, in those moments, that humans are good. We see only blood and hate and fear and evil.

We see the Oregon shooter, the Arapahoe gunman, the Aurora shooter, the Sandy Hook shooter, the Columbine killers. And in those people, we see those who came before. The Unibomber and Ted Bundy and Hitler and Stalin.

And we forget.

This is when we need to remember the goodness and decency in people. We do not need to remember heroes. They are icons, but they are few in number. In times like these, we must remember that humanity as a whole is good. There will always, always be more good people than bad.

*In times like  
these, we  
still mourn*

For every school shooter there are millions of teachers who will protect their students with their own lives. For every arsonist there are thousands of firefighters risking their safety to put out the blaze. For every serial killer there are millions of people transporting food and water to the desperate and needy.

There are hundreds of millions of good, honest, hard-working people. Thousands of teachers, accountants, friends, and loved ones. Hundreds of thousands of people who will let you under their umbrella in the rain, or lend you their supermarket MVP card when you've forgotten yours, or simply give you a smile when you've had a tough day.

The violent acts we hear about in the media all too often are awful, but I believe with all my heart that people are inherently good. I believe it because even after thousands of years of hatred and oppression and massacres and evil, we still live and laugh and love.

And in times like these, we still mourn. We feel for the victims we do not even know. Human beings grow accustomed to so much, but not loss. Not things like this. We are too good for that.

"Do you really believe that people are innately good, or at least neutral?"

Yes. ♦

# Juvenile Injustice

by Laura Hinkle, Elizabethtown, KY

In prisons all over America, juveniles are fighting for justice. Too often, children are thrown into the adult prison system where they have little chance of survival. Juveniles are harassed by adult inmates who are stronger and much more experienced. Juveniles should not be tried or sentenced according to adult law in Kentucky or any other state.

The eighth amendment of the U.S. Constitution prohibits “cruel and unusual punishment.” But when children as young as 10 are sentenced as adults and enter adult prisons, they are five times as likely to be sexually assaulted, twice as likely to be beaten by guards, 50 percent more likely to be attacked with a weapon, and eight times as likely to commit suicide compared to children in juvenile facilities, according to “10 Reasons Why Juveniles Should Not Be Tried or Sentenced as Adults” by legal analyst Barbe Stamps and David Berger.

Not only is this practice cruel, it defies our Constitution. The practice of trying and sentencing children as adults “has struck a nerve” with judges, jurors, lawyers, and legislators who ultimately believe that we as a nation are doing juveniles an injustice, according to Stamps. The Supreme Court has acknowledged – on multiple occasions – the fact that, compared to adults, teenagers are biologically wired to have more trouble refraining from acting immaturely and irresponsibly. It is the duty of our criminal justice system to protect and rehabilitate juveniles instead of pushing them into adult prisons. Our society’s laws already recognize the difference between children and adults. Kids can’t smoke, drink, or vote because they have not fully matured cognitively.

I know that people are frightened by the idea of a young super-predator – an unredeemable child who’s terrorized others through heinous crimes. I understand where this idea is coming from. I’ve studied various juvenile crimes: Christopher Pittman (age 12) shot his grandparents, Sam Mandez (14)

was accused of murdering his elderly neighbor, and Nathan Ybanez (16) killed his mother. Often, though, the police and courts do not properly investigate the reason for a juvenile’s actions. For these teenagers, what at first sound like inexcusable crimes are not what they seem. Mandez was convicted of first-degree murder on slim evidence, without eyewitnesses or a confession. Ybanez was badly abused and neglected by his parents, and Pittman was prescribed antidepressants designed for adults that his defense claimed influenced his actions. Yet all three boys received life sentences in adult prisons.

With the right treatment and good care, most juvenile delinquents can be rehabilitated and given another chance at a normal life. This is because the human brain is not fully developed until a person’s early twenties, according to Stamps and Berger. The prefrontal cortex – the part controlling aggression, mental flexibility, and moral judgment – can be positively influenced with the help of skilled professionals. “Children who commit serious crimes still

have the ability to change their lives for the better. It is now time for state and federal officials to take positive steps by enacting policies that seek to redeem children instead of throwing them in prison for the rest of their lives,” Berger writes. It is possible for children and teens to reform – if our legal system gives them the chance.

Kentucky is considerably ahead of other states in the campaign for juvenile justice. The flaws in the system aren’t small, but I believe the simplest solution that could be put into practice in a short time span is an amendment to current juvenile laws in Kentucky. The amendment should require that:

*It is possible for children and teens to reform*

1. Juveniles are always tried in juvenile courts. Even if it’s an adult crime, there are no exceptions. Children do not have the competence to be tried in adult courts.

2. Before a juvenile is sentenced, the circumstances and motivation for the crime must be investigated thoroughly by police, defense attorneys, etc.

3. If the judge deems it appropriate, juveniles will be sent to a juvenile facility that provides rehabilitation. There will be no sentencing minors to adult prison systems.

Allowing children to be incarcerated in adult prisons isn’t justice. It defies the rights our founding fathers sought to protect with the Constitution, including the abolishment of cruel punishments. We have turned into a country where, under the law, kids can be sentenced to an almost unavoidable death in prison. Imagine your sisters and brothers, your cousins, your friends. Would you wish this fate on them? Are you truly okay with 10- and 11-year-olds getting assaulted by middle-aged drug dealers? This injustice is happening to children who could still turn their lives around, given the chance. ♦



Photo by Lena Zlock, Newtown, PA

# The Heisman Controversy

by Kevin Schroeder, Merritt Island, FL

The Heisman Trophy is the epitome of all sports accolades. Every football fan dreams of hoisting this 25-pound bronze trophy overhead at the end of a record-setting season. The Trophy is awarded each year to an outstanding player in college football who combines excellence with integrity both on and off the field. However, in recent years, Heisman voters seem to have forgotten the “good character off the field” aspect.



Photo by Katie Ehrlich, Glendale, CA

Giving this honor to a player who lacks real character puts a stain not only on the Heisman Trophy, but on college football as a whole.

College football has seen many outstanding athletes win the Heisman Trophy. However, in 2010, Auburn University quarterback Cam Newton hoisted the trophy above his head as he led the Tigers to a national championship. While few would question his athletic qualifications, many wondered about his character. That season had been filled with controversy over a “pay for play” scandal which alleged that Newton’s father solicited a significant amount of money from Mississippi State University in return for his son transferring to the school – a direct violation of NCAA rules. The NCAA investigation was still ongoing during the Heisman voting, and, despite being the center of a nationwide controversy over whether he should have been playing for half the season, Newton won the Trophy by a landslide.

Florida State redshirt freshman quarterback Jameis Winston has been stunning on the field recently. Unfortunately, the nation has also been stunned by off-the-

field allegations about his behavior. Halfway through the 2013-14 season, the media discovered that Winston had previously been charged with sexual assault, a charge that was put on hold due to Tallahassee investigators convincing the victim that her life “would be made miserable” because Tallahassee is “a big football town.” Evidence was hard to come by due to an apparent cover-up by the Tallahassee Police Department, making the chance of conviction slim, and Winston won the Trophy by a landslide (despite 13 percent of the voters leaving him off the ballot entirely). Honoring him with an award of this level drags down the prestige of the Heisman Trophy, but it seems that the past year has given the Heisman voters more to think about: Winston was conspicuously left off the nominee list this year, despite another stellar football season.

The Heisman Trophy must continue to reward both athletic excellence and outstanding character, and not simply be given to the best college player in the country. Public perception of the players affects the league as a whole. The Heisman voters need to remember that this trophy is about character, not just capability. ♦

*It’s about character, not just capability*



# Remembering at Yad Vashem

by Ali Schindler, Philadelphia, PA

The place is called Yad Vashem. It means a place and a name.

The ceiling is beautiful, a triangular prism that points at all the right angles, letting the brilliant light of day pour in. The sky is just barely visible, and the trees outside devour golden sun on this mountain of the dead. The ceiling is beautiful, but the walls are monstrous.

I cannot take my eyes off the video screens.

The bodies are skeletons wrapped in skin. Before they are tossed into the ground, I count their ribs and discern the exact shape of their pelvis. It makes me sick to watch. People once inhabited these bodies, but the cadavers are filled with nothingness. They are bulldozed in heaps into pits in the ground.

I sit on a bench and watch the loop of the film play over and over. I see the same bodies twice, three times, five times. But each time the corpses are thrown into a trench, my eyes see someone different.

Cradled, coddled, nursed. Educated, loved, laughing. Kissing and marrying and selling and sweating. Praying and baking and sleeping and rising. Starving and working and weeping and dying. Burned and hanged and gassed and shot in the heart.

Unnamed. Unknown.

I am someone seventy years removed, but I will not be the one to forget, I will not be the one who passes these video screens without seeing the horror of reality. I am trapped behind a glass wall generations wide, but instead of pounding my fists, I stay transfixed by the screen.

I imagine myself standing in line at one of the trenches. The man in front of me stands before the SS soldier. He spreads his spindly arms wide, shaking. He closes his eyes and tilts his head up to God. Seconds later, he falls into the trench. I have heard the shot, seen the blood stain upon the ground

so many times before, but this time I cry out. I cover my mouth with a shaking hand.

I am not brave. I am so afraid to die. I am afraid of the gunshot; I am afraid of my own blood, the last thing I will see before I fall upon the others. After everything that has happened, after I have been tormented and beaten and starved, I am still afraid to die. Hell is on Earth, but what is death? If God is not here with me, who is to say he exists anywhere at all?

On another TV screen, a woman is being interviewed. She has wrinkles so deep I could bring up a garden in them, but she speaks in a low, soft voice that roots me to my spot. They marched, she said.

They marched for weeks. It was winter in Eastern Europe. Thousands of women began the march. Less than one hundred fifty ended it. Friends cradled the dead in their arms. Corpses were left in the snow.

I imagine seeing her fall. She is shivering violently. Her lips, fingers, and toes are purple like a bruise, and each vertebra on her spine is a mountain I could climb. A guard comes up from behind and kicks her. "Aufstehen," he says. *Get up.* She stands for a moment, wobbles, and collapses again. He spits at her and kicks her in the face. "Ungeziefer." *Vermin.* He leaves her there thrashing, delirious; her eyes roll back in her head. "Please," I beg her, "Please stand up, keep walking, please —" I wrap my arms around her and hold her so close I can feel the contractions of her lungs, but a blow to the head makes me fall to my knees.

"Lass ihr du sterben. Weiterzugehen," the guard commands, kicking my back. *Let her die.* He points a gun at her. Her coughing stops. The words are unbelievable, the images indescribable.

I am a mother, a wife, a woman getting off a train I have been on for a week. I am covered in sweat and lice and excrement. The smell is the first

*I can feel the yellow star branded on my clothing too*

*The UN General Assembly designated January 27 – the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau – as International Holocaust Remembrance Day*

thing that hits me as I stumble into the open air. It is overpowering and sickening, the smell of death and burning and suffering. My daughter is writhing in my arms, screaming. An SS guard pulls her away from me. My husband reaches out to grab her from the guard, and he is shot. My wedding ring is taken from me, and I am pushed toward a long line of women headed toward the shower house. I cannot hear my daughter's cries anymore.

My imagination brings me to tears. The faces I see aren't nameless – they morph into the faces of people I know, people I love: my neighbor, my best friend, my boyfriend, my niece. What if it was them? What if it was me? But it was someone's best friend, someone's family, someone's death.

I'm crying in the middle of a museum exhibit because I can feel the yellow star branded on my clothing too, the yellow star that says *Jude*.

This place is called Yad Vashem. It means a place and a name. In this place the beautiful day comes in through the skylights. But for every name, there is a grave gone unmarked. A story never told.

There is not one place and one name. There were so many more than that. ♦

## According to My Mexican Upbringing

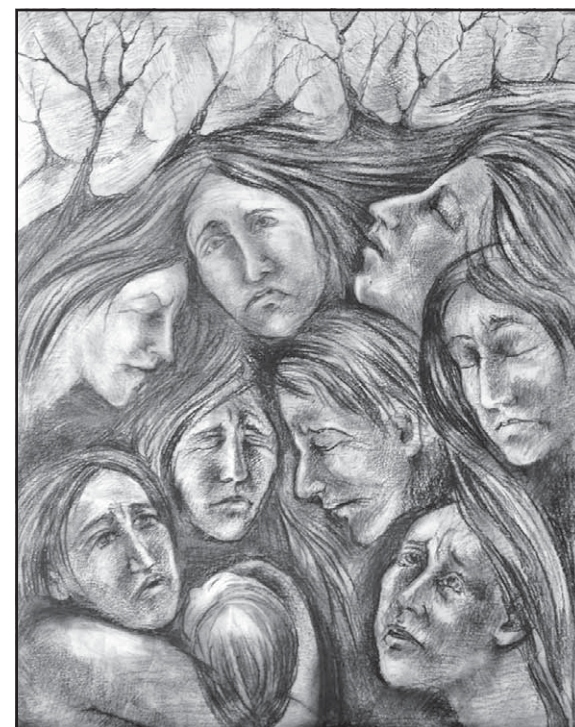
1. Little girls receive a kitchen play set for their fifth birthday whether they are interested or not. They will be taught to eulogize the real kitchen, waiting for their turn in it until their backbone has committed it to memory and they forget they never liked cooking in the first place
2. Mothers don't eat desserts. They sip their coffee from a measuring glass, trying to convince their yearning stomachs they are too full for the chocolate cake the men and children are licking from their fingers. Because their husbands' round bellies don't make room for them anymore. Because they have never felt entitled to a full stomach
3. You should never ask certain things, like "Why do only the girls clean up?" No one has an answer

and they will be left searching for it in the coffee-stained cups and soapsuds, finally understanding why they have always felt empty inside

4. Little girls should be called "cute," not "loud" or "curious," not "boyish," because it is a boy's job to be called those things and girls in pink dresses are everybody's dream of what is right with the world

5. Being a woman is synonymous with being secondhand, a flower in men's coats for them to look at only when they want to. You'll need to speak twice as loud, work twice as hard, or you never even existed in the first place

by Alejandra Márquez, Monterrey, Mexico



Art by Dani Sher, Redondo Beach, CA

# Thai New Year

by Ethan Wood, Chiang Mai, Thailand

It felt like an iceberg had slid down my back, freezing me in my sopping wet shirt. If I'd been used to the cool climate of the Northwest, I might have been better able to handle the cold. But although I was born in Seattle, Washington, I grew up in Chiang Mai, Thailand, which is still my home today. Chiang Mai is one of the most exciting cities on Earth, despite its dusty appearance. I've made so many memories in the time I've lived here.

For the Thai New Year I climb into the back of a huge, rusty pick-up with 15 of my friends, ready to head to the city to participate in the annual water festival known as Songkran. We have water guns strapped to our shoulders and sunscreen on our faces, and we're wearing tropical, touristy shirts we only put on once a year. We've brought buckets of ice-cold water so that even in the 110-degree heat, pedestrians will soon face the wrath of the arctic plunging over their skin.

We make our way to the moat around the center of Chiang Mai, where our truck becomes part of the traffic. Markets are open and people are everywhere, splashing buckets of water on each other. The warm air is full of the marketplace ruckus, the scent of fresh pork (sold for less than a dollar), and the stench of exhaust spewing from the Toyota truck. Pop and EDM music blare through bass speakers, and a faint odor of beer surrounds many of the

*We brought buckets full of ice-cold water*

passersby.

My friend Daniel and I stand in the back with bazookas full of chilled water. When our truck stops, we unload our armada on everyone in view. Then we rush around, spraying people left and right. People run, and shrieks rise from those who are splashed. It's absolute chaos, and you'd never get away with this in the United States, but in Thailand it's a national holiday – and a tradition. A long time ago, Buddhist monks would sprinkle water on villagers' heads as they passed by. How it changed into an all-out water war I'll never know, but I'm not about to argue because it's so much fun.

Eventually Daniel and I run out of water and have to retreat to the truck for refills. We maneuver through cars and trucks that have been covered in wax so the water will simply clean them. As I jump onto the truck, a Thai man in a Bob Marley T-shirt with a thin, gray beard runs after us with a small bucket and hits Daniel in the back. He gives a yelp, indicating that the water is freezing, and we all laugh. The man runs off, yelling “*Sawad-dee bee mai, fa-rang!*” Happy New Year, foreigner!

At noon, the sun is high and hot, but we don't mind: we feel refreshed. We stop at a vendor selling sticky rice and fried pork on a stick. You can buy Thai food in the States, but it's not the same. That hot, juicy meat you can rip with your teeth, plus a

handful of sticky rice, is one of the greatest tastes in the world. That and *rotis!* A *roti* is a thin, fried piece of bread covered with toppings ranging from bananas to chocolate syrup. Just thinking about them melting into my mouth makes me hungry! To top it off, I buy a can of A&W and chug it before we continue our aquatic battle.

We round the corner of the moat and become one with the chaos again, all the while splashing people and yelling “*Sawad-dee bee mai!*” I am hit by a wave that tastes as if it came from the sewer, which is close: it's from the moat. Who knows what's thrown into the moat besides trash? People swim in it, so some don't care, but I once saw a man urinate into it like it was no big deal. I wouldn't be surprised if that water was thick with disease; I can recall a few years when I've gotten sick right after Songkran. Needless to say, I try to spit the water out.

Daniel and I get ready for our next raid, this time with others backing us up. We charge an Isuzu truck and bomb it with buckets of water. There is screaming and laughing all at the same time as we finish. Suddenly the coldest blast I've ever felt hits me in the back! I let out a high-pitched scream and recoil from the icy pain. It burns! Of course, everyone is laughing, so I just shake it off and refill my tank.

By the time I get home, I'm exhausted. Another Songkran has come and gone – and I loved it. I love Thailand, and I know that it's only in Thailand where I can have these experiences. ♦

# Llama Central

by Felicia Zhang, Rochester, MN

The country of Peru is llama central. It's also an unbelievable destination for a twelve-year-old tourist – one that changed my definition of “vacation.” Women dressed in colorful woven garments roam the streets with llamas and alpacas on leashes. After several days, it seemed as natural as neighbors back home walking their dogs. I was never able to get over the food; it was a shock to dine on alpaca pizza and have guinea pig as a special dish. Luckily, I could finish my meal with a nice bottle of Inca Cola.

We spent the majority of the trip in a unique mountain city called Cusco. The hotel in Cusco was a dainty little place. Our room had three twin beds crammed in. Each morning, we woke to a pair of stinky feet at the head of our bed. Our hotel offered us coca-leaf tea, made from the same plant used in the production of cocaine. The tea is supposed to help in acclimating to the high elevation.

*Guinea pig is a special dish*

I thought that New York City had the worst traffic on Earth until I visited Cusco. There were taxis everywhere, and local drivers ignored red lights. We would be completely stuck in traffic, yet oncoming cars seemed to believe they could magically drive through the middle of our taxi.

We took a bus to a marketplace filled with assorted foods and handmade goods. We wove in and out of streets, gazing at the beautifully handcrafted rugs and ponchos. I wished I could buy everything. We also had a tour of an authentic village where women demonstrated the tedious process of making different products. Their only income was from the goods they sold. They showed us how to make lip stain using the red blood of a squished bug. I was speechless as they smeared it on their lips. After the tour, I bought a soft pair of handmade mittens.

In addition to all the other magnificent sights, getting off the airplane in Cusco was wonderful. In movies and on TV, I had watched celebrities walking down the steps of their private jets, waving at the cameras. In a city like Cusco, the airport is not large enough to have terminals, so I had the opportunity to walk down the “steps of fame” – except there was a lot of shoving, and there weren't any cameras taking my picture. A girl can dream, though, right? ♦

# Times Square

by Cyd Sacks, New York, NY

Huge signs of all shapes and sizes are plastered to the sides of buildings, on top of awnings, and on walls and construction sites everywhere. Glittering lights illuminate every surface; just like the city they are proud to be part of, they never cease to shine. It is the land of song and dance, playbills and matinees. The excitement bubbles through ticket holders as they anticipate seeing a Broadway show.

The swarms of people, adults and children alike, are filled with amazement. Every person wonders, at some point, how something could be so grand and fantastic and still be real. The buildings tower over their heads, and the billboards seem larger than life. There is a menagerie of stores, theaters and restaurants, but never enough time to visit them all. Everything imaginable exists on these streets: performers, artists, and a myriad of vendors selling everything from colorful paper kites to exquisite handmade jewelry.

The brilliant sounds of a soulfully played saxophone fill the air one second, and the next, a hip-hop song with a distinct beat is accompanied by the cheers of a crowd converged around a street dancer executing complicated moves.

*Everything imaginable exists on the streets*

Nearby, awed customers watch a paintbrush glide over paper; a unique portrait comes into view. Then delicate brushstrokes beautifully form their

names within a chosen border.

The notable sight of the New Year's ball drop is a must-see. The big numbers indicating the new year sit peacefully at the base of the pole, waiting to be changed once more at next year's celebration. Countless cameras capture sights and feelings that will be cherished long after the photographers return home, whether that is a few train stops away or as far as another country. The people are all so different, but they share one thing in common: the thrill of exploring the brilliance of Times Square. ♦

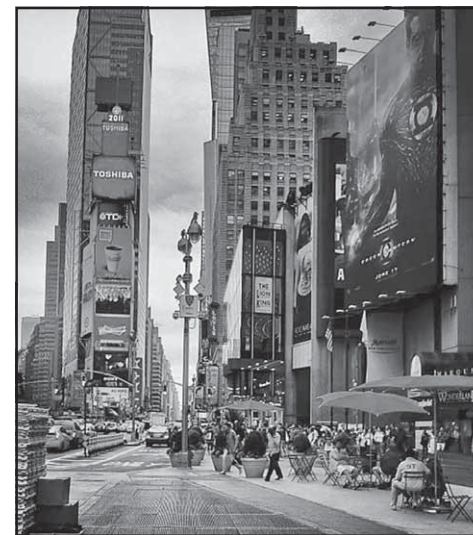


Photo by Vanessa Miranda, Corning, NY



# Princeton UNIVERSITY

**Princeton, NJ:** Idyllic Princeton University is one of the eight historic Ivy League colleges in the Northeast. In fact, just this past year, the picturesque school was named the number-one academic institution of higher learning in the country by *U.S. News and World Report*. Founded in 1746, Princeton is a midsize college sprawling over 500 acres and hosting 5,244 undergraduate students. With a 7.4 percent acceptance rate, it is clear that Princeton is searching for the best and the brightest, but that shouldn't deter anyone from applying. A top-quality Princeton education will prove to be both intensely challenging and life-altering.

Personally, I would describe Princeton University as a rural New York University. The academic and study abroad programs offered by both are similar, helping provide students with international experiences that cannot be matched inside the walls of the classroom. Princeton is a school for budding politicians; in fact, many eminent world leaders, including president Woodrow Wilson, earned diplomas from Princeton. Here, great emphasis is placed on the social sciences, languages, and the humanities.

Princeton does not have a core curriculum as many colleges do, but it does have distribution requirements. Each student must complete one or two semester-long courses in seven areas: epistemology and cognition, ethical thought and moral values, historical analysis, literature and the arts, quantitative reasoning, science and technology, and social analysis.

With these requirements, Princeton encourages exploration of academic areas that may not pertain to students' majors, which helps create thoughtful, responsible, open-minded citizens. For example, Princeton requires that students become proficient in a foreign language before graduation; luckily, the university offers over 20 languages to choose from.

One interesting offering at Princeton is the Bridge Year, an all-expenses-paid gap year program that students can spend volunteering abroad. Only 35 students are chosen for this highly selective, work-heavy program each year. Opportunities in the Bridge Year include teaching international students and helping out local communities. Students can visit China, India, Senegal, Peru, or Brazil. In my opinion, nothing is quite as life-changing as travel to a foreign country. I love this inventive, innovative approach to learning, and I would strongly consider this program as a reason for applying to Princeton.

Another highlight is Princeton's generous financial aid packages, offered to students of all economic backgrounds. Tuition carries a hefty price tag of \$41,820 annually, plus \$13,620 for room and board. But through its large endowment, Princeton is able to provide students with the most generous financial aid of any university I've visited. If a student's parent makes less than \$60,000 per

year, the entire \$55,000 will be fully funded by the institution. It is a widely held misconception that Ivy League schools are overpriced and not worth the cost. The reality is that an Ivy education can be fully accessible to all.

Princetonian culture is alive and well on campus, where over 300 co-curricular activities are offered, including multicultural student organizations and even a campus fashion magazine. Athletics are also very popular, with football, basketball, cheerleading, and even crew teams.

At Princeton, mealtimes are social gatherings.

There are a variety of meal plans, including on-campus dining and co-ops, in which students take turns preparing meals and washing the dishes. Students may also choose to join an eating club. These are not run by Princeton, but

are affiliated with and welcomed into the university's setting. Eating clubs host dining nights with professors, and each club represents a different personality. For example, the Tiger Inn is most frequented by athletes. Eating club admission can be sign-up-and-join or "bicker." A bicker club is more exclusive, as students must go through a selection process. On a bicker night, unaffiliated students go to the eating clubs of their choice and chat with the members at a welcoming party. Then the members decide which students to accept. I think that bickering sounds a bit silly, but it may be a fun tradition at Princeton, and

*Helps create thoughtful, responsible, open-minded citizens*

provides an excellent opportunity to socialize.

A walk around the bucolic campus motivated me to apply. By far, Princeton is the most attractive campus I have visited. It is spacious and inviting, and the atmosphere is relaxed and open. At the entrance is a small lake that leads to the university's main buildings. The architecture is in a charming Gothic style, making Princeton resemble a medieval city center instead of a college. The many ivy-covered buildings offer visual appeal.

As mentioned, Princeton is in a fairly rustic area of New Jersey. At first I was hesitant about even visiting, since I thought that it was in the middle of nowhere. On the drive, all I noticed was a Target store and a small cinema. However, a one-hour train ride will land you in Manhattan, and an hour-and-a-half ride will take you to Philly. But there is so much to do on campus, it is unlikely you will ever be bored.

I changed my mind about Princeton after visiting. The rural campus allows for college life to be in full bloom, with the urban world just a train ride away. I also appreciate the international education the institution promotes and provides at an affordable price. The school isn't too big, only welcoming 1,303 freshmen per year. I urge everyone to keep an open mind and take a look at this illustrious institution. Learn more at [www.princeton.edu](http://www.princeton.edu). ♦

by Danielle Green, Westbury, NY

# Endicott COLLEGE

**Beverly, MA:** When people think of colleges in New England, a few names come to mind: Harvard, Boston College, Tufts, and Yale. While these schools have amazing reputations, let's face it, most of us cannot get in unless we give up our sanity to take five APs a year and get 800s on our SATs. There is something else to consider: what does reputation really mean? Nowadays, the most vital return from your college investment is a job. This means building your résumé before you enter the work force, which is exactly Endicott's mission.

Endicott is a picturesque, bucolic, oceanfront liberal arts college that boasts 235 acres and a closely knit student body of 2,852 undergraduates. It offers a plethora of majors, with especially strong programs in business, parks and recreation, psychology, visual and performing arts, and education. However, one of Endicott's most unique features is its innovative internship program. In fact, it was the first institute of higher education in the country to require students to complete an internship. Students start their real-world experiences as early as sophomore year and complete two 120-hour internships, plus a semester-long internship, before graduation. This helps students discover avenues within their major, and most importantly, become more eligible for employment. Endicott focuses on preparing students for their

careers by immersing them in hands-on courses right away, while exposing them to different topics for a well-rounded liberal arts experience.

This all sounds wonderful on paper, right? Well, as anybody would say, you have to see it to believe it. This past summer, I had the opportunity to take an informal campus tour. I did not expect to like Endicott as much as I did, but I found its campus gorgeous and unique, and extremely spacious for a small college. There was a mix of old-world buildings along with the modern, in addition to oceanfront and woodside campus housing. The students and athletic coaches were extremely friendly, ready to say hello even to a stranger like me. I also met the food manager, who spoke to me for an hour about how dining services would accommodate my food allergies. How's that for approachable?

I already know that Endicott is going to be at the top of my list. My first impression of this school is that it gives students a well-rounded experience while preparing them for the real world, which is what a college should do. Is it possible that Endicott could give me what people call the best years of my life? I'd say so!

For more information, go to [www.endicott.edu](http://www.endicott.edu). ♦

by Alexandra Spund, Stratham, NH

*Immerses students in hands-on courses*

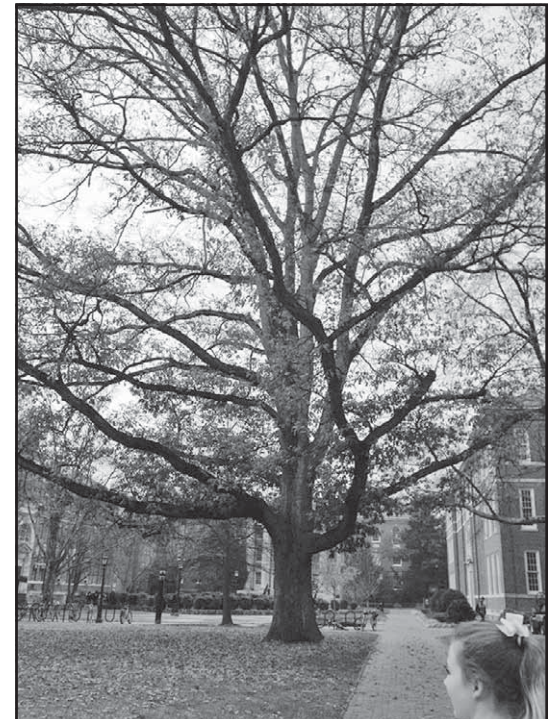


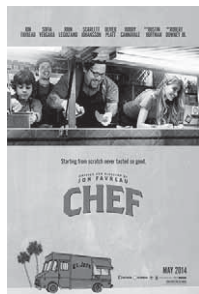
Photo by Kyla Hurley, Wake Forest, NC

COMEDY

## Chef

I remember the feeling I got after watching “Big Night” – that feeling of wanting to cook something, anything, just for the art of it. When I watched Jon Favreau’s new film, “Chef,” I got that same feeling. As with most films, this movie had positives and negatives, but thankfully more of the former. A good movie must have a good plot or else it dribbles away like watery French onion soup. For the most part, “Chef” succeeds. It’s definitely unique: a brilliant chef goes crazy on a critic, loses his job, and ends up food-trucking across the country while repairing a broken family relationship.

There are a few weak parts, however. For one, there is a very odd dynamic between Carl (Favreau) and his ex-wife, Inez (Sofia Vergara). The reason they divorced is never made clear; Carl just tells his son that they couldn’t be married anymore. Regardless, Carl takes Inez on a trip to Miami and even dances with her at a nightclub. And further into the movie you can see that there are obviously feelings between them. While I’m not saying that this doesn’t happen, it is a little bit outside of reality.



**Made me want to cook something**

It’s obvious that there is a lot of tension between Carl and his son, Percy (Emjay Anthony). But there is also a well-done side story where the two bond through the food truck. It’s cheesy, but it’s presented well and isn’t too prominent, which reflects well on Favreau as a director.

The ending also made me a bit uncomfortable. The food critic (Ramsey Michel) who had originally caused Favreau to lose it suddenly appears at the food truck. He apologizes for his actions and praises the food – which is nice, cliché as the villain-turned-

good storyline is. He then explains that he sold his influential website in order to buy Carl a restaurant to run. This is one of those unfortunate situations when a movie reminds us that it isn’t real. The perfect movie should capture the audience in a veil of fantasy so plausible that we forget we’re watching characters on a screen.

But these are relatively minor mistakes. The bond between Carl and his sous-chef Martin (John Leguizmo) is brilliant. Both do an incredible job interacting with Percy, culminating in a very convincing newfound relationship within the cooking family. The dynamic on the food truck is something that simply cannot be taught.

Another positive aspect of “Chef” is the musical score. It is absolutely amazing and subtly changes to complement the plot shifts.

Although “Chef” does have some mistakes, it contains strong performances reinforced by a nice plot and refreshing music. ♦

by Evan Dotas, Harrisonburg, VA

*This film is rated R.*

TV

## Game of Thrones

I must admit that I don’t love fantasy. Look through my cluttered bookshelves for a Tolkien novel and you’d search forever. Redundant tales of dragons, powerful wizards, and the same cardboard-cutout heroes fail to ignite a genuine spark of interest in me. That said, I’m not sure what mentality I had when I curled up in my armchair late one night and put on the first episode of HBO’s “Game of Thrones,” based on the epic fantasy series *A Song of Ice and Fire* by George R.R. Martin. I was eager to see if it lived up to the rave reviews, though I was dubious I would like it.

By the end of the hour, my mouth was agape, and I stared at the screen until I realized the credits were rolling. “Game of Thrones” is unconventional storytelling in every way imaginable. It takes all your familiar fantasy tropes and dumps them out the window. Don’t be disheartened to find your typical noble champions in shining armor missing – the characters here are much more complex than the black-and-white personalities often found in fantasy stories.

The attention magnet of “Thrones” is the tangled web of ruthless, bloody political conspiracy in the pseudo-medieval Seven Kingdoms of Westeros. “Everybody wants to rule the world,” as they say, and even those who don’t covet the Iron Throne are unwillingly thrown into the maelstrom of conflict. From smart-mouthed, sharp-minded underdog Tyrion Lannister (Peter Dinklage) to the exiled dragon queen, Daenerys Targaryen (Emilia Clarke),

there’s a character for everyone.

The series begins slowly, building with unexpected turns in the road. Eventually, “Game of Thrones” proves itself to be more grounded in reality than any other fantasy story out there, blatantly conveying the bleak truth that good guys don’t always win with their heads held high – unless you count a severed head mounted on a spike. In moments like that, the words of ice queen Cersei Lannister (Lena Headey) ring bitter with truth: “When you play the game of thrones, you win or you die. There is no middle ground.”

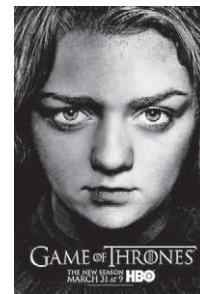
There are plenty of quotable lines and quality actors to be found in this series, but one of the few recurring letdowns is the gratuitous sex and violence. Both are graphic and pervasive throughout the show. Letting the guillotine fall on these unnecessary scenes would pave the way for more character

development, a demanding feat to attain with a ten-episode season limit and a colossal cast. With the books’ storylines scattered from the desert climates “across the Narrow Sea” all the way to the frigid coldness of the Wall, it’s not surprising that some plotlines fade into the background, and some are completely ignored by the show’s writers.

“Game of Thrones” provides wickedly satisfying entertainment and continues to claim a spot amongst today’s top TV shows. ♦

by Amy Chang, Shelton, CT

*This television series is rated TV-MA.*



**Dumps familiar fantasy tropes out the window**

DRAMA

## Romeo and Juliet (2013)

“Romeo and Juliet” tells the classic tale of two rival houses, the Capulets and the Montagues, who have, for many centuries, loathed each other. During a party set up by Lord Capulet (Damian Lewis), Romeo (Douglas Booth) and Juliet (Hailee Steinfeld) meet and fall in love at first sight. The thing is, they are from enemy houses, and that is socially not done.

This film basically makes it clear that Hollywood is stagnating. New stories are not being produced, so studios have to make use of ones that have been told over and over again.

The problem with this adaptation of Shakespeare’s play is it’s pretty lifeless. We all know the story and the ultimate fate of our leads, but the way the tale is told is what is supposed to keep us attached, make us love the characters, and eventually make us tear up in the final minutes. But I did not. The film is painfully dull and too sappy to be entertaining.

The script doesn’t take its time to look at what it has in front of it; it spits out chunk after chunk of Shakespeare’s dialogue, and it all comes out clunky to the audience’s ears. When adapting a classic, you must fit it to the period presented. Sure, that dialogue works, but it’s hard for the average viewer to comprehend.

The thing that makes “Romeo and Juliet” even the slightest bit watchable is its sets. They are beautiful and well crafted and suit the film, making it feel more or less real.

Our leads are convincing, but no more than average. Hailee Steinfeld, though very talented, was not able to overcome her stiff dialogue, and Douglas Booth should have been given better material. One must also note the distracting age difference between these two. However accurate, it’s



**A lifeless adaptation**

very uncomfortable to watch them fall in love.

The film runs at an unbearable length of two hours, and with a total lack of editing, it slowly becomes unmanageable. You get lost among long lines of melodramatic dialogue that could have been reduced to a few snippets. There’s just too much talking and not enough action to suit the length.

I wanted to like “Romeo and Juliet.” Its sets are beautiful, and leads Steinfeld and Booth are mostly convincing, but the dull script proves the fatal poison. It gives the cast wooden dialogue and provides a sense of soupy melodrama that pervades the entire two-hour film for a painful experience. ♦

by James Pasier, Jeffersonville, IN



## Multiply • Ed Sheeran

On August 27th, I had the privilege of attending Ed Sheeran's incredible "Multiply" concert at the Staples Center in the heart of downtown Los Angeles. Eighteen thousand of my fellow "Sheerios" (dedicated Ed Sheeran fans) surrounded me as we sang along to his songs, both new and old – and I, at least, sang until my voice was gone. His set list was impeccably planned, manipulating the crowd to dance wildly to the fast songs and wave their iPhone lights to the slow songs. Oh, and did I mention that this ginger-haired Brit can rap like there's no tomorrow?

Ed Sheeran's career started when he got signed to Asylum Records in 2011. With his hit song "The A-Team" and his iconic ginger hair, Sheeran became a British sensation. He has channeled his rough early life into his music. Sheeran has admitted that he began to abuse alcohol from a young age, and music, he says, was the thing that pulled him out. He is now an incredible role model

for young adults trying to find their way, and that's why I am one of his many fans.

This was the second Sheeran concert I have attended; it was interesting to see how much he has changed. Listening to both his albums back to back gave me the feeling that he has grown as an artist. Even Sheeran's appearance when he walked on stage proved this. With new songs, and a little more facial hair, he has evolved into a more mature version of his old self – but as he continues to grow, he has stayed true to himself and his music. Unlike a lot of artists, Sheeran makes sure that he – not his management team or his label – is in control of his music.

The best aspect, by far, of Sheeran's concerts is the way he plays. If you're



He is a singing poet

not familiar with his music, let me give you the lowdown. There are no dancers, sets, other musicians, or even drums. It's just Sheeran, standing in a single spotlight, making all of the music himself. He does everything, and I mean everything, with his Baby Martin LX1E guitar and a loop station. Sheeran is

literally a one-man band. As he sings, he strums the strings and pounds the body of his guitar, providing all of the ingredients. If you closed your eyes and just listened, you wouldn't guess he was the only musician on stage. This is what makes his concerts so unique and entertaining. He's a prime example of "less is more."

Sheeran's lyrics are what fans fall for. He is a singing poet; his writing is

unbelievable. Words that would make me tongue-tied are effortlessly spoken in his deep yet angelic voice. His lyrics are like a story filled with imagery, personification, and endless metaphors. When Sheeran sings to his audience, he makes sure that we have his attention and, in return, makes his performance intimate and bonding. He does not put a wall between himself and his audience; both he and his music are vulnerable.

I know that I should include some criticism of this concert, but I can't name one. Ed Sheeran is someone I look up to as a fellow musician. Watching him perform is a huge learning experience for me. At the end of the concert, I found myself singing along with all his fans as Sheeran made his exit.

If you ever have the chance to see Ed Sheeran live, I have only one thing to say: take me with you! ♦

by Margaux Alexander,  
La Cañada, CA

SINGER/SONGWRITER

## The Idler Wheel ... • Fiona Apple

Fiona Apple is living proof that less is truly more. In the past 18 years she has released just four albums. In today's industry, this may not seem like enough. But these four albums are certainly enough to show just how extraordinary she is. She creates captivating music with a voice that emits emotion directly into the heart of her listeners. She is not only a lyricist but a poet, and her work is explosively honest. She has no problem pointing the finger of blame at herself. She makes herself vulnerable to the audience without appearing weak or fragile. It's refreshing to hear an artist who writes with her whole heart instead of spewing meaningless rhymes.

In 2012, after seven long years, Apple released her most recent album, "The Idler Wheel Is Wiser Than the Driver of the Screw and Whipping Cords Will Serve You More Than the Ropes Will Ever Do" – a title to jar your brain and an album to tear you inside out. On this album Apple is as vulnerable as she's ever been, and the music has a lot of unique sounds.

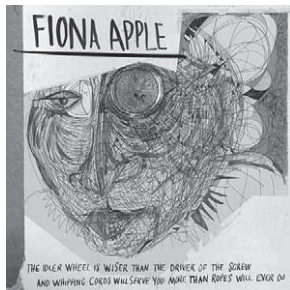
The drumming is especially experimental. On songs like "Anything We Want," it sounds as if there are pots and pans clanging to the beat. "Periphery" has a "boots scraping across pavement" sound. These alternate forms of percussion make the album captivating. "Left Alone" features a thunderous timpani, cymbals that strike like lightning, and a lively, bouncy piano riff that swirls like a tornado. The piano completely controls the mood during the album and accentuates Apple's emotion.

An outlier of the album is the final track, "Hot Knife." This song surrounds you with a waterfall

of voices singing as many as five parts at once. Apple said (in an interview with NPR) that the voices are hers as well as those of her sister, Maude Maggart. She describes the experience with her sister as a "soul picnic." There is no doubt that you can feel the electric energy between them. "Hot Knife" is also a standout track because the lyrics suggest a positive love story, unlike the majority of tracks, which express resentment and anger on the subject.

Fiona Apple sets a high standard for other artists and poets. She deserves much more recognition for the phenomenal work she has produced, and her fourth album only shows a fraction of her genius. ♦

by Izzy Dupuis, Portland, CT



Her work is explosively honest

ALT. ROCK

## Devotion • Anberlin

The title of Anberlin's newest release is a perfect description of their approach to making music. Released a year ago, "Devotion" is an extension of their previous record, "Vital." That being said, don't expect "Vital" with bigger muscles. The iTunes version of "Devotion" comes with a bonus disc of remixes and a live concert in Brooklyn. There are six new songs on the main disc, and every one is a modern treasure. The intensity in "Vital" is a prominent part of the album, and "Devotion" carries on this energy perfectly.

Established as an alternative rock band in 2002, Anberlin has released six albums in addition to "Devotion." Their earliest have a strong rock vibe with few electronic sounds. However, since "New Surrender" was released in 2008, they have included more electronic elements. Despite this change, the band has stayed true to their roots, focusing on guitars and vocals.

Vocalist and main composer Stephen Christian is, in my opinion, one of the greatest music writers of today. His lyrics are meaningful, describing common struggles in society, relationships, and faith. The power in his voice accentuates the lyrics and sends chills down my spine.

"Devotion" begins with one of the best songs to pump you up, "Self-Starter." The rapid pace is a thrill ride for the senses that sets the stage for the rest of the album. I love the guitar solo in "Little Tyrants"; it is one of the coolest and most forceful sections of any

song. "Someone Anyone" is a plea against meaningless wars and how they affect people. It stands out as an inspirational song.

The new tracks are incredible as well, and I find them the best part. "Unstable" makes you feel on edge with gradually increasing intensity on the drums and powerful lyrics. If you want a song about American greed, look no further than "Dead American." "Safe Here" has an amazing beat, as well as lyrics that see into the struggle and neglect of the

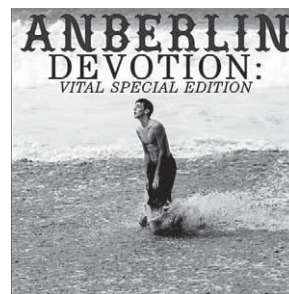
poor. "IJSW" (standing for "I Just Sang Whatever") has an increasing electronic intensity that fits perfectly into the album's structure. These songs truly showcase what a lyrical genius Christian is.

The other discs pale in comparison to the main one, but the Brooklyn concert is definitely a must-have for fans. It includes a version of the song "Down" from "Dark Is the Way, Light Is a Place" that seems to be better structured and have better rhythm

than the original, which was already incredible. Another great song in the concert was an all-piano version of "Dismantle.Repair." from "Cities." It makes me feel right there with him in his struggles.

"Devotion" is one of the most solid albums Anberlin has released. I would recommend it to anyone who likes alternative rock. This seems to be the start of something good for Anberlin, and I'm excited to see what is to come. ♦

by David Guardiani, Allison Park, PA



A thrill ride for the senses

FICTION

## The Mozart Season

by Virginia Euwer Wolff

**T**he *Mozart Season* is a surprisingly brief book about Allegra Leah Shapiro, an outstanding young violinist. She has been selected as a finalist for a competition where she must play a Mozart concerto, but this honor comes with great sacrifice. Allegra must spend her entire summer studying the concerto, attempting to play its most accurate version to honor its composer, young Mozart.

During the summer, Allegra evolves not only into a more respected musician but also into a more sophisticated, mature, and confident individual. She experiences repercussions of her Jewish ancestry and its legacy on her, and struggles to commemorate a piece and its composer instead of overpowering them. She encounters an odd woman who helps her initiate her endless journey to find herself, as well as a lost man restlessly seeking his lost song.

Although I found this book thought-provoking, it was also tedious. I couldn't stand Allegra and the slow progress made in both her music and the development of her thoughts. This book was hard to grasp, and I was easily distracted from it. I felt that Virginia Euwer Wolff lacked the strength and will to engage the reader in the story or the evolution of its plot and characters.

I take my hat off to Wolff for the clever way in which she plays with words, and the way she Capitalizes Some Words is rather amusing. I also relished her use of italics, and I must give credit to the author for taking her time to describe and define musical terms to help the reader keep up with Allegra's advanced knowledge of music. This added polish to the story. But despite witty word choices and a great message to the reader, Wolff didn't manage to thread these fine ideas into a captivating plot.

My verdict? *The Mozart Season* is a fine, thought-provoking book, but undeniably not one of my favorites. ♦

by Magdiel Amell, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

NOVEL

## Someday, Someday Maybe

by Lauren Graham

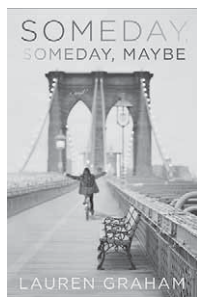
**I** will be honest: I wanted to read this book because Lauren Graham, who played Lorelai on "Gilmore Girls," wrote it. I have watched her on television and in movies for as long as I can remember, but had no idea she was a writer. I was quickly engrossed in this story of the ups and downs of the New York acting world.

*Someday, Someday Maybe* is the story of Franny Banks, a struggling actress in New York City, with just six months left of the three-year deadline she gave herself to succeed. So far, all she has to show for her efforts are an ad for ugly Christmas sweaters and a degrading waitressing job.

Life is heavy. Literature is heavy. Yet, this book is a light and incred-

ibly fun read. I could not have been happier I picked up this book.

This is chick lit at its finest: an uplifting story of what it takes to achieve your heart's desires. Graham writes with passion, soul, and honesty – not to mention, she's hilarious.



**A light and incredibly fun read**

If you are a fan of Lauren Graham the actress, be prepared to be a fan of Lauren Graham the author. *Someday, Someday Maybe* received a Goodreads Choice Award nomination for Best Fiction in 2013, and a TV adaptation is planned.

I'm looking forward to another book by Graham; one will be released someday, someday maybe. ♦

by Josh Tennant, Lemont, IL

NOVEL

## Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore

by Robin Sloan

**I**n *Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore*, author Robin Sloan does an outstanding job creating a world thriving under the nose of today's society. He also rewards his readers with an unforgettable journey that combines scholarly culture with new technologies. His writing style exceeded my expectations, especially when it came to describing settings and giving the protagonist a consistent voice throughout the novel.

This book smoothly connects aspects of real, ordinary life to the idea that an underground society of bookworms and puzzle solvers exists in the heart of New York and in bookstores around the world. The reader is immersed in a centuries-old struggle, but the narrative maintains a 21st-century setting with modern technology.

This book also contains a great deal of humor, from Dungeons and Dragons references to simple situational comedy and

misunderstandings. It is enjoyable and takes the reader on a journey to eternal life and back.

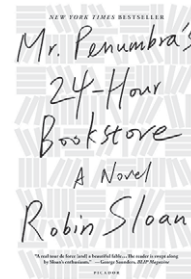
Sloan uses imagery to paint vivid pictures in the reader's mind, whether it's

Mr. Penumbra's blue eyes and gray pea coat or the cave-like underground library where members of the Unbroken Spine study to find the secrets to everlasting life. Above all this literary artistry, the author maintains a distinct voice for Clay, the main character, showing his reactions, ideas, and emotions.

When I read this book, I felt like I was right beside Clay, unearthing the secrets of the Unbroken Spine and cracking the codes of old philosophers. *Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore* is a must-

read, especially if you are looking for a feel-good plot that challenges outdated knowledge and our modern-day society's take on eternal life. ♦

by Lexi Boden, Scottsdale, AZ



**The reader is immersed in a centuries-old struggle**

GRAPHIC

## Maus: A Survivor's Tale

by Art Spiegelman

**I**n Art Spiegelman's introduction to his illustrated novella, he includes Adolf Hitler's quote, "The Jews are undoubtedly a race, but they are not human."

This is the perfect incentive for Spiegelman's pictorial interpretation of his father's Holocaust experience, drawn with Jews depicted as mice and Nazis as menacing cats. What makes *Maus* atypical compared to other Holocaust stories is that it's a graphic novel, but what makes it worthwhile is Spiegelman's personal interpretation of the story of his father, Vladek.

Spiegelman begins his father's tale long before World War II, against Vladek's request, delving into his early love life and marriage. The story is told in flashbacks so amazingly thorough and intricate that it makes *Maus* difficult to put down. Every box is drawn with such care and precision, it's obvious that Spiegelman is committed to portraying his father's experience as accurately as possible. He documents everything from Vladek's marriage to his capture and time in Auschwitz. Spiegelman also includes scenes of himself and his father bonding over coffee and dinner made by Vladek's second wife, Mala.



**Unforgettable memoir**

It's wonderful to watch Spiegelman and his father's relationship revive through these stories. That's what brings *Maus* to life and makes it so sincere and three-dimensional. The book is wildly dramatic and heart-breaking at times, but also filled with small bursts of humor.

In the beginning, Vladek secretly throws away his son's coat because he thinks it's shameful for the child of a Holocaust survivor to wear such a shabby jacket. Vladek has very abnormal and old-fashioned ideals, and it's entertaining to see his son try to please him.

*Maus* is an unforgettable memoir that is perfectly paired with a cup of coffee and a free afternoon. Who knows if Spiegelman wrote it to reconnect with his father, learn his story, or understand the mild antagonism between them, but the result is a sentimental and captivating tale. ♦

by Elena Siamas, Seattle, WA



# The Final Sunset

by Alanis Baumgardner, Barnegat, NJ

I always loved to watch the sunset; I loved the way the blue would blend with the purples and pinks, turning the sky into a canvas. For hours I'd watch as nature became da Vinci and the sky the *Mona Lisa*. Soon the pastels would fade to black, and the stars would return to the sky. It was a cycle that always intrigued me.

Even now, when the sky was no longer the beautiful array of colors, I still loved the sunset. As the dirty yellow meshed with green, I continued to see the artist at work. The palette was just a little different. Then, when the night came and the stars refused to shine, I still found beauty in it.

That was the one damn amazing thing about me: I could find beauty in anything. In the iron skeletons of cities, I always spotted the green grass poking up through the remains. Even the animals, now hairless and deformed, were thriving and reproducing. The radios still broadcast the news, sometimes a song or two. People were rebuilding.

I guess that was why I had such a fascination with Ashton. He was in no way conventionally beautiful. His face was covered in burns and gashes. Chunks were missing from his arms, and his left third toe was gone. He wasn't buff or an alpha male. Hell, he was the middle child, nothing special. But he made a mean sandwich, so I guess that was why I stuck around. I mean, once you got past the walking corpse look, he was kinda cute.

• • •  
"Ava, it's getting late," Ashton called from the shelter, his voice breaking the silence of the night.

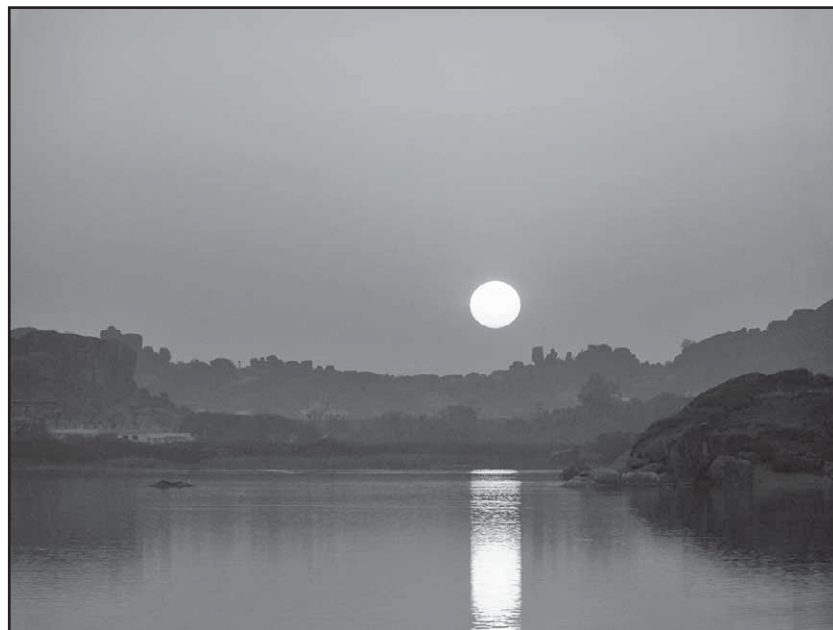


Photo by Shravya Goteti, Hyderabad, India

*"Spending  
the end of the  
world with you  
wasn't so bad"*

"Can I have five more minutes?" I asked.

"I'm not your mother. If you wanna stay out longer in the radiation, be my guest."

"Save me a sandwich. I'll be in soon."

I heard the door slam, so I knew he was back inside. The radiation was always a problem. It wasn't like the piles of bodies or ruined houses; you couldn't avoid it. Radiation was in

every breath, every tear, and every word. Everyone suffered from exposure to it, but I had gotten an especially raw deal. My house had been close to the blast site, sending millions of waves through me. The medic said it was an act of God that I survived. I said it was the act of me crawling into my basement.

Either way, I had to take these stupid pills every day. The government had issued medicine for those who were the most affected. They were small, white, and tasted of burning flesh. Don't ask how I know what that tastes like. This is the end of the world, remember?

The sky was fully black before I decided to head back into the shelter.

Our shelter was ... functional at best. We fixed up an old ranch to the best of our ability. Seeing that we could only use what we could steal from abandoned houses, I thought we did pretty well. The roof was starting to cave, and the walls were smashed in and dirty, but it was home.

"Did you ever manage to reach Dave?" Ashton asked as he handed me a sandwich.

Dave Ross was the local "pharmacist," if you could call him that. He basically stole as much medicine as

possible from the Red Cross and gave it to those who were too poor to afford it. Dave was the post-apocalyptic Robin Hood.

"Nah, he wasn't at the post," I responded, taking a bite of sandwich. "Don't worry, dude. He'll be there tomorrow and I can pick up my meds then."

"First, chew, then talk. Two, it's risky not to have your meds." He took a breath. "And three, I'm not your damn mother."

"I'll be fine, Mom," I reassured him.

He sent a glare my way.

When the sun rose the next day, I decided to head out to the post. It was a few miles away and traveling at night was dangerous, so I needed a head start. After throwing some food into a backpack, I set out.

I got about twenty feet before I heard the door to the shelter slam shut.

"Hey, you wanna wait up?" Ashton yelled, running to me.

"I didn't want to interrupt your beauty sleep."

"Very funny," he responded as he caught up with me.

I waited for him to catch his breath before asking why he decided to come along. This was the millionth time I had gone to the post. The route was practically engraved into my mind.

"You haven't had your medicine. It makes me nervous, you traveling alone and all."

"Dude, stop worrying."

"I'm not your mother. I'm not worrying."

I wish I could say the route was scenic. Rather, it was a barren wasteland, featuring dirt and sand with special guest, dust. The air was always quiet, never a chirp or tweet. Every once in a while, a rabbit came straggling along, hairless and with one ear missing. Most people would have just killed the damned things. I always left them alone in the hopes that they'd get better. Ashton let them live because he thought that if he had to live in this hell, so should they.

"Ava, isn't Dave supposed to be here?" Ashton asked, looking around. He normally came very early in the morning and stayed until late. There was no way we could have missed him.

"He might just be running late," I said. I rubbed a hand across my neck. It was unlike him.

"He better be."

We waited for hours, but there was no sign of Dave. Eventually, we set off for home, medicineless and very

scared.

Every day we checked the post. Every time we marched back empty-handed. At first I tried to be optimistic – tried to ignore how heavy my lungs had become and how hard it was to stay awake. Dave was just caught up in things, that was all. My skin would peel and my head would throb. Yet Dave was still just caught up in things. Ashton tried to find alternatives to the pills, but those herbal medicines never worked on me. It was when I started to cough up blood that I realized Dave wasn't caught up in anything.

I tried to hide it from Ashton. He could never find out that I wasn't okay. Ashton would worry too much. Eventually, he did find out. He screamed and threw a hissy fit over it.

Apparently, I wasn't allowed to keep secrets from him, because "we only have each other." I assured him I was fine. But as the weeks stretched on, I realized that I couldn't live much longer without the meds. My clock was running out.

From the minute I opened my eyes, on that Tuesday the seventh, I knew it was my last day. Something was off; my heart thumped to a different tempo. *Like a funeral procession*, I thought. Again, I didn't let Ashton know. My last day was going to be spent like any other, not covered in bubble wrap. The day wore on. I knew it was almost time.

"Hey Ashton, wanna do me a favor?"

"Anything."

"Watch the sunset with me?" I asked, as I sat down in the dirt.

He sat next to me. The sky was abnormally pretty that night. The yellows were a tad brighter and the greens a little less murky. They blended in the sky, rather than meshing together.

"Do you ever miss the old sunset?" Ashton asked, turning to face me.

"Every damn day," I said, stretching my legs out. "But I'm happy that we have a sunset at all."

Ashton made a noise of approval and returned to staring at the sky. Minutes ticked on. I felt my heart beginning to fade. Breathing was getting harder.

"I'm glad this is my last sunset."

"What?" Ashton asked, instantly stiffening.

"I'm not making it through this one, dude."

"Yes, yes you are. We can go inside. I don't know. Maybe if we find some people we can ask for –"

I cut him off. "We both know that isn't going to work." ➤ ➤

*The medic  
said it was  
an act of God  
that I survived*

# The Client

by Isabelle Mongeau, Wellesley, MA

“He wasn’t supposed to be there.”  
“Wasn’t?” I wonder, leaning back in the metal folding chair.

She hunches forward and places her hands on the metal table between us. I look her up and down. Her once-luscious blond hair – now scraggy and scruffy like a stray dog’s fur – falls behind one of her bony shoulders. Her usually painted, strikingly beautiful face is wrinkled with worry lines. Without its artificial enhancements, her skin’s as dull as old parchment paper.

“Yes.” She rubs her eyelids with her pointer finger and thumb. Her eyes – formerly a gorgeous glacier blue – have faded to pale moons.

“So why was he there?” I ask.

“I don’t know. He just was.”

Her look reminds me of a chubby pageant mom who’s living vicariously through her primed and shaped-into-perfection toddler. The ones on TV. Yes, that’s it. The moms who possess that brilliantly desperate sadness. And this pageant mom has traded in her jewels for a different kind of silver bracelets.

“... just came home from work,” she finishes.

I pull my consciousness back to the conversation. “You or him?”

“Well, I guess both of us. But I meant me.”

“Why were you home early?”

She focuses on her nails, peeling off a fleck of pink polish.

“You know ...” She sighs. “Teddy stopped loving me a long time ago.”

“What relevance does that have to your statement?”

“None.”

I raise an eyebrow.

“He ... he just stopped loving me.”

“You can’t stop loving a person like that.”

“Well,” she huffs, combing fingers through her hair. “I guess he never really loved me, then.”

“I’m hearing motive right now.”

“You might want to start building a case for me, not against me. When I go to prison, it’ll look bad on your record too.”

“I was just saying that it sounds like motive.” I gesture to the microphone and recorder on the table. “Why did he marry you at all? You must be pretty angry he never loved you.”

“I wasn’t angry,” she says.

“Oh?”

“I was upset, that’s for sure. I didn’t believe all those late nights at the office. You’ve seen his secretary’s skirt length. No coincidence there.”

“She is very beautiful.”

Her pale moon eyes blaze like suns.

I continue. “What are you suggesting with the secretary?”

“I did share a man with that woman.”

“And?”

“The possibility of her doing it is just as plausible as me doing it.”

“So are you confirming it’s plausible you did it?”

“No. I—” She catches herself, then breathes in.

“I’m just saying I’m not the only suspect here.”

“Are you a loose woman?”

“What?” she snaps.

“I’m just wondering if your husband was the only unfaithful spouse here.”

Her mouth drops open.

“Anyone you were keeping on the side? He could’ve gotten jealous you were wearing a ring that belonged to another man.”

“You’re repulsive.”

“I think we’re done here.” I reach across the table, flick off the microphone and recorder.

“What kind of questions were those?” she hisses.

“I can’t show bias toward my sister-in-law,” I reply, clipping my briefcase closed.

Her face softens. “You were mine, once.”

“And you were his.”

“Not anymore. You made sure of that.” ♦

*“What kind of questions were those?”*

## Not Yours

by Nicole Brownrigg,  
Ormond Beach, FL

I am not your Saturday evening, nor do I wish to be your Sunday morning. I am, however, the crisp autumn Sunday, sunny and 65 – the one you can never fully grasp, always just out of reach. I fall with the leaves and bloom in the spring. I am the spontaneous cool night in the middle of the blazing summer. I am the hurricane in late July and the shower in early April. I am not your weekly routine, for I am not yours. I do not follow my flock south in the winter, nor do I greet them in the north when spring arrives. I am the moon seen in the morning and the first star you see at night. You wish you may and wish you might, but I am the sun your thumb can’t measure with one eye shut tight. Your ignorance is not bliss when you schedule me at three-thirty on a Thursday afternoon or to take me for a night out on the town then cancel at noon. I am done being your Saturday evening and wish to be yours no more. I am not a time set and placed, one for you to scribble down last minute and crumple up later. Throw me out with last year’s planner, I do not care. I am truly my own and do not wish to share. ♦



Art by Ana Carpenter, Johnstown, OH

“We can try.”

“Ashton, we’ve tried for weeks now.”

He let out a shaky breath before looking at the sky again. Then he shut his eyes, as if trying to block out reality.

“You’re right. I’m glad this is your last sunset too.”

Silence fell over us. Words are hard to come by when you’re dying.

“You know ...” I faced him. “You make the best damn sandwiches.”

He laughed and ran a hand through his dirty hair. I almost told him that he should get it cut, but I decided that was a dumb thing to waste breath on.

“I do what I can.”

“When things get better, they should totally crown you as the apocalypse’s Top Chef.” I smiled at Ashton

and tried to ignore the wetness on my cheeks. My throat was burning, both from dying and from crying.

“As stupid as this sounds,” Ashton started, “I was looking forward to spending the end of the world with you.”

“Well, you got to spend some of it with me.”

“Yeah, I guess. I just wanted you to see society rebuild, the animals come back, me being crowned Top Chef.”

We both laughed. “I wanted you to see the sunset come back.”

“I would have loved that.”

“You can always try—”

“We tried, remember?” There was no way I could let him get his hopes

up for my survival.

He fell silent.

“If it makes you feel any better,” I said, “spending the end of the world with you wasn’t so bad.”

“Thanks. A guy can only try.”

“You know, I’m going to be fine,” I said, both to reassure myself and him. “You always worry too much.”

“Ava, I’m not your mother,” he whispered, taking my hand in his.

“I know.”

We lay back, hand in hand. The sky was almost completely black now.

My chest felt tight. I could feel my eyes starting to close.

“I’ll see you soon, Ashton. Don’t wait up.”

*“Do you ever miss the old sunset?”*

I felt his hand squeeze mine, and the sky faded out.

The funny thing is, you find out a lot after you die. Apparently, Dave was caught up in some stuff after all. Someone snitched about his free meds business and the government hunted him down. Shot him three times in the head, actually.

Ashton died a few days after me. The radiation got to his heart or something like that. They found him inside our shelter, his body worn and tired. I guess he read my mind, because his hair was significantly shorter. But they said that he died with a smile on his face, finally relieved to have left this hell.

And I think that’s beautiful. ♦



# Sentinel Origins: Simon

by Brett Bohan, Marcellus, MI

When I was six I took a boat from the harbor of Moranth and set out to sea. It took four days, but eventually my parents found me – beached on the shore a mile down the coast. When I was nine I strapped a sword to my belt for the first time and headed off into the wilderness. It took two weeks to find me, and I was near frozen and starving. When I was twelve, I went hunting with my father and nearly killed a bear. My father held me back as I wielded my sword savagely above my head, trying to break from cover. So – maybe I didn't almost kill it, but I tried.



Art by Maya St. Clair, Mundelein, IL

Now, at 15, it was time for me to head out on another adventure. This year had to be grand, a finale before I set off on my real journey when I turned eighteen.

"None of those things actually happened," Rose reprimanded me as she sat on my bed, watching me scratch my adventures into the journal before me. "Yu need to get yur head out of the clouds."

"Oh, but Rose." I gazed longingly out the window, hoping that something would stir to take me away from this place. "Ah have to spice up the story a bit. People wouldn't be interested in what ah have to say otherwise."

"A'm interested." Rose smiled reassuringly at me.

Rose and I had been friends for as long as I could remember. My father told me that we had quickly bonded because we shared auburn hair, a light

complexion, and a mess of freckles on our noses. "Don't lie about it."

"My life isn't interesting, though. It's not like the stories." I glanced over at my bookshelf, stacked with novels about great heroes. I had always wanted to be one of them – like my father, except even greater. "Life is never like the stories, though, is it?"

"Life is exactly like the stories," Rose replied as she perused my collection of books. They had been expensive, but my father was the son of a nobleman and his inheritance had been hefty. "The people who write these just take out the boring parts. Maybe yu need to just take out the boring parts."

"That's all my life is, boring parts." I sighed, staring down at the first paragraph I had written. Why couldn't that have been how I had grown up? I just wanted to be important, go on an adventure, and save the world; was that too much to ask?

"Well, yur life has had one interesting part, yu numpty." Ewan burst through the door and interrupted our conversation. He was my best friend in Moranth. "Yu met me."

"Oh, very funny, Ewan." I shook my head, and he pushed me playfully on the shoulder. "Yu're such an eejit sometimes."

"Oy!" He leapt up in defense. "Speak for yersel."

"Wheesht, yu two." Rose hushed us, and we looked at her with grins on our faces. She sighed. "If ah didn't know better ah'd think yu hated each other."

"We're just playing," Ewan said, and he stepped close to Rose. I hated when he did that. Who did he think he was? "So what are we doing?"

"Simon's writing about his adventures," Rose explained. "He just doesn't think he has any."

"That's because he doesn't. Ah come here every day and ah wonder what it is that we dae for fun." Ewan

dropped onto my bed and stretched. After a while I'd come to accept his lack of manners. It was kind of endearing, in a strange way. "Then ah waste the day doing nothing and go home. A'm tired of it. We've got to

dae something one of these days."

"That's what ah was just saying." I turned back to the nearly blank journal in front of me. It was time for a real adventure; Ewan was with me. "Rose, what dae yu think?"

"Ah think the two of yu are heid-bangers." Rose crossed her arms and glanced at our expectant faces. "But ah don't have anything better to dae."

"So, what did yu have in mind?" Ewan asked. He looked excited to get going.

"I don't know." I shrugged. Maybe that was why I never had any adventures. I could never think of any good ideas. "Maybe we could just go in the forest and the adventure will find us."

"It doesn't sound like yu really want this." Ewan eyed me skeptically. I wondered if he had an idea he wasn't telling.

"Let's go to the Maw."

Rose and I looked at each other and then back at Ewan. The Maw was what we called the inlet about half a mile down the coast. It was a cliff that overlooked the sea. Rocks jutted up from under the water and stalactites hung from the cliff above, forming a cave that vaguely resembled the mouth of a wild animal.

The Maw was taboo for the people of Moranth. We were told stories to scare us from a young age. It was said a monstrous creature guarded the area and would kill any intruders. In hindsight, the story seemed ridiculous, but it had kept us away when we were young. Even now, there was a subconscious fear that nagged us to leave the Maw alone – but we were teenagers, so that was not going to happen.

"Are yu serious?" Rose asked.

"What about the stories?"

"Yu're not really afraid of those stories are yu, Rose?" Ewan asked. "Haven't yu always wondered what was there, why we're so afraid of it?"

"Not really, no," Rose replied quickly. "Ah like being alive. Ah don't want to die this young. So no, ah haven't even had a touch of curiosity."

"It doesn't matter, Ewan," I growled, suddenly defensive, though I wasn't sure why. "If she doesn't want to come, just leave her alone."

"Fine." He shrugged. "Ah guess we'll meet up with yu afterward."

"Ah didnae say ah wasn't coming." Rose looked back and forth between our faces. "Ah just wanted to make sure yu were up to it."

"Ah knew you would." Ewan smiled, then turned to me. "Get your sword. We might need it."

The three of us made our way into the snowy forest on the outskirts of our town. Everyone knew where the Maw was; that made it easier to avoid. As we walked I could feel the adrenaline start

to rush and nerves begin to kick in. Maybe this wasn't such a good idea. No, I told myself, it's high time for an adventure.

Rose led the way, and Ewan and I walked a bit behind her. "Now that's a bonnie lass, eh?" Ewan nudged me with his elbow, and for some reason my face flushed.

"Yeah, ah guess," I replied quietly, staring at Rose. "But yu wouldn't want a girl like her, would yu?"

"What do yu mean?" Ewan asked, his voice little more than a whisper so Rose wouldn't hear.

"A girl that's smarter than yu." I turned to Ewan and grinned. He didn't

grin back.

"Hawl?! Yu take that back, yu bawface." Ewan pushed me down into the snow, and I couldn't help but laugh. Then he stopped, as though he realized my statement was correct.

"Ah think we're here," Ewan said, and I turned to look over my shoulder. It looked like many of the other inlets along the western coast. Something about the cliff face seemed ominous, though. No one said anything, but we all felt it.

Ewan helped me to my feet, and we walked to the edge of the cliff and looked over. It was a long drop to the spikes that would mean sure death. My fear resurged, and I looked to Ewan to see how he was fairing. His eyes were shining, and he was smiling.

"So how do we get down?" I asked. We couldn't just jump, but I was not sure of my ability to climb >>



Art by Kian McKeown, New York, NY

*I strapped a sword to my belt and headed into the wilderness*

# Just a Little Broken Wing

by Jodie Poole, Goldston, NC

James's mother was going to kill him. He was supposed to be home at three, and it was already six. He glared at Scott, who had gotten them lost in the first place. Of course, Scott had no worries. His father left when he was five, and his mother was always drunk. He did as he pleased.

"C'mon ... we need to find our way home!" James pleaded, looking nervously at the sun as it began to set.

"Relax, you pansy. We're having fun!" Scott

picked up a long stick and bashed it across a tree. Apparently, that was fun for him, but James didn't understand.

"Look, my mom is going to freak. I need to get home!" James said, stepping in front of his friend, and blocking his path.

Scott rolled his eyes and dropped the stick. "Bro, you need to forget about her sometimes. Having fun comes with consequences," he said, walking around James.

James turned around quickly. "You don't have to worry about consequences because your mom doesn't care about you!"

Scott suddenly stopped walking, and James instantly regretted what he had said. Silence passed for the next few seconds.

"Dude, there's a bird," Scott said finally.

James tilted his head and squinted, as if it would help him understand.

"What?" he asked.

"There's a bird," Scott repeated, kneeling.

James gaped. "I thought you stopped walking to beat the crud outta me for

saying that about your mother," he admitted.

"Nah, man. I know she doesn't care. Check out this bird. I think it's hurt."

James stepped around his friend to get a better look. The bird was indeed hurt. Its wing was bent awkwardly. It chirped angrily at them, feeling threatened.

"What do we do?" James asked.

"Let's take it to your mom," Scott said, his eyes not leaving the bird.

James looked at him in disbelief.

"Why would we do that?"

Scott shrugged. "Don'tcha think it would take her mind off you being late?" he said calmly.

James thought for a moment. Would his mother really be distracted? "Okay, it's worth a shot," he said finally.

Scott picked up the bird, which was still squawking uncontrollably, then started walking in the opposite direction.

They walked in silence for a few moments before Scott spoke up.

"Hey, man, don't worry about your mom. If she actually tries to kill you we can run away together," he said, looking straight ahead.

James looked over at his friend. Scott wasn't as much of a bad boy as he played. ♦



Photo by Tirzah Meditz, Austin, TX

*"Dude,  
there's a bird"*

*We were face  
to face with  
the beast of  
the Maw*

*It was over  
nine feet tall,  
and it seemed  
hungry*

down either. It seemed like we had come all this way for nothing – or maybe I was starting to back out.

"Ah guess we climb," Ewan answered. He crouched and looked for a place to clamber down the rock wall.

"Or we could just take this path."

Ewan and I looked at Rose, who was standing at the beginning of a path that headed down the sheer wall. I laughed, and Ewan glared at me. "Come on, you two."

Rose took the lead again as we walked single file along the frighteningly thin path. One misstep would mean death. The snow was so high there was no way to judge where to step.

"This is so much better than staying home!" Ewan was shaking with excitement, or maybe it was the cold. "We should dae this more oft--"

Ewan took a step and didn't find purchase. Rose and I watched as one leg slid out from under him and then the rest of his body followed. I grabbed hold of one wrist and Rose just barely caught the other. The weight jerked us, but we somehow remained standing.

"Rose, let go of him," I ordered, and Ewan's head snapped to look at me. I finally saw the fear in his eyes I had been looking for. "Ewan, you have to trust me. Rose, let go."

Rose let go and the weight became a

little heavier. I grabbed Ewan's opposite wrist with my other hand and pulled him up next to us. My extraordinary build had finally come in handy.

"Yu scared me for a minute there." Ewan was lying in the snow, breathing heavily. "Ah thought yu were going to drop me."

"It crossed my mind." I laughed.

We continued down the path. Finally we reached the bottom without further incident. We walked along the ice toward the Maw. From this vantage point it was

more terrifying than I had imagined. I was worried that the stalactites would fall at any minute and the mouth close around us.

Eventually the ice gave way to a rocky beach where the cliff wall had been carved. Rose, Ewan, and I stared into the darkness before us: the esophagus, I supposed, of the Maw. That was where we would find our creature, if there was one.

"So who wants to go first?" I asked. They both looked at me, and I sighed. "Fine."

I drew my blade and took a few cautious steps into the cave. I could barely see a few feet in front of me. If there was a monster in here, we wouldn't know until it was right in front of us.

"Maybe this wasn't such a good idea," Ewan finally admitted. "We

could go back."

"Yu're not giving up now," I answered, sidling forward.

Eventually the three of us emerged into a room. Dim light filtered in from somewhere, just enough for us to see that there was no way out except the way we had come. There was a frozen pool in the center, and many nondescript jutting rocks accounted for the rest of the scene.

"Is that it?" Ewan brushed past me, not believing this could possibly be all the Maw held. "That's anticlimactic."

Then, only a few feet from Ewan, something moved. It had appeared to be a rock to our weakened eyesight, but now we could see it was a large mass of fur. Ewan took a few steps back as the beast rose to its full height. It looked something like a bear, but on its hind legs it was over nine feet tall, and it seemed hungry.

"What dae we dae?" Ewan yelled. He had gotten his wish; we were now face to face with the beast of the Maw.

"Ah don't know! Run?" I replied. Everyone seemed to think that was a good idea. We turned and sprinted toward the exit, but the beast caught us with little trouble, knocking Ewan off his feet.

As it loomed over Ewan, Rose and I came to a skidding halt. It was about ready to dig in when I stabbed my

sword into its side. It roared and swung one of its front legs at me, knocking me off my feet. The beast seemed more annoyed than anything else as it turned its attention to me.

I saw my only defense sticking out of its side and recognized my defeat. "Get out of here!" I shouted to my companions. "There's nothing yu can dae!"

Then a rock flew and hit the beast in the snout. It turned and looked at Rose, who was preparing to throw another. "What are yu doing?" I shouted, getting to my feet and ramming the beast to get its attention. I felt like I had run into a wall, but somehow I managed to knock it from its feet.

"Saving yur life," Rose answered as Ewan drew my sword from the beast's flesh. It turned toward Ewan, and he drove my sword through its eye. It fell over, dead.

When we got back to town the three of us looked at each other and started to laugh in hysteria. "I think that's enough adventure for now." I smiled as I opened the door of my house.

My dad was sitting by the fireplace drinking. I could only guess what was in the mug. He glanced at us. "So, what did yu dae today?"

I looked at Ewan and then at Rose. We wanted to smile but couldn't give it away. "Oh, yu know ..." I turned back to my father. "Nothing much." ♦



# Carrot Soup

by Anna Zakelj, West Branch, IA

Her name was Alice, and instead of talking with humans, she made friends with objects in her apartment. She shared one-sided conversations with a glass canning jar, sometimes filling it with water to drink as they talked. There was a particular paper clip that she kept in the same spot on her desk and greeted each morning. A blue pillow on her couch and the aloe plant she tried to tell herself was still alive kept her company as well. She had given each of her inanimate friends a voice and made up their replies to her questions. She chatted contentedly with them, changing her voice from one to the other.

Every morning she got up early and made herself oatmeal in a yellow mug that fit perfectly in her hands. Together they sang soft morning songs as she ate. After washing the

she had watched so many times she could recite every word. Sometimes she would say just the lines of one character, feeling as though she was conversing with the other people.

She only ventured outside the walls of her apartment to buy groceries,

and then she kept her eyes glued downward and her lips sealed, never making polite conversation, even with the friendliest of cashiers. She went about hoping not to be noticed, to mix invisibly into the

blend of walking feet and swinging hair. After these brief ventures out, the apartment always felt wonderfully warm and comforting. Sometimes when she got home, she would sit in silence for hours on the couch.

One day her phone rang. The noise jolted Alice, interrupting a conversation she was having with her aloe plant. She let it ring. She continued

discussing a book that she'd read and, after recommending it to the plant, left it lying open on the windowsill so the aloe could read. The couch pillow squashed behind Alice's back felt rather excluded, as it had read the book one day when it had been left, pages open, on the couch. The pillow tried to interject muffled opinions in a high-pitched voice that grew more and more like Alice's the more excited it got.

"But love!" it

screamed. "She gave up love."

The voice grew louder in an attempt to drown out the phone's ringing. "She was too frightened of what might happen to think about the possibilities of what could have been."

Soon the voice had given up any pretense of belonging to the pillow. It was Alice's voice now, and as it rang out, hollow in the room, she realized the emptiness around her. She leaned back hard against the pillow, as if to smother it and stared at the aloe. It was the single living – or once living – thing in the apartment, aside from herself and the foggy mold creeping around a block of cheese in the fridge.

She sat hunched and crying, and fell asleep slumped on the floor, the pillow clutched to her chest.

The pillow followed her into her dreams. It ran weirdly forward, proffering a hand. When she turned to run, her foot landed on something small and soft. She lifted it to see a

frog smashed and bloodied on the pavement. Her bare feet tingled with the feeling of it between her toes. Her face was wet and there was something she had forgotten to do. She looked at the pillow, who gingerly picked up a pair of the frog's ribs and began wrapping them tightly together with a piece of string. She waited, wondering what she had forgotten. It was something very important, something she needed. She was sure of that.

Quietly, the two bones morphed into a table with candles and glasses of wine and bowls of carrot soup. "Yes, I would love to have dinner with you," said the pillow, who was now a man in a suit. "Thank you very much for asking." Then he began to scream over and over until Alice awoke and picked up the ringing telephone.

"Hello?" she coughed.

"Hello," said a male monotone.

"I'm calling to tell you about a great new deal you can get because of your credit scores."

"I think," whispered Alice. "I think I'm supposed to ask you ... would you come to my house tomorrow for dinner?" There was no answer. Only breathing assured her that there was still someone on the other end of the call. "I believe I'll make carrot soup."

"Excuse me—"

She cut him off. "Do you have a pen?" She dictated her address and then added, for good measure, "If you come, I'll buy whatever it is you're selling." Her finger shook as she pressed the little red button that said "End."

She spent the next day learning to make carrot soup. She grated ginger, the juice dripping down her arms and running off her elbows in a spicy stream. While looking for a mixing bowl, she unearthed an ancient bag of coconut in the bottom of a cupboard. She tried recipe after recipe, sipping tastes and conversing with her glass jar.

Cooking for other people was foreign to her, and she wasn't accustomed to following recipes. The teaspoon measure managed

to evade her and the tablespoon was missing its handle. Three pots boiled on the stove, all with different attempts at the perfect flavor. She brought her pillow in from the living room and held it over the soups so that the steamy aroma could soak into its woven skin. One smelled slightly burned and another had an odd color. Together they decided that although the coconut tasted slightly like the bottom of a cupboard, its flavor was the most delicious when mixed with the carrots. She hid the other attempts

in the fridge and ran to her room to get dressed.

The bed favored a simple black dress, but her stick of deodorant preferred a flowered skirt. They argued for a while, voices rising, until Alice was in nervous giggles on the floor. In the end, she went with the bed, thinking it was the more tasteful of the two. Later she would bake the deodorant some cookies to make up for her snub.

The soup went into her nicest bowls, and she set them on the table along with candles and glasses of wine. Then she tucked her hair behind her ears, slipped off her socks and pushed them under the couch in a pretense of cleanliness. She walked around the kitchen and pinched herself every time she glanced at the clock.

He was late. Quite late. She considered curling up on the floor and letting her tears soak the carpet. She knew he wouldn't come, but there was still the possibility.

At nine o'clock she poured the soup down the drain and the wine into her own mouth. The two bowls lay empty and forgotten in the sink as she fell into a mess of blankets, fully clothed. She did not dream, but woke often, hands clammy and feet constricted in angry sheets.

At ten the next morning she pulled herself from bed and stumbled to the couch to retrieve her hidden socks, which she slid, inside out, onto her feet. She retrieved one of the rejected soups from the fridge and ate it cold, sitting on the kitchen floor. She poured a little into the aloe plant in an effort to revive it.

The sun streamed through the window, twining around the stem of an empty wine glass and illuminating the burgundy puddle at the bottom. She looked at the aloe's withered shoots and the soup turning a dry dirt orange. Unthinking, she took the potted plant

in her hands and – confidence filling her chest with unaccustomed strength – threw it down on the cold linoleum, where it broke into shards of red clay and black dirt. She sat down

among the mess, next to crumpled leaves and jagged edges, to think.

The phone rang and she picked it up. "Hi, I'm Rachel," said the voice. "Do you have student loans? If so, I can help—"

"Wait," Alice said.

The voice stuttered to a stop.

Alice gathered her courage into a warm ball in her throat, and, with a gulp of air, blurted into the static of the woman's breath, "Do you like carrot soup?" ♦



Photo by Karlin Jensen, Abbotsford, BC, Canada

dishes she would dress and talk to her toothbrush, her voice muffled by its bristles as she brushed. Sometimes they discussed the weather or the news, her plans for the day, or what to make for dinner. She found that the toothbrush always advised her well.

Her life had a schedule that she wrote down on a yellow legal pad with a pen whom she found especially easy to talk to. She worked at her desk writing instruction manuals for the assembly of household appliances. She liked the work, mainly because she could do it from home. She liked the idea of her words being read by so many people, and because she had discovered that they were not edited, she sometimes snuck in little notes to whoever bought the appliances.

At four o'clock she snacked while reading a book, and after that she swept the floors and cleaned the windows before starting dinner, which was usually a sandwich eaten in front of a movie. Often the movie was one

**He was late.  
Quite late.**

# Carrot Soup

by Anna Zakelj, West Branch, IA

Her name was Alice, and instead of talking with humans, she made friends with objects in her apartment. She shared one-sided conversations with a glass canning jar, sometimes filling it with water to drink as they talked. There was a particular paper clip that she kept in the same spot on her desk and greeted each morning. A blue pillow on her couch and the aloe plant she tried to tell herself was still alive kept her company as well. She had given each of her inanimate friends a voice and made up their replies to her questions. She chatted contentedly with them, changing her voice from one to the other.

Every morning she got up early and made herself oatmeal in a yellow mug that fit perfectly in her hands. Together they sang soft morning songs as she ate. After washing the

she had watched so many times she could recite every word. Sometimes she would say just the lines of one character, feeling as though she was conversing with the other people.

She only ventured outside the walls of her apartment to buy groceries,

and then she kept her eyes glued downward and her lips sealed, never making polite conversation, even with the friendliest of cashiers. She went about hoping not to be noticed, to mix invisibly into the

blend of walking feet and swinging hair. After these brief ventures out, the apartment always felt wonderfully warm and comforting. Sometimes when she got home, she would sit in silence for hours on the couch.

One day her phone rang. The noise jolted Alice, interrupting a conversation she was having with her aloe plant. She let it ring. She continued

discussing a book that she'd read and, after recommending it to the plant, left it lying open on the windowsill so the aloe could read. The couch pillow squashed behind Alice's back felt rather excluded, as it had read the book one day when it had been left, pages open, on the couch. The pillow tried to interject muffled opinions in a high-pitched voice that grew more and more like Alice's the more excited it got.

"But love!" it

screamed. "She gave up love."

The voice grew louder in an attempt to drown out the phone's ringing. "She was too frightened of what might happen to think about the possibilities of what could have been."

Soon the voice had given up any pretense of belonging to the pillow. It was Alice's voice now, and as it rang out, hollow in the room, she realized the emptiness around her. She leaned back hard against the pillow, as if to smother it and stared at the aloe. It was the single living – or once living – thing in the apartment, aside from herself and the foggy mold creeping around a block of cheese in the fridge.

She sat hunched and crying, and fell asleep slumped on the floor, the pillow clutched to her chest.

The pillow followed her into her dreams. It ran weirdly forward, proffering a hand. When she turned to run, her foot landed on something small and soft. She lifted it to see a

frog smashed and bloodied on the pavement. Her bare feet tingled with the feeling of it between her toes. Her face was wet and there was something she had forgotten to do. She looked at the pillow, who gingerly picked up a pair of the frog's ribs and began wrapping them tightly together with a piece of string. She waited, wondering what she had forgotten. It was something very important, something she needed. She was sure of that.

Quietly, the two bones morphed into a table with candles and glasses of wine and bowls of carrot soup. "Yes, I would love to have dinner with you," said the pillow, who was now a man in a suit. "Thank you very much for asking." Then he began to scream over and over until Alice awoke and picked up the ringing telephone.

"Hello?" she coughed.

"Hello," said a male monotone.

"I'm calling to tell you about a great new deal you can get because of your credit scores."

"I think," whispered Alice. "I think I'm supposed to ask you ... would you come to my house tomorrow for dinner?" There was no answer. Only breathing assured her that there was still someone on the other end of the call. "I believe I'll make carrot soup."

"Excuse me—"

She cut him off. "Do you have a pen?" She dictated her address and then added, for good measure, "If you come, I'll buy whatever it is you're selling." Her finger shook as she pressed the little red button that said "End."

She spent the next day learning to make carrot soup. She grated ginger, the juice dripping down her arms and running off her elbows in a spicy stream. While looking for a mixing bowl, she unearthed an ancient bag of coconut in the bottom of a cupboard. She tried recipe after recipe, sipping tastes and conversing with her glass jar.

Cooking for other people was foreign to her, and she wasn't accustomed to following recipes. The teaspoon measure managed

to evade her and the tablespoon was missing its handle. Three pots boiled on the stove, all with different attempts at the perfect flavor. She brought her pillow in from the living room and held it over the soups so that the steamy aroma could soak into its woven skin. One smelled slightly burned and another had an odd color. Together they decided that although the coconut tasted slightly like the bottom of a cupboard, its flavor was the most delicious when mixed with the carrots. She hid the other attempts

in the fridge and ran to her room to get dressed.

The bed favored a simple black dress, but her stick of deodorant preferred a flowered skirt. They argued for a while, voices rising, until Alice was in nervous giggles on the floor. In the end, she went with the bed, thinking it was the more tasteful of the two. Later she would bake the deodorant some cookies to make up for her snub.

The soup went into her nicest bowls, and she set them on the table along with candles and glasses of wine. Then she tucked her hair behind her ears, slipped off her socks and pushed them under the couch in a pretense of cleanliness. She walked around the kitchen and pinched herself every time she glanced at the clock.

He was late. Quite late. She considered curling up on the floor and letting her tears soak the carpet. She knew he wouldn't come, but there was still the possibility.

At nine o'clock she poured the soup down the drain and the wine into her own mouth. The two bowls lay empty and forgotten in the sink as she fell into a mess of blankets, fully clothed. She did not dream, but woke often, hands clammy and feet constricted in angry sheets.

At ten the next morning she pulled herself from bed and stumbled to the couch to retrieve her hidden socks, which she slid, inside out, onto her feet. She retrieved one of the rejected soups from the fridge and ate it cold, sitting on the kitchen floor. She poured a little into the aloe plant in an effort to revive it.

The sun streamed through the window, twining around the stem of an empty wine glass and illuminating the burgundy puddle at the bottom. She looked at the aloe's withered shoots and the soup turning a dry dirt orange. Unthinking, she took the potted plant

in her hands and – confidence filling her chest with unaccustomed strength – threw it down on the cold linoleum, where it broke into shards of red clay and black dirt. She sat down

among the mess, next to crumpled leaves and jagged edges, to think.

The phone rang and she picked it up. "Hi, I'm Rachel," said the voice. "Do you have student loans? If so, I can help—"

"Wait," Alice said.

The voice stuttered to a stop.

Alice gathered her courage into a warm ball in her throat, and, with a gulp of air, blurted into the static of the woman's breath, "Do you like carrot soup?" ♦



Photo by Karlin Jensen, Abbotsford, BC, Canada

dishes she would dress and talk to her toothbrush, her voice muffled by its bristles as she brushed. Sometimes they discussed the weather or the news, her plans for the day, or what to make for dinner. She found that the toothbrush always advised her well.

Her life had a schedule that she wrote down on a yellow legal pad with a pen whom she found especially easy to talk to. She worked at her desk writing instruction manuals for the assembly of household appliances. She liked the work, mainly because she could do it from home. She liked the idea of her words being read by so many people, and because she had discovered that they were not edited, she sometimes snuck in little notes to whoever bought the appliances.

At four o'clock she snacked while reading a book, and after that she swept the floors and cleaned the windows before starting dinner, which was usually a sandwich eaten in front of a movie. Often the movie was one

**He was late.  
Quite late.**



# Babushka

by Jessica Li, Livingston, NJ

I don't know if she would have wanted it in a church. That being said, I suppose I didn't know her that well, and the emotion in me can't really be described as sad, and I'm standing here in off-black (yes, there is such a thing), holding unholy water in a white plastic cup. Dad says *shh* to Ivan as he shifts from leg to leg, the antsy nine-year-old that he is, and even though his face is solemn, I know what he really wants to do is hop on that plane and go back to his "COD 3."

Two weeks before, we got the quivering call from Uncle Andrei. "Are you drunk calling me again?" Dad had yapped, muting Sunday night football.

"Mamochka," he wept, loud enough for the whole house to hear. "She's dead."

My parents had always been rather indifferent, but I was surprised by the quiet, almost cold calculation of their reaction. They swiftly reserved four airplane tickets, bought me a black dress on sale at Macy's, and called off their work for "personal reasons." While death was emotionally taxing, clearly it could be economically efficient.

My first reaction was about missing school. Ivan's was about missing video games. I thought about the calculus test on Tuesday, *Oh my GOD Mr. Reesely is going to kill me. Maybe I can get an extension on the English paper.* This was for a split second, and then the world regrouped on its axis and I thought *oh*.

So we flew to Belyov, Russia, Dad's hometown. Dad tried to write a semi-decent eulogy, his sleep-deprived eyes fluttering shut every few minutes, often muttering "s\*\*\*" under his breath, spilling green tea all over his lap. My mother slept, Ivan watched movies, and I tried to remember my grandmother.

My father's native language is foreign to me, but I knew Babushka swore heavily and wore large cloaks that weighed down her shoulders. She was the kind of person who made cynical comments from the corner of a room. "She's a firecracker of a woman," Aunt Nina had said the last time we visited, which was more than five years ago. She had said more, but the memories were blurry, and besides, I had to order dinners from the flight attendant and make sure my father didn't stab himself with his pen.

Yesterday was the wake, when we got to see the body. She was not "an angel in a casket," as the priest politely offered, but emaciated, weak, small. Paper-thin veins trailed her closed eyelids, and her chest was eerily still. She was not the woman who flicked Ivan on the forehead for breaking a plate or who made the gooiest *syrniki* I had ever tasted. She was a corpse.

Now I'm standing in the local church again, and it's nice but it's suffocating, and relatives who might as well be complete strangers are milling around. I'm obligated to say hello.

"Anna, it's been so long!" A woman with yellowing teeth and a mothball aroma throws her arms around my neck. "How old are you now, *daragaya*? Twenty-two?"

"I'm seventeen," I say in broken Russian. More old family members and friends come up to me, surrounding me like an armada of bees. I spy Aunt Nina in the front pew and Uncle Andrei in the last pew, their backs silent and black. I wish I

could go up, say something, anything – but if that was in my ability, I would say something to my grandmother's rotting body, and that's not something I can do. Not in the mother tongue, at least. Not with paltry snippets of something imitating memories.

"Ahem," the priest coughs. The crowd around me disperses. I sit next to Dad, who's fidgeting.

The priest says a bunch of things in rapid Russian, stuff about God, the afterlife. His back is straight and his head slants down respectfully, and the people nod. "Ye," some guy with no teeth calls.

And soon it's time for Dad to say his remarks, his crumpled eulogy in his sweaty hands. Apparently, he was the "best with words" and could most eloquently express the mourning of the whole family. He speaks slowly, deliberately.

"Mamochka was not just my mother, but a wife, caregiver, sage, and friend to all," he says. His shaking voice fills the empty spaces of the hall. "She offered us guidance, tolerance, respect, and most of all, love. She was a woman not afraid to voice her opinions, not afraid to try new opportunities. She—"

The door swings open. We look around to see a swaggering old man with flies buzzing around his head. He's got ruddy cheeks and an odor I can smell from the front. Two old ladies in pearl necklaces gasp.

(It's worth noting now that we didn't bother to spend money on any kind of security. Maybe we were honoring Babushka's tenet of frugality?)

Andrei and Dad rush to grab him by his arms and pull him out, but he's not leaving without a fight. His muddy boots trail a path on the red carpet. "No," he shouts, swinging his empty Baltika bottle like a torpedo. "It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter," he chants like a mantra, his eyes shut. After some time, he allows himself to be thrown out the door.

Dad wraps up his final words. The relatives wipe their last tears. The service ends quickly. Ivan dives for the food table. I wonder if his tiny body can even feel anything.

I don't want to talk to relatives I don't know. I don't want to touch her casket and say something heartfelt like I'm supposed to. She hated insincerity. When it's all over, for the first time, I feel an ache. The ache is unmistakably *I wish I knew her better*.

I walk outside; it's still 3 p.m. and downtown Belyov is bustling. The cool spring breeze doesn't give a s\*\*\* that Babushka is officially gone. I walk down the street a little, and I find the same homeless man sitting at the cusp of an alley at the corner of an intersection.

I stop, and he grins at me. Several of his teeth are missing. "It doesn't matter," he says happily, pounding his fist against the brick building.

I want to agree. It'd be much easier to agree, and the burden is almost lifted from my shoulders, but not quite. Something in me is cold and hollow, and I think that means something. I don't know what, but I don't intend that part of me is going to change. I am not wracked by sobs (and there aren't any tissues anyway), but I can almost (it's probably more wishful thinking, the need for closure) hear Babushka laughing and saying, "Stupid. Of course it matters. Finish your *syrniki*." ♦

*She was not  
"an angel in  
a casket"*



Photo by Hannah Moses, Llandeilo, Wales

fiction

## Stalker

by Julia Clardy, Lexington, MA

All my life, I've been a people watcher. But not in a creepy, stalkerish, looking-in-your-windows kind of way. Countless shrinks, doctors, therapists, even a hypnotist, have diagnosed me with all sorts of things. Depersonalization disorder mostly. Even though my mom drags me across the state to get all kinds of medication and professional help, I know I'm not crazy. Funny-minded people are stalkers. Gazing at people with interest is not stalking. However, one day changed my life forever.

I was on the way to therapy, riding the elevator. Just then, the doors opened a floor early, and the most heart-stoppingly gorgeous boy I'd ever seen stepped on. Kids my age are not interested in me; I'm invisible to everyone; I think that's why I started watching people, anyway, because even if I jumped on a table and sang the

National Anthem wearing nothing but a star-spangled banner draped artfully around my shoulders, no one would look at me twice. Lucky for me, for one day, for one moment, I was visible. Meaning, I was sure he could see me; he stared for an instant too long, his hazel eyes half-covered by a lock of messy dark hair. No one had ever really looked at me like that before.

On the elevator, I saw him again, and again, and again, every Tuesday. Precisely what happened on the elevator that first time I could never be sure, but I'm almost positive it was love at

first sight. Quirky and strange though I am, I'm still a girl – a girl wishing for a fairy-tale ending like everyone else. Right there, on that dingy elevator, I was sure I had found my Prince Charming.

Soon I started living for Tuesdays. Tuesdays when I would see him slouch into that elevator and slouch right off again, never saying a word, perfection in a hoodie and battered Converse. *Unattainable*, I thought, *beautiful boys don't go for psycho girls* – until one day.

*Voosh*, the doors slid open like always, and he took a step, ready to start the weekly journey that took him away from the elevator, away from me, the journey that made my heart fall to my feet in protest of another one of my lame encounters with the love of my life, when he stopped and looked at me, my heart jumping back up to beat an incessant tattoo against my ribcage, which I swear he could see beneath my old Ramones T-shirt; he opened that perfect mouth and said in a voice dripping with a painful casualness: "My name's Xavier, by the way, what's yours?"

What, I thought; I was paralyzed; my name, my name, what was it again?

Xavier looked at me, a half smile playing on his lips. "Your name ... what is it?"

"Zoé." ♦

*Author's note: "The assignment was to write a short story where the sentences began with every letter of the alphabet (in order). It also had to contain a 100-word sentence and a one-word sentence."*

# poetry



Art by Margaret Siu, Dallas, TX

## The Emancipation of the Lie

Have you heard of the girl  
who is only alive  
on Sundays?  
She slithers between the hymnal pages  
leaving a trail of yellowed age.  
She leaps from pew to pew  
wearing down the maggot wood  
and most of all  
she nestles deep inside the preacher's ear  
humming along to the eternal lullaby  
ringing in his head.

by Presley Hargis, Hebron, KY

## That Big World

Why do we keep on thinking  
Of a big world  
When we never try to be successful  
Carrying weights on our shoulders  
Staring at the ground and not ahead  
Shadows creeping by

Snow footprints  
Fire-breathing dragons  
We all run away

Tears come fast  
Sizzling down our face  
White pupil eyes  
Hands on a hot stove

Holes and rabbits  
Fantasies in our ears  
Broke bank accounts

Lying to the cops  
Laughing on the corner  
Getting into fights  
Like a child  
With old tunes  
Jamming on my Walkman

A Coke can  
And a cute-ass boy  
Playing a slow jam

by Yulitsa Tapia, Bridgeton, NJ

## unspoken sparks

being with you is like striking a match  
in the rain –  
both unreasonable and impossible.

by Mercedes Ramanathan, Miramar, FL

## Detours

grief feels  
like chapped lips and bare legs in  
weak texas winters, trembling,  
secondhand tea that doesn't warm  
your hands.  
i will not feel these months anymore.  
i am buying coats.  
here is the sharpness  
of spearmint in the cracks of my lips,  
exhaust fumes in dry eyes.  
it's been a long time since  
i've stood on this sidewalk and shivered,  
spilled coffee down my sleeves with regret  
for letting it get cold.

grief looks  
like taillights, half an hour on I-30 when  
i know exactly how to curl into the road.  
night falls like a sheet shaken  
over a bed, drifting down, full of ripples.  
i can't fall asleep in my bed anymore;  
all my dreams fell out on the sidewalk and  
they're still looking for the bus stop.  
i trace old routes that take longer,  
but they don't feel the same.  
taillights blink in braille,  
send messages i can't read but  
repeat in my sleep, tapping letters  
on couch pillows between the names  
of people i won't see for ten years.  
some won't come back.

grief tastes  
like thick texas summers, copper,  
car keys warm from holding on too long.  
no matter how many times i drive by,  
there's no excuse to go inside.  
the coats are in suitcases, waiting

for september,  
and i spend hours next to them on the floor,  
measuring the size of my bubblegum

bubbles  
until my tongue tastes like nothing,  
less than water.  
i want to drive straight through the suburbs  
and out the other side, but it's too late and  
the highway is littered with eyelids, droopy  
taillights.

it's light enough to sleep outside the suburbs  
where i've bartered with the city for stars  
and pretend it's always looked like this.  
i pretend four years and all their faces  
are somewhere up there.

grief sounds  
like sitting in my driveway, no headlights,  
a song i've heard for four years with notes  
i still can't hit. i let other voices sing  
most of the time.

most people are ghosts,  
and i saw it coming but missed it happening.  
so many universes will never touch mine,  
and they've stopped existing for me.

they are already just memory  
tucked in the corners of hymns  
we sang in january, sweaty under our coats,  
bare ankles blue. i can't pick out the faces.  
i can't pick out the words  
no matter how many times i remember.

grief smells  
like gasoline, lemon tea,  
the burning skin of palms  
scorched on june sidewalks.

by Kelsey Schmitt,  
Dallas, TX

## Proclivity

The proclivity is there  
unspoken (maybe mentioned by spoken  
silence and a few perky responses  
met with  
awkward silence) raking its way from  
the nether regions of the brain  
numbing (not denying, but not encouraging,  
just kind of suppressing, impressing as  
Not Important)  
but it is (it is oh it is ohitis!), and it shows  
In the – hesitation – so eloquent in its  
uncertainty and its silence  
(the lack of defined) borders and desire

by Livne Ore, Auckland, New Zealand

## The Act of Missing

Pasting blown-up photographs  
on whitewashed uneven walls,  
all torn up inside by halves  
as this act of Missing calls.

What meager distraction is decor  
To a heart so full to the brim.  
Tangled memory strands sore  
From so long holding it all in

Forbidding tears from falling hot  
Hot, hard and fast onto this frown;  
When eyes some serenity sought  
Such treachery deserves a crown.

Don't cage the rage, just let them fall  
Saltwater being the cure to all

by Dua Anjum, Jhelum, Pakistan

## Tree of Life

I wonder if the tree of life  
ever sheds its leaves  
because its branches are too heavy.  
I can imagine leaves from the  
tree of life fluttering downwards  
like a plane shot out of the sky  
and the acorns peppering the ground  
below like carpet bombs.

by Eli Gravitt, Summerfield, NC

## Road Map

At the end of the road  
Make a right-hand turn  
Check your left side  
Leaves float

The trees rush past  
The car's windshield  
The sun is blinding you  
Even in fall

His house is on the right  
In the green garden  
He is picking fruit off the trees  
Wave to him

He smiles at you  
The sunbeams hit the dash  
and you are pierced  
You fly through it

For a second you feel euphoria  
As you collide with the light

by "Audrey," Portland, OR

## Spain

Did you see her smile in sun-soaked Spain?  
feel her fingernails against you like foreign  
tidal waves?

dark hair and dark skin  
did she touch you like static?  
and did you feel shocks of electricity  
under her gaze?

did you shudder and shake when you were  
yanked out from underneath it?  
And now you are here.

suffocating from lethargy under inferior  
sunsets.

the beauty of this tiny town too azalea,  
not enough passion fruit  
passionate and exotic, sweet against  
your cheeks

it can't be easy to forget.  
Let me be your distraction  
I cannot fix you, I won't even try.  
but let me kiss you, touch my razor skin  
feeling not static but burns.

I cannot be her, I won't even try.  
But I can write poetry that will sting you  
like sea salt

I am not a lighter against beachside  
midnight

But I have hundreds of matches waiting  
to smolder in your fingers  
I am not fluid but fanatic and holding your  
hands will help me to not tear out my hair.  
there's a glass of cool water by my bed  
maybe we can flush this out of us

by Nesha Ruther,  
Takoma Park, MD

## Roots

"Humans grow roots,"  
you said,  
"and they grow deep."  
Darling, you were right.  
I spent months trying  
to rip out these roots,  
grown in tight.

by Abby Simms, Easley, SC

## I Was Not Happy When I Wrote This

you say my hair  
is a blanket  
of darkness  
and my eyes  
are fireflies,  
but you like me best  
when my body  
is a tree in winter.  
You call me your flower  
but you snap my branches  
every time you look at me.  
I am not made  
of metaphors;  
soon I will be nothing  
but a twig  
and I was not  
born to be a  
skeleton.

by Lucy Massad,  
Greenwich, CT



## Peter and His Mother's Pantyhose

Peter, mumbling, crawled through the bush of mustard-colored flower buds sprouting to settle in rain-soaked vibrating hush broken by his mother's scattered shouting for Peter to come back to her, quick, run – but he only burrowed deeply his nose into the dirt's roots, like he was its son, and rubbed his fingers on his mother's hose.

He'd stolen it from her dresser drawer, twined it round the fingers of his left hand, and then tiptoed out the back porch screen door to gasp in the scent of vibrant green land crawling with lively, squirming, buggy things and sprouting all over with stem and bud and to breathe the sound of fluttering wings as his ten bare toes squeezed hard through the mud.



Photo by Austin Akidil, Lexington, KY

Once he'd found his own special hidden place Peter burrowed into his mind and out of the normal buzzing, chattering space where his mind had twitched and winced with self-doubt. With the crickets' chirp and cicada's hum buzzing in his ears he could away break to the overpowering damp earth sun seeping through his neck's skin in a slow bake that contented him to sleepy floating and resting his heavy head against his knees like when he curled in a ball on boating trips with his parents as the swift breeze swept past his shuddering skin, pale and quaking with fear at the chopping waves rough like they'd been slapped by the tail of a whale, sending them to early graves because they'd dared to venture out into the great vast heaving she-creature that was the ocean, the route to uncertainty, that great feature of every day he'd yet lived and always feared except when curled under the bush with hose clutched in hand so his thoughts felt more settled, less whirled.

With nylon between his skinny fingers Peter felt the world sift through the tiny gaps until the only thought or worry that lingers is one that watches the time elapse.

by Nadia Tivvis, Baltimore, MD

## We Were a Family of Three

the meat didn't get thawed out last night moths swim around the lampshade looking for light – the love affair between the dark the bruise you got from falling out of the tree is fading the doctor says you should get some antibiotic cream for that lullabies don't put the baby to sleep anymore visit the graveyard during the day the stones glisten and smile dim sounds erupt on the door hinge when you come home you forgot to WD-40 it the character in that fairy tale – the one we watched for the memories – can't fly – sorry to disappoint pompadour is the love that can't be fixed my favorite recipe fell out of the cupboard I guess we are eating lamb chops tonight you talk lots about the creationism of the dung beetle violent comprises into a flood – the rainstorm took away the mating bugs the roots beneath the trees simmer like my baking pan the glove on the counter is getting sold in the garage sale

by Selena Flores, Davenport, IA

## sesquipedalian to a fault

I like to use big words, that is, I'm sesquipedalian to a fault

and the moment right before you're about to kiss me,

I'm not thinking about the friction in the air sending sparks that burn a path down my spine

no, I'm thinking about how they call it frisson, the thrill I'm observing when I'm supposed to be experiencing

not the sudden shiver or pleasure-pain that's better than sex

or the butterflies in my stomach and the fleeting jump in my pulse

because I'm trapped in a book I'm constantly trying to finish, but can't

because I'm too busy trying to word it exactly right, instead of furthering the plot in order to actually kiss you

by Callie Zimmerman, Fishers, IN

## Science, Anew

You might notice that Curly hair is light bulbs, Extinguished when doused, And viruses are dictators Forcing cells to cruelly house, And atoms are married, Exploring benefits of bonds, And plants, like all, To light respond.

by "Zoe," Toronto, ON, Canada

## Life From My Eyes

For the lonely hearts club That has no perception of the ache in its souls. For the forgotten Who have forgotten what initially forced them to be forgotten. For the wind That feels nothing, yet howls in pain. For the dried eyes That are too dusty and rotten to cry.

I have heard the stifled cheers and confused yells of your sorrow. I have held the twitching fingers of disgust and broken them off in my anger. I have yearned with idealistic naivety for the Band-Aids and Neosporin. I have longed for pots of soup and soups of pot. The fire has bitten my toes and preyed upon my flesh. I am accustomed to the unseen eyes of a pompous creator flickering in the darkness. I see the consumption of the obscure and the strange by plastic beauty and lust. I have dug my fingernails deep into the relentless enemies that pound just below my rib cage.

I have woven a life out of stories that aren't mine. I have shopped for souls at the supermarket. I have clawed at the faults and the linings of our stars, I have bruised the opaque ozone and cussed at the sun. I have slept with the throbbing fabrics of reality and troubled it for its secrets. I have slipped on spurring bookshelves and fertile libraries, their insides impregnating ideas into wombs and thoughts into hearts.

Believe that the snarky teeth and white flesh of ignorance have disfigured me. Attempt to understand that not a single organism can successfully unravel the tangled thread that loops itself tirelessly beneath my skull. Perceive that nothing in this spherical metaphor of a world can ever soothe an indistinguishable rip or blissless tear. Believe that the gallant distress that rains its tapping on your hungry ears is the prescribed music for your illness.

by Caleb Beck, Canandaigua, NY

## stuck

television turned on. click, plop, sigh. polar bear in a blizzard. stuck in a snowstorm. can't change the channel. – can't see the news.

snow showers outside, dreadfully dreary and dripping with despair. sticky clumps of slush plaster the dead grass, dead leaves, dead earth. wrapping them in a white blanket, like a hospital blanket.

– is she wrapped in a hospital blanket? I don't know. I didn't know. I still don't know.

by Bianca D'Antonio, Natick, MA

## Clouds' Courante

The daylight breaks; we rouse and wake, Then gracefully our places take. With clothes of pink and golden hue, We wait to hear the music's cue.

We swirl and twirl, the light grows dim, Our garb is somber, gray, and grim, We circle in a spinning form, And flashing, crashing, end the morn.

And then we waltz. Our gowns are pale. There is no gust, no bite, no gale, But gentle winds propel our tread Until the rays of day have fled.

We're wispy in our weakened state, With crystal dress and languid gait; Our step is light, but weak and slow. The wind is frail and hardly blows.

Then with a final tranquil trill, The music stops, we all fall still. Sweat drips from our exhausted frames Onto the land the humans claim.

And then it all begins once more: We're back upon our dancing floor, Unseen to many eyes below. We spin to make the shine or snow.

by Madison Marshall, Lehi, UT

## Decay

Toxicity is difficult to define when we have yet to find its polluting source. But it leaks through small fissures into this vacuum. The longer it enters, the more the cracks weather and smooth. They soon become regular. They go unnoticed, stuff accumulating in dark recesses. And chemicals originally non-toxic in small quantities flood the system, declaring this body obsolete.

by Eleni Aneziris, East Setauket, NY

## The Taste of Laughter

What does it taste like  
as it billows up your throat,  
erupting from the depths  
of that joyous little grimace?  
And tell me,  
what does it taste like  
as the baby sunflower  
thrusts itself  
through the cage of my teeth,  
engulfing your tongue  
in its own maniacal melody?  
What does it taste like  
as they intertwine?

To me it tastes like  
Yellow,  
doesn't it?  
Like Yellow sunflowers.  
And like  
lemonade.  
It tastes like the sound of canaries  
serenading the wind.  
And like honey.



Photo by Karina Wojnar, Ringwood, NJ

Like butterscotch and caramel.  
And it tastes like light.  
Sometimes like the hush of a candle,  
soft,  
melancholic.  
And sometimes  
like the sun.  
It tastes like the air in fall  
as Yellow leaves waltz throughout it.  
And like the subtle hum bees make  
as they flit through time.  
And it tastes like  
daffodils.  
Like daffodils and dandelions,  
And, well,  
like bluebells.  
(Only those bluebells  
happen to have the strange abnormality  
of being  
Yellow.)  
It tastes like midnight in Virginia  
as fireflies caress shadows  
with subtle luminescence.  
And like beer.  
Like Corona Light  
smoldering within the corners  
of my soul.  
And it tastes like dewdrops –  
like the amber-flushed dawn  
embalmed within a prism of syrup.  
And like helium  
spewing from the lips  
of Yellow balloons.  
Is that what it tastes like

as the baby sunflower  
thrusts itself  
through the cage of my teeth,  
engulfing your tongue  
in its own maniacal melody?  
And is that what it tastes like, darling,  
as they intertwine?  
As my laugh  
devours yours?  
As it overwhelms you?  
As it  
suffocates you?  
And is it possible  
to drown in the metaphysical?  
To suffocate in the exhaustion of ecstasy?  
To overdose on the septic high  
infused within my breath?  
Funny  
how deceitful laughter can be.  
Because it tastes like  
Yellow,  
doesn't it?  
Like Yellow sunflowers.  
And like  
lemonade.  
Like honey and like fireflies.  
Daffodils and dandelions.  
But it feels –  
It feels like red.  
And it feels like fire.  
And no,  
not like the dwindling candle, either.  
It feels like the flame that gorges itself  
with rows upon rows  
of those f\*\*\*ing  
sunflowers.

by Julia Adams, Healdsburg, CA

## Identical

Halfway sister –  
closer to friend,  
but closer than that.  
Empty ice chest, dried beer on the sides,  
blue paint chipping away;  
roaring fire trapped beneath the metal rods  
of a grill.

like,  
you bleed lava,  
coal-fire sizzle-skinned princess  
red-faced spitting hatred  
for society, for high school,  
the ideation of a “beyond”  
the only thing preventing your  
inferno from taking the whole forest.

and I *don't* bleed.  
ice cube glacier mother  
fingernails. steady, tapping the  
granite countertops  
a mirror, of you, full of  
spiderweb cracks  
distorting our reflections ....  
because we were almost in unity,  
but you burn too hot, and I melt too fast.

by Megan Williams, Pittsburgh, PA

## Jump, Jump, Punch

Never have I been  
More thankful for those gloves that  
Hit it all away

by Alex Helm, Double Oak, TX

## Holocaust Survivors

Eyes so hollow you saw right through  
their story and into their soul.  
Mouths so thin, the pictures they drew  
left me feeling less than whole.  
Some were tense, radiating fear,  
others too tired to hold up their heads.  
All showed their history clear  
the memories they carried, the dread.  
They told me their prayers, their cries  
sobbed silently at night  
as they told their children the lies  
that everything would turn out all right.  
Can you hear the whispers pierce the air  
as the voices rise of those who dare?

by Anja Oberg, Lancaster, PA

## Lottery

The world is a lottery ticket,  
but I'm the sucker who bought it.  
The advertisements got me –  
promises of knowledge, freedom, success –  
drunk with the possibility that  
I could construct my own reality  
before even touching that silver surface.  
My image  
reflected from the cheap foil staring up  
at me  
served as a reminder  
of every promise I'd ever heard  
washing over me, whispering  
that I could mold my own future  
that what is right always prevails  
that others cared.

Scratching away the veneer  
letter by letter:

F A I L U R E

I'm tired of trashing ticket after ticket  
never cashing in on goals and dreams  
wasting potential on unrealistic expectations  
because no one had the courage to tell me  
that there are many swindlers in this world  
but life is the greatest of them all.

by Johanna Masterson, Petal, MS

## I am white

I am white.  
I think.  
At least, that's what all the other girls say.  
That's what my makeup brand says,  
Porcelain.  
But my skin is olive,  
My father is dark,  
And my *situ* has sand etched in her hands  
Deep under her dark nails.  
Somehow my partner,  
Redder than I,  
So much darker than I,  
Firmly believes  
That I am not limited to such a description.  
It doesn't do me  
Justice.  
My hair and eyes like woven wood  
Yet they are carved  
With others'  
Words.

by Carly Shaia, Farmville, VA

## What I Do Know

I'll be honest: I don't know too much about  
universal truths.  
I don't know much about God,  
Or about physics,  
Or about Justin Bieber being the face  
of a generation.  
What I do know is that I have a mother  
and a sister,  
And my love for them could level cities.  
I don't know if black is flattering,  
Or if winged eyeliner is more sophisticated.  
But I do know a brave soul will be tacked up  
among constellations,  
Swaying between galaxies with Orion.  
I could spend hours waxing poetic about the  
dance of the stars  
And the kiss of the morning sun.  
But I'd rather talk about the imperfect light  
of my best friend's smile,  
Or the way I have enough love in my heart  
for all these people.  
Including myself.  
I don't know if young love is the most pure,  
Or what a coordinate plane *really* is.  
But I do know a person's capacity for  
generosity is insatiable  
Once tested.  
And I do know my life line cannot predict  
the joy of falling in love  
Or the pain of losing it.  
And I do know that laughter can pearl  
into stardust  
Even on the darkest of nights.  
I don't know a lot about platitudes.  
But God, do I know about human nature.

by Nicole Alex, Wyckoff, NJ

## Smorgasbord

Let them come in  
My delicacy is ready  
Made it with all I had  
Just to make them happy.  
Powdered my face  
Put on some eyeliner  
Highlighted my lips  
With the sweet shade of cherry.  
They arrived with silver knives  
Each one carved with an insignia of might  
Advancing with care  
They sit at the table  
On which the feast lay  
Wholesome and untouched.  
They cut open the stomach  
Scooping the meat inside  
Kept going till only the epidermis survived.  
It being too sour for their tastes,  
They left it looking like a limp red sea.  
The bloody insides were served in  
multicolored penny licks  
Next they decided to cut open the brain  
A wise option, since they were thirsty  
And apparently the brain takes three seconds  
to melt  
They left a shell where there was once  
somebody.  
Let them come in  
For I'll serve myself as dinner everyone  
craved so voraciously,  
I've nothing else but this worthless body.  
Not anymore, I don't have that too.

by Tanvi Kusum, Gurgaon, India



## Smudged

They say to close your mouth and open  
your eyes to the wonder(land)  
but we are blind to all but the heart(ache/  
break)  
green eyes lost in a shell of black  
black in the soul and the eyes and the  
bones of a lackadaisical heroine  
amid the weariness of breath

Here the books have faces  
and places  
and smoke has a voice whispering in my ear  
of goblins and ghouls and the devils of day  
but I prefer the night.

And there are long pipes made of glass  
and enigma(tic smiles)  
that leak dreams of psychedelia  
& papier-mâché clouds of three-eyed felines  
with claws dripping in venom  
& halls lined with men without mouths and  
the last vestiges of spirit free from  
the ever-turning [emotionally volatile  
hormonal teenager]-esque world where the  
only steadfast companion is the infinitely  
faceted daughter of Doubt and  
Faithlessness:  
Change.

The hunters go out with their hounds and  
their spidey senses but  
still there is no true escape to be found  
no way out of the paralysis that is life  
and the universe  
and everything,  
the paradox of our endless contradiction  
as we drag  
our ailing, wailing minds forward on  
the highway  
to bliss {noun: an undefinable solace  
of clarity and peace disagreed by all  
who share}

so the cries of the lonely echo between  
my ears and above my throat  
and there's a loudness to the murmurs  
smudged beneath my skin and around  
my eyes

and malaise in the fumes of musk and  
jasmine  
creeping over my lip in gray mist  
yet an eye-corner glimpse  
and the trace of a whisper  
reveal in this muddled, blurry existence  
one  
angel  
alone

by Isabel Acevedo, Pittsburgh, PA

## natural disaster

When I'm around you volcanoes  
erupt beneath the apples of my cheeks  
and tsunamis hit the beaches of  
the waterlines of my all-too-unsuspecting  
eyes.

Earthquakes tremble in my fingers  
and I suppose this love is a natural  
disaster in its own way.

You are toxic and I am fragile  
yet I cannot let go.

by Katie Witte, Pilot Point, TX

## Durian

From the distant shores of the Far East,  
The green spiky ball beckons me to return  
To the village of pungent aroma  
They say the delectable scent arouses,  
Inhale, exhale; inhale, exhale.  
It is a glutton shrine, a golden treasure,  
a fruit of paradise.  
The alluring appeal emanates ecstasy; the  
soft yellow inside promises enchantment  
My native Singaporean family bows to its  
sovereignty like royalty,  
But my foreign self rebels against this  
King of fruits,  
For I am no longer home.

I cannot fathom its richness; it is an  
unsavory character to me,  
The thorns are intimidating, menacing;  
the sight makes me nauseous.  
There is no pleasant aura, no aroma,  
only a putrid smell,  
A whiff chock-full of controversy,  
Invading my olfactory senses,  
Strong and bold, revolting, rebelling,  
unflattering

The buttery custard, creamy pulp inside,  
Pungent, moist, pure white pith,  
Smells like a rancid, misplaced Easter egg.

My taste buds are in overdrive  
Terrorized by the cacophony of odors  
My breath is haunted like sated ghosts of  
the ancient past.  
I am a foreigner in my home country.

by Sara Kay, Honolulu, HI



Photo by Kailey Harris, Portland, ME

## eggs & melancholia

I wake up tasting like eggs and melancholy,  
teeth like  
baby corn – tiny, soft and young and just a  
little bit sad.  
I am at the edge of some great  
foretelling, the  
omnipotence of roses, like the way I hope  
the light  
hits me when I die – blooming and fresh  
and sweet.

I am the wind, the breaking of dawn and the  
blinking threshold, the soft curl of  
shellfish in  
inexplicable earnest. Dinner feels like  
fairy lights,  
on the edge between bemused and  
enlightened,  
veins tinged with flora and feathers. I heard  
the morning sun likes solitude, but  
I know the  
moon and the way she eats her heart out –  
I am her one and only last supper.

by Sydney Shavallier, Byron Center, MI

## Devotedly Human

With my bright eyes  
and flawed thinking;

with my cool temper  
and full-slate memory;

with my desire to grow  
and acceptance of shrinking;

with my lack of words  
and overflowing thoughts;

with my fear of falling  
and willingness to love,

I am

by Sarah Bridgeport, Columbus, OH

## Dedicated to Her

She wore her worry like a scarf wrapped  
'round her neck too tightly  
She wore her confidence like a bracelet  
that kept sliding off  
She wore her sorrow like a heavy coat  
five sizes too large  
She wore her joy like a mask fake  
through and through  
She wore depression like she wore her skin

I wore black

by Sharon Pantano, Medford, NJ

## Alone at the Carnival

I'm walking through a carnival alone,  
Which is nice, because my head's been  
very crowded lately.

The people run around and laugh and smile,  
Which is comforting, because I've felt  
very lonely lately.

I get on the Spaceship and spin and spin,  
Which is poetic, because I feel like  
I'm just going in circles lately.

The Slingshot takes me up and up and up,  
Which is refreshing because I've been  
pretty down lately.

A girl stumbles from the Scrambler and  
vomits funnel cake,  
Which makes me jealous of her ability  
to feel release.

I leave the carnival grounds and sit against  
an old tree,  
Which is well needed, because I'm sick  
of having no one to lean on.

by Cameron Leahy, St. Peters, MO

## Closed Doors

A movie screen, dim and blurry,  
Chatter in the classroom, a girl looking  
at me

Asks for gum.

I hand her mint and watch the screen.

A convertible

Full of rich bums who have been drinking  
Roars past a straggling column of humanity,  
The people the American fairy tale left

behind.  
Hold your breath, count to ten, cross your  
fingers and spin around.  
They're not there.  
They're not there.  
Who needs an invisibility cloak  
When you have unshaven cheeks,  
Dark skin,  
A prescription for Thorazine that will  
never be filled?  
No health insurance,  
No house or home,  
No wife or children to call your own,  
Or worse,  
They're there,  
Children, full of hope and promise, invisible.  
No one sees them, no one holds their hands,  
While Suri, Prince George, Apple, and North  
Are showered with gifts they don't need.  
A child can be anything, right?  
Wrong.

If you're born with extra melanin or  
chromosomes,  
The wrong gonads or the wrong neurons,  
Eyes and ears that betray,  
Your mother never took those prenatal pills  
anyway.  
Futures shrink, possibilities die,  
And no one even deigns to cry.  
In my fairytale world,  
People aren't forgotten on the streets,  
Little girls don't get lost and never  
come back,

They can always find a gingerbread trail  
to lead them back to their mommies.  
Nobody dies alone,  
The final journey waits until they're  
wrinkled-paper grandmas and grandpas,  
and ready for the trip.

Young people don't shiver in bed and cry,  
they dance, laugh, steal, and fall in love.  
Nobody starves their brains and mothers  
don't push their children,  
Fathers don't ignore,  
And people never say things that rip  
and tear hearts for no reason.

Everyone has enough,  
And no one concerns themselves with  
whether their neighbor has too much.  
Parents and teachers and gods pay attention,  
And babies are only given to maidens and  
princes who have prayed long and hard.  
There are no more ill-matched couples  
mated under the purple moon, and  
no more children who cower while  
their parents fight.

Special children are given to special parents,  
And nobody hits a child for not being  
normal.

Children with extra chromosomes are  
cuddled and praised for their own talents,  
And lonely boys and girls who rock in their  
rooms are not pushed or labeled freaks, but  
have comforting hands put on their backs,  
and everything is all right from then on.

If I had lady-spider legs, I'd weave a world  
where the stars align and Christmas trees  
stay tied to their trucks,  
And where if you wished and prayed,  
what you needed would be yours.

But I don't.

I don't.

And so the doors slam shut, and I weep  
for all the people I cannot save.

by Clara Gibson, Arlington, VA

## under ice

I feel unreal.  
these eyes  
aren't mine.

a stranger's reflection  
in an iced lake,  
my feet floating up,  
cheeks against the frozen crystal plate,  
eyes gaping.

From above  
I'd look  
like  
a burnt, sunken shrub.

Out there,  
on the ground,  
below the snow,  
are insect eggs,  
pods,  
green seeds  
grayed and frozen for now,  
but they know  
they'll burst and bloom in spring.

I'll only become  
dust  
under the terrible sun,  
filtered through fingers,  
dropped back into dirt.

I wish I could burst out of me.  
I'm so stuck  
in someone's skin.

Dear god,  
all the stupid, damn things I say  
and the days I so easily waste away.

Below the ice,  
I've made me a home.  
When my sky melts,  
I'll float in a sea of teeth.  
shards will cut my blue skin,  
but I've turned much too numb  
to bleed.

by "James," Shavertown, PA



Photo by Quin Tyler, Rochester, NY

## Snow Globe

You lay stagnant for  
endless seasons. A meddling  
hand snatches you up.  
Inverted ivory flakes  
fall onto your plastic town.

by Lindsay Smith, Springfield, MO

## I Took a Chance

I looked away  
and missed a mile  
I took a glance  
and saw a page  
I took a swerve  
and crossed a country

by Terra Richards, Sacramento, CA

## When I Close My Eyes,

the sky breaks white  
with no churning darkness  
and the stars are these meaningless  
forms of white with no contrast:  
all their light has caught up  
to the passing of time.  
as this sky falls away,  
i wake to see a flash of your skin,  
your shoulders, sleeves and fingers  
brushing mine.  
i open my eyes to the darkness  
of my room,  
blinking furiously.  
i erase, with a harsh severity,  
your face, and why i thought  
the sky was so  
broken.

by Haley Boyer, Windsor, CT

## Unmasked

John Dominique once said,  
"You cannot kill truth. You cannot  
kill justice.  
You cannot kill what we are fighting for"

I begin peeling off a layer of the mask that  
once covered my wounds  
Starting with the meticulously rehearsed  
smile hung high on my face

Revealing anger, torment, loneliness,  
vulnerability  
I had ignored the brewing storm of  
frustration in my head  
Just as they said to.

Work  
on moving on.  
Work  
on healing yourself,  
they told me.  
What about working on justice?  
What about having control over my  
own body?  
That didn't matter. Not to them.  
Because somehow they had come to  
the conclusion  
That rules could be broken

By the man who held her down by the neck  
and told her not to scream  
By the friend who said she needed a reason  
to say no  
By the boyfriend who never made her  
comfortable enough to say stop  
The father who said sex was the only way  
to prove she really loved him  
The teacher who pretended to care  
And neighbor who threatened to tell  
By the doctor who was only supposed

to do a checkup  
The brother who held a knife to her throat  
and told her the pain would be over soon  
By the same man who others said  
"would never do such a thing."

Because somehow suffocating the cries  
of violated women  
is the best way to solve a problem no one  
wants to hear about.

Because those I once trusted put a limit on  
the amount of pain I was allowed to feel.  
They focused on the amount of skin

I was showing  
The way I had my hair up  
The way I talked,  
walked,  
and smiled

They asked me if I was drunk,  
or high,  
or alone.

As if wearing a low-cut shirt was  
an invitation

A bottle of beer sign of consent  
As if the way I walked made me deserve  
what he did

As if the amount of makeup I wore  
determined the amount of damage  
he was allowed to do

As if the time of day made any goddamn  
difference

As if teaching girls to hide themselves  
from the world gets rid of the problem.  
Silencing the suppressed was easier for them  
than standing up for what was right.  
Funny how it all works, isn't it?  
Funny, like a rape joke?

People with power play by the book as long  
as it's written in their favor.

They fight only the battles they have no  
chance at losing

They practice hardening their hearts  
while preaching about compassion  
and persistence

They are afraid of risks that need to be taken  
to achieve justice

They have more interest in protecting  
their reputation than their people  
But even a dog remains untamed until it is  
taught the word no.

So why are men any different?  
Why do we not teach our boys

That women are not objects  
That they have a right to their bodies  
That relationships do not validate  
perverse actions

That "no" does not need a reason to follow  
behind it

That they can no longer hide behind excuses  
That they cannot force someone to do  
something they do not want to.

No.  
The mask others forced onto my face  
Was but a futile attempt to suppress  
the reality.

That is not who I am.  
I will not stay silent.

I am not a coward.

I refuse to kill truth.  
I peel away the last bit of my mask:  
It's about time I revealed my scars.

by "Hana," West Des Moines, IA

## Dances

*movement*  
point, step, rise – don't forget to breathe,  
don't forget the arms.  
soften the arms –  
the fingers.  
Ignore the mirror, the temptation –  
"Don't look at yourself in the mirror, now!"  
no silvered, dazzling reflections  
now the feet, quick-step  
*One-Two-Three-and-One-Two-Three-and ...*  
first arabesque, or is it –  
"Second arabesque, girls, second  
arabesque!"  
shift the arms to match the pink-  
embroidered others,  
except don't forget the feet  
*One-Two-Three-and-One-Two-Three-and ...*  
Oh, for a breeze, a brief respite –  
concentrate, now, focus,  
hold your core, feel your center, feel the,  
the parallelism like mathematics of your leg,  
the floor,  
turn your head and smile ...  
*One-Two-Three-and-One-Two-Three-and ...*  
"You, remember your foot, don't sickle,  
that's better!"  
There, but it's so hot now, pools of sweat  
tears  
inside and outside,  
Focus.  
Only – only another  
*One-Two-Three-and-One-Two-Three-and ...*  
One.

Pose.

Don't flinch.

Smile, head straight.

curtain's going down, that's better, the light  
shuts off,  
Music's silent, isn't it, now there's a breeze,  
finally.

"Well done, girls, well done!"  
still a thousand more practices,  
more evenings  
caught like a firefly under the spotlight  
fluttering  
But it's all worth it, really.

*Worth it.*

by Daria Syskine, Cupertino, CA

## Scattered Thought

my mind is elsewhere, my thoughts  
are scattered  
my words are spoken, my body battered  
my wings are tattered and my arms  
are heavy  
my heart is strong but my mind's not ready  
her eyes swirled like so many planets  
my guilt so strong that I can't stand it  
this life is dark, but she was brighter  
all my life I've been a fighter  
now a lighter burns toward the sky  
but please don't weep for a wounded soldier  
as the days grow long and the world  
grows colder  
still I hold her within my mind  
but I must march on, because so does time

by Malique Johnson, Phoenix, AZ



## Madame Tristesse

She breathes  
In her own reality  
Unblinking, she sees  
The dent in the wall  
As more than drywall  
Caving in  
And more  
Something like her

Her smiles  
Are worth more than 1,000 paper bills  
Not because they're beautiful  
But because  
They're rarer  
Than the solar eclipse  
She says  
"The world  
only makes sense  
when I'm sad"  
But then again  
She always says  
She understands

She has a pocketful  
Of drugstore-priced  
Regrets  
And a cellar full  
Of 52-karat remorse  
She drives a banged-up  
2006 Camry  
Because she wants  
To look the same  
Inside and  
Out

She's always  
Tired  
No matter how much sleep  
She gets  
Maybe it's from all the  
Medication  
But she just says it's from  
All the voices  
That call  
Her name

She sees in kaleidoscope dreams  
And bombshell memories  
But now  
She's not seeing too much  
Anymore

by Regan D'Arruda, Brookfield, WI

## ants; humans

bend 'round the corner  
in mindless frenzy  
and quicken your wispy  
legs when god comes  
around, pull faster  
for master, for king and  
for heartless queen, now cross  
yours she says and hope  
not to lie, now scurry,  
keep in line and move  
antenna wires, let me ask you  
can you love me, little one?  
don't wait for the celestial  
hand to snatch away what is left  
of the leftover cat food and  
certainly don't watch when it kills  
you.

run.

by Chinasa Okezie, Hayward, CA

## Words Around My Neck

I carry your words around my neck,  
a bead necklace with tendrils curling  
into my ears.

A steady stream of all the  
sentences you've gushed at me  
over the years.

I carry your words around my neck,  
a collar holding me back from  
the decisions you wouldn't approve of.  
The invisible leash always  
tethering me to wherever you are.

I carry your words around my neck,  
a chain whose weight  
pulls me ever deeper into the earth  
until I am small,  
making you feel tall.

Eventually, the weight of  
your words around my neck  
will choke me.

by "Samantha," Nashville, TN

## Introspection, 2008

When I was nine,  
I discovered the divination  
of astrology  
The Sun, my core  
my sense of identity  
and conscious awareness –  
My thirty degrees of  
celestial longitude  
is the arch in my back,  
the nook behind my knees  
My battle ram charges forward  
still, I am learning to tame  
paroxysmic passion  
My curly-tipped wings  
metamorphose into Golden Fleece  
guarded by hooves of brass  
and breath of fire  
My faint stars glow  
with a brilliant assertion  
My spontaneity triggers  
meteor showers  
and intertwining galaxies  
aerated with volatility  
I am the Sign of Self,  
a floret of flares destined to  
ignite every path I cross  
When I was nine  
a journey across Arietis  
kindled my decoupage of  
perpetual flames

by Ina Wang, Portland, OR

## Your Lips

gentle and starry  
the sky  
is meshed  
against my  
cheek  
he whispers  
the notes of a  
forbidden song  
silently

by Nicholas Malizia, Red Bank, NJ

## Metamorpho

Sister –  
You were not meant  
To be this cocoon,  
This huddled heap.  
Time now to  
Unfurl your spine,  
Carry yourself like  
The woman you are.

Do not hide truths  
Behind cement lips,  
That trick  
Is far outdated.  
Instead  
Peel apart  
Crimson gates  
To reveal  
The vertebrae  
Of your thoughts  
Crouched waiting  
In the cave.

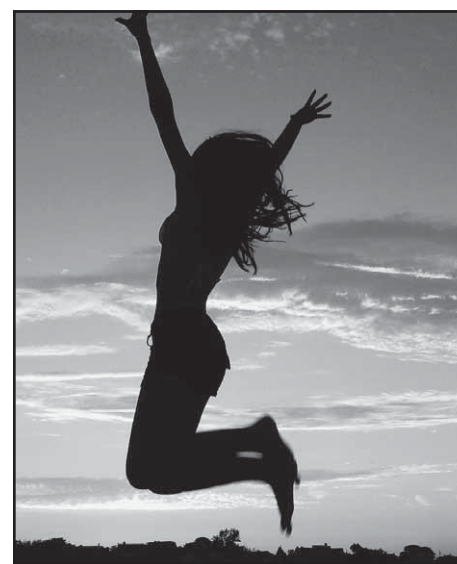


Photo by Kariny Santos, Medford, MA

Choke no longer  
On the blood  
That has rendered  
You silent  
For millennia.  
Speak.  
Reveal yourself.  
This is no masquerade.

Stand on the edges  
Of open doorways with  
Rusty locks gnawed away.  
Look hard at yourself.  
Every space  
Where light  
Drips through you  
Is where they  
Tore away your feathers  
Like all the promises  
You so deserved.

Forgive them  
For their ignorance  
As they slaughtered  
Unarmed innocence  
But  
Never forget  
You were made  
To have wings.

by Sarah Dalgleish,  
Boulder, CO

## A Secret Fire

A secret fire lit obvious eyes in an  
empty wasteland  
The sparks that triggered the flame  
Were brought on by the natural imperfection  
Of human features  
She wore no mask  
And hid behind no ill-written fantastical  
verse  
She didn't make you think of porcelain  
Or finely chosen ink  
Not even the intoxicating scent of roses  
In an empty wasteland there was rough skin  
A freckled nose  
Eyelashes reflecting scorching sun rays  
In an empty wasteland  
What else was there to admire  
But the vertical object that stood  
Proud and youthful  
Curious  
Stone-like and uneasily phased  
Child of an empty wasteland?

by Justyna Maria Kedziera,  
Stalowa Wola, Poland

## perspective

how powerful our settings are!  
after all,  
it is the darkness  
that reduces  
balloons,  
happy,  
bright,  
fun balloons,  
to  
pockets of trapped gas

by Jenny Park, Houston, TX

## My Hope

You are my small grenade of hope,  
the spot where the rusty train tacks intersect,  
the bud of a white rose.  
You are the patches holding me together,  
the pages in my favorite book,  
the heavy anchor  
holding the massive ship from floating on  
for miles.  
You are ready to take the fall for me  
even if there is no one to catch you  
at the bottom.

by Ella Steinberg, Missoula, MT

## What a Mirror Cannot Do

I stand  
in front of the mirror  
it has seen a lot of me  
from the start  
but  
it sure is a tragedy  
seeing all  
precious things  
but  
the heart

by Gillian Borromeo,  
Manila, Philippines

## Overthrowing the Cold

The trees know it has happened like this many times before. History is a cycle. And they know the cold will come, they know they must suffer the punishment of those pomegranate seeds (glowing like fire in the palm of your hand) but they protest. They burn. They are crying out against the inevitability of their fate, like stars in nova, they are crying out that they will no longer be allowed to dance, to sway with the wind, to be kissed by the sun, and so they burn. They are protesting the passage of time. (They are protesting the spinning of the earth.)

by Susannah Duncan,  
Evanston, IL

## The Artificial Girl

There's a girl with a removable face –  
Removable veins  
Removable parts.

And it's rumored even still  
that she had a removable heart.

Every man wants hers to be his –  
To kiss her removable lips –  
Removable eyes,  
Removable hair,  
Removable parts.

She can change her face to suit their niche –  
Removable freckles,  
Removable dimples,  
Removable lashes,  
Removable hips,  
Removable parts.

But those who want her are far apart  
And can't tell which from dreams and art.

And for me, I'm not as smooth as glass,  
My eyes are my eyes, my laugh is my laugh.

Last time I checked my face was set  
And everything, for sure, permanent.

Yet  
behind her removable –  
beautiful –  
face,  
nothing but nothingness  
sits in place.  
Because now everyone removes the brain.  
I didn't, and they think I'm insane.

The writers in the paper said  
Her "Before" was quite a pity.  
But I think that's stupid, because  
"Before" she was quite pretty.

by Julia Thompson,  
Silver Spring, MD

## Onyx Secrets

I watch  
as you admit  
to the blank pages  
your darkest fears  
and watch them fill up  
word  
by  
word  
until your sins are spelled out  
in  
Onyx.  
Black.  
Ink.

You write until  
your demons dance  
pas de deux  
across the page,  
and streams  
of secrets intertwine  
with every new syllable.

You spill your heart  
into an empty book  
because the only thing  
worse  
than meeting  
your  
demons  
would be to lock  
them  
inside you  
and  
throw  
out  
the  
key.

I understand  
your need to stain  
the paper's  
white innocence  
with  
Onyx.  
Black.  
Ink,

because I, too,  
have watched  
as secrets  
waltzed  
inside my veins,  
and I need you to know  
that  
I won't judge you  
if you have  
to  
bleed.

by Anna Kressbach, Yarmouth, ME



Photo by Emily Wood, Franklin, TN

## Why You Left

Corroded  
feelings often turn into nightmares. Laced  
with blood and terror,  
Wisps  
of my memories that all lead back to you  
remind me  
Of  
my better days. Since you have been taken  
into the  
Afterlife  
I have been all alone, surrounded by  
darkness. Not moving,  
Still  
but barely breathing. Your voice speaks to  
me at night, calming me, but can  
Haunt  
the dreams I once relied on to bring me to  
you again, but instead remind  
Me  
why you left.

by Julie Iazzetto, Burbank, IL

## My Smell

I suppose I must smell a little like  
The toxic aftertaste  
Of all my wasted dreams  
And a little like  
The strawberry lip gloss  
I try to hide them in.

I suppose I must smell a little like  
The acid, boiled-out sweat  
Of all my ballet classes  
And a little like  
The satin pink trappings  
I still cling tightly to.

I suppose I must smell a little like  
The slick, harsh weight  
Of all my smirk and sarcasm  
And a little like  
The silent, crushing tears  
I try to keep within.

by Catherine Sleeman,  
Horsham, England

## Let's Run Away

Let's hop a train,  
Leave our whole lives behind us,  
Figure-shaped cut-outs  
Where we used to stand.  
Let's chase our fancies  
And count on our fortunes  
To take us to where we're  
Too scared to have gone.

Let's run away,  
Not a penny between us,  
Not a clue in our heads,  
Nor a care in the world.

Let's take the first flight to nowhere,  
Leave our duties behind:  
A gift to the tarmac.  
I'll watch from my window  
And take to the sky,  
Squeezing your hand as we go.  
Alive and carefree and safe from the world,  
But oh, for how long can we run?

by Jake Adams, Gilford, NH

## Do you remember

Do you remember the first time you  
kissed her,  
the second you felt the electric sparks  
that were your passion?  
Stung your lips like a fork stuck in an  
electric socket,  
puffy like a Peep put in the microwave.  
Except you didn't take it out in time,  
so it exploded,  
burning sugar all over.  
That was a mess you didn't want to clean,  
but you did.

Do you remember the first time  
you touched her,  
hands on fire, leaving scarred traces down  
her porcelain skin?  
Fingers quivering, every touch like a needle,  
gently pricking a tattoo of your name  
covering her body.  
The tattoo remains, but what happened  
to the needles?

Do you remember the first fight?  
The one where her hair whipped you  
in the face and  
created marks deeper than the ones caused  
by your words. Your words, do you  
remember those?  
Or was the smoke so deep  
that you lost them before you could  
catch them,  
thrust them back down your throat like  
the life you devoured?  
Was the drink too strong?  
Did you have to wade through the waves,  
ricocheting through the current,  
a pinball game created by your idiocy?  
She should have left then.

Do you remember yourself?  
Where'd your heart go? Maybe it was  
ripped out the day  
they left each other and abandoned you  
in the center.  
Maybe it was sliced to pieces, like your back  
as they took out their own inner demons on  
someone helpless, helpless like the day  
you watched,  
trapped inside your own mind,  
screaming to be released,  
as you landed each level strike from  
your tongue  
on someone equally helpless.

Do you remember me?  
I'm not tumultuous, just insane,  
just like you, who's just like me.  
Who learned from who?  
It's not a quiet world, but why do you have  
to be so loud?  
I've always heard you.  
Even when I shut my ears tight and  
covered my eyes,  
I've always heard you.  
The only difference now is that  
I  
don't  
need  
to.

by "Sophie,"  
Angwin, CA



## A 13-Year-Old Waits for the Rapture

You are far from childhood  
and even farther from adulthood.  
You can stand tall above what  
you once were,  
but you cower below what's ahead of you.

Locks of chocolate hair will fall to the floor  
as you snip away at your youth,  
though it's still growing at the roots;  
you'll have to touch up  
every month  
(or so).

Once upon a time  
your stomach bounced up and down  
like a little happy earthquake  
when you giggled, but  
now you'll keep your body still  
because God forbid anyone  
knows you even have a stomach.

But I stand corrected,  
for there is no God in  
the world of teenagers;  
their Bible is comprised  
of snide notes scribbled on  
math homework,  
its verses are composed  
of three-character text-speak, and  
its psalms are clipped articles  
from gossip magazines.

Just hold on tight, my friend,  
just have faith,  
it will all be over  
sooner or later.

by Olivia Hart, Natick, MA

## What X Equals

I don't think I'm understanding this  
Because the answers I come to don't feel  
quite right  
How are we supposed to know for certain  
what X equals?  
How do we know that X isn't an infinite  
number of problems in its own  
Reaching far out into oblivion where our  
minds can't begin to comprehend?  
And why should we pretend to know more  
about X than we really do?

We constantly put this unidentified variable  
in situations  
Where it sits uncomfortably between  
numbers  
That have already "figured themselves out"  
But X is stuck in the midst of it all  
Everyone else knows their worth  
Their impact  
And what happens when they're added to  
or subtracted from  
Multiplied or divided by

And they know that X is different  
And they isolate X  
Leaving X to accept  
That the number on the other side of  
the equal sign  
Is all it will ever be worth

by Emily Fritzler, Cave Creek, AZ

## Chores

Door slams shut, earbuds go in,  
hinges rattle, the world is cut off.

Cold hits like a freight train,  
transforming my fingertips into numb  
white stones  
which do not faze me, only fascinate,  
for the seaside emits rays of warmth  
like radiation,  
pulsing through my brain at ease like  
pleasing sharp daggers abiding their  
destinies.

*Besides*, I think as the intro plays  
hypnotically  
and I stare at the diamonds standing out  
in the darkness,  
*They are only doing their jobs,*  
*atomically reacting to the bitter attack*  
*of winter conditions.*  
Thoughts like these give me pleasure.

By now I have made it past the short,  
ugly, pompous bushes  
that stand on opposing ends of the driveway  
(they stand as if to say to applicable buyers,  
"Don't bother; the interior is hideous!"),  
and have made my way past the tall,  
aloof pine tree  
that defines the estate.

Spinning spheres of carbon and argon  
interlope  
on this marvelous adventure,  
and it is to them I sacrifice  
as I dance to the skies.  
I fear the dancing days  
might well be over.

Freezing winds send a highway of ripples  
across my cheek,  
and my hair rides passenger, sticking up  
wildly.

Robert's entrancing vocals elude  
my capability.

"Down by the seaside,  
see the boats go sailin';  
Can't the people hear  
what the little kid's sayin'?"

She's done early this time,  
and that bothers me;  
I won't have time for a repeat.  
When do we ever?

I walk back through the  
traffic of gusts and spirits  
and wind up back home.

I take it slow stepping inside,  
enjoying the last fascinations  
in my world of dreams.

And as I unleash the chore  
and watch her go directly to the refrigerator  
(along with her sister)  
for her daily delight,  
a beam of thought stabs  
through a crack in the closing door,  
sending one final message to my soul.

And as I watch, intrigued,  
the diamonds slowly but surely

shift back into garnet.

by Justin Lehere,  
Easley, SC

## Why aren't there more poems about the Sun?

You glow as if you have drunk from the  
curve of the moon,  
your lips cupping its crater-ridden surface.  
As if surrounded by a thousand glittering  
fireflies  
as they brush you in their own personal fire.  
So you glow.  
On your back, you carry a mountain  
of gems.  
Encased in stars,  
enveloped in galaxies,  
encaptured by the Milky Way.  
You walk a million years across this  
universe,  
this reality which can never touch your skin.  
It is if you are made of lava,  
of burning rock and death.  
I mean that in the lightest way I can.  
You are bolder than Saturn,  
lighter than Pluto,  
hotter than Mars,  
livelier than Jupiter,  
and lovelier than Venus.

by Madeline Campbell, Sturgis, SD



Photo by Emma Zoller, Newcastle, CA

## Blind Spot

Real life never extended  
further than the windshield wipers.  
Real life existed only behind television  
screens,  
never in minivans  
on dirt roads by the soccer fields  
off of 495.  
Because we were never really lost,  
we were just exploring  
And we were never really late,  
we were just waiting for the right time  
to show up  
And because she can definitely  
see everything  
in the right lane,

And there's never a reason to look out  
the window  
until you're tall enough to see over  
the dashboard  
and tell her to stop stop stop

by Molly Raddant, Natick, MA

## Forwarding the Motion

Pushing and pulling,  
My bones begin to splinter.  
One more day, she said.

by Rebecca Robledo, Canoga, CA

## Sand Castle

Build your home on rock  
they said  
Build your home on rock  
and build that castle high

so when the wind kicks  
and six knocks hit the door  
fortresses remain

and the windows are boarded  
flesh intertwined

They never said  
that rocks split  
and temptation abides  
that the grit of freeze  
could be so abominable

And six knocks  
are on high hooves  
that nothing reigns over the assuaging  
of pain

That my thoughts  
are merely just cassettes  
with his glory on replay

And that caution tape  
breaks away  
with hint of resolution

Our fortress on the rocks  
falls harder than the sand

That rainstorms  
could make us so malleable  
or that apathy  
binds you to the pain

or that romance  
was just a serpent  
that cheap wine  
could be our desolation

And that rock withers  
with just 6 knocks

by Abbey Wise,  
Browns Summit, NC

## Gone in Spirit

I always wished my parents would divorce.  
My mom would take the keys and the  
vintage radio that always sounded  
fuzzy to me  
And probably most of the money, too,  
But leave my dad with the house,  
And my sister and me,  
And the friendship bracelets I'd made her  
that she'd never worn:  
All the things she didn't want.  
Instead I have spent every day for the  
last seventeen years  
Cleaning up after a mother  
Who's only gone in spirit.

by "April," Kingsville, ON





# Get connected with **Teen Ink!**

**Take a Teen Ink  
online writing course!**

Sessions starting  
in February.

Go to [TeenInk.com](http://TeenInk.com)  
for details.



TeenInk.com  
Mobile Web  
[TeenInk.com/Mobile](http://TeenInk.com/Mobile)



Poetry To Go  
Free App  
[iTunes.apple.com](http://iTunes.apple.com)

Submit your work at [TeenInk.com/submit](http://TeenInk.com/submit)

Share your writing, get advice, and exchange ideas with teens just like you  
at our writers' workshop and regular forums: [www.teenink.com/forums](http://www.teenink.com/forums)

 @teenink

 Teen-Ink-Magazine