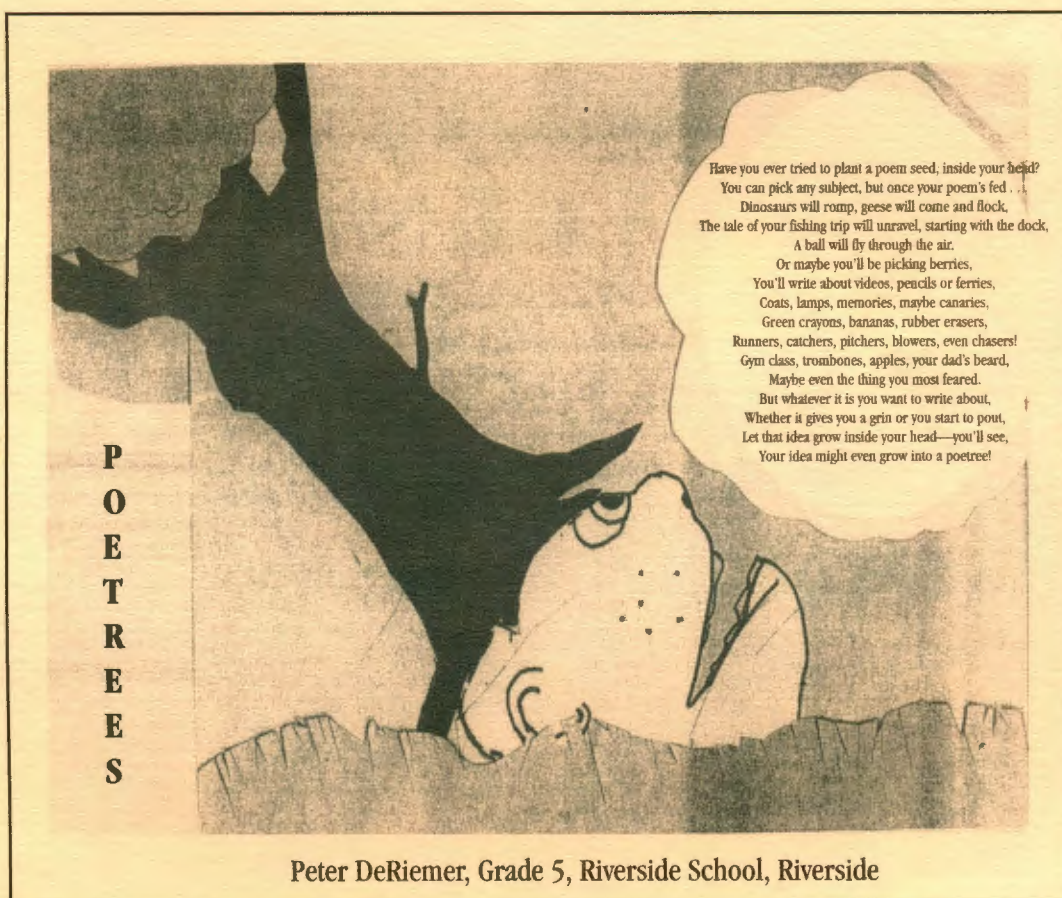


# Connecticut Student Writers



Volume XIV May 2002

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# Connecticut Student Writers

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Volume XIV May 2002

A publication sponsored by  
the Connecticut Writing Project





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## FOREWORD

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Each year, those of us who work and volunteer for the Connecticut Writing Project solicit readers for the Connecticut Student Writers magazine. These teachers read the thousands of submissions we get each year, and decide which stories and poems to publish and honor. It's never an easy choice, but it is in many ways a pleasure to be in the position of having to choose. First time readers often begin the task with the assumption that they are helping us get work done, but by day's end they leave delighted, uplifted, even teary-eyed at times. The work, if you can truly call it that, of reading students' writing can be downright inspirational.

We invite you to take the time to read every poem and story in this volume, to savor the emotions, envision the images, allow the words to roll around in your mouth. We're pretty confident that when you are finished, you, too, will feel inspired and touched, as we are time and again, year after year.

Then, read them again.

### Editors

*Evangeline Abbott*

*Steve Albrecht*

*Jason Courtmanche*

*Maggie Francis*

*Kerry Jones*

*Cathy Holdridge*

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# Connecticut Student Writers

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## Untitled

Once upon a time the spider was making a design shirt with his web. He called his friend the sheep because he needed something to cover the holes. The sheep gave him some wool. And then the spider made a picture of himself in marker. So it could go on the shirt.



## I Hate Raincoats!!!!

I hate  
raincoats,  
Because  
they are  
yellow!  
You can't  
run fast!  
You can't

go down

the bars!

My mom packs  
my raincoat  
when I  
don't need it!  
I hate raincoats!



## Animals Come at Night

Bats fly at night.  
Skunks dig holes to eat grubs.  
Foxes sneak around in the night.  
Animals can come out at night.  
The animals go to sleep in the day.

**Kyndrel  
Dawson**  
Kindergarten  
Natchaug  
Elementary  
School

**Heath Hartley**  
Grade 1  
Daisy  
Ingraham  
School  
Westbrook

**Jessenia  
Anariba**  
Grade 1  
Rogers Magnet  
Elementary  
Stamford



Austin Bagley  
Grade 1  
Daisy  
Ingraham  
School  
Westbrook

## Snow

Snow feels  
like a  
gentle angel  
falling  
from  
the sky.



Nahjetta  
Walters  
Grade 1  
Columbus  
Magnet School  
South Norwalk

## Untitled

I like to play  
I like to laugh  
I like to act funny  
And I like to go to The Center.

I am in first grade  
Then I will be in second grade  
Then I will be in a lot of grades  
And I will go to college.

I like my teacher  
I love my classroom  
My classroom is fun  
And I like my friends.

But when I am old  
I will break my bones  
I won't like to be old  
It is fun to be free  
And I am not old yet.



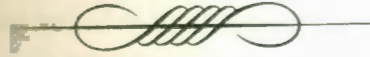
Daniel Puleo  
Grade 1  
Holland Hill  
Elementary  
Fairfield

## The Reptiles Named Dinosaurs

One thousand years ago there were reptiles named dinosaurs. Dinosaurs ruled the earth. Then God made us. Now we rule the earth, and so do the dogs, the cats, and the birds. Who knows what will come after us. Maybe Aliens or . . .

## A Cat Named Pat

I once knew a cat named Pat who was such a brat. He sat on my  
grandmother's hat! He even chased a fat rat. After all that, he took a long nap.



## A Parade of Laughter

Mom, you are like a bird  
And I soar on your back  
And keep tight to you  
As you love me  
You don't want me to fall.

And my class thinks the way  
You play the piano  
Takes them over the rainbow.

You help me soar through school  
By helping me climb a steep hill  
With encouragement and games of math.

Dad, you are like a path  
That leads me to knowledge and courage  
You don't want me to get lost in the woods  
Remember about two months ago  
You helped me with my Glinda parts?  
You said to say "rubbish" with expression.

Erin, I can't live without your smile  
Without it, my lips sink down on my face  
And my life would be a playground  
With no one there  
And some leaves flowing in the air.

Ireland, you are like a parade of laughter  
When I do or say something I can hear  
Your laughter anywhere  
Without that parade of laughter,  
I'm a farm with crops that won't grow  
And an empty field without animals.

Shannon  
Laccone  
Grade 1  
B. W. Tinker  
School  
Waterbury

McKenna  
Thomas  
Grade 2  
East  
Elementary  
School  
New Canaan

Raechel  
Manga  
Grade 2  
University of  
Hartford  
Magnet School  
West Hartford

## Dance with Me

Dance in the flowers  
Dance wherever you go  
A girl and her mother dancing on a hill  
Butterflies flying in the woods  
Laughing  
Laying down on the ground  
Talking to each other  
Mom wearing blue pants  
A pink shirt with butterflies  
The girl wearing a red flowered dress  
Shoes dirty from the mud  
Washing them at a stream  
How beautiful it is to be outside again!  
Snow trapped us inside  
I smell beautiful flowers  
Red Roses  
They dance in their white house  
They dance by the wall  
They dance with me and  
her little girl and her mother says  
You are sweeter than ever, my little girl  
They play a game of patty cake  
and mea-mea-tora-tora  
It is fun to be outside again.



Sarah Petuck  
Grade 2  
Julian Curtiss  
Greenwich

## How the Butterfly Got Its Color

Once upon a time, a long, long time ago, the world was black—all black. In the world, there was a scientist named Dr. Color. No one knew why that was his name because the world was only black! Only Dr. Color knew why that was his name and it was because he was working on an animal. An animal so beautiful it would shock the whole world! Dr. Color promised it would have an amazing thing called color on its wings. He also said it would fly with the wind, but that's all he would say. He knew that he was going to call it a butterfly. Only Dr. Color knew this. It was such a secret that he wouldn't even tell his wife or his three kids. The only person he did tell was his dog Lucy. He could not only make wonderful inventions, but he could also talk to animals. He knew he could rely on Lucy because she was so loyal and thoughtful. Dr. Color told her never to speak a word about the butterfly. And he meant it!



Lucy couldn't help it. She got so excited that she had to bark about the butterfly. She had broken her first promise ever. The dog she told it to couldn't keep a secret. Pretty soon every dog in the world was barking. Dr. Color wondered why every dog was barking. He turned to Lucy and asked her why every dog in the world was barking. She didn't want to tell him the truth because she knew something bad was going to happen, something really bad! She thought it was something between no food to sleeping outside. She knew she couldn't lie, so she told the truth, and he just yelled at her and that was that. One thing that Dr. Color didn't know was his kids were behind the door and overheard about the butterfly. They quickly told their mother. Even though she was mad at them about sneaking up on their father, she was happy to know what he was working on. She was also relieved to know that he was okay.

Dr. Color was right on schedule. The next day a caterpillar was born. The next week the caterpillar made a cocoon. Two months later the caterpillar came out of its cocoon and had turned into a butterfly! Every two to three hours Dr. Color dropped dye onto the butterfly's wings. The colors of dye that he put on were red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple and brown. He did that for about two weeks. On February ninth, the butterfly was ready to be let free.

Dr. Color was happy to know that he had made something wonderful, but he was also nervous. Since everybody knew about it already, they were all waiting for Dr. Color to free the butterfly. Before he let the butterfly loose, he gave a speech. He said, "Thank you for coming. I do have something to share but since you all know about it, it's not much of a secret anymore. As you know, I have made a butterfly. Its wings have color just as I promised. The amazing colors are called red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple and brown. This creature is one of a kind, and I hope no one will try to harm it. This is a beautiful and marvelous creature, and I hope you will enjoy it as much as I do." The butterfly was in a box with a silk cloth over it, so no-one could see in. He removed the silk and there it was. The beautiful butterfly was flapping its wings and flying around its box. It was amazing! The crowd went wild in oohs and ahs and excitement. Five minutes later the butterfly was let free, and everyone ran after it shouting, "Good-bye, good-bye."

About a half-hour later it was quiet, much quieter than it had ever been before. Before long the butterfly came back to Dr. Color's lab. The butterfly flew into his lab, into the kitchen window, out the back door, and circled around the house three times as if it was getting ready to do something fantastic. It was collecting so much speed that it was dragging a rainbow trail behind it. It flew up into the sky and right back down again. The rainbow trailed behind it. Moments later the butterfly was around the world. One hour later, the world was finally in color. That night in their prayers, the people all over the world thanked the butterfly and Dr. Color for putting color into their world. Even though Dr. Color never saw the butterfly again, its love was still in his heart.



Jessica  
Molyneux  
Grade 2  
Daisy Ingraham  
School  
Westbrook

## Shells

Shells  
washed up  
on the  
shore,  
as they wrestled  
in the waves,  
I heard them  
crackle  
and  
roar.



Schuyler  
Borden  
Grade 2  
University of  
Hartford  
Magnet School  
West Hartford

## Poems

I'm thinking of something.  
It matters. It moves me.  
I know it and others  
don't. I want that answer.  
It really surprised me.  
I noticed it in the closet.  
It had really interesting  
sentences. It had good lines,  
good pictures, good ideas and good  
facts. Millions of lists  
and conversations. It made me  
think of feelings and pictures  
and art and music and  
reading and videos and  
life. It had drawings,  
sketches and poems and  
photographs and posters  
and diagrams.  
It made me think of new story ideas.  
Poems

Poems

Poems



## My Favorite Horse

One beautiful fall afternoon I got in the car, and my dad drove off so we could go on horseback riding. I was so excited; it felt like Christmas morning. I looked out the window at the beautiful changing leaves. Finally we turned down a road called Wheeler Road. At the end of the road there was a horse farm called the Blue Spruce Farm. We parked right in front of a big thoroughbred. He looked right at me. I really wanted to watch the thoroughbred. He was just as beautiful as a black and white rainbow. I knew we came to go horseback riding, but I couldn't take my eyes off him because of his beauty. The thoroughbred trotted over to me. My heart was pounding. We had to go meet our horses. After we went around the ring about two or three times, we went on the trails. As we went onto the trails, I took a quick glimpse at the thoroughbred through skinny trees which gave me a good view. I noticed he was watching me pass by. On our way around the trails, I saw the thoroughbred again. When we got back from our ride, we went around the ring one last time. I was still hoping to pet the thoroughbred. After the ride my legs were hurting, and my sister Brittany rode Prince. As I watched her ride, I still kept a special eye on the beautiful thoroughbred. Finally I had to leave. I wanted very badly to say good-bye to the thoroughbred. I ran to the front of the car to say one quick good-bye. I reached over the fence to pet him, but I couldn't reach. I knew I'd have to wait until next time to pet the thoroughbred. I was extremely sad, but I knew I couldn't wait there forever just reaching. So I left still thinking about the ride but mostly about the beautiful thoroughbred that was out of reach.



## The Little Butterfly

Once there was a butterfly who had beautiful wings. Her wings were blue with red stars. Her name was Star. She could not fly. As much as she tried, she could not do it.

Then one day Star met a fairy. The fairy said, "I hear you have a problem. You cannot fly. I have a magic wand, and I can help you fly."

"You can?" said Star.

"Yes," said the fairy, "but it can't do everything. It can only help you fly. There are many things I will tell you that you must know. When a bird spots you or when a grown-up comes too close, you must fly away, or they will capture you. We must get to work now, but remember what I told you."

Star promised to remember.

The fairy waved her magic wand and—poof—Star could fly.

"We will go now," said the fairy. So Star with the fairy by her side flew off around the globe. With the fairy by her side, Star did not get caught by a bird or a child or a grown-up.

They flew over the Atlantic Ocean and saw whales and schools of fish.

Amanda  
Watson  
Grade 2  
Middle Gate  
Elementary  
Newtown

Harley Pastore  
Grade 2  
Long Hill  
Elementary  
School  
Shelton



Rebecca  
Mortensen  
Grade 3  
Middle Gate  
School  
Newtown

They went to Hawaii and had a hot, hot time.

They went to Australia and hopped with kangaroos.

This is very funny because Star and the fairy survived the Antarctic, the coldest place on earth. They went there and danced with polar bears.

When Star and the fairy finally went home, Star laid her eggs and died. The fairy was not sad because she knew the eggs would become beautiful butterflies like Star.

The fairy was right. When the eggs finally became butterflies, they were Star's beautiful daughters.

Molly had heart-shaped wings of gold and pink.

Hannah had wings the color of the ocean with pictures of dolphins and sea life.

Annalin had wings the color of a rainbow.

The fairy took Star's daughters on wonderful adventures, and they were all very happy together.



## Claude, the Claustrophobic Cat

One bright, sunny, crisp fall morning, a Siamese cat gave birth to four kittens inside a coat closet. There were three girls and one boy. The three girl kittens' names were Jemima, Sylvia and Betty—I'm sorry to interrupt, but . . . **those names don't have anything to do with our main character!** —Now . . . we'll continue. Claude, the only boy kitten, was the first to leave the cozy coat closet. Here is what happened: As soon as his eyes opened he screamed, "AAAAAAAHH! THIS PLACE IS TOO SMALL! IT'S CRAMPED! WHAT WILL WE DO IF THE WALLS CAVE IN?!" and he promptly left the closet. Just as Claude entered the dining room, Suzy, the maid, gave a shriek.

"AAAAAAAHH! IT'S A DIRTY LITTLE CAT! WHERE DID HE COME FROM! MR. JOHNSON! MR. JOHNSON!" she cried to the master of the house. Suzy dashed to the cupboard to find a box large enough to fit the cat in. The first thing she found was a pickle jar. She put it on the countertop next to her so it would be out of her way. The next thing she found was a jar of vanilla extract. That went on the counter also. After rummaging through two whole shelves, she became frantic! "AAAAAAAHH!" She shouted again. "Who knows where the cat has wandered off to?! He could be scratching the velvet sofa! He could be wrecking the china cabinet! Where IS Mr. Johnson?" She began tossing things from the cabinet onto the kitchen floor, which made loud noises. Occasionally, she would give a groan, a shout of frustration, or she would mutter, "No, that won't do." As she was doing this, she remembered that Mr. Johnson was at the store. Because of this, she had plenty of time to clean up the mess she had made.

Finally, Suzy came across a large oatmeal box. "At last, I've found something!" She sighed. She rushed out of the kitchen to find Claude spread out on the



roomy, ruby-colored velvet sofa. She gasped in astonishment. "But that couch is fit for the master and his upper class friends, and the master and his upper class friends only!" She quickly pushed Claude into the oatmeal box and threw the box in the closet. Little did she know, she was simply returning him back to his home.

"AAAAAAAHAH!" Claude shrieked. "THIS BOX IS TOO SMALL! IT'S CRAMPED! WHAT WILL I DO IF THE WALLS CAVE IN?!" and he promptly left the box. As soon as he saw he was back in the closet, he shrieked, "AAAAAAAHAH! THIS PLACE IS TOO SMALL! IT'S CRAMPED! WHAT WILL WE DO IF THE WALLS CAVE IN?!" and once more, he promptly left the closet. He trotted nervously to the kitchen. There he found Suzy sweeping up the contents that had recently been in the cupboard.

"IT'S THAT BLASTED CAT AGAIN!" Suzy shouted. Immediately, she opened the door and pushed the cat outside with a broom. Five minutes later, Jemima walked in and gave Suzy quite a fright. Unfortunately, we shouldn't be paying attention to that because Claude is our main character. Now, we'll get back to what Claude was doing. While Jemima, Sylvia, Betty, Suzy and Claude's mother were in the cozy house, Claude was outside freezing his bum off.

"I-I'm f-freezing, b-but at l-least it's roomy o-out h-here," Claude groaned. He was walking across the yard when he heard a voice.

"Psst! Buddy! Over here!" Claude looked around the yard. There was an orange tomcat standing next to the cellar door. Claude carefully stepped through the yard avoiding all the slug covered leaves.

"W-w-what?" Claude shivered. "W-what do you want?" The cat looked around.

"Do you want to buy some catnip?" the orange tom asked in a voice that sounded somewhat like a gangster. (Of course, Claude didn't know what a gangster was. He also didn't know what 'buy' meant. He also didn't know . . . let's just say there were a lot of things Claude didn't know.)

"What do you mean? What's catnip?" Claude said. He was feeling very confused. The orange cat looked at Claude the way a caveman looked when he saw the first dinosaur. His mouth hung open, as if he was about to say something, but seemed to have lost his voice. His eyes were wide, as if he had just realized he was on train tracks and a train was two feet in front of him.

"YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT CATNIP IS?!" the cat screamed.

"Well . . . no," Claude muttered. The cat sighed and sat down.

"Catnip," he explained, "is two things. First it's a cat club that I invented. It stands for Cat All-stars That Narrate Icicle Poems. I'm working on the name. Anyway, that's not the catnip I was talking about. What I meant was cat gum. It makes you go crazy. Want some?"

"No," Claude answered. "I would prefer not to go crazy right now."

"C'mon! It doesn't make you go THAT crazy!" the tom nagged.

"No," Claude said in a way that meant "THAT'S FINAL!"

"Okay," the orange cat sighed. "At least let me show you something though." Claude nodded and reluctantly followed the other cat. Claude and this strange cat walked for a long time. Finally, they arrived at a two-car garage and entered it. "This is where I go when I want to get out of the wind." The cat



jumped up on large wooden table and pressed a button on the wall. "Watch this," he said proudly, puffing out his chest. The whole garage shook as the garage door came down.

"AAAAAAAHAH! THIS PLACE IS TOO SMALL! IT'S CRAMPED! WHAT WILL WE DO IF THE WALLS CAVE IN?! HOW COULD YOU BRING ME TO A CLOSED IN PLACE LIKE THIS?! AAAAAAAAHAH!" Claude kept on shouting as he tried to get out. He jumped at the door, he tried to dig out, but there was no way to get out of the garage. "AAAAAAAHAH!" Claude shrieked. Suddenly, he jumped out the garage window. He ran at least ten yards away until he stopped. He dove into some pachysandra and lay down. "That (pant) was (pant) the scariest (pant) thing (pant) in my (pant) life," Claude moaned. Out of the blue, Claude heard a sound he did not recognize but his instincts told him to run from. "WOOF! WOOF! GRRRRR. . . WOOF!" Claude rose his head from the pachysandra plant just enough so that he could see what was out there.

Just about eight feet in front of him was the strangest creature he had ever seen. The creature was black with tan on its paws, on its long snout, and on the tips of its floppy ears. The creature's tongue was hanging out, and it seemed to be dripping. Claude raised his head a little more. He didn't seem to be in any danger. The thing was actually smiling. Claude sat up. "I'm a cat." Claude smiled. "What species are you?" The creature's grin became even bigger.

"I'm a Rottweiler, and I'm about to give you the fright of your life."

Claude frowned.

"What do you mean?" Claude asked. The Rottweiler sighed impatiently and then grinned again.

"I'm going to chase you until you get away from my humans." The dog growled. He looked over at two five-year-old children who were playing tag. There was one boy and one girl. "GRRRRR! GET AWAY!" The dog started to run straight at Claude.

"AAAAAAAHAH!" Claude screamed for the sixth time. Claude looked at the dog with bulging eyes and climbed the nearest tree. If you had been there, you would have missed Claude climbing that tree if you blinked. The two animals actually started a conversation. It went somewhat like this:

"GRRRRR!"

"AAAAAAAHAH!"

"WOOF!"

"AAAAAAAHAH!" and it continued like that. Out of the blue, the two children appeared.

"Poky, stop barking at the kitty!" the boy shouted.

"Yes, Poky! You stop that! Here, kitty, kitty, kitty!" the girl yelled.

"GRRRRR!" The dog growled. "My name is NOT 'Poky'! I'm the king of all dogs!"

"POKY! STOP IT!" The two children shouted together. But Poky—*Ahem!*—I mean King Albert would not stop. I believe Claude is still up in that tree today, and I believe the dog is still barking, and I believe the children are still yelling and crying at the dog.



## What You Hold In Your Hand

What you hold in your hand, you can put in your pocket—

Like a tooth you just lost.

What you hold in your hand, you can hold close to your heart—

Like a picture of a long lost friend.

*What you hold in your hand, you can hold up to your eyes—*

*Like binoculars to see into the distance.*

Hold a pencil—write a poem.

Hold a paintbrush—paint a picture.

But I'm holding a butterfly, and I choose to set it free.



## Dear Grandma

Dear Nonna,

I can remember when we used to bake a lot together. Do you remember when we made lasagna? We wanted to make dinner for my family after that long plane ride. Do you remember when we got to your house? We went to the kitchen and put a covering on the bottom of the pan. We put pasta in with some spices. After we put another covering on. Then we got a lot of cheese and put it on top of everything else. Then we put another covering on. Next we put it in the oven and waited. We waited together chatting about what we were going to do next with smells of your perfume and lasagna swirling around the kitchen.

I remember when we used to play cards, and we used to play Snap the most. That was our favorite card game. And do you remember how we played it? First we got a deck of cards. We split them evenly. Then we took turns putting down a card face up. If you put down the six of hearts and I put down six of hearts too, then someone would put down their hand on the pile and then they would say "Snap!" really fast. Then whoever put their hand down first would get to win the whole pile.

And remember when we both put our hands down at the same time? I said to split it evenly, and you made the joke that we snapped together, and you pointed at your head as you said it. I love playing cards with you because you never cheat, and you're a very good sport, and it is just really fun to play cards with you.

And do you remember that birthday card you made me? I loved it. It was so beautiful; you must have worked so hard on it. You pressed all those flowers and glued all those little bitty sparkles. And I know it was hard with your broken leg and all. That made me feel so so so so so special for you to make that wonderful birthday card. I think of it as the most thoughtful and creativest thing in the world! I miss you so so so so much. Talk to you next time.

Love,

Lara

Alison Kirsch

Grade 3

Jennings

Elementary

School

Fairfield

Lara Tiamani

Grade 3

Parkway

School

Greenwich



## The Witches Disappear

Hi, I'm Luke. I know it must be strange to be talking to a mouse, but it is kind of fun being one. You see, when I was in a hotel with my Grandmama, I wandered into the ballroom to train my pet mice, and a bunch of witches came in and turned me into a mouse, and I have been like this ever since.

Now, I will tell you how my Grandmama and me got rid of the witches in the witch headquarters, and about the new Grand High Witch. "Grandmama, will you tell me how to recognize a witch? I forgot." "Why, of course Luke, but try to remember them."

Ah, how to recognize a witch, if there is a lady who is holding her nose as she goes by, you see she might be a witch. You see witches can smell a child on the other side of the street on a pitch-black night. Witches have extra large nose holes so they can smell very well. A very clean child would probably smell like fresh dog droppings. You see the cleaner you are, the more you smell. Witches have blue spit, but it won't help you because witches never spit. You might see a blue tint on their teeth, but that's all. Also, witches have no toes so they have to squeeze their feet into little pointed shoes because that's what ladies wear. It is really uncomfortable. If you see a lady limping, she could be a witch. Oh yes, I forgot something. Witches have fire in their eyes and always wear long gloves up to their elbows. You see, witches don't have fingernails; they have claws. They wear gloves to cover them.

I saw that the person next to us was very interested in what my Grandmama was saying. You see, we were on a plane heading to a little village high in the mountains to the castle of the Grand High Witch. The Grand High Witch is the leader of all of the witches. In that castle is a book that has listed where all the witches live, what state, what town, and even what child they are after! Suddenly, I saw something that made me jump! The person next to my Grandmama and me was taking a little bottle out of her pocket, and when I looked at it, I gulped. The writing on the small green bottle said, "Formula 86 Delayed Action Mouse-Maker," the latest and very powerful formula made by the Grand High Witch herself, but now she is dead. That's another story.

I looked again; now the lady was holding her nose with one hand and taking off the cork of the bottle with her teeth. I noticed a purple tint on them. That's a sign of a witch! Quickly, I jumped out of my Grandmama's handbag. I whispered in her ear, "Look Grandmama!" She was startled by my sudden appearance. She said, "Look where?" I pointed at the witch who was now standing up and leaning over the seat in front of us. I jumped off my Grandmama's shoulder and onto the seat in front of us. What I saw made me jump. The witch, well at least I think she is a witch, was now trying to make a baby open its mouth. I could see the witch was looking at the sleeping mother, and she might wake up. The witch was glancing around nervously, in case someone might see her. I quickly jumped back onto my Grandmama and told her what I saw.

"Well!" she said. Grandmama suddenly stood up and said, "We will certainly not have this!" She walked around to the seat in front of us. I think the witch saw her because she dropped the bottle and my Grandmama caught it.



Just then I got a great idea, in fact, a stupendous idea. It would be a great risk to take but it would be worth it if it worked. I told Grandmama my idea. She looked concerned but said "O.K." I quickly jumped onto the seat in front of us. Then she handed me a backpack filled with things I might need. I put the backpack on and climbed into the witch's purse. It was dark and spooky. I took a flashlight out of my backpack that Grandmama made, and flashed it around. There were lots of bottles with names like "Goose Horn Eggs" or "Dragon Fang Breath." Then they caught my eye; a whole pile of Mouse-maker bottles were gleaming in the dim light.

Then suddenly the light went out. Thinking quickly, I climbed up on top of one of the bigger bottles into the opening of the purse where there was more light. I got a new light bulb out of my backpack and changed the bulb. I climbed back down, but before I could jump from the bottle, the purse started to shake. Everything started to move. "We must be getting off the plane," I thought. I was right. I saw the lid of the purse close so the only light that came was from my flashlight. It was hard to stand up with all of the rattling of the purse. Then after what felt like an hour, the purse came down with a thud. The shaking had stopped.

All was quiet except for two voices. Though they were very faint, I was able to make out a few words. "I told you that we needed the cake to be done by Friday. That would have given you plenty of time if you started on Monday as I told you to," said a raging voice. Then another person spoke in a trembling voice. "Please don't punish me," pleaded a little girl. Well it sounded like a little girl to me. "Give us one good reason not to and we will let you go, right Linda?" By now I was curious enough to climb up and peep one eye out of the lid of the purse, so that is just what I did. I climbed up on top of a bottle and peeped one eye out of the lid. When I looked around I saw that I was in a little room with walls made of stone, with a fireplace built into one wall and five chairs were lined up neatly on the other wall. In one chair was a little girl about eleven or twelve. She had wavy blonde hair down to her shoulders. It looked like it hadn't been washed for days. There were lots of burnt spots on it and lots of charcoal bits in it. Her eyes were a dark blue and she was wearing a raggedy old dress with stains and burns on it. She was staring at a lady sitting behind a desk, in the shape of a horseshoe, in the middle of the floor. The lady seemed to be smirking rather nastily. I looked to my left and saw the witch from the plane sitting on the chair next to me.

Then the little girl stood up and said more calmly, "Don't blame this all on me. It wasn't my fault. The cooks took a long time to find the ingredients for the cake. You know how really hard it is to climb trees to get those twitch bird eggs, and to find the red herb wheat to make the flour. I have been scouring pots and pans all day to put the ingredients in. I was just going to make the cake when you stopped me in the hall. I would have been halfway done by now." Then she sat down without another word, expecting the witch to reply.

The witch was speechless. She did not say anything for a few minutes. Then she spoke rather fast, saying: "You may go do your work and make the cake." The little girl started to walk slowly out the door. I saw my chance to make a break for it while the witch at the desk talked to Linda, the witch from the plane.



I could easily slide out of the purse, taking one of the bottles of Mouse-maker with me, and scamper after the girl without anyone seeing me. You know what, that is just what I did. I climbed out of the purse and scampered from chair to chair, hiding myself behind the legs. Finally, I got to the door. Now, how was I to get through? The girl had already left. Suddenly, the door banged open, and two witches came out. I saw my chance and took it. I quickly ran out from behind the chair and out the door, and no one even saw me!

Outside of the room witches were scattered everywhere. I ran and jumped over boxes, and then it clicked; I was in the witches' headquarters, the castle of the Grand High Witch. Suddenly a huge foot came over me and I was cut off from my thoughts. If I did not move soon, I would be flattened. I managed to get away, but my tail got stepped on, and it was numb with pain. I looked around for the girl, trying to forget about my tail. Then I saw her, standing and looking up at a list of chores. I quickly ran up to her and crawled up one of her legs, then up her sleeve so fast she couldn't even feel it! I climbed out on top of her sleeve.

I climbed up to her ear and whispered, "Hey." She jumped. Then she noticed me on her shoulder. Before she could say anything, I said, "Wait, you know how the witches use Mouse-maker to turn kids into mice?" "Well, yes," she answered. "Well, you see, I was changed into a mouse by the old Grand High Witch." "Oh my, I did not know," said the girl. "Hi, my name is Stacy!" "Hi, my name is Luke. Will you help me get rid of the witches?" I said. "Yes, tell me what to do!" Stacy replied excitedly

"Well, first we have to put this bottle of Mouse-maker in the cake," I said. I held up the bottle of Mouse-maker I was carrying. She said, "That would be easy." Then I explained that we would have to phone Grandmama at the Whitestone Inn to tell her to bring the cats as soon as the witches turn into mice. Stacy said we could use the phone in the kitchen.

"How about calling now and telling your Grandmama you are okay? I bet she is worried." So we went inside the kitchen after I hid myself in her apron pocket. We called Grandmama and told her we would call back when we needed the cats.

Then we made the cake and added the Mouse-maker to it at the very end. We put it into the oven to bake. When it was done we frosted it with icing. Finally it was finished. We went over to one of the cooks, and Stacy told her the cake was ready. The cook then went over to it, looked it over, and then took it into the ballroom where all the decorations were ready. Soon the new Grand High Witch and all the other witches in the castle would be eating the cake and evolving into mice right before our eyes.

We waited in the ballroom while everyone got ready. Finally the doors opened and everyone rushed into the room. Stacy took orders and served, while I watched from her apron pocket. Finally, the time had come for dessert. One cook cut slices of the cake while Stacy served it. When everybody was served, we sat at an empty table and waited and watched.

Then it happened. One by one they started screaming and turned into mice. First they started to shrink. They grew fur, sprouted whiskers, four paws, and a tail. Suddenly, the whole place was littered with mice running around in



every direction. Even the cooks had been turned into mice. Stacy quickly scrambled out of the room, jumping over groups of mice. She reached the door of the kitchen, opened it, and slammed it shut before any mice could escape. We took some deep sighs of relief and did a little dance. Then we called Grandmama and told her to come with the cats. She said they were ready, and she was getting in the car right away.

Finally we heard the rumbling of an engine. Stacy opened the door, and we both went to greet Grandmama. Stacy helped her bring the cat cages into the ballroom and let them loose. There was a great racket in the ballroom, and after an hour it died down. Then, all we heard was the scratching of cat paws on the kitchen door. Grandmama safely tucked me into her handbag out of reach, and we opened the door.

Some of the cats ran into the kitchen, but most were fast asleep in the ballroom. Not a single mouse was in sight. The cats had eaten them all up. We cheered and danced. Then Stacy and Grandmama picked up the cats, put them back in their cages, and into the car. We drove away and then dropped the cats off at an animal shelter. We now live in the castle. We are working on a plan to get rid of all the bad witches in the world.



## The Case of the Poisoned Medicine

### Part 1

Once upon a time in the deep, dark forest there lived a very mean rabbit. She sold medicine but not just any medicine—her medicine was poisoned! Where she got these medicines nobody knew except the Fox, for he was a clever fox. He was so clever, he was a detective. When Fox went on a mission he changed his name. His new mission was to find where Rabbit kept the medicine hidden and get rid of it.

Rabbit's house was huge! Fox looked around and didn't know where to start. He began by putting on a red vest and brown pants. Then he got a rope and a watch that detected bombs. The watch also had an alarm on it. He drove his car far into the woods. Rabbit's house came into view. He went up to the door and opened the lock. When he opened the door, a black, scaly dragon popped out of nowhere! He saw a collar that said "Chinese Fireball." Then he knew the dragon was a fake. It was put there to scare away anyone who came to the door. Now he knew he had to be very careful.

All of a sudden he fell into a trap! He found himself in a room with no doors or windows. He used his rope to climb up. Now he found himself in a different room. There was a TV on and Rabbit was talking. She said, "You will never make it out of here." He leaned against the TV and it spun around. He found the hidden medicine! He quickly grabbed it and escaped out of the house. He saw a lake and threw all of the medicine into it.

People cheered when Fox returned. As for Rabbit . . . She bought a one-way ticket to Antarctica so she wouldn't get caught.

Sam Spector  
Grade 3  
Parkway  
School  
Greenwich



## Part 2: Revenge of the Rabbit

It was Fox's last day of vacation. He was at a baseball game, the Yankees vs. the Diamondbacks, when his radio beeped. "What is it?" said Fox.

"The rabbit is back to her tricks!" his boss roared.

"Oh no! Not again!"

"We need you, Fox."

"I'll be right over," he sighed

Fox went to the airport. He decided to go on U.S. Airlines. When they called his flight for England, he got his bags and boarded the plane. He found his seat and sat down. There was something funny about the person next to him. First, he or she had fairly large feet for such a short person. Second, she kept asking for more carrots. The thing that bothered him the most was that she made a fairly big mess eating them.

Finally, the plane ride was over. He had forgotten something. He didn't have a ride to his office. To his surprise, there was a car waiting for him. When he got to the office the secret agents told him that the rabbit had been taking tours of the queen's palace and making people faint and breaking the glass and stealing the jewels.

"Any questions, Fox?"

"Yes, how is she making the people faint?"

"With acids," the agent explained. "This is how you are going to capture her. You are going to go in with a disguise and carefully handcuff her. We will get you a disguise."

They gave him a coat and a hat to hide his face. He was walking on the street when he saw the rabbit. She was in disguise too. He could tell by the familiar evil smirk on her face.

"It was the rabbit I was sitting next to on the plane," Fox muttered to himself as he found himself dead straight in front of the queen's palace.

Fox didn't have any money to get into the queen's palace. He would have to go through the air vent. Fox had to crawl through on his hands and knees. It was very dusty and there were cobwebs inside the air vent. Lucky there were no spiders. Finally he got to the end of the air vent. He found himself in the air vent to the queen's safe, just as he had planned. Nobody was there yet, but he heard footsteps. Finally the Rabbit came into view with the rest of the people.

Rabbit was reaching into her pocket. Rabbit was getting the acid! Fox kicked out the air vent bars, which hit Rabbit, who dropped the acid!

"Nobody move!" screamed Fox.

"Oh, so you think you've got me!" sneered Rabbit.

"Yes, I do," said Fox, handcuffing Rabbit and bringing her to Scotland Yard.

"I almost had it," muttered Rabbit.

Fox was signing autographs while the policemen were arguing over how many years the Rabbit should stay jail. "Twenty years I tell you." "No, forty." "No, for life. I mean, she has killed forty people with that medicine and stolen jewels. Off you go Rabbit, into the cell!"

Everybody cheered as Fox got into his car and drove away.

# The Night's Call

Monica Ague  
Grade 4  
Mary T.  
Murphy  
Branford

July 17, 2050

*Midnight. It was my only chance. I ran. Ran. Ran. It was my call, The Night's Call. The night had called me. Called me. Called me to its darkness, called me to my home, on a planet no one knew of, Lamairious. "Meii," it called. It had chosen me, Meii.*

April 1, 2050

Meii was from Lamairious. "Meii," she said. Except her Earth name was Linda Marie Tasch. The Tasches were her family, except the Moyszes were her Lamairious family. Linda couldn't really remember her Lamairious family. The night had called her to Earth in a black whirlwind. She was not reborn, but the Tasches were enchanted so they would think, not know, Meii (Linda) was their daughter.

July 17, 2050

*I was going home. Lamairious. Home. I was finally going home.*

April 2, 2050

Meii couldn't remember Lamairious. She had been two years old when she came to Earth. She'd forgotten what Lamairious looked like, but she knew it was the fifteenth planet. Meii hoped to go back, when they needed more people. Little did she know how soon she would get her wish.

July 18, 2050

*Home. It felt wonderful, familiar, going through The Night's Call. I could feel the feel of familiarness, smell the smell of fresh lands, and smell the smells of home. It was home, home at last. Suddenly the Lamairious sun, Solares Dea Clara, was just to come up. Oh no, I thought, I'll never get home. The Call was getting smaller. I could just barely see the lush green fields of Lamairious. I may never get home, but alas I must try. With great force I was sucked in as I pushed myself forward. The great hole entrance to Lamairious was called Carport Entrance A De Voir. And I had entered it.*

April 4, 2050

Meii had a feeling, a telling feeling. It told her on July 17, 2050, The Night's Call would call her home. Home to Lamairious. Home to her Ma, her Fa. Home to the Moyszes.

LaVeda 20, 2050

It was, unfortunately, on the west side of Lamairious, when I ought've been on the east side. I remembered my parents' last words to me, "East. Remem' thy east. G'toward thy east. Ye shall find us."

*I remembered Lamairia Des Quigk (Lamarea Dez Qwig), which was lucky, because most Lamairians spoke it. I was home, AT LAST.*



April 6, 2050

"Esex De\mlorszshuas noosz asckas Bympoor Lasgene ooshz noosea De falsz," read Meii from her Lamairia Des Quigk phrases. In English, "Cat's loose in the next door neighbor's garden and is wrecking it!" "Acke, Veekce-nostroms Desclosure Herosome Denotaa Shek!" The book was magic. It had appeared in Meii's pack. Now it was useful. She'd be able to remember Lamairia Des Quigk, the Lamairian language.

*LaVeda 20, 2050*

*"Acke, Man con frosce este. Dyout thik youk' 'els mmasha?" (Well, I come form east. Do you think you could help me?) I asked a man whose tag said "ELLEK Eastermsoskeook." He paid no attention to me. Then the man yelled, "Stager Nosk asveg! Earthe acadentos! Nichet Call mistakesdone ad!"*

*"No!" I thought. "I'm not a mistake!" It was too late. All the windows became boarded up. The doors shut and locked. I was all alone in such a familiar, yet unfamiliar place.*

April 8, 2050

Dear Diary,

Mother says I ought to keep writing in you. Nothing's interesting 'round here. Except this: Kasell Norak, the boy on the corner says the local high school, Oppenheim High (33 Acker St) is haunted. Of course, I don't believe it. It's just a K.L.R.J.N. rumor (Kase, Len, Renee, Joey and Nora). That always is happening. Kase (Kasell) starts it, then the rest encourage it. I had a feeling on April 4, 'bout.

Yours truly,

Meii Moysz

(Linda Tasch)

P.S. Tomorrow's my Earthday Birthday. In Lamairious it's Lasen Gorre 09, 2035.

*LaVeda 26, 2050*

*I was hungry. I was just hanging onto life. I hurt. I kept searching. I knew I'd die before I reached home. I was welcome to few homes because I had made a tag, or asveg, out of some scraps. It read: Meii Moysz, agea 15, Bosk Lasen Gorre 09, 2035. I never accepted, though. In my Lamairious book, it talked of things called "Population Bandits" or people who tried to reopen Nichet Call to send us Earthe grown up Lamairian children back to Earthe, or Earth. But I recorded everything in my Journal.*

*Dear Diary,*

*I am starving. I can't wait to find the Moyszes.*

*Yours,*

*Meii Moysz, agea 15*

*I knew I had a friend this way, at least*

April 11, 2050

Now she really knew she would go back to Lamairious.

*LaVeda 27, 2050*

*With or without my journal, I was alone. No family, no real friends. I was tired and cold and hungry. I was living off little scraps of food I found in bundles on the street. They all had the same message. To: The Wanderers, From: A Caring Family. It was small food, but for me, it was a little feast. I was happy, so happy when people put a whole orece or banana inside. I wandered the streets, stopping every so often to nap on a park bench. I had no real time to sleep or eat. I just slept when I was tired and ate when I was hungry. For me, there was no such thing as "settled."*

*LaVeda 28, 2050*

*Areck, Vada! I am home at last! I was so hot and hungry yesterday, I guess I fainted on these steps. When I woke up, I was being treated by a family whose name seemed to be Moysz. (It was hard to tell, everything was blurry). They asked me, "What is your name?" I answered, "Meii Molks Moysz. Is this east? I came from the east." "Yes, yes. We remember now. We've been waiting for you."*

*LaVeda 30, 2050*

*No! Last night I couldn't sleep, so I lay awake on my bed. The night was quiet, so I could hear everything. I heard the door and then voices. In Lamairia Des Quigh they said, "Where is the Moysz kid?" "In the back room." "Is she asleep?" "Yes, I put that sleeping drug in her water. She usually drinks a sip or two. I also put some other things to make her unconscious." At that moment, I realized it. This wasn't my family. They were a group of Population Bandits. I had to go. These people had power. A lot of it, too. Enough to open up The Night's Call if they wanted to, at least. Quietly, I pulled on my clothes. Atop that I pulled on my windbreaker, grabbed my bag and opened the window. I pulled myself onto the ledge. The cold night air whipped my hair around my head. My eyes stung. Everything was a blur; I was on the ground level. I swung my feet over the ledge into the cold, dark night . . . and jumped. My knees, thank goodness, hit the frosty ground first. I found a bend far away. That is where I am now. Let me explain something. La Veda is July, but the days are between 80°—90° Fahrenheit, and the night is between 20°—30° F. That is why I fainted on the twenty-eighth, and I am sitting here now, half frozen.*

*LaVeda 31, 2050*

*I am still sitting on this bench. I am scared. I have no idea where the heck I am.*

*Anovea 2, 2050*

*Alas, LaVeda has finally passed. I am not on the park bench. I am now sitting on someone's step. I ought to go, though.*

*Anovea 4, 2050*

*I am sitting on another pair of steps. These steps, these steps, these steps, they're, yes, that's it! Familiar steps. Yes, familiar steps. I think I might ring the bell.*



*When I rang this bell, I had doubts. Then I saw my mother's face, her round familiar face. I saw her tag. I knew I was home, at last. Now as I sit here on my bed writing this, I know this is home. It really is.*



## Revenge of the Supermarket

Joey Katz  
Grade 4  
Totoket Valley  
Elementary  
School  
Northford

### 1 ATTACK OF THE SALAD

"Joey," yelled my mom loudly, "put down those disgusting games and come on. We're going to Stop and Shop!"

I jumped on a mushroom, leaped over fire, and kicked a giant lizard in the side of the jaw. Then quickly the lizard turned around and hit me with a sledgehammer.

### GAME OVER

"DARN!" I thought. I turned off the TV and ran downstairs.

"Come on," mom said, "we've got to go."

We entered the supermarket after a short car drive.

"Go make your dad a salad," said my mom.

I went to the salad bar and reached for the tomatoes, when suddenly a strange force pulled me into the bar.

### SPOOSH!

Veggies flew everywhere. I felt millions of tiny teeth ripping into my flesh

"AAAAHHHH!!!" I screamed.

"Joey!" my mom gasped in horror.

### 2 HORRIBLE SOUP CAN

"Why the heck are you in the salad bar?" said my mom. She pulled me out of the vegetables. I was dripping red stuff.

"How did you get salad dressing on your new shirt?" she asked, but I wasn't listening because a giant soup can was rolling in from aisle one!

"AIEEE!" I screamed.

"What are you yelling about?" my mom asked. A little can rolled to her feet. "My son's afraid of Campbell's Creamy Chicken Noodle, just great," said my mom.

She added it to her cart.

### 3 THE GUMMY OCTOPUS

The Sourbrite gummy octopus wrapped its tentacle around my body.

"AAAAHHH!" I screamed, as it thrashed and knocked over a shelf full of canned ham.

THUD! THUD! SMASH! Vacuum packaged meat bounced down the aisle. The octopus raised me up to his mouth.

"Joey, Joey, Joey!" my mom said, embarrassed that I was sitting in a pile of gummies and ham.

"What a mess! Let's go to another aisle."

Later in my trek through the odd supermarket, I was sprayed by twenty ounce soda bottles, had cheese chucked at me by a nine foot bag of finely shredded whole milk mozzarella cheese, and was pounded to a pulp by a brown and serve sausage. Then I ended up boxing bread or something, but none of that would match up to the horror of horrors coming up next!

#### 4 THE HELL-BENT HAMBURGER HELPER

Aisle 14 had all the baking goods.

"Let's see, where's the boxed meatloaf?" asked my mom.

"Looking for me?" said a deep rasping voice, and out stepped a giant make-your-own meatloaf in a box. "You two have been shopping in our store and eating us for years now. It's time for revenge!"

It charged. As if I were in a video game, I charged. Then I jumped on top of the creature's head. He retaliated by breathing his horrible leftover breath. I leaped the fumes and kicked the monster in the chops. THUMP! Then it lunged and struck me with a cold, hard fist. I slammed into a shelf.

"Woo ha ha ha!" rasped the box of meaty powder. "Now I shall take over all of humanity." But at that moment the shelf I had crashed into started falling and CRASH! The monster was blown away in a wave of possessed produce.

#### 5 EPILOGUE

After the disaster, my mom took me home and the police busted the meatloaf. For my heroic actions, I'm allowed to play video games anytime, but most importantly . . . now we shop at Waldbaums!



### Water

I live on the waves of the ocean.  
I shelter fish with powerful arms  
and carry them on fast currents.

I am as clear as glass.  
I make waves at the beach  
and give children a place to play.

I fall softly when it rains.  
I run smoothly on rivers  
and race over waterfalls.

I help wear down sea glass.  
I'm always there when you cry.  
I make every tear on your face.

**Koby Nelson**  
Grade 4  
Regional  
Multicultural  
Magnet School  
Waterford



Evan  
Woodford  
Grade 4  
Daisy  
Ingraham  
Elementary  
School  
Westbrook

## A Cat From the Eyes of A Mouse

The cat's jaws,  
lined with  
needle sharp  
teeth  
hung above the mouse.  
Its blazing  
green eyes  
glared out  
from deep in its head.  
Its cold,  
black nose  
felt like a leech  
as the cat  
sniffed  
its next  
victim.  
The head  
was supported  
by a thick, furry neck.  
The shoulders,  
down to the muscular  
forearms,  
totally amazed  
the mouse.  
The mouse  
was pinned down,  
by a paw,  
with claws  
like  
hooks  
on each toe.  
The body was  
lean,  
and strong,  
covered with fur,  
as black as coal.  
Its powerful  
back legs  
were perfect  
for closing any gap  
between it . . .  
and  
its

doomed  
prey.  
The cat's tail  
swished  
like an  
enraged serpent.  
The cat  
spread its lips  
and

hissed.  
It was  
the most deadly sound  
that had ever,

ever,  
entered  
the mouse's ears.  
Then,  
out of the corner  
of its eye,  
the mouse  
saw a paw,  
lifting

to

strike . . .



## The Beach that Talked

Once a person told me his story,  
That it was good and bad.  
He said he was walked on,  
That he was squished and squashed.

He told me animals used him as cover,  
And dug below,  
And happened to have children.

He has told me of great ships with fins,  
They row ashore and colonize,  
But the conditions grow bad,

Charles Shu  
Grade 4  
Jeffrey  
Elementary  
School  
Madison



And soon up, up, and away,  
They leave, but leave their grave to be seen.

He was a nice person  
And greeted thousands to live,  
Some with scissors, and armor,  
Others with snakes and scales.

He has told me of living rocks that open and close to feed.  
And some even build chimneys.  
Some people take them to collect and to eat,  
Like the beaked plane that dives to get its prey.

He told me of his memory of brown people who had feathers in their hair.  
Before that, he said, giant beasts ruled the land, and dragons in the water.  
Around the time of his birth he could remember tall Cones  
That spat out extremely hot chili sauce that shortly turned to night.



## The Journey of the Gargoyle

Walker  
Downey  
Grade 5  
Saxe Middle  
School  
New Canaan

The gargoyle sits above the cold wrought iron  
Of the cemetery gate.  
Its smooth stone dissolves into dry, scaly skin.  
The evil, twisted smile  
Of the gargoyle's carved mouth  
Opens in a cackling laugh.  
Its stiff wings slowly unfold like ice thawing.  
The gargoyle takes off into the night  
And flies freely until the sun rises.  
It swoops back down  
Into the cemetery as day breaks,  
And falls into a deep sleep

Until the clock strikes midnight.

Stealthily,  
The gargoyle creeps  
Through the empty vaults of the cemetery crypt  
On the following night.  
The eerie silence is broken

By its squawking and screeching.  
The gargoyle carefully claws spider webs out of its way  
As if not to disturb them.  
A mouse scurries across the cracked stone floor,  
*Hiding itself from the looming shadow of the gargoyle.*  
The gargoyle peers through  
*The barred window of a locked vault.*  
Inside it sees a dusty wooden coffin  
And wonders what surprises it conceals.

Splosh, splosh.  
The groundskeeper treads through the damp grass.  
The gargoyle creeps quietly out of the crypt with curiosity.  
It sees the man and grins.  
An easy target.  
The gargoyle cackles and snickers, hidden from view.  
The man spins around,  
His heart beating so loud the gargoyle can hear it.  
The groundskeeper sees nothing  
But the tall shadows of tombstones.  
He shrugs nervously and shuffles away.  
The gargoyle smiles, satisfied, and flies off.

The gargoyle dives  
Into the forest in a blur.  
With a thud, it lands on a fat branch  
and jumps to the ground,  
Making dead leaves crackle  
Under its bony grey feet.  
Howling bitter winds swirl  
Through the sad moaning trees  
Making the swaying branches cast ghostly shadows  
Across the ground.  
The gargoyle grabs a low branch  
And swings to another like a monkey.  
It twirls in the air doing  
Front flips and back flips,  
As free as a bird.  
The gargoyle soars back into the sky,  
A small shadow against the moon.  
By the time the sun rises above the horizon  
The gargoyle is back on its stony perch,

Until the clock strikes midnight.



Emily Parsons  
Grade 5  
Henry A.  
Wolcott School  
West Hartford

## Forest

Tall long trees surround me  
Peaceful songs from birds ring throughout  
the pine trees  
Scurrying animals  
dart out of sight  
Leaves cover the paths  
where either a human or an angry predator  
looking for a delightful snack has prowled  
Sound of a rushing brook  
dribbles past me  
The wind brings in a soft and gentle breeze  
The sky becomes a grayish brown  
instead of the stunning crisp blue it once was  
There is a rainstorm coming.  
The raindrops fall down  
On me  
like I am the dartboard  
and they are the clear darts  
The forest stands still  
The wonderful sounds of birds singing  
their peaceful song  
has drifted to a warm  
and now dry  
place  
The dark trees are soaked  
and look like sobbing willow trees  
all bent over and crying  
The forest is silent, not a sound except for the  
Pitter-patter  
of the tiny drops of water still falling  
on my head  
Finally the rain  
has moved on to the next field of trees  
where it will stay for the night.



## The Troll Invasion

In a far away land, in the sapphire blue sky, lived a hefty young piglet. He was named Hunga after his great-grandfather. This piglet had no idea that in a few years he would become the hero of Hunganaga. Hunganaga is a very close com-

Carrie  
Margeson  
Grade 5  
Hebron  
Elementary  
School  
Hebron

munity where everyone helps with the town's burdens. After all, living on clouds in the sky isn't very easy.

Hunga was the runt of the family, but also the most adventurous. Being adventurous in mid-fall brought Hunga to the Flying Wart Troll Fortress cloud. As Hunga approached the fortress, he ducked behind boulders and peered at them from the side. When Hunga got close enough to hear the trolls talking amongst themselves, he started to eavesdrop on their conversations. He overheard some disturbing news: "Are you going to the invasion on Hunganaga?" "Have you been selected to go to the invasion on Hunganaga?" Hunga realized that this information could save his people's lives.

All he had to do was get someone to listen to him, which was going to be the hard part.

Hunga hurriedly flew home to find his dad, who was mayor of Hunganaga. When he arrived, he found his father busily reading official papers. Once he got his dad's attention, Hunga frantically explained what he had overheard. His dad, knowing that Hunga had never been wrong about things like this, trusted his son's information. He asked his staff to gather up all of the strong hogs, while he went to the dreaded Flying Wart Troll Fortress to discuss the problems between their clouds.

Hunga was worried about his father, so, as was his nature, he followed his father to the Flying Wart Troll Fortress cloud. Hunga secretly hid behind dark storm clouds. He could hear them conversing about their differences, and his dad was trying to persuade the Wart King that the problems they had weren't large enough for a war. When the conversation was about over, it sounded as if his father had made an impact on the King.

Hunga stayed a while after his dad left, only to hear the Wart King chuckle to his guard and exclaim: "That fool, he actually believes that I'm going to call off the war after he comes to talk about our differences! Think again, you lousy piece of pork."

Hunga flew home in a frantic rush. He couldn't believe it when his father wouldn't listen to his warnings. His father insisted that he and the King had become friends with each other. Hunga wouldn't give up. He said, "But father, haven't I always been right about things like this? You even said it yourself!"

When no one, not even his father, would listen to him, Hunga knew that he must take matters into his own hands. He gathered his friends together, and they snuck into the creepy Fortress one night to find some way to stop the King from attacking their land. While tiptoeing in the main hall, they saw a light approaching them and immediately hid behind a fifty-foot beam. After that, they stayed out of sight in the hall.

The piglets heard tell of a scepter that was the Wart Trolls' central brain. It controlled all of their thoughts and actions. Hunga and his fellow piglets were determined to find the Flying Wart Trolls' scepter. Soon they came across a room with a funny lock that looked like a troll fist. The piglets had learned how to make a troll fist as newborns, so the three of them combined their fists to make one gigantic troll fist. The door finally opened after a few tries. Inside lay the scepter of the trolls, the one thing that gave them life. The pillow that the scepter was laid



on was maroon velvet with gold trim. The light made the scepter glimmer and shine. Carefully trying not to drop the scepter, the piglets flew home. They hid the scepter under some fluffy white clouds until the next day when they would show Hunga's father what they had brought back.

The next day came sooner than Hunga wanted it to because he had hardly slept. He tried to look nonchalant while he walked with the scepter on his back as if it were a toy. His father saw the scepter and almost fainted when Hunga was done explaining. It took a lot of persuading to get his father to believe him. Both Hunga and his father knew that the trolls were probably missing the scepter, and they also knew that if they destroyed it right then the trolls would die. Before they gave the scepter back, they were going to try to rearrange the thoughts it was sending the trolls. They hoped to get it to send peaceful thoughts so that the trolls would forget about attacking Hunganaga. They called the best mechanic they knew of, and asked him to change the wiring around. Meanwhile, the trolls were having all kinds of emotions and twitches and fights and mood swings. One minute they were joyous, the next they were shedding puddles of tears. One minute the clouds were fluffy and dry, the next they were drenched and gray.

When the master mechanic was done and thought that he had changed the scepter's wiring for the better, he sent little Hunga over to the Fortress to return it. Hunga snuck in without being seen. He was just leaving when he heard someone calling after him. "Oh, great," Hunga thought to himself, "I've been caught. Now how am I going to get out of this?" It turned out that the troll yelling after him was going to offer him tea. That is when Hunga realized that the master mechanic had successfully re-wired the scepter. With a delighted smile, he accepted the invitation.

When Hunga returned home, he told his father all about his adventure. The mechanic was proclaimed the Best Mechanic in Hunganaga. Now the Pigs and Trolls live in harmony on their two fluffy white clouds. As for Hunga, he has a lot of new friends and is a respected pig in both cloud communities. Of course Hunga and his friends, pig and troll alike, still chase after adventures deep in the clouds.



## The Forest

In the forest

I hear the sound of the breeze moaning,

The trees waving their arms back and forth,

The leaves running in circles, chasing each other,

The sound of silence, the ruler of this place.

And the trees, they tell us their stories of age.

The holes in the trunks are endless caves,

And the abandoned sky lets you know you are the only one there

Ned Moore  
Grade 5  
Old Saybrook  
Middle School  
Old Saybrook

## The Inside and Outside of Reading

Inside a book is knowledge and history,  
Outside there is a mind waiting to be filled,  
Inside a book is alarm and fear,  
Outside is a human waiting to be startled,  
Inside a book is a mystery that's exiting,  
Outside is someone who wants to crack the case . . .  
Reading a book is an adventure.



### Sven Langlois—Secret Agent (Retired)

#### Chapter 1: A Call From the Past

It all began on April 1st, 2001 in the Chinatown section of New York City, New York. It started out like any other day. I got up, grabbed my grease-stained apron and paper hat and headed off to work. When I got to my food stand, I fired up the grill and started the deep fryers. The "take out" phone rang. At the other end was a voice from my past—Jack "HQ" Topdollar.

HQ was my boss before I retired from life as Sven Langlois, a secret agent with the worldwide intelligence agency 24CIO—24 Carat Industrial Operations. Two years ago he had relocated the agency to the small town of Moneales, Portugal. There, he was able to carry on the operations of the agency undetected as the owner and bartender of a local pool hall. He asked me to come there in a week so we could talk. I said I would, as long as he paid for the trip and kenneling for my dog.

#### Chapter 2: Out of Retirement

A week later I met HQ bar-side in Moneales, a gathering spot for the local business people and their bookies. He said he wanted me to come out of retirement for one last special assignment with the agency. It was a job that he felt only I could do. I drifted off to thinking about my life now. It was a good life operating my own cart in the heart of the Chinatown food district. The only downside was the occasional trickle, trickle and downpour, trickle, trickle and downpour, and the winter blizzards. I was happy living with my half-blind bulldog, Meathead. But then I was brought back to reality when I heard HQ mention El Gordo Matsuo, my half-Japanese, half-Mexican archenemy. "Ah," I thought. "Here's an opportunity for revenge!" I couldn't say "No," so I said, "Yes."

He told me that El Gordo was now a partner in MacroRough, an industrial giant in the cubic zirconium market. He was suspected of funneling money from the operation to Mexican and Japanese operatives. They were going to attempt an overthrow of his legitimate partner, Bob Gates, and move the operation to foreign ports, causing chaos in the world costume jewelry market. HQ wanted me to take

Mike  
Stawecki  
Grade 5  
Witt  
Intermediate  
School  
Stafford  
Springs

Matthew  
Llewellyn  
Grade 6  
Juliet W.  
Long School  
Gales Ferry



a job inside the company, so I could break open the scheme. I was sure it would be a tough job. I just hoped I would remember how to do it.

### Chapter 3: Back to Work

I returned to New York that same day. I was so excited but yet distraught at the same time. My food stand would have to be closed for at least six weeks while I was undercover. What would my customers do without me, and who would answer the "take out" phone? It turns out that Meathead was evicted from the kennel. He had been panhandling in the lobby using his food dish and fetch stick. That meant I'd have to have my neighbor, Fannin' Franny, take care of him while I took up residence in New Jersey. I would tell her I was visiting a sick aunt who had contracted a mysterious disease from the hairnet she wore at her job as a school cafeteria worker. I just hope Franny wouldn't feed him any of her old leftover macaroni. It causes serious gas.

HQ promised me a high-class car. "A Chevy," I hoped. I would also need a new ID. I needed to get a haircut and brush my teeth before they took my picture. "What job will they give me?" I wondered. "Distribution Manager? Executive Vice President? Regional Shipping Director?" To my surprise, I got even better than any of those—galley grill man! How lucky could I get? Not very, it turns out. I had to work for M. T. Pockets, the Mess Hall and Industrial Supply Manager and one of El Gordo's distant henchmen. I heard he could be a rough taskmaster when it came to too much salt in his fries!

### Chapter 4: TTC Tactics

I finally got set-up in a fleabag motel with a nice view of the Jersey landfill and reported for my first day of work on the job. Turns out I couldn't get a Chevy, but they did give me bus fare. Unfortunately, I didn't hit it off with M. T. Pockets on the first day because I was late. I was unaccustomed to the pull-cord system to get off the bus, so I ended up having to go to the end of the route and catch my stop on the return trip.

When I received my assignment, it wasn't exactly as the galley grill man. As a matter of fact, I was put in the TTC division—toilet tidiness crew. However, that turned out to be an advantage. I was able to gather important data from conversations I overheard in the men's room. Three weeks into the job and four hundred toilets later, I finally got a break in the case. I overheard one of the truck drivers say that he was delayed because they were repackaging generic toilet tissue into Charmin cases. "Ah," I thought. "No wonder we have been getting so many complaints. I knew Charmin was better than that!" Then I realized that if they were doing this to the toilet tissue, maybe they were doing it to other things as well.

I started investigating further. I pulled a Pepsi can from the trash, and found that the "e" could peel off. It wasn't Pepsi; it was Popsi! Instead of M & M's, they were really selling N & N's in the vending machines. That night when I was cleaning out M. T. Pockets's executive washroom, I overheard him talking on the telephone with El Gordo. He said that he had almost completed an entire turnover of the use of name brand supplies to generic supplies without being



detected by Bob Gates. With the money that he was saving, they were able to fund the Japanese and Mexican operatives in their takeover attempt. I finished cleaning the toilet, flushed, and left.

#### Chapter 5: It's All in the Paperwork

That night when I returned to my motel, I grabbed fifty cents and walked to the nearest pay phone. The agency had not authorized me to make long distance calls from my room. It was morning in Moneales, and the pool hall was already bustling with bookie activity. HQ answered the phone and actually agreed to accept the charges. When I told him what I found out, he said that that explained a comment Bob Gates had made to him a few weeks ago. "He said that he would have to cut off his conversation because he needed to do a little shopping before he left for work. He noticed that the toilet paper at work was rather rough, so he was picking up a roll of Softique on the way in." I understood exactly what he was talking about—ouch!

That day, as M. T. Pockets was exiting his washroom, I saw two 24CIO agents hand him a search warrant to impound all company supply paperwork. At the same time, other agents were preparing to arrest El Gordo at the company headquarters. When they arrived, however, he was nowhere to be found. Someone reported seeing a man running down the fire escape with a piece of toilet paper stuck to his shoe. From that moment on, I knew that he was a marked man.

I turned in my company ID, and that night slipped out of my motel, undetected. I just hope the agency pays the bill. I boarded a train for New York, glad to be returning to my good life. When I opened the door to my apartment, Meathead was waiting for me. "Oh, no," I thought. "She did feed him the old macaroni."



### Autumn

Dear Grandma,

Winter is coming. The long, hot days of summer are gone, and autumn has taken over. The change has been so gradual, the temperature slowly shifting so that I did not notice. Now, though, I see and feel the difference every light-footed step I take and every breath of crisp autumn air I inhale.

I remember the days when you were here, when I could lie in the green grass and look up at the bright blue sky. It looked so open and welcoming. We would talk about jumping into the sky and exploring the area that only birds call home. We would imagine sitting on the scarce, fluffy, white clouds and having the wind gently caress our faces. We would soar through the sky with not a care but to be home for dinner.

The grass was spongy and always well-watered. It was green and ripe all summer long. There was always the sweet scent of fruits and flowers in the air. Now the grass is frozen and brown. It cracks under my slippers when I scurry to get the paper in the morning. Not all of it lies there, being coated by a thin ice; a cover of crisp leaves blankets some of it where no one raked.

Julianna  
Flanagan  
Grade 6  
Gideon Welles  
Glastonbury



If you were to lie on the cold, hard ground and stare up at the sky, you might see gray clouds that seem ominous. Even if it were a clear day, the sky still wouldn't be bright. The blue would be faded, and it would be hard to believe that this was the same sky that triggered such pleasant thoughts.

The horizon isn't lined with green leaves, and the woods aren't blocked and hidden. The leaves are not on the trees; they are dead on the ground. All that is left is the brown figure of trees and shrubs' bark. What were once their fancy trimmings all green and alive, then golden and scarlet, have fallen, and they lay getting trampled on nature's floor, slowly losing color all together.

When I walk through this dreary world, all I hear is the shuffling of my feet on the ground and a distant birdcall. I know that that voice belongs to geese on their trip south. They stop here, resting in our ponds and polluting the water with their waste. They do not feel at home here, though; they are looking for a warmer place that is more alive. I hear their voices grow louder as they fly near, and then move on. Their call slowly fades into a distant echo.

The wind is not friendly like a cool summer breeze, but cold and nippy. It rushes through the trees and sends chills up your spine. When you exhale, you can see your warm breath hanging in the air and coiling up until it is carried away and lost in the wind. In the morning when I step into this silent world from my cozy home, and I take my first breath of fresh air, coldness rushes through me and stings my lungs.

When I play soccer or run around, my face turns red and rosy. Even when I feel warm under the many layers I wear, when I reach up and touch my ears they are always cold, and even though I can't see it, I know that my nose is pink underneath my freckles.

When I saunter through the woods with the dogs, they cannot hide. I can hear every crackling step we take on the fallen leaves, and I can see them through the bare foliage. The plants are not coated with snow yet, but it will come. When the snow finally does fall, I will trudge through it with a shovel instead of a rake or a lawnmower.

When I think about the holidays to come, I yearn for them. In my dreams I see all of us together, laughing and talking over a grand feast with the turkey crisp on the outside but juicy inside. We will have mashed potatoes and cranberries, followed by apple pie, pumpkin pie, and licorice. We will all be filled with stuffing and meat; we will be tired, and my cousins will be carried away sleeping. I know the longer that I wait, though, the better it will be.

When you are here the house will smell of chocolate chip cookies just coming out of the oven. When I come inside, you will be there welcoming me with hot cocoa, just like old times. We will have numerous conversations that I can only begin to imagine. We will have peppermints as dessert after we eat the scrumptious food that you make for us.

It's not that I hate autumn and getting ready for all the merriment. It's just that looking forward to all the fun (and snow) makes the present seem dull. In fact there are some things that I love about this season, but we will have to discuss those in front of a warm fire when you come up soon for Thanksgiving!

Your granddaughter,  
Julianna



## The Forgotten Island

Jacqueline  
Feldman  
Grade 6  
Avon Middle  
School  
Avon

The crystalline ocean pounded rhythmically against the coarse grains of sand that lay by the millions upon the quiet beach. Samantha could feel the silence all around her. The gentle nighttime breeze blew gritty sand into her mouth and sharp pieces of shell scraped against her bare feet. This was her beach. She could see the rowboat from here, the one whose wooden sides had carried her to this solitary place. Her navy blue shorts and pink blouse did not shield her from the cold, and nothing could shield her from the silence.

Ten seconds later Samantha had slid into sleep, and the sands of that peaceful beach embraced her like a blanket.

All night, she dreamed of a beach like this one being crushed by a cruel thing off in the distance that Samantha herself could not see.

When Samantha woke up, the sun was high in the pale blue sky. Fluffy clouds drifted sleepily by. There was an atmosphere of noontime laziness, and the last thing she wanted to do was to paddle herself back to the small white building, her grandmother's home, on the other side of the expanse of water. She gingerly dangled her big toe into the dark bluish-black water and watched a school of thin silvery fishes, as serene as the breezy, fresh July day, dart through the water. The water was cold, and Samantha hastily withdrew her foot. She was hungry, and the thought of a heaping platter full of eggs, toast, bacon, and plenty more of her grandmother's good cooking finally persuaded Samantha to reluctantly canoe back across the lake.

Before Samantha left, she tied her white handkerchief to the tip of a reed that was swaying gently in the summer breeze.

"It's a marker," Samantha told herself, "so that I can find my way back." But more than that, it was a promise—a promise that she would return someday.

The rest of that day she spent with her three cousins—Annie, Rose, and George. George (called Georgie) had brown hair like Samantha's, only his was short and untidy. Little pieces of hair stuck out in all directions from his two-year-old head. George was the baby in the group, and although he was spoiled, he was very sweet and followed Rose around everywhere. Rose was twelve, a year older than both Samantha and Annie, and she was shy and quiet. Like Samantha, she had freckles that crossed her face like chocolate sprinkles on an ice cream cone, but her hair was a lighter brown than Samantha and Georgie's. Annie was Samantha's age, and Samantha had always felt closer to her than to either Georgie or Rose. With her blonde hair, green eyes, and freckle-less face, she didn't look at all like her cousin and siblings.

At Grandma's house, the children were allowed to pretty much run wild. If Georgie wanted to sleep in the crudely made wooden tree house that he had helped Rose build, Grandma wouldn't mind, as long as Rose came with him for safety. And if Samantha felt like exploring the lake and spending the night at a little sandy island, Grandma wouldn't say no. But today wasn't a day for any more of those things. Samantha and Annie played tag by the lake. Rose sometimes joined them but was focused mostly on keeping Georgie out of the poison ivy, which was abundant in the green-golden summertime trees surrounding the



lake.

"Berries! Berries, yum, yum!" It was Georgie, who evidently had found a strawberry vine. Before he could add more to his rapidly growing handful of fruit, Rose rushed over.

"Are you sure? No, don't eat them, Georgie—No! Stop!" But she relaxed after seeing that the hard, sweet, pinkish-yellow fruit growing on three-leaved plants truly were strawberries, not poison ivy, and were safe to eat. (Not only that, Rose soon discovered that they were delicious.) Even one of the stray cats that roamed around Grandma's yard somehow materialized there too at the declaration that there was food. After a while, their bellies aching with too many strawberries, the group of children, followed by the several cats that they had turned up, trooped up the steps of the house, carrying in their red-stained hands what they hoped were enough squashed berries to make a small pie or tart. This was the way all summers at Grandma's house were—carefree and full of innocent fun.

At dinner, consisting of freshly caught trout that Samantha and Annie's uncle had caught in the lake, Samantha remembered the tranquil islet that she had discovered. She told her grandmother, who seemed unusually interested in her granddaughter's recent discovery.

"That island means a lot to myself and to our family. My mother, your great-grandmother, brought me to that island when I was a little older than Rose, and I have very good memories of that time with her. I was going to show it to everyone this summer, but I suppose Samantha has discovered it for herself. Maybe we can all go there for a picnic tomorrow."

"Ummmmm . . . picnic. Berries?" That was Georgie.

"If you want," his grandmother smiled, tousling his scruffy hair.

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Somehow, that glorious summer ran out all too quickly, and soon enough it was time for the children to go home and for the fall semester of school to start.

The next year, Grandma had to leave the house and lake that had been in the family forever and move closer to Samantha's cousin's house, ending the yearly visits to that wonderful place. Samantha's uncle would be able to support Grandma while Samantha's other uncle, who lived near the lake, went to fight in World War II.

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Samantha drove quickly along the once-familiar road. To her right, instead of the rustic little village that had been reality sixty years ago, there was a bustling, busy town. An empty potato chip bag that someone had carelessly discarded skittered across the road, carried by a summer breeze like the one on the island sixty years ago. The breeze seemed to give Samantha hope that could not be changed by even the several cigarette butts. Her granddaughter Rose, named after Samantha's cousin, was sitting in the back seat of their light blue station wagon, listening to a band called "Fate's Child" or something like that. Samantha didn't keep track of those kinds of things. Right now she had a specific goal in mind. When Samantha was eleven or so, she had discovered a tiny islet near the edge of a peaceful lake. The island was important to her because it had been a special place to herself and to her grandmother. It had been full of a special magic, the



magic of quietness and solitude mingled with the connection that this island had to her grandmother and great-grandmother. Now, she was going to show Rose, who had just turned twelve.

Samantha parked the car near the lake, and then looked up, filled with dismay. A bold sign on a very modern, tall hotel proudly read "Lakeside Towers," and several motorboats zoomed around the once crystalline waters. A community of overly extravagant summer homes stood where the beautiful forest surrounding the lake had once been.

Samantha made a strangled, sobbing sound. She felt as though she had been crushed between sky and earth, like an ant stepped on by a hiking boot. She blinked, hard, and was carried back to one summer evening in the peaceful house by the lake. She remembered a simple yet delicious meal of trout and strawberries. Bullfrogs croaked a harmony Samantha never realized that she had missed in all these years. With the next blink, she was in the present again. Listening hard, Samantha could only hear the rumble of the highway and the shouts of civilization.

"Look! An Old Navy!" Rose indicated part of the mall that completely blocked off the small island, which was the reason they had come. Trying to be as grandmotherly as possible, Samantha forced a smile. She blamed her tears on allergies and let herself be tugged into the loud, brightly lit store that was so much different from the silent shores of that sandy island. The white, threadbare handkerchief Samantha had been clutching slipped gently from her fingers onto the cold, unfeeling floor.



## The Miracle

It was Friday morning, a few hours before work in early April of 1988. Michael Laivin was on the 5th Avenue bus on his way to The New York Public Library where he worked as an accountant. From where he sat, he could see the bus driver clearly in the rear view mirror. She was reading a newspaper, drinking coffee from a white paper cup that said "I heart N.Y." and eating a bialy.

Michael was going over the accounts of the library when, suddenly, the bus swerved, knocking his head against the filthy window, and throwing him out of his seat to the floor. People screamed as the sound of shattering glass and crushing metal filled the air. The bus gave a terrible jolt, tipped over, and came crashing down against the sidewalk in a pile of rubble. The last thing Michael saw before he blacked out was a white paper cup that read "I heart N.Y." roll past him.

Michael was the only survivor on the bus. He suffered severe leg, hand, and neck injuries, and he lay in the hospital weeks later, wondering why, out of the 75 people on that bus, only he had survived. As he lay there with his neck in a brace he thought, "I don't see why I'm so special; I'm just a simple man with no family who works at a library." Nevertheless, he was spared, and for a reason he did not know. This would haunt him for a very long time.

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Almost two years had passed since that day, and time went on as it always

**Jordan Wolfe**  
Grade 6  
Coleytown  
Middle School  
Westport



does no matter the obstacles it may encounter. The knee on Michael's left leg was permanently bent, causing him to walk with a more than subtle limp. Because his right hand had been broken in so many places, it was difficult for him write or type. He also had developed a speech impediment that made communication difficult.

At first he was thankful for surviving the crash, but as time went by he began to hate, even to loathe the deformities he'd been left with. Soon he got to the point where he bitterly complained every time he had to limp across the library floor, every time he had to fumble to pick up the phone, and every time he dropped a pencil. These simple abilities had been taken for granted all of his life, and he was mad that he could not use them any more. His desperate daily prayers for a miracle to fix his deformities were never answered, but Michael never stopped praying.

On a Friday in April of 1990, Michael went to have dinner with his good friend Austin on his way home from work. Michael had known Austin since he was about five or six, and he hadn't seen him in about a month.

Over a Dr. Pepper, Michael asked, "Austin, do you believe in miracles?" "Miracles?" asked Austin, "I never really thought about it before . . . I guess so. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, just wondering," he returned. Michael had always believed in miracles, even though one had never happened to him.

Just then the buzzer rang. Austin opened the door to reveal a small Asian man in a blue and white jacket. He held two large plastic bags in his hands. The Chinese food was here. Austin paid the man, thanked him, took the food, put it on plates, and they began to eat. Needless to say, Michael wasn't using the chopsticks.

When they both opened their fortune cookies, Michael was puzzled when he looked at the message in his fortune cookie, for there, on the little slip of white paper, in tiny red letters were these words:

WHEN TIME IS IN THE RIGHT ALIGNMENT,  
YOUR MIRACLE SHALL COME TO YOU.

Michael went to bed that night with those words embedded in his mind: "When time is in the right alignment, your miracle shall come to you." What could it mean? At length, he finally fell asleep.

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The next morning, he woke up, and suddenly it hit him like lighting; it was all clear now. His miracle had been granted long ago. His miracle was surviving the crash and being alive at all. To see the sun set and rise again in itself was a miracle.

There were seventy-five people on that bus who never got to hear children play in the park or see a rainbow again, seventy-five people who never got to say goodbye. Michael had lived through two more years of rainbows. What a fool he'd been!

That night, he sent up a prayer of thanks for his miracle, which had been granted all along. He just didn't know it.

## Where Did Time Go?

Last night my mother asked me, "Where did the time go?  
You have been working hard all night,  
And yet your work just isn't done."

So I began to think,  
"Where did the time go?"  
And realized, it could be anywhere!  
But how did it get where it is?

And so I riddle you this:  
Where did time go?  
Now it is always one step ahead;  
I've chased it, but cannot catch up again.

Where did time go?  
I thought I had it on a leash  
Bouncing, barking, at my side  
But it has slipped its collar.

Where did time go?  
It hides, a curious child.  
You can't be mad that it is lost,  
You are just relieved to find it again.

Where did time go?  
It flew out the window, a graceful bird,  
Its wings the only thing that leaves  
Us humans far behind.

Where did time go?  
It disappeared, a trickling stream,  
The sun takes it away when the earth is parched  
To save it for a soggy day.

Where did time go?  
It seems to have just disappeared  
Whether bird or child, dog or water  
It has escaped me.

Where did time go?  
Going, going, gone.  
It will be back another day,  
When waiting seems less than alluring  
That's simply how it plays its timely game.

Brenna  
Czudak  
Grade 6  
New Fairfield  
Middle School  
New Fairfield



Emily Davis  
Grade 7  
Whisconier  
Middle School  
Brookfield

## There

There they are right in front of me  
In front of the old house and the  
Green woods  
Looking into the lens

There they are playing like young kids  
Fresh and new  
There is my Mother with her pale outfit  
Her skin is so soft and clean with a chain of  
Wooden beads around her soft neck  
Trusting my father with life  
And into the depths of a new generation  
To come

There is my Father standing  
Gripping my Mother with confidence  
He is there with his big bushy hair and dark blue shirt  
Boldly standing there  
Supporting my Mother's weight  
Looking into the new life  
With the unknown standing  
In front of them

There they seem free and lively  
In the photograph  
With the warm fiery sun sheltering them both from  
The hard future  
Until they are on their own  
Then they will be vulnerable  
To the hard world

Here I am  
One eyebrow raised  
Trying to grasp the life and spirit  
That was once there  
Looking at them there



## Different

Who are you to label me as strange?  
Maybe it's you, and maybe I'm normal.  
Who are you to decide what is normal or not?  
Differences? They're not an excuse for being naive.

I'm different from you; you're different from me too.  
So maybe you're the one who's strange,  
who's weird, who's different.

Just because I stand alone, doesn't make me wrong.  
When I don't follow suit, that doesn't make me strange.  
I don't go by the book, but I'm being true to me, my soul.  
Maybe you should try it.

The crowd you follow isn't always right and you know it.  
What's right is truth and honesty, to yourself and your differences.  
For that is what sets us apart, though we try to fight it.



## A Deer Staring at Me

Presents. That was all Christmas meant to me as I walked down the stairs, and I walked into the living room. I flicked on my flashlight and was in awe at the present-filled living room.

I grabbed my stocking silently and poured everything on the carpet. Once I finished staring at all the chocolate, I shoveled it back into the stocking, and I threw it back on the hook above the fireplace. Then, I shook, felt, and smelled every one of my presents while I tried to make guesses. I thought there might have been some I didn't see because I counted more presents for one of my brothers than me. I made one of those "that is so unfair" faces and stomped quietly to the stairs. I took one last look at the presents to make sure they were the way I had found them when I saw a deer staring at me out in the snow through the window. I scrambled into my boots and wobbled through the snow after it.

I passed where the tree line began, and I saw my tree house in the corner of my eye. I did not take my eyes off the deer, for I thought that it would disappear even if I only glanced away. I finally had to stop to catch my breath and get some snow out of my boots. I took a moment to do this, and I decided to go back because I lost sight of the deer. I turned around, and I saw endless trees.

Was I lost? That was the question I asked myself as I walked in what I thought was the right direction. White snow had powdered over my tracks in the snow before I could say Christmas. Tears froze in my eyes, and the winter winds stole feeling from my ears.

Alicia Talarico  
Grade 7  
Slade Middle  
School  
New Britain

Tyler Cheney  
Grade 7  
Mansfield  
Middle School  
Storrs



Jason Clain  
Grade 7  
Eastern Middle  
School  
Greenwich

I slapped some snow off a large rock and sat down on it. I felt like plunging into the snow and screaming. I didn't want my presents anymore. I didn't think I even deserved my presents anymore because of waking up before I was supposed to. All I wanted was to be with my family. I wanted to sing songs with them, sled with them, laugh with them, and love them not for what they give me but for who they are. I suddenly felt bad for the people who don't have family.

I knew my life was going to change from then on, and I knew I had to get back to my family. Again, I started off in what I thought was the direction of my home. The snow stopped flurrying, and the sun became brighter than ever. I knew my family was awake.

My walk soon turned into a jog, and my jog came to a sprint. My sprint was more like a fast wobble considering the snow was up to my knees. I tripped over a white rock, and I fell face forward. I looked up and saw my tree house. I was home!

In seconds, I was in my family's arms next to the fireplace. From that day on, Christmas meant much more than presents to me. It meant being with my family and knowing my family would always be there for me.

Over my mother's shoulder, out the window, in the snow I saw a deer staring at me.



## Crazy Lady

Grandma . . . that makes you think of some old lady with glasses. Well, not my grandma . . . my grandmother is crazy.

One night we decided to go out to dinner. My grandmother was in her room getting all "pretty." Then, like a bullet, a sixty-year-old Marilyn Manson came running through the doors . . . that's right. It was my grandmother!

Later that night we were sitting in a restaurant. Everything was going fine until my grandmother took off her hat, and I noticed she was bald! That's right, bald. I was so embarrassed. Why would her hair fall out, you may ask? She accidentally put Nair in her hair instead of styling mousse. For most people this would have been horrible, but for my grandmother, it was an excuse for a little fun. She dropped me at home and went out to a club with her new "look."

These stories may all sound outrageous, but there is one left that tops them all, one that I have never told before.

It all started on a calm April day. I woke up to the smell of pancakes in the oven (my grandma's secret recipe) and eggs cooking on the stove. I sat down at the table and munched down every scrumptious crumb off my plate. Then I was off to walk Doby, my grandma's adorable Cockapoo puppy. We set out along the bumpy dirt road. The woods in my grandmother's neighborhood were truly beautiful, even without their leaves. After a long rambling walk, we headed back toward the house. I sat myself on the cold granite steps, and Doby plopped himself on my lap. Nothing could ruin the serenity of the day . . . or so I thought.

Soon after I headed inside to see if my grandmother needed help with anything around the house. That's when the fun began. I cautiously asked, knowing how outrageous some of the things she does are, "What are we doing today?"

"Just let me check the calendar, sweetie," she replied. "What's the date again?" she questioned.

"April uh . . . 15<sup>th</sup>," I replied.

"April," she said. "April 15<sup>th</sup>. I thought we had something planned today, or something to do . . . guess not. Let's just hang around here and play a game. Okay?"

I actually wanted to stay home. I didn't need any more adventures with grandma this century!

"How about Monopoly?" she inquired.

"Okay," was my reply, and so it started. I quickly took the lead by buying up all four railroads. My grandmother was not pleased.

"I landed on Community Chest!" She exclaimed. "Pay a \$200 water tax," she read from the card. For a second she seemed deep in thought. Then suddenly she shrieked and threw the Monopoly game off the table.

"Taxes... that's what April 15<sup>th</sup> is. That's what we needed to do today. Pay my taxes!" she gasped.

I didn't know what to say, but I knew a new adventure was beginning.

First came the forms for state taxes.

"Here, fill in these," my grandmother ordered.

Now how crazy is that. My grandmother had me doing her taxes.

"How Grandma?" I asked.

"Just make up some numbers and put them on the paper," she yelled in a panic.

"Okay, okay," I answered knowing I had no idea what I was doing.

Business deductibles . . . Six dollars I entered on the line next to it.

Yearly income . . . Two hundred dollars sounded reasonable.

"How's it going, honey?" the sweet-but-agitated voice asked.

"Good . . . I guess." I really didn't want to mess this up. Okay, next question.

Property value . . . \$50 . . .

"Maybe that's a little too much," I thought. " . . . Whatever."

As soon as I had finished those, another pile was slapped on my lap. Ugh, I can't stand this.

"Grandma," I whined.

"Just do it, honey," came the reply.

As the "completed" pile was getting higher, the time was getting later. It was 8:00 p.m. . . . 9:00 p.m. . . . 10:00 p.m. The midnight deadline was approaching. Finally, the senseless forms were done.

"Sweetie, we need to put them all in envelopes." I worked until 11:30 when my grandmother suddenly yelled: "Get in the car!"

(My grandmother was officially hysterical). I followed her but could not talk after licking over fifty bitter tasting envelopes. We were off to the post office. Her old Chevy pickup quickly reached twenty, thirty, forty M.P.H., and just as



suddenly screeched to a stop at the post office. Her wrinkled hand grabbed the cold, steel post office door. Clunk . . . clunk. LOCKED!!!! It was 12:02. I could swear flames shot out of her ears.

We were about to head home, totally dejected, when my grandmother spied a truck in the corner of her rear view mirror. Could it be? It was! It was the mail truck. Again grandma was gunning the old pickup as fast as it could go. Twenty, thirty . . . forty M.P.H. But it still wasn't fast enough to catch our government's finest.

"Take the wheel," my nutty grandmother shouted as she climbed into the bed of the pickup. Gulp!!! My body went numb as my small head struggled to see over the wheel. I was less scared of the driving than I was of the rumbling of supplies in the back of the truck. My worst fears were confirmed when I saw my grandmother throwing a rope towards the mail trucks bumper. To my disbelief it caught. And if this wasn't enough for a twelve-year-old's heart, what I saw next was worse. She had put on roller blades and was slowly lowering herself to the ground. Holding the rope in her right hand and the envelopes in her left, she slowly made her way toward the mail truck with me still driving. Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, she reached the truck. She winged the letters into the back of the mail truck and slowly made her way back. She made it back without a scratch, and we proceeded back home as if nothing had happened.



## The Sub

Sarah  
Bergeron  
Grade 7  
Ellington  
Middle School  
Ellington

"Ready for bed Jo-jo?" Kelsy asked her younger brother.

"I want a story!" Jo-jo yelled back.

"Oh, all right, but today I'll make it up." Kelsy swooped up her three-year-old brother and Tommy followed. She had been left in charge of them for a couple of hours while her parents were out. Kelsy carried the toddler to his small room, placed him on the bed, and looked around. The room was small with blue walls and a brown dresser. It had a white carpet with a few stains on it where Jo-jo had had an "accident." Jo-jo's bed was low to the ground and covered with airplane blankets. A window stood directly across from the door. There were a few toys strewn across the floor where Jo-jo had left them. Kelsy turned back to her little brothers. "All right Jo-jo," she said, and began...

There were once two girls who lived up the street from us. Their names were Samantha, whom everybody called Sam, and Karin, a small shy girl. The two fourth-graders were enrolled in a school called James Elementary. Sam and Karin used to meet at the corner of Little Street at eight fifteen every morning and walked to school together. One warm foggy morning Sam looked out the window. Something about the sky seemed a little mysterious. Sam pulled on her jean shorts



and a pink tank top, ate a bowl of cereal, grabbed her bag and yelled goodbye as she raced out the door.

Karin was already waiting as Samantha came running.

"Hurry up!" she yelled.

"I'm coming," Sam replied. After she had caught up, Sam said, "I read this book last night. It was called *The Revenge of the Aliens*."

"What was it about?" Karin asked.

"Oh, the aliens got mad and took over the earth." She paused and then added, "You don't think that could really happen, do you?"

"Are you crazy?" Karin laughed. "Aliens aren't real!"

The two girls had reached the school and sat down on the swings to wait for the bell.

After the bell rang, Karin and Samantha walked into their classroom. In the front of the class stood a new teacher.

"Where is Mr. Tanner?" asked Sam.

"Mr. Tanner is sick today. I will be your substitute."

Everyone then talked about what they would be for Halloween that year. Although Halloween was only two days away, the October air was pleasantly warm.

Sam felt strange. Something wasn't right. The fog only got thicker, making the day seem ominous. The teacher was a bit strange, too. She was very pretty with long dark hair and a gentle face. But that wasn't what Sam saw. Sam, observant as she was, noticed that the teacher's blue eyes seemed piercing, almost evil. And the way she walked, it wasn't something Sam could explain. The teacher walked awkwardly; she seemed to concentrate on every step.

As soon as everyone was seated the substitute turned around and, on the blackboard, she wrote: Ms. Neila. Sam gasped. She had noticed something really weird. Obviously no one else had noticed that Ms. Neila hadn't really written her name. All she had done was lift the chalk and move it across the board. The letters had appeared on their own.

Ms. Neila turned back to the class.

"My name is Ms. Neila. I hope to make today a very fun day. First," she paused, "a spelling bee."

Some kids gasped.

"That's not fun!" yelled Tom, the worst speller in the class.

Ms. Neila ignored the remark and said, "Everybody line up on the wall by the window. I will tell you the rules. One: everybody must play. Two: you will decide who is right and wrong. If you tell someone they are wrong, and they are right, then you are out, not them. Three: the winner gets this chocolate bar." Ms. Neila held up what looked like a ten-pound bar of chocolate in the shape of a bee. "I will give you ten minutes to study this week's words." Everyone, including Tom, ran to get his or her books. As it turned out, Tom won and got sick from eating too much chocolate.

At lunch a few hours later, Karin said, "I like Ms. Neila. I hope we have her again." Sam was silent for a change. Then, softly, she said, "There's something strange about her. I don't like the way she walks, and her eyes are strange."



"She could have had a stroke or something, and some people have strange eyes," Karin told her.

"I think she's an alien," Sam said over a bite of pizza.

"Sam!" Karin exclaimed. "I think you never should have read that book."

"No, really, I know this sounds strange, and you don't have to believe me, but when she put her name on that board, I saw that if you spell her name backwards, it reads: Ms. Alien."

Karin gasped. "What?" she asked, surprised. Just then, Ms. Neila walked in. She carried a tin lunch box; it looked very old. Karin and Sam were totally surprised when the substitute waddled over and sat down across from them.

"Is anyone sitting here?" she asked.

"No," Karin squeaked.

"Good. So did you learn anything yet today?" Ms. Neila asked.

"Oh, yes, I learned a lot," came Sam's reply. Samantha watched as Ms. Neila opened her lunchbox. Inside was something that looked like moldy applesauce with bits of raw meat.

Karin glanced at Sam. "Um, we'd better be going now," Sam stammered. The two girls quickly stood up and were about to leave when the fire drill went off. The lunch aids immediately told the kids to form a single line and march out to the playground. Karin and Sam were the last in the line. When they were halfway down the hallway, a thought occurred to Sam.

"Where is Ms. Neila?" she asked Karin. "She is new and might not realize that you need to get out during a fire drill." Sam paused and then added, "Come on, Karin, let's go find her."

"But she's a . . ."

"Alien or not, Karin, she needs to follow the rules. Come on!" Sam grabbed Karin's hand and dragged her back to the cafeteria. "Ms. Neila," she called, "you have to . . ."

Ms. Neila turned around. "I don't have to do anything," she said. A wicked grin spread across her face. Ms. Neila was no longer a person. Instead, a tall four-legged creature stood there. The body was a bluish green color. Instead of arms she had tentacles, eight of them, with suction cups on every one. Her head was very round. Instead of hair, the ghoulish creature had wormlike rings that never stopped moving. The alien had about ten eyes all around its head.

"An alien!" Sam gasped as she stared in horror.

"No need to call me Ms. Neila any more," it said. "My real name is Marmack." Marmack stretched out two of its tentacles. The last thing Sam saw were waves of electricity. Then everything went black . . .

Jo-jo screamed and began to cry. "Why did the alien kill them?" he sobbed.

"Shh," Kelsy said softly. "It was only a story." Kelsy tucked her brother into bed, then led Tommy to his room.

"I don't believe that story," said Tommy. "You made it up." Even so, the boy seemed a little nervous.

The next morning Kelsy woke up. It was a windy fall day. Leaves blew

around and a strange fog swept in. Kelsy dressed, ate a bowl of cereal, grabbed money for lunch, hissed her mum goodbye, and ran to catch the bus. Kelsy remembered how Tommy had hugged her. "Be careful," he had said. She smiled at the thought.

As everyone filed into the classroom, Kelsy saw someone new. The teacher was gone, and in her place was a new person.

"Hello," she said. "My name is Ms. Neila."



## Cows over Moons

Babies cry,  
As the brightness fades,  
When the moon comes out tonight,

Amongst the stars,  
Inside the universe,  
The moon is awakened,

The starstruck cow,  
Leaps out of the blue,  
And moos into the distance,

The moon still dreaming,  
The night just still,  
The cow approaches the moon,

Glowing in the dark,  
Over land and water,  
Leaving peaceful cloud tracks,

You see it stepping closer,  
Up it goes,  
Sweeping the sky,  
Over the nightingale,

As all the world is at rest,  
The cow jumps marvelously,  
Sparkles everywhere,  
Clouds and lords rejoice,  
At the one and glorious eve.

Andrea  
Romero  
Grade 8  
Bedford  
Middle  
School  
Westport



Tonya  
Malinowski  
Grade 8  
John Wallace  
Middle School  
Newington

## Leaning Against the Wind

Your scarlet shadowed dreams  
burrow beneath your lashes . . .  
They escape sometimes,  
whether it is through your stare,  
which is the envy of the moonlit seas,  
or by your star-kissed whispers.  
Their source is irrelevant  
to their destination,  
because whatever you were  
to the world before,  
you are now everything to me.  
Lately I'm venturing into  
all the secrets you keep locked within  
and they are the setting  
of each daydream I wrap you in.  
I wish I were an immortal snowflake,  
so I could meander down  
to rest gently on your eyelash . . .  
and bathe in your  
midnight-tinted iris,  
before drowning in your hidden tears.  
I get lost so easily,  
in your words that I carry within,  
but outside them I find myself  
longing to be lost with you again . . .



Jordan  
DeSimone  
Grade 8  
Tolland Middle  
School  
Tolland

## The Storm is Coming

Trees sway  
Grass shimmers  
In the raging wind  
Clouds soar along  
And darken on their way  
Raindrops fall on freckled arms  
Here and there  
Birds stop chirping  
Squirrels stop searching  
Silence fills my ears  
And everything is still  
Before the coming storm

## Daddy and Poppy

Ben Zachs  
Grade 8  
Schechter  
School  
West Hartford

"It's okay, Dad. You really don't have to come. I mean it; it's no big deal. I really don't want to go anyway." It sucks when you are a kid and you move from town to town (and even state to state) so often. My dad has this job that requires us to move about every two or three years. I hate having to explain my life to everyone I meet.

When we moved this time my parents enrolled me in an all-boy's academy in Los Angeles. Right before we left our old town I heard them talking when I was getting ready for bed. "Bill, are you sure this new school is going to be right for Mark? He's never been to an all-boys school before. He's always had a lot of friends who are girls. I think the change of moving and the change of school will be very tough on Mark. Don't you agree?"

"We've been through this before, Richard. He's going to be fine. Mark is an easy-going, friendly kid. He'll fit in any place."

I knew I was in for it. I hated moving. I hated explaining myself to everyone and I hated talking about "them." Now, I wasn't even going to have any friends who are girls. What else can they possibly do to me?

Okay, I must admit, the move went better than I thought it would. Then, all the new students and their parents are invited to a "New Student and Parent Orientation." To make things worse, it was a sleepover for the kids and their parents. I knew that was when the trouble would begin. I had no choice. I had to go.

I tried pretending to be sick that day but my parents knew I was faking. Later that afternoon, around five o'clock, Dad, Pop, and I went to the orientation. Right when I got there I saw these guys who looked around my age. They seemed cool. I didn't want anyone to know that both men I walked in with were mine so I went over to talk to those kids.

"Hi, I'm Mark. What are your names?"

"I'm Johnny, and this is Bobby," Johnny said.

"Hey, nice meeting you. So, what grade are you in?"

"I'm in ninth and Bobby is too. Bobby's kind of shy," John said in a whisper.

"That's okay, I usually am, too. It takes me a while to open up," I blurted out accidentally. "I'm not really into telling about myself and talking to many people until I'm comfortable with the person."

"Same with me!" Bobby yelled with a great huge smile.

"C'mon Mark, the tour's starting," my Poppy said.

"Is that your dad? I thought that other guy you came in with is your dad?" Johnny asked. I know he looked kind of confused. I ignored his question.

"I'm coming, dad," I yelled. It seemed like Johnny and Bobby were saying something to each other about Poppy. Maybe they could tell. Oh no! If they already know, they might not want to hang out with me.

The tour started out pretty good; the campus was really nice. We didn't need to do anything with our parents, yet. I kind of walked away from my parents so nobody would notice I was with both of them. After showing us the whole



campus, we were broken into many groups. Different groups of kids were put together and the same with the groups of parents. Right when we got into our groups, kids started complaining about their parents. They were all normal things, though: "blah, blah, blah, mine are so strict, they make me watch my brother and sister, they don't let me do anything, they are always looking through my stuff, they don't let me have girls over when they're not home." I couldn't believe what they were complaining about. All of their complaints were normal, everyday, and dumb complaints.

When it was my turn I said, "All you guys think you have problems? How do you think it feels to walk into a new school and have to explain that you have two fathers and no mother?" Everyone was dead silent; it sounded like a moment of silence at a funeral. You could literally hear a pin drop. All the kids in my group were staring at me and muttering to each other. I fell back in my seat. I have never been so embarrassed. Now everyone at my new school would know. I was ruined even before we got our first homework assignment.

I was surprised. As the group put their tongues back in their mouths, they started to ask me some pretty normal questions. They wanted to know if one of them was actually my "real dad." They wanted to know which one was my real dad. Did I ever get to meet my mother? Do I have a relationship with her? Who do I talk to when I have a problem? Are they good athletes? Do they watch when I play sports? I figured I should answer some of their questions. I told them that Richard is my birth father, but Bill is as much "my dad" as Richard is. My parents got divorced when I was a baby. I lived with my dad and Bill since I can't even remember; I don't remember my mom at all. When I was younger I didn't know the difference between having a mom and a dad or having two dads.

As the kids asked me all these questions, I realized a few things. I realized that I love both of my dads. I realized that even though maybe it was weird to everyone else, it was the family that I knew. I didn't know life any other way. You don't get to pick your family. You can choose your friends, what you wear and what you eat for dinner. Those things you can change. You can't choose who your parents are any more than you can choose who your siblings are. I leaned back in my chair and was actually able to say that I am glad that I brought my two dads. It was a lot easier starting out at a new school when you put your cards on the table from the start.



## All My Fault

Great, just great. I'm a ghost. I've been dead for thirty years. I went to Hawaii on a little vacation, and where did I find myself? At an old, crummy house in the middle of a dying cornfield with broken cornstalks and high grass on the coast of Oregon. Oregon! Can you believe it? I suppose I will just have to deal with it and try to make the best of it. Good-bye Honolulu!

Lori Meehan  
Grade 8  
Newtown  
Middle School  
Newtown



I walked over to the front door of the white house as the clouds began to knit together into a black abyss of the latest time of night. Oh how I hated creaky old houses! With the cobwebs dancing along the walls and the furniture covered in dirty, white sheets! After walking through the door of the house I realized this place was no exception, but I did need to rest. Dust covered the floor in layers as thick as honey and swirled through the air. A long spiral staircase led to a light, barely visible through the dust in the air. I guessed it was better than nothing, and I walked up the steep staircase to the light.

"No! No! No! No! It's all my fault! It's all my fault!" I heard a voice from the room where the light radiated from, not that the dust had cleared the room. Instinctively I walked into the room.

An old man around sixty years of age lay in a four-poster bed. He was thrashing and turning and waving his long, bony arms wildly in the air, his face contorted with fear and pain.

"Forgive me! I didn't mean to do it! It was raining. I shouldn't have let them! I'm sorry!" he screamed.

I could only stare at this old man as he yanked his pillow from behind his bald head and began clutching it to his stomach as he started to cry. He moaned, groaned, and was in such misery I couldn't take it; I had to do something. As a ghost I could not awaken him, but I could go into his dream and try to comfort him.

I slowly glided next to the bed. "Here goes nothing," I whispered. I lightly touched his eyelids with my fingertips and was blasted into his dream.

Three children and their father sat on a speedboat in the middle of a large lake. The father looked like a younger version of the man on the bed. One of the children, a young boy around six years of age, sat with a fishing pole, while the other two children, two girls who looked to be five and eight, sat on a tube in the lake held to the boat by a rope. None of them wore lifejackets.

"Are you having fun, kids?" the father asked as he helped his son reel the fishing line back in and cast it back out.

"Yes, daddy," the youngest girl told him as she smiled, the gap where she had just lost a tooth showing.

"It looks like a storm is going to hit us. We better get back," their father said as the clouds began to get dark, and the wind picked up just a little. The smell of rain, moist and damp, hung in the air. The father wanted to keep the children happy on this special day out, so he put them all in the tube so they could ride back to the dock that day. He did not think the storm would be that bad, though the waves had grown choppy. He got behind the wheel of the boat and sped toward shore.

"Faster! Faster!" the children yelled to him. He did as they said and went as fast as the boat could take them through the waves. But somewhere along the line the strain on the rope grew too strong, and it snapped. The tube was not able to stay upright in the choppy water, and turned over. The children had no lifejackets on, and they drowned.

The man had a heart attack when he realized it.

"Oh my gosh," I whispered in the man's dream. "It wasn't your fault; they



wanted to be in the tube. Don't worry, they are in a better place now." I found myself standing next to the four-poster bed once again.

"All my fault! All my fault!" he croaked. I hoped what I had told him had comforted his yelling.

I could do no more to comfort this man. I stepped away from the bed, away from the dust and the house, away from the sadness, and found myself on a beach in Hawaii. But I already knew that seeing that man and not helping him completely would make my trip not as fun. My dad did not deserve to blame himself all these years. It was an accident how we died.



Sara Adelson  
Grade 9  
RHAM High  
School  
Hebron

## Prayer to the Water Bottle

Container of life,  
keeper of dreams, fountain of sweat.  
Your cold sincerity fills me like . . .

Silver liquid of truth,  
better than artificial flavors,  
truer and purer than the Gatorade  
that adorns the floor at the big meet.

Spiller forth of nutrients,  
tight bundle of oxygen and hydrogen,  
holy shrine to which I pray  
nearly every day. And if  
I forget, may my legs wobble  
and my step not be as true.

Sodium free thirst quencher,  
hiding only in mystical mountains  
where the water runs pure and  
naturally delicious.

Cool, clear, clean contents,  
translucent and yet opaque.  
How many forms you come in.  
How many bodies you fuel.  
How many legs you run, and arms  
you pump and tears you cry.

You are the keeper of our emotions.  
You that sits inside and waits for the

top to pop and the seal to be torn away.  
And then you are free and you are  
running over tongues, through mountains, hills  
and valleys to the big ocean inside of  
each of us.

Then like magic you spread through our veins,  
you fuel us, you keep us moving.  
Oh bottle, we pray to you, please refresh us  
every time, cool us down, let us gasp for breath.  
And before we go out and win our big token.  
We make sure that your seal wasn't already broken!

To you our water bottle, we pray,  
Amen.



### “A Cup of *Chocolat* . . .”

One afternoon in 1942, long after that first day of the occupation, Clotilde and her inseparable high school companions were engaged in an intense dialogue. All of the students were sprawled in wrought iron chairs gathered around a spindly table. A breeze wafted in through open doors, and sunlight spattered patterns of fancy across the wooden floors. Satchels were strewn at their feet and swelling purses were hung over chair backs.

The foaming liquid lapped gently at the opaque walls surrounding it, staining the china with each tilt of the cup. One never attacked *chocolat*; first it had to be savored by scent, eyes closed and nostrils flared open to catch the curling steam. The aroma filled your nose and traveled to your very brain, stimulating all the senses along the way. *Chocolat* was the true aphrodisiac for all Parisians. Every afternoon following school was spent languidly chatting in the open-air café with the signature cup positioned in front of your hands.

The boys threw flirtatious compliments across the table to the girls, and the murmur of subtle conversation crisscrossed the cluster of scholars. That moment was free of Nazis, free of the occupation, and almost free of the war. But who could've known that the page of youthful assurance would be torn from its book of innocence with the pull of a trigger scarcely half an hour later?

Nazis flooded into the café and suddenly the conversation was stilled. The eyes of each teenager widened, and each breath of air was suddenly caught in each throat. What happened to the fanciful light designs on the wooden floor? They were cast into darkness by snapping boot heels and stiff profiles. One of the soldiers, a holster sitting heavily on his hip, moved towards the cluster of friends. The khaki clad arm swung downwards abruptly, the nearest satchel grabbed, and its contents poured onto the floor. Clotilde winced at the wrenching and splitting

Molly Douglas  
Grade 9  
Canton Junior/  
Senior High  
School  
Collinsville



of textbook bindings. The officer challenged the downcast eyes of the owner of the satchel, daring her to look up.

Down went the arm again and up came another satchel to be emptied. Clotilde's clasped hands in her lap tightened until the knuckles lost all their color. Her eyes found those of the boy opposite her. Across the expanse of table, this boy's eyes spoke unmistakable despair, and for one moment the two shared a current of fear. Their gaze broke as the young man turned to watch his satchel emptied like all the others, but his emitted more than textbooks and notebooks. Sheaves of papers cascaded to the floor. In the middle of a pool of white, the Nazi bent to grasp one of the flyers. The corners of his steely eyes narrowed almost imperceptibly as he took in the bold French words. Languid fingers neatly ripped the sheet in two.

Down went the soldier's arm again, but not to grasp the strap of the next satchel. His pistol slithered out of the holster, with the same sunlight playing upon it that had danced on the floor of the café. It ran the length of the barrel and swirled into the curl of the trigger. The muzzle swung down to the boy's head, and one white Aryan finger neatly cocked the pistol. The soldier's stance was firm and sure, and the boy's face was expressionless as that same finger tightened. Slowly and steadily the trigger moved back. The crack of the gun shattered the silence of the café. The young man's body jerked inhumanly backwards, sliding off the seat to crumple inertly on the floor.

Clotilde did not know if the screams tearing the air were ripped from her own throat or from one of her friends. The iron chairs were overturned, and the café's occupants all moved to stand. Friends clutched each other in horror and disbelief. Others simply stared in shock. How could this happen to one of them?

Leaning forward, Clotilde could see this young man sprawled on the other side of the table. His legs were limp, one still draped over his seat, and his arms were splayed in the sunlight. His head was framed in a pool of crimson, the last portrait of a Resistance fighter who dared to carry anti-Nazi flyers in his school bag.



## Duck Pajamas

Friday

The lights shone bright in my eyes. The room was an exaggerated Christmas tree—chaotic and busy. Despite the club's excessive stimulation, or maybe because of it, everyone was having fun. The crowds glistened in the spotlight. I made my way gradually to the exit. I just wasn't in the mood to be enveloped in sweaty teenagers.

My high heels were a size too small, and rubbed the skin off of my ankles. Once outside, I took them off and instantly shrunk four inches. I didn't need the extra height. When equipped with such a shoe, I towered over the waves of people in the club. And besides, the cool, bumpy pavement was a familiar comfort to my large feet. I like being barefoot. Ironically, I work in a shoe store. I bought my

Rachel Small  
Grade 9  
Robert E. Fitch  
Senior High  
School  
Groton



now empty footwear at my work. With my thirty percent discount, they had seemed like a good deal. So what if I paid forty dollars for silver pumps that I wore once a month, at the most. Come to think of it, I have no idea why I bought them. I'm not exactly the glamorous type. It's hard to feel more than mediocre when you live a less than mediocre life.

I hobbled on sore ankles to the bus stop. The heavy wooden bench appeared pale in the moon's attempt to compete with the harsh neon glare of the city. The sign next to the bus stop stated that a bus comes at the hour. To my luck, it was ten till eleven.

The obnoxious club music was audible, even from across the street. It was so full of energy, but it wore me out. I couldn't wait to get into bed.

The bus approached its stop at a speed that was comparable to a TV police chase. Obviously, it had no one to drop off, and was hoping it wouldn't have to stop to pick anyone up. When the driver saw me, ten feet behind the end of the bus, he stopped. The bus screeched so loud, one would have thought it was trying to avoid striking a small child.

When I clambered up the steep, narrow steps of the bus, the driver gave me a fairly evil stare. After informing him of where I wished to get off, I made my way to the back of the bus and set my shoes down next to me on the soft, gray seat. I watched the buildings pass as the bus sped through the night.

When I was dropped at the bus stop in front of my apartment complex, I proceeded to walk clumsily, and barefootedly, to the door. I fumbled with my key and opened the entrance to the lobby. I took the elevator to the third floor. I just didn't have it in me to climb thirty stairs. When I arrived at apartment 3F, I once again took out my key and blindly inserted it into the lock. The door opened with a mild shove. I dropped my shoes carelessly on the floor. The heel broke off of one. At this point, I didn't even care.

The light on my answering machine stood still. No messages. I gave a loud sigh. My room was pleasantly quiet. I'm so glad I don't share my apartment with anyone.

Without turning on the light, I undressed and put on my duck pajamas. My blankets felt heavy. I sank into oblivion as the comforts of sleep pulled me into their arms.

#### Saturday

When I awoke this morning, it took me countless moments to convince myself that getting out of my warm, safe bed was the right thing to do. I finally staggered to the bathroom and managed to find the light switch.

My shower felt cold. I don't know why I always hope for a warm shower in the morning, because my apartment seems to be lacking heat of any kind. But I do, and am always disappointed when my shower wakes me up instead of soothing me back to sleep.

After my cold shower, I made my way back to my bedroom and realized what a tremendously difficult task I had ahead of me: deciding what to wear. But I was late as usual, and just picked something boring out. After all, I was just going to work. I quickly got dressed because I could feel the tense, chilled air rushing at



me. Why does everything in my apartment always seem so cold?

The toaster and I have a love/hate relationship: Sometimes perfect toast pops out, not burnt or undercooked (that's when I love it). Other times a disfigured carbohydrate will emerge, blackened and shriveled, so that the corners stick out like little devil horns (that's when I hate it). I prayed that the shiny-white toaster was feeling as friendly as it looked.

"OH, THANK GOD!" I thought out loud as a pleasant breakfast leapt from the toaster. I was in no mood for the appliance to spit Satan's breakfast at me.

Later, on my bus ride to work I realized how stupid my existence is. Wow. How did I get like this? I mean, how did I end up working with sixteen-year-olds for minimum wage at a shoe store?

\*\*\*

"Jenna! What do you mean you don't like purple? You have to! It's, like, the most prettiest color!"

It was 9:35 in the morning, and my coworkers were already off task. Not only were they off task, but also they were being unfairly obnoxious. Carrie was on the phone with Jenna, discussing something that required little thought; I was sure. And Michelle was writing MICHELLE + DAVE all over herself. Sometimes she draws little hearts in between the names, too.

I convinced Carrie to get off the phone and stock the shelves. However, she is very IQ deficient, and took a long time to think of an acceptable reason to tell Jenna why she had to get off of the phone. (But, Jenna would, like, totally think I'm, like, a total loser if she knew I, like, work in, like, a shoe store). So eventually, when Carrie's dad REALLY had to use the phone, she ended her conversation with Jenna and actually did some work.

Moments later, the phone rang. Carrie didn't hesitate to run up to the register and answer it. A look of utter disgust crawled onto her face.

"It's for, uh, you."

I really didn't have the slightest idea who it was.

"Hello, Natalie speaking," I said to the stranger.

"Hi, dear."

Oh, no. Not her.

"Hi, Mom. How are you?"

"Well, I'm alright, but, uh, your aunt Sashey has passed."

A long pause then occurred. She probably thought I was trying to gather myself. Actually, I was straining to think of who aunt Sashey was.

"Dear, are you okay?"

"Yeah, Mom. Uh . . . that's awful."

"Well, you'll have to get Monday and Tuesday off."

Yes! I love when I have a legitimate reason for not coming to work.

"Okay. Where is the funeral going to be?"

"Well, she's being cremated, so the service is going to be held at Grandma's house."

Damn. Now I'd never be able to see who aunt Sashey was. I hoped they wouldn't ask me to speak at the funeral.

The day finally ended. I'd be able to go back home, put on my pajamas, and go to sleep. Except that when I got to the bus stop, I realized I'd left my purse at work. And by now it was locked. For some odd reason they entrusted the key to Michelle.

I hoped to God that I didn't have the same angry passenger-resenting bus driver that I'd had last night. He would never lend me the bus fare.

But today was a good day: decent toast, a reason to not go to work, and thankfully, a nice old woman for a bus driver. Things were looking up.

### Sunday

I walked out the door this morning, hoping that the ordeals of the day would be few. Of course, work was not a place of peace. Shoe stores were always full of crazy people. Frustrated shoppers with fat feet, teenagers, mothers with upset six-year-old boys who would rather be at a toy store. When I got this job, I figured it would give me a little extra money. It was only after the third day that I thought it would give me an ulcer, too.

I had to walk to work today. I didn't have my purse or any money with me for bus fare. Step-by-Step Shoe Company was not more than a twenty-minute walk. On the way to my mediocre little job, I happened to pass the arcade. I went inside to see if my only real friend, my brother, was inside. It had been a few weeks since I'd seen him, despite his living ten minutes away from me. He's five years younger than me, but acts at least ten years older. He always knows what to do, has the answers to my problems (as petty as they often are), and is the wisest person that I know. Ironically, he works in an arcade.

I stepped past the counter at the entrance.

"Is Mark here?"

"No, Mark got the day off."

"Okay. Is he working tomorrow morning?"

"Yeah, try back tomorrow."

Mark always enjoyed hearing my shoe store horrors. After today, a Sunday, when everyone wants to buy themselves rewards for surviving the work-week, I should have had plenty.

I opened the door and the strand of bells attached to the top clattered tediously.

"Michelle? Carrie?"

Someone had to be here, or it would have been locked, but the silence was undeniable, and not suited to Michelle and Carrie.

"Oh, Natalie. Good morning. The two girls called in sick. Bronchitis."

"Hello, Mr. Frayer. Are you filling in for them today?" Mr. Frayer was my boss. He was boring and blunt, but at least he didn't have two-hour conversations about which Backstreet Boy has the nicest smile.

"Yes, Natalie. Today it's just you and me."

"Mr. Frayer?"

"Yes?"

"My Aunt Sashey died. I'll need tomorrow and Tuesday off."



"Oh, well, I'm very sorry to hear that. Were you close to her?"

"Yes, we'll all miss Aunt Sashey very much." Whoever the hell she was.

"I'm sure. Now if you wouldn't mind, there is a lot of work around here that we need to do today."

I left Mr. Frayer to stock the shelves, because Carrie hadn't done an acceptable job the day before. As I stacked the endless supply of shoe boxes in their various places, I heard an early-morning customer open the door, and the bells clattered again. A forty-something year old woman proceeded to the back of the store and attempted to shove her fat, callused feet into some trendy, narrow mules. She grunted several times and muttered

"That's strange. I'm normally a seven-and-a-half." It really was quite amusing. I wanted to say:

"Ma'am, we have other shoes that I think would fit you better," and point to our selection of white, orthopedic nurse shoes. Instead, I said nothing. I just watched her, laughing silently to myself.

\*\*\*

The day was fairly uneventful, not as many crazy customers as I had predicted. As five-o'clock neared, I found my previously abandoned purse and left without saying goodbye to Mr. Frayer. Even though I had money with me, I decided to walk home. This time when I passed the arcade, I didn't go inside, but wondered if Mark knew who Aunt Sashey was.

My apartment was cold, but welcoming nonetheless. For the first time in quite a long while, my answering machine light was blinking. I pressed the button to hear:

"Hey, Natalie. This is Mark calling. How are you? I just was wondering if you know who Aunt Sashey is. Call me. Bye."

Then I laughed out loud to myself. I realized how perfectly imperfect everything is. Instead of being angry and frustrated, like I usually am, I felt relaxed. More than anything, I felt amused. I was okay with everything:

- My undeniably lame job
- My socially, but not mentally, capable coworkers
- My bi-polar toaster
- My dead, unidentified Aunt Sashey

I don't mind. I put on my duck pajamas, poured a glass of wine. That night I went to bed laughing, for the first time.



## My True Best Friend

You may not still remember me. And in all likelihood, most of your existing memories have long since begun to fade or distort, as always seems to happen whenever you try to recall something that happened a while ago. So perhaps my account of our friendship has also been faded by time, or may be

Kristen  
Andreoli  
Grade 9  
Bethel High  
School  
Bethel



different from yours. But I will never, ever forget about you. You meant too much to me for me to just let that happen. I suppose the thing I want you to know most, even if you forget all else, is the fact that I love you. I love you for your kindness and your strength. At the time we knew each other, I held a sort of hero worship for you. You were never afraid to be yourself, and to live your life in a way that was best for you, no matter what anyone else thought. That is a skill that before I met you I never knew I wanted; now I try and perfect similar confidence and individuality. You were the best friend I have ever had, my first real role model; and in all honesty I have never lost that hero worship despite how long it has been since I saw you last.

The fact that you listened to me, never doubting me the way that others always had, was always one of the things I liked best about you. Everyone else told me how I should not feel a certain way, how I was overreacting or just trying to get attention. My other friends hurt my feelings very badly by never taking me seriously, by never respecting me very much. I clung to them because I thought they were the only people who would even speak to me. (Other people only seemed to strike up a conversation when they needed the answers to last night's homework: "Jerry Springer Episode 55555: Help Me Jerry, He Used Me For My Brain, Then Left Me To Ask My Best Friend For Math Test Answers!") Looking back, I think my friends were just so self-obsessed because they were insecure, and I was someone to take it out on. But you were never like any of those losers; you always cared. If you ever doubted me, I never knew it because it was always more important for you to listen, rather than constantly interrupt and criticize.

Listening to you, I learned that although we thought alike, we were very different. Our differences never seemed to hurt our friendship; in fact I think that being different was what made us such good friends in the first place. But we were alike in another way: A terrible, ravaging illness. The only reason we even met was our potential death sentence. And yet within those dark, institutional walls, we helped each other to survive. Mostly, I'll admit, you helped me because you had been sick longer and knew what to expect from treatment; but I tried to help you as well. Aside from the actual treatment (doctors, nurses, comically large needles and meds, meds, meds) you also managed to help me maintain my sanity in that place.

Of course, the main way we avoided going round the bend was to make mischief. I remember the time that you told me the joke, the one about Superman taking shots of tequila; how it upset the nurse that you were being loud *and* telling younger children jokes about alcohol. She sent you to your room for ten minutes that time. If you wondered why it took me so long to reappear after you did, it was because I was trying not to laugh, or avoid the temptation to tell one of my rude jokes lest I become the next one sent to their room. We wrote dating advertisements for "Princess Cashmere" and "Six-Pack Mc Buff" on the tables. (For a fun time, call Six-Pack Mc Buff at 1-800-Yeah Right.) And gave ourselves magic marker "tattoos," another way to upset the nurses. My favorite was the time you dumped your entire portion of "Refried Goat Bile" (a.k.a. Tuna Casserole, as it was deemed) into a wastebasket when the nurses weren't looking and pretended to have been horribly sick. She really believed your act, at least until she saw pans



full of that same junk.

I remember sad times too. The day the youth ward nurse decided that you (and others) were well enough to go outside, but I was not. You told me all about your snowman, and how Jane had tripped over her feet and knocked him down, and after all that work! But you, being you, just helped her up and asked her if she was okay. I remember the night that Karah woke up screaming because her medicine caused painful side effects. You asked her how she was the next day; her roommate told her to shut up. The time you were the only guy in our activity group who was not making fun of "little Joe." Funny isn't it? Children that sick able to be so cruel. The staff always seemed to devote more energy to graffiti than to the fact that some of the patients were just cruel to each other. But you were never one of the mean ones.

I knew that if I had an older brother, I would want him to be you. Of course, as your "younger sister," I was very jealous when you spent time with other people instead of me. But I got over it as soon as my own insecurity disintegrated to the extent where I could trust that I really had a true friend; someone who could care about me and other people without letting anyone feel neglected. I always felt so sorry when I could not be such a good friend, especially to you. Those times when Pete would tease you, just for being you, and how you just sort of sulked away, unable to cope. Just so you know, if I had been bold enough, defiant enough, (and obnoxious enough), I would have greatly enjoyed making a few rude hand gestures on your behalf. You probably would have not liked it anyway, because I would have been sinking to Pete's level. You always made sure to look after your own actions (and sometimes mine), despite the behavior of those around you. I still regret that I never stood up for you as you did for me, but I now know that you did not need or expect protection from me. Because you, like the ideal sibling I had imagined, was always looking out for me—even when I could not do the same for you.

We were both judged fit to return home on the same day. Actually, we had both left hospitals and returned when we had medical emergencies before. So I think that both of us were pretty much anticipating that we would be back for more, intense treatment that we could not receive while living at home. Neither of us was "well," not unless you asked those dreaded sadists in charge of our healthcare, THE EVIL INSURANCE COMPANIES!!!!!!!!!! As long as you are literally unable to function, you can stay in an official "approved facility," complete with revolting food, medication, and short-tempered staff. It is not likely that we would have been in the same place for much longer anyway, but it still hurt to have to leave. I remember how you made me a card, and how you got several people to sign it for me. If I had known that I would never see you again, I would have made you one too. What can I really even say about that, anyway? I was an idealistic twelve-year-old who thought that everything would turn out all right, that I would surely see you again, that nothing could keep true friends apart. Ten minutes after I left the building I realized that we had never exchanged telephone numbers or addresses. My true friend, gone forever.

Wherever you are, whatever obstacles you may have come across, always know that you made a difference to someone. As a teenager, you stopped a person

who was both physically ill and mentally distressed from giving up, from letting the illness take her over completely. How many adults, especially ones functioning with perfect health, can honestly say that they have ever done anything even remotely that significant? You never hurt anyone, even those like Pete who were intent upon inflicting their pain on others. But you saved me, and even if you only saved one person, you have made a huge difference. Even during my darkest moments, I could see you, on that day when you comforted me and told me that I would get better because I wanted it so much and that I was strong enough to work for anything I needed, especially something I needed that desperately. You know what? You were right. For that memory and for so much more I thank you: my true best friend.



## I Don't Know

I don't know;  
If the world that's surrounding me  
Is slowly just drowning me,  
Or if it is falling,  
Or maybe just calling,  
Me home;

I don't know;  
If this feeling I'm feeling,  
Is God on the ground kneeling,  
Or if it's just sunlight,  
Beating my eyes bright;

I don't know;  
If the spinning is stopping,  
Or if it's just flopping,  
These waves in my head,  
Undulate me to bed,  
In this night so dark;

I don't know;  
If the trees keep on swaying,  
Or if it's you saying,  
It's going to be fine,  
In a tone so benign;

I don't know;  
If the drum that is pounding,

**Kevin Reed**  
Grade 9  
Masuk High  
School  
Monroe



Is Columbus whose founding,  
Or comedians joking,  
Or a leader whose poking,  
Telling me to move on;

I don't know;  
Why the meter is timing,  
Or a monkey keeps climbing,  
To the top of the world,  
Where he goes back curled;

I don't know;  
Why the baby is crying,  
Or the ten year old dying,  
Or the leaf that is falling,  
Into a street brawling,  
Under the moon;

I don't know;  
If this pen keeps on writing,  
Or if I'm just fighting,  
Or maybe just lying,  
My way out of crying;

I don't know;  
If the money stops meaning,  
Or lean-to's stop leaning,  
Or life stops to think,  
In this puddle of ink,  
That we call culture;

What I know;  
Is that life is worth going,  
And snow keeps on snowing,  
The long dusty trail,  
Our path lies forechosen.



## 18 Brighthill Lane

I first met Neal not long after my parents got divorced. I had heard of him from Conrad Fuller, a good friend who lived nearby. Conrad told me wild stories of how Neal once stole every Kit-Kat bar from CVS, and how in eighth grade Neal used Vladimir Lanin's mailbox for a science project and turned it into a volcano.

Aidan Levy  
Grade 10  
William H. Hall  
High School  
West Hartford

I finally met Neal six months later when he and Conrad showed up at my door one February morning before sunrise and rang the doorbell until I ambled down the stairs. They pulled me out the door in my pajamas and demanded that I go for a two-mile run so we could see the sunrise in West Hartford Center.

This was about the same time that I began to believe that God was dead, or just didn't care about people anymore. Neal introduced me to Nietzsche and convinced me to grow my hair out long.

I guess that's why I liked Neal. He always had this happy-go-lucky grin on his face, as if he didn't know where he came from, and he had the greatest bel-lowing laugh I have ever heard. He was what he called an "anarchocommunist," and he read Ginsberg and talked about intellectual topics like how far the universe extends. He wrote poetry too, and was pretty good at it. My favorite poem of his started like this:

*We're all plastic people produced in a factory,  
But soon we will all break.*

We had long conversations that often lasted far into the night, and we discussed everything that was on our minds. I wanted to be exactly like Neal. He said he would teach me how to write poems with metaphors.

I spent more time with Neal, cementing our friendship, and slowly stopped caring about school. During my freshman year in high school, I was getting all A's and B's, but after the first semester of my sophomore year, I had a 2.8 GPA. This was partially due to my negligence to do any homework or pay attention, but it also had something to do with Mr. Harrison, my algebra teacher. He was a gnarly, emaciated man with foggy yellow glasses and was the human embodiment of a big fart. He was a stuffy middle-aged man with a fake British accent, which I presumed resulted from a childhood affectation but could have just been to impress the girls in his classes. And he was totally anal about everything he did.

Harrison kept work that needed to be graded in a folder labeled "IN," and work that was already graded in a folder labeled "OUT." He probably had color-coded clothes for each day so he wouldn't wear anything twice.

Anyway, Harrison knew I was a smart guy, and when first semester report cards were issued sophomore year, I saw that I failed algebra. The fact was I had a solid "C" for the class. My parents probably wouldn't let me drive, which I was bummed about, but I could probably get rides with Neal whenever I wanted. My parents would understand, especially because they were letting me do pretty much anything and didn't seem to care. But I was seething.

"You must have confused me with someone else," I told him the next day. "Look here, I got an F for algebra."

"Ah," sighed Harrison. "Weinstein comma Gerald. Your case was a special case. You must understand when I tell you that your work in this class was merely plebeian, and I was hardly impressed. You can do much better than C work."

"I know," I chopped.

"However, Gerald." He paused. "If you average an A for the third and fourth marking periods, I will consider changing the F to a B."

I gave him a confused look. "But, but you can't do that. You can't."

"I'm the teacher, and I can do whatever I feel necessary for the progress of



my students. Is that all, Gerald?"

"Yes," I conceded.

"OK then. I will see you tomorrow period two."

I muttered the first snide remark that I thought of as I left the room.

"You're a failure at life," I mumbled just loudly enough so he could hear.

That day, I walked home with Neal, raided his dad's liquor cabinet for the strongest whisky I could find, and copiously drank at least half a bottle. We sat in his dank basement on two chairs. Neal was mad about it too.

"Douche bags like Harrison can't be tolerated, Jerry," he told me.

"Douches like that bastard are the reason democracy is a failure. People like Harrison get put in power and are corrupted and are just big douches."

"I know. But what can I do about it?"

"Let me think. Tonight, let's go to his house and egg it. I'll get a carton and we'll leave at exactly ten. It'll be cool."

"OK," I agreed.

Neal looked up Mr. Harrison's address in the phone book, and we walked over to 7-11 to buy a few dozen eggs. We were preparing for a glorious night of vengeance. I called up old Mick McDonald, Wino Weinerman and Hassan Rahman to invite them.

A gaping full moon shone brightly in the sky that Friday. At ten, Neal drove us over to his house at 18 Brighthill Lane. We waited for the other guys to arrive, and when they did, we began hurling eggs from the sidewalk. First we hit the door and then a few windows. I noticed a brooding figure resembling Harrison peering out of a second floor window, and I was glad he was watching. I wanted him to witness the destruction of his carefully planned out house. Besides, if we got caught we could just run away and hide. However, Harrison left the window as soon as an egg splattered all over it.

Fifteen minutes later, after 24 eggs hit his house, a police car drove down the street slowly.

"They couldn't be after us," I stammered.

"I know," replied Neal. "The car didn't even have the siren on. It's dark out. Besides, it's not like this is really much of a crime anyway."

The car stopped in front of the house, and a tall man ran out. Everyone fled the scene and their shadows disappeared into the darkness. I was the last one remaining.

"Stop right there," commanded the policeman. "Don't move."

I had never been confronted by a policeman like this before, and being that he was a policeman, I decided to do what he told me.

"Come with me," he said. He motioned towards the police car.

I sauntered over to the car, and the cop let me into the back seat. He began driving. "I'm Officer T-bone," he said. "And you are?"

"Weinstein," I said timidly.

"Throwing eggs at that poor guy's house?"

"Yes, sir," I said. "Sorry."

He didn't say anything more until we got to the police station, which was right around where I saw that sunrise the previous year.

I was led into a dank, claustrophobic room with a table and a few chairs. I sat down and waited. Beads of sweat poured down my head and made my face shiny. My leg uncontrollably tapped on the floor. Twenty minutes later, two tired men came into the room.

Both wore blue-collared shirts. One had a large protruding beer belly and greasy hair with a classic comb over. The other was gaunt and had gigantic ambiguous pit stains. His arms hung loosely in front of him as if he wasn't sure where to put them.

The fat officer, pacing back and forth, began to question me. "It's late," he said. "I'm tired, and the last thing I need today is a juvenile delinquent being caught throwing eggs at some guy's house."

"That's right," retorted the other man. "Do you know your rights?" He quickly read the Miranda rights and continued. "Empty your pockets," he demanded, pointing at my jacket. I reached in, and felt the cold glass whisky flask and some money. I hesitated and then reluctantly revealed the whisky.

"A minor in possession of alcohol. Did you steal that money?"

"No," I answered.

"The report said that you didn't throw the eggs by yourself. Can you tell us who helped you?"

I thought of Neal and the other guys. I knew it was all my fault.

"No one did," I said.

"Did you know the man who owned the house that you vandalized and trespassed on?" said the larger man.

"Yes," I replied. "He's my algebra teacher."

"You're looking at a substantial amount of community service and possibly six months house arrest. We'll notify the DA so you can be arraigned," one of the men explained.

As I peered into the questioner's eyes, my whole range of vision began to dissipate into one giant mass of brown. I couldn't believe what I had done. Was I capable of this monstrosity? After all, it was Neal who convinced me to do this. Then he fled the crime scene and let me crawl right into the spider's web.

Neal called me the next morning.

"What happened, man?" he asked.

"They took me in for questioning. I'm probably going to have six months house arrest."

"Sorry, man," said Neal sympathetically. "You didn't tell them about me did you?"

"No," I said.

"Great," he said as he breathed a sigh of relief. "I'm really sorry."

"It's OK," I said.

"Then I'll see you in school Monday?"

"Yes."

It wasn't all right, though. Neal didn't offer to take any of the blame. I suppose it was my fault for agreeing with him. Life resumed, but from then on whenever I looked at Neal, I saw a stranger, a boy I had never really known.



Kate Lennard  
Grade 10  
Old Lyme High  
School  
Old Lyme

## Sisters

She lies there silently,  
Breath after breath,  
But slowing.  
It's cold by the window,  
It's snowing.  
The snow,  
It falls so motionless,  
The time,  
Slows it.  
Her hands in mine,  
I look at her while she sleeps.  
Wanting to see her innocent, now old-soul smile  
Appear on her face.  
Her wisdom shines through,  
Like the sun in the breaks of a windowpane.  
The sides of her mouth scrunch together,  
And for a second,  
I believe I see her smile,  
But my eyes continue to play tricks on me.

At times,  
My exhaustion allows me to  
Fade and drift away,  
To my secret land far away.  
But for reasons,  
And unexplainable ways,  
I lay,  
Still awake.  
Watching her every breath,  
And waiting.  
I seem to find myself looking into nothing,  
Daringly staring down the black clouds of the world.  
Only, it's a place where everything shows itself clearly,  
And jumps out at me from within that wall.  
It's cold and dark out now,  
The room is finally quiet,  
And the snow and the rain have stopped  
Tapping on the window.

I yearn for tears,  
But they're not to be found.  
I breathe deep,  
She's almost still now.  
Day in, day out,

Dreams come, dreams go,  
Reality,  
It stays always though.  
The glass,  
It mists up.  
Machines begin to ramble on,  
And in time,  
She lets go,  
I let go,  
We both let go,  
Of memories,  
Hers and Mine.  
One last breath,  
And her hands fall from mine.  
I say goodbye forever,  
For her warm embrace no longer exists.  
She's now gone,  
Full of grace.

Only knowing things can't get worse,  
I grow stronger now.  
I lean against the wall,  
But the world seems to push me down,  
So as to fall.  
I sink to the ground,  
Put my head in my hands,  
For I hope the good times will begin again.  
I pull myself up,  
I walk step by step,  
Left, right, left, left,  
And I seem to stumble upon the notes of my own footsteps.  
So I thought things were getting better,  
But again I'm wrong.  
For I know nothing anymore.  
The tears run down my face from both my eyes,  
In a race for their eternity in time.  
My tears crash to the ground,  
Like glass that hits a wall.  
The days go on,  
My vivid dreams end,  
Then the surreal reality sets in.  
And I bring with me,  
Dear friend . . .  
Only the good memories between me and you.



Lyndsay  
Garval  
Grade 10  
William H.  
Hall High  
School  
West Hartford

## Circle Poetry

Write until it hurts

Until the pain knives through your numbed and swollen brain of spider webs tangled with the thought and idea flies escaping down your nose and chin and neck and shoulder and elbow and wrist to the fiercely hardened middle finger grasping the pen that marks the death of thought and idea flies onto their tombstones of paper.

Write the words as they come to mind

Copying cries of insane voices babbling wildly into the distance and reverberating shrilly into the hollow metal casing of your cranium hidden underneath the genes of skin and bone and face and hair masking the ugly with the pretty and the pretty with the ugly, prettified.

Write the tears

Words replacing droplets of sadness that can never be called upon to shed themselves but flood unexpectedly and fully when last resources must be called upon to replace words which replace tears replacing thoughts and heartbeats and nerve impulses and wrong turns around dark corners into lit rooms where you linger hungry for reason to put pen to paper to replace the tears.

Write of desire

Fasten wants down onto the hungry page with the willing pen recounting feelings often restating simple words to grasp the effect of the passion and feeling that is so raw and pure it steals the words weaving them into fiery liquid lust, love, hate or worse when words would have been used to relieve the rawness of the passion that binds them.

Write down dreams

Dreams so wild and fueled by imagination darting away with blots of ink, too unaccustomed to an open environment and too timorous to breathe that you end up chasing them further on into the day into clouds into rays of sunshine and somehow back into your sleep filled nights once again enchanted and brought to life by innocent but watchful and patient moonlight fueling the feeling which fuels the imagination that fuels the sleep which brings to life the dream in its most pure and unobtainable form.

Write of actions

Things occurring or yet to occur, things left unsaid, words and mouth muscle movements wasted on what never should have been said leading to or coming from things done and things not done encouraging the use of words once again but not through fickle speech but rather the reliable old pen which never succeeds but with its efforts masks its failure with an inky shroud of completion while the incomplete actions remain inside the pen of the mind for another try seeping eagerly out of the mouth but not so sweetly into the fingers changing what the pen must say.

### Write in patterns

Changing meanings of words with rhymes letting phrases out to play as they dance across the page and morph themselves helplessly into poetry when poetry is least expected as a nice change from the usual game words play on playgrounds of paper and ink that chain words into square but needed patterns of expression expressing less than a single sigh from the emotion that compelled the soul to choose the being to move the hand working the pen that plays the music so the words can dance.

### Write in circles

Follow the flow and simplicity of the world with words made confusing scrambling on free of grammar and sentence structure or extraneous markings that only stop words from getting to their destination though if words could choose they would never stop flowing on through their journey around the writer's world in the circle that they have created an end and beginning to.



## Dwindle

I sifted through our box of memories  
and pulled out experiences, tattered along the edges.

Trying to seal up the gap in me  
that you left wide open,  
I fell into the abyss of your echoes  
and never quite returned.

I tried to feed my insatiable hunger  
By drawing on old memories,  
so worn down  
that they crumbled at the thought.

Instead I was left with a famine  
that bore a hollow hole in the spot  
where you used to hold my hand.

Lonely hours crawled by  
As I waited for your lingering voice to dwindle  
And your place in my memory to fade completely . . .

But I fell into the abyss of your echoes  
And I never quite returned.

Sara  
Schneider  
Grade 10  
Westhill High  
School  
Stamford



## Highgate

### Prologue

Darkness fell over London as the city of two million doused their candles and extinguished their fires. It was truly a city that never slept; however, the revelers and others often stayed until the early hours of morning or later. In the northwest, the manors of the wealthy and prominent citizens were quiet, the night peaceful and serene and devoid of disturbance. This sector was a far cry from the noisy and more dangerous southern areas where dwelt drunks, thieves and worse.

Across the wide cobblestone road, however, two large iron gates set into a formidable stone wall led to a more feared and respected area in North London. The vast Highgate Cemetery sprawled across seventy acres of swamp, decrepit and forgotten, graves marred beyond recognition sat broken in the northwest corner. The oldest of them could have been new centuries ago, and now, in 1933, the newest fresh graves had been dug and readied for use.

It was from the domain of the ancient, however, that the creature arose. A once hastily constructed iron fence blocked off the tomb where Olivier Schurven had once rested in the Cemetery Arlon, now part of the Highgate. The fence was broken and rusted, areas missing from the effects of centuries of aging. From that cursed tomb the creature was born . . . it was not truly a man, in a sense; it was a creature which had itself, but no sense of that self, in a loneliness too pure to be known by man. It had been called many things in the past, none near the truth. The creature was misunderstood, as a rule, by the living—it had grown used to that with bitterness and resignation but not acceptance.

Some suggested Olivier Schurven was not dead. The criminal had been sealed up in the tomb, alive, five hundred years before, for a murder which he had protested until his death that he had not committed. Even if he had avoided the grave he would have died long ago. And so he had . . . but now he rose once again.

•1•

### AWAKENING

Night. Olivier winced as the soft light of the moon spread over his ruined body, one which had not seen light of any kind for many centuries. He felt a mild strength flow into his bones as he looked back at the broken and crumbled tomb covered almost completely in ivy. Dirt was piled alongside a fresh hole in the ground from which the creature had emerged. He felt no hunger, for the pain had long left his body. He had only a thirst for something that would return the life to him and let him be once again.

Olivier knew that the world had changed. He knew what it was like to wait, and in his waiting had discovered new devotions to which he had committed himself. In five hundred years of confinement he had gained knowledge and ability in exchange for his existence. Now that was what he sought to regain.

Leaving the tomb behind he crept in between the ancient stones which even in his life had been illegible with age. He passed the graves of his ancestors and those of his grandchildren and their grandchildren, and he felt no grief, for he had gained a new respect for death. He had been cheated out of the privilege of



ing, and the only way to die was to live once again.

The new world of 1933 sunk into him, and he took in his surroundings as he strode at a lanky gait through the vast expanse of the realm of the dead. He felt uncomfortable on the legs that he had not used for so long, and his body felt different. He was lighter now that the meat of life had left him, but he remained tall, six feet and then some, taller than before. His skin was a ghostly pale from so many years without sunlight, and he felt no warmth inside him. He was cold and senseless, but deathless, and felt no pain as the thorned ivy scraped along the thin skin that stretched over the bone of his arm. His clothes were scraps of the vestments in which he had been buried in 1421, and they had little color left in them.

Olivier could see the tall buildings in the distance, the haze of smog, the far-off noises of aircraft flying and landing. He jumped as he saw a large black automobile cruise past the gates that blocked off the northern entrance of Highgate Cemetery. His new world was very different, but all the same very inviting.

Now he approached the exit. His thirst was unbearable and he felt a need for energy, the feeling of life. The large iron gates, finely carved, sat between two large columns atop which sat immense gargoyles, wings raised in the air. The gates were unlocked for they had no reason to be fastened otherwise, and with a step and the push of his frail arm, Olivier Schurven stepped out into the world once again.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Third one this week," remarked Sergeant Joseph Adams as he received the curious report that shadowed two others. "Bizarre, really . . . you'd think that if someone was going to start a fight they'd want to finish the job." His eyes moved with interest as he read the paper detailing another attack. The victims had all been accosted on Draven Street during the night, apparently pierced in the neck by a thin instrument, and then left there. None showed any serious injuries except for blood loss, which was another odd fact, considering that neck wounds were usually fatal, especially when they were clearly the result of an assault.

"There are plenty of rumors circulating, of course . . . gibberish, really. We have plenty of detectives stumped on this case—might even get MI5 involved. Well, that's not really my decision to make anyway. You're dismissed, Private."

John Boyd nodded and withdrew from the room with at least as many questions as Sergeant Adams. The newspapers would be running stories about the unprecedented third attack soon enough. Rumors spread by the more adventurous newspapers detailed the attacks as anything from a serial killer (despite the fact that none of the victims had died), to a mysterious cult, to even a vampire. The curious method of attack led strength, if not credence, to the latter theory that was being adopted by the less scrupulous of news agencies.

Private Boyd, however, was more anxious to see to the result of his transfer request—nearly all the men positioned near Draven Street had asked to be reassigned to a different department. One even threatened to quit, and was given assurance that he would not be prevented by any means from doing so. It had been two weeks now since the first attacks, one on Wednesday, one the next



Friday, and now, in the dawn hours of the following Thursday, a third case. As the Sergeant had said, investigators were clueless, and even the government was getting interested, if not directly involved.

Now he stepped into the office where Lieutenant Stanwick was waiting for him. Stanwick slapped a folder of papers onto his desk and swiveled his chair to Boyd, his feet up and his arms crossed. His face bore the smirk of superiority that was so native to it.

"You're not the only one trying to get away from Draven Street," the Lieutenant remarked. "I'm afraid we can't accept all the transfer requests. We need presence in that area now more than ever." He opened the folder and flipped the pages with his thumb for a moment before continuing. "You will report for duty at Post 323 on the junction of Draven and Berewick tonight at twenty hours as usual . . . I'm sorry," he added with a look on his face halfway between pity and amusement, "but there's nothing else I can do. You're dismissed, Private."

John Boyd gave the Lieutenant a look of contempt and did a smart about-face, then walked briskly out of the office.

## •2•

### HUNGER

Early winter rain drizzled lazily from the overcast sky that Tuesday night, a particularly dark one because of the moon and stars being blocked by the clouds. Olivier sat in the corner of Lewke's Joint, a shabby tavern on Berewick Street. He swigged a cheap beer as he looked out of the window into the miserable, dreary London night. The flesh had begun to return to his bones now—he was gaunt, but unmistakably human. He sported some old slacks, a business shirt and a full-length trench coat he had acquired from the tailor. Though a criminal, he had been fairly rich in his life; the valuable amount of ancient coin with which he had been buried now helped him along in such purchases.

Now Olivier thought of his current situation. He only needed to drink every so often . . . once or twice a week. However, having acquainted himself with London society well enough, he needed a way to fit in. He avoided conversation with the men of London, and would not identify himself for fear that they might recognize his name from the grave and respond in a way that was less than friendly. He had considered making an alias for himself but had not thought about it much. It seemed, as well, that one's occupation was an important factor in London in 1933.

He supposed that if he was to fit in with the society that he might as well start practicing. Olivier approached the bartender, who introduced himself as Thomas Byford as he wiped some glasses clean. Inevitably, he inquired as to Olivier's identity.

"I'm . . . er . . . Olivier Schuerrin. I'm from Paris," he added, in an attempt to explain his unfamiliarity with the modern language and customs. He figured he should probably have chosen the country where they spoke the only other foreign language he knew, which was French. Luckily, the bartender did not appear to know French, and did not press him for further information. After taking his empty mug, the bartender bid "Oliver" good-night. Apparently, Olivier's feeble



important, first contact was a mild success.

Now Olivier had a desire to find some way to be able to act freely in London society. He knew that the lives of citizens were generally based in the day, and so he would have to get used to sunlight. Having not been exposed to the sun for six hundred years, he was quite pale, though in the past two weeks his skin had gradually been shading back toward its natural olive color. Olivier hoped that soon he would once again walk in England as a free and living man.

\* \* \* \* \*

Wednesday's dawn found Olivier ambling back to his tomb, as yet the only place where he could find complete respite from sunlight and bustle and existence. He felt the mossy edges of the cool, dank room he had come to know well. There was a rather musty stench about the room, of old bones and ancient book and clothing that had long since decayed. Olivier did not mind the smell, for it was his. Indeed, the only things he could truly consider his own were in this tomb or on his body. He removed his long trench coat—though he had grown rather fond of modern clothing—and laid it on the ground.

Olivier had come to realize that he no longer needed sleep—though he was capable of such, he did not feel exhaustion or tedium. Now, however, he climbed into the coffin that lay in the center and did go to sleep, if only to get in the human pattern. He had no dreams as he slept, for his isolation was complete, and his mind needed no exercise. Olivier had found that a dead mind does not work in dreams but instincts. He had knowledge, perhaps, and wisdom, but no desire to be active other than to feed on and seek life.

•3•

#### DISCOVERY

On Saturday Olivier felt the thirst again. It had not been long, but he was more active now, and growing at an accelerated rate. His face had been restored to the olive color, and his arms and legs had flesh and muscle. His once thin and sparse hair had darkened again to a thick black mop that hung low over his forehead. He looked almost dashing in a grey trench coat and boiled leather boots, which covered him to halfway up his shin.

It might have been the early hours of Sunday as Olivier sought another vessel for his energy. His previous victims had regained much of their strength and would soon wake again, and Olivier felt no remorse for his sustenance. He did worry, however, for he knew that if the victims could identify him, the London police force would surely act in a manner less than courteous toward a being only attempting to feed.

It was so that he saw an ideal victim; one with the young and tender blood he required, but also with plenty of it. She was a fairly tall young lady in her twenties or thirties—not an uncommon sight in the whereabouts—and was accompanied by a male of similar age. Olivier waited for them to part in front of the lady's apartment before he struck, extending his fangs to the most inviting morsel.

He restrained her without inflicting unnecessary pain and drank only as much as he needed, leaving the woman pale and unconscious but not in life-



threatening danger. Olivier did not want to remain in the vicinity any longer than he must, and with ever-growing strength and refreshment, he retreated quietly to the Highgate Cemetery.

Olivier had casually decided to take a different route back to his tomb when he found another one, similar to his, which had gone previously unnoticed to him. It was also in shambles, but he could still barely read the inscription on the stone placed in front. It read: "Lady Gressila Valen, born 14 May 1627, entombed 30 Dec 1669 after being hanged for Murder." Under the stone were what appeared to be freshly planted flowers, despite the fact that there were no other flowers around and that the tomb was three hundred years old. Then Olivier noticed two drops of fresh blood, still liquid, dribbling slowly down the wall by the door.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was not long before he saw two small green eyes glowing from within the tomb. Stunned, Olivier waited for a minute before approaching. He had never even considered that there might be others like him. Before he could act further the door to the tomb opened. A fairly short, thin woman with a hollow face and jet-black hair glared back at him.

He began, "S-sorry to disturb you—" but was cut off by the lady vampire. She opened the door a fraction wider so that he could enter.

"I had a feeling there was a new one creeping about," she said casually, leading him downward through a maze of catacombs. It didn't even seem as if she were talking to him. After a few minutes, they reached a large iron door. Gressila took the brass knocker in her hand and pounded on the door. She then motioned for Olivier to enter.

A tiny, ancient man sat there at a desk, his ring of thin white hair falling to his shoulders. He hobbled over to Olivier, leaning onto a short knobby stick, and extended his hand in greeting.

Though unfamiliar with hand shaking, Olivier took the hint and grasped the man's hand for a short moment before allowing it to drop. Gressila introduced him—Olivier had no idea how she knew his name—to the man, who she introduced as Eithsi.

"Merau was the first in London that we know of," she explained as they were seated at a wooden table. "He is somewhat of a master to me." Olivier nodded, still not taking his eyes off the odd man. "I suppose the people in London have a very different idea of how we are."

Olivier wanted to put in his own ideas on the subject but was warned by Gressila not to speak. "Of course, Eithsi is not one of us . . . he was Merau's butler in his life, and I suppose it carried on into death. He was killed the same time Merau was, in a Danish invasion. That was in 859."

"Now Eithsi lives on only under the will of Merau. That also conveniently assures us of his complete and unwavering devotion," she said with a rather severe look to Eithsi. The small man took the hint and scurried off, apparently to see to his master. Gressila then looked to Olivier. She hesitated before continuing. "That is all . . . we just think we all should know about each other. There are only a few others, Keublin and Stefan and"—she made an expression of mild disgust—



"I have nothing further to say."

And then, without a further word, Olivier was dismissed. He was astonished. First of all, there were others like him, and second of all, they seemed to be perfectly able to care less that he existed! Eventually, he decided that it would all become clear soon enough, and decided to retire to his tomb.

•4•

#### DEFIANCE

Olivier was still bewildered, first at the discovery of the others, and even more at their nonchalance and even abhorrence. They seemed to completely ignore him, though Gressila stopped only long enough to tell him why. She explained that those who were newly risen were generally treated as inferior to the older vampires. Since they gained power and strength through time, the younger ones were the less powerful. Gressila also explained that she had been around only a few months more than Olivier, who had not even yet seen his first full moon.

So, with so much going on, it seemed surprising that Olivier found time to practice in the light. It was now December, and after feeding twice more, Olivier was completely indistinguishable from a human. He had even been able to gradually adapt to the sunlight, so that now he found himself staying out later and coming out earlier. The light was still painful, but combined with the shorter days of winter, he was now able to stay in London for fourteen hours or more. He could come out at the eighteenth hour on one night and return on the seventh the next day.

It was not until mid-December that his new unlife was greeted with snow. It might have been the fifteenth or sixteenth, at the time when he was once again feeling the thirst for life. He claimed his ninth victim on the eighteenth. Olivier knew that it would not be long before he gained that upon which he preyed. He wanted to achieve life so he could achieve death.

Unfortunately for Olivier, however, his first victims had finally recovered. Sergeant Adams was in a much happier mood now that they were able to describe the attacks. His joyful manner was soon discarded, however, when the reports came in from Guy's Hospital in West London.

"Nonsense!" cried the discouraged Sergeant, throwing the papers to his desk. "Utterly ridiculous. Balderdash. What a load of piffle . . ."

When he was through with all the exclamatory adjectives he could think of, he decided to finish reading the report. He squinted at the finely printed words, which, though difficult to read, were unmistakable. None of the victims had seen their attacker, and they all believed that they had been assaulted by a vampire!

"Unbelievable. Vampires . . . Private Boyd, ask the doctor if the victims showed any other signs of mental incompetence, will you? No, don't. I want you to report to Constable Burlington on Chatham Street at twenty. We'll see about this 'vampire' nonsense."

And the superstitious Boyd found himself once again reluctantly reporting for duty on the street that he desperately wanted to avoid. Constable Burlington was an aging but imposing man with a stiff demeanor and a large truncheon. He



was known for being rather strict to his underlings and did not tolerate cowardice. It was no surprise to Boyd that he was reassigned to his old position.

Therefore it was with a heavy and resigned disposition that John Boyd slung a carbine across his back and stood to his post at the corner of Draven and Berewick. As the hour of midnight neared, Boyd became increasingly nervous. It had been five days since the last attack and another one would be due soon enough.

\* \* \* \* \*

It must have been about two o'clock when John Boyd was jolted awake by an odd sound. It seemed as if someone were dragging and scraping something heavy across metal. He looked around, fingers clutching his carbine. Frightened, he cocked the rifle and held it tight, his hands shaking slightly. There was complete silence. He relaxed a little bit, relieved and almost enjoying the peaceful quiet.

Suddenly, a scream rent the air and shattered the serenity. In a heartbeat Boyd was out of his post and raising the alarm. He blew three sharp blasts from his whistle and dashed around the corner of Draven Street, his carbine slung around his shoulder. Raising the weapon, he searched the area.

Far off, he could barely make out a tall, gangly figure dashing down Draven and onto Guildford Street towards Bermondsey. Blowing his whistle again, the private felt a reassuring return blast as the constable came with three of his men. The suspect had proved his guilt by fleeing. Now the chase was on.

•5•

#### PURSUIT

Olivier did not look behind him as he ran. His breath came in short gasps as his powerful legs propelled him away from the chasing constable. He quickly turned off Guildford and onto Chatham, then took a left onto Copperfield and dove into an alley. He regained his senses a little bit and could hear the constable approaching. Olivier was surprised they had followed him this far, and he watched them go thundering past down Copperfield before turning off.

This run-in with modern law was the last thing Olivier needed. He knew he had lost them for the moment, but could not evade the citywide police for long. Now watching to see if he had been noticed, Olivier started off casually then beat a hasty retreat towards Highgate Cemetery.

Merau and the others would not be pleased, Olivier knew; still, he felt an obligation to tell them what had happened, and that he had successfully evaded the police. Perhaps then they would accept him as one of them. So he decided to visit Gressila's tomb, which he entered to find vacant. He opened the panel on the wall and came into the catacombs. Olivier tried to remember which winding passages and forks to take, and after quite a bit of sidetracking, he managed to find the room where Gressila had introduced him to Eithsi. He knocked.

"Come in," squeaked the ancient and high-pitched voice of Eithsi, who at the moment seemed to be having a rattling cough attack. Olivier hesitated and then inquired as to Merau's whereabouts.

Before Eithsi could answer, however, the door in the back of the room



open and out strode a man Olivier had not seen before. He had black hair, Olivier and Gressila, and a short goatee that was closely trimmed. He gave Olivier a suspicious look before turning to Eithsi.

"I have a matter of extreme importance that I believe would be most interesting to Merau," spoke the man. He had a rather odd glint in his eye that Olivier thought that he was not one to mess with.

"I am sure"—Eithsi coughed again—"Master will be glad to see you, Myrloc."

The man nodded curtly and ducked through a side door. Olivier followed, hoping to see Merau, whom he had not met before. He found himself in a circular room with only a desk in the center. A man who looked like Myrloc, but taller, with a longer beard, sat at the bureau. He had a wizened expression but looked to be about thirty years old, and Olivier realized that this must be Merau.

He was currently involved in a deep conversation with Myrloc, however, and appeared not to notice the younger vampire. Olivier looked around at the contents of the room. It was fairly nondescript, with natural grey-colored stone walls and a few torches flaming in wall sconces. The desk was the only piece of furniture.

Despite his apparent indifference, Olivier was quite interested in what Myrloc had to say. Apparently, he was warning Merau that the police were suspicious about recent attacks. The longer a vampire survived, the less they had to feed; Merau only did so once every ten years. Olivier, however, had the thirst much more often. This was something that the others surely did not appreciate.

Therefore, Olivier decided to leave without concerning Merau any further. He wandered out of the tomb—it was still only about four o'clock—and sat in front of his own. The cool breeze of winter's night air ruffled his coat and blew his hair back behind him. Through the silence, he could hear the faint rustling of leaves nearby, which was odd, for the snow covered most of the ground. He stood and turned around to find that it was not leaves at all.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I want every one of you in the Draven Street sector on this," ordered a frustrated Constable Burlington to his crew of seven. The men, most of them privates or corporals, nodded glumly, not looking forward to their task. The newspapers had gone wild at the report of "what was surely the being" who had committed the attacks.

A flustered police department, now more than ever faced with the public existence of a vampiric threat, had finally turned to its last vestige of hope. James Mitchell and Evni Lasombra, self-described vampire hunters, had offered their services to the people of London. With little else to turn to, Sergeant Adams had finally been allowed to give them a commission.

Now, Mitchell and Lasombra examined the route Olivier had taken when fleeing from the constable and his men.

Private Boyd spoke of the chase. "Well, he was comin' off of Draven, then went west on Guildford. He turned north then, and we lost 'im after that."

"Northwest," muttered Lasombra to her partner, gesturing on a map. "If my estimation is right, he would have been heading directly toward the Thames. Since he surely would have been seen if he attempted to cross the bridge, he must have turned off before then . . . we must determine where."



"Evni," spoke Mitchell, "look here. Directly south of the Thames, on the west side of Copperfield—Highgate Cemetery."

•6•

#### DEATH

Olivier stood immediately as he saw the lone figure dash away from its position on the cemetery wall. The vampire ran after it and clambered up the wall himself, but he was too late. The phantom man had gone. Wasting no time, Olivier returned to his tomb after making sure he had not been seen further. He huddled in the corner, wondering how he would be able to disguise himself. On the other hand, perhaps those who hunted him would unknowingly give Olivier what he wanted. Having been cheated out of a proper death, he hoped he could find ultimate respite some other way.

However, he was much more fearful that they would find him and, instead of destroying him, imprison or torture him in the manner he had come to know so well in his previous life. Thus he still dreaded contact with the humans who now knew exactly the manner of his being.

\* \* \* \* \*

Evni Lasombra and James Mitchell crept side by side down Swain Street which led directly through Highgate Cemetery. Lasombra was armed with a crossbow loaded with a wooden stake—the traditional bane of a vampire. Mitchell clutched a crucifix and a .38 revolver.

They were followed at a length of two hundred yards by the cautious John Boyd and William Anderson, both now corporals, who represented the Constable's men. They had instructions to follow from behind and move in only if Mitchell and Lasombra looked to be in trouble. Now they stood at the entrance to Highgate Cemetery, one on either side, rifles cocked and ready.

Meanwhile, Evni Lasombra fitted one of three wooden stakes into her crossbow, placing it between stock and shaft and winding the pivot string. Her partner, meanwhile, stood at the ready with his pistol. After the string was wound the two set off to seek Olivier's tomb. Because they were unaware of his identity and the cemetery was such a vast place, they had quite a task in front of them.

They decided to fan out. They knew the oldest graves were in the northwest corner, and it was likely for that to be the location. As skilled vampire hunters, they knew that the incriminating hole in the ground would point to the location where the vampire had exited its tomb.

Lasombra decided to look directly along the wall, examining the back of the tombs. Some of them were built directly into the wall, but this was not the case with Olivier's; he was now working desperately from the inside of his tomb to fill in the hole with earth. He knew he would have to dig it again later, but it now seemed to be his only hope. After hastily blocking off the rest of the hole with a stone, he clambered into his coffin. It was nearing daylight.

\* \* \* \* \*

Merau, Gressila and the others were more than aware of the vampire-hunters that crept about in the cemetery above. They had, of course, barricaded Gressila's



and the other two entrances to the catacombs, and felt themselves safe and sound. Better even for them, with Olivier captured or destroyed, the people of London would believe that the threat of vampires was over.

So most of them did nothing and were in fact pleased with the outcome of the events. Merau, however, looked anxious. He had been around for thirteen years longer than Olivier and knew that it was difficult to destroy a vampire. Only a wooden stake, dipped in the blood of the attacker, and driven through the heart of the vampire, could finish them off; and then, the body had to be completely cremated or the vampire would rise again once the stake had decayed. Merau was afraid that if Olivier lived, or was captured and tortured by the vampire hunters, that he would reveal the location of the crypt where the others lived.

And so Merau joined the other two who were attempting to be as inconspicuous as possible while seeking the same target.

\* \* \* \* \*

Evni Lasombra could tell now that she was close. She saw the ancient, crumbling tombs, the illegible inscriptions, the broken headstones. She noticed the odd splotches of blood that dotted the ground. There were three tombs in this area: Olivier's, Gressila's, and one that bore the name of Nicolas Keublin. Lasombra raised her crossbow cautiously, looking around. She could see footprints in front of the tombs of Olivier Schurven and Gressila Valen. Many of the footprints led from one tomb to the other. Lasombra smiled in satisfaction as she approached Olivier's tomb.

James Mitchell came up behind her, his pistol extended at arm's length. The crucifix was in his waistcoat pocket, the chain dangling from around his neck. They both moved in toward the tomb of Olivier Schurven. Mitchell noticed the fresh pile of dirt that was covering Olivier's entry hole. They had begun to dig when a sound came from behind them.

Merau struck Lasombra in the arm with the dagger he was wielding, drawing a line of blood. Drops of it slid down her arm and dripped onto the crossbow and stake, further dribbling to the ground. Infuriated, Lasombra shoved Mitchell in front of her attacker as she smashed in the door to Olivier's tomb.

Olivier froze, three feet from his tomb. Evni Lasombra, her wounded arm bleeding, raised the crossbow and pointed it directly at Olivier's heart. She fired. The vampire was completely incapacitated and dropped to the floor, unable to move. His eyes caught a glimpse of James Mitchell as Merau sunk his dagger deep into the man, and then fled in the direction of Swain Street. Olivier's body shuddered once, and then lay still as Evni Lasombra cast a flaming rag onto his body. Then she too fled, followed by a frightened and wounded Mitchell.

The flames from the rag wrapped around Olivier, jumping higher as they found nourishment. The fire destroyed his clothing and consumed his flesh completely. He felt no pain, but triumph, in these last moments of his life. Then Olivier smiled and closed his eyes for the last time.





## Anthills and Eskimos

It begins with me at five years old. It begins when my mother and her best friend sit on a screen-porch in rural Kentucky. It is December and that is sad, because screen-porches are for lemonade breaks and summer heat. Two windows look down onto the back yard and the blinds are slightly skewed, which gives the house a sort of sleepy, drunken look. Inside two women sit in orange, fur-lined parkas with an ashtray between them. If you were to ask them why they are wearing the jackets, they would say it's because there is no heat in here. I think it's because they feel just a little safe that way. They are smoking, and the steam from their breath and the smoke from their cigarettes make them seem creepy and unearthly, from where I'm standing. It reminds me of a picture I once saw in a Children's Dictionary of two Eskimos standing over an ice-fishing hole. They are like that. Two sun-kissed Eskimos. I am playing in the yard, and I stop sometimes and look up at them (the glare from the vinyl siding makes me squint and cover my eyes). I can't hear them. But I see the pink roofs of their mouths when they laugh and the red tips of their fingers when they flick their smokes.

On this particular day the sky is the color of dead flesh and it aches to snow, but cannot. I play alongside a boy who has no mittens. Actually, he owns them, but refuses to wear them. He says it's because he can't feel the crumbs of the dirt or the snow between his fingers when they're on. At the moment, we are squatting like ducks around a small piece of frozen ground. We make a crude circle with our bodies, and in the center is our object of interest: a frozen anthill. We stare at it waiting. Waiting for an ant to appear. Both of us are curious as to how they stay warm. *He* thinks they grow fur, and this notion distresses me. We keep watching, squatting until our thighs burn, and then decide the ants must have moved out. There is something oddly frightening about a dormant anthill. As if time has stopped. As if evolution is taking place and each phase leaves behind an exoskeleton of life as a reminder of what once was. It is disappointing to him too—one more sign that things are never static. Then he does a funny thing that leaves me curious still. He takes my right mitten off and lets it dangle by the string that connects the pair, puts my index finger in his mouth and bites down. Not hard, just hard enough to leave a ring of marks around my first knuckle. I can feel the wet, sandpaper surface of his tongue. I think it's funny and sort of scary. But he drops my hand and we go to look for another *living* anthill.

I am eleven and just coming to know the end of childhood. To cope I become tough, cocky. I cut my hair short and make calluses on my hands. I think I am impenetrable. It's September. There is a family reunion and I am forced to wear a dress, but I tear the hem and grind dirt into the front where my knees are to make sure everyone knows how rough I am. Other children are there too, and we are playing a game we've invented: a combination of freeze tag and hide-and-seek. I feel empowered because I've chosen a spot where I'm sure no one will find me—crouching inside an abandoned car. There are no doors and both of the seats have been ripped up, so if you were to sit in them, your feet would touch the hood. But this has created a nook just big enough for an eleven-year-old person to fit. I smell rust like blood and wrinkle my nose up. The light plays off of the



tered glass, making me think of water. It is all violently beautiful and I am  
ing. I raise up slightly to check for *hunters*, but instead I see something  
ected. He is standing there, partly in the shadows and he has found me. He  
not run to me, calling me out, announcing his presence and mine. He only  
ches me in the stillness. I am frightened and confused. *Watching for furry ants.*  
ell to him. I tell him he's found me and ask him why he doesn't chase me. I am  
ting him a little, mocking him even, but he does not move. I walk over to  
ere he's standing and then circle around, looking him up and down. He follows  
only with his eyes. And then I stop and look at his face. He smiles at me then,  
d it catches me off guard because it is not a mean or silly kind of smile. It is just  
clean smile. It means nothing. This makes me cry. I sit back on my haunches  
weep because he is so childish—everything I'm struggling not to be at eleven.  
hiding my face in my forearm, and it is wet and slobbery with tears. It is so  
quiet. I can hear the dead crunch of leaves under my weight when I rock back and  
forth. Still, he doesn't move . . . only listens to me cry. *He is so quiet*, I think. I  
wish he would say something so I wouldn't have to hear myself like this. *Dead  
and headache snow.*

I am seventeen and my grandfather is dying of lung cancer in the bed next  
to me. I sit beside him in the hospital and don't know what to say. We are not  
close, but he is my blood, and I am squirming because I don't feel enough pain.  
He starts talking because I'm making him feel awkward, too. He is reminiscing  
about the old days when he was young and the world was still his. *Anthills in the  
forest.* I laugh at the parts I'm supposed to and try not to think about the fact that he  
will be dead by tomorrow. At the funeral I see *him* again: the mittenless, knuckle-  
biting boy from the winter of my childhood. Except, he isn't a little boy now. He  
is bigger, but still the same. It's his mouth. He has a wide fish mouth with  
porcelain teeth. (I will come to know a certain, favorite look of his where he  
squints up his left eye and sort of twitches the right corner of his mouth down-  
ward.) He does this when he is reading me, and he is doing it now as he looks at  
me for the first time in twelve years. We stutter and stammer about what an  
amazing life my grandfather led. But the truth is we are only talking to hear each  
other's voices. *Two sun kissed Eskimos.* He says he is sorry. I raise my eyebrows  
and make my mouth a line. Someone is calling my name and the moment is lost.  
But, later that night we will sweat together in the backseat of his car and write  
funny things on the steamed-up windows. I will claw and scratch at him because I  
am desperate. He won't say a word because he understands this. I am watching  
him sleep now. And I know that he will leave when the sun rises, and I think it  
might be the last time I see him. Somehow it's different this time; *he's gotten to  
me.* I am crying a little now. *Why, I think, am I doing this to myself.*

I would eat him whole if I could. Turn him inside out and try on his skin.  
Breathe his breath and blink his eyes. Course through his veins and stretch in his  
muscles. Pump the blood in his heart. I am angry at the world and frustrated with  
the unpredictability and unfairness of life. I feel a dullness in my skin and in my  
chest. I ache to rub it out, shine it up. I find this polish in him because we are  
foreign to each other . . . and we try that on.

This is how it ends. It ends when I walk away from his sleeping body with



my finger in my mouth. It ends with the blood and tears mixing to make a strange taste. It ends with me praying that this *isn't* the end, because . . . because I need someone to save me now and again. *Frozen anthills and a boy with no mittens* on



## Golden Girl

Megan Baily  
Grade 11  
Avon High  
School  
Avon

Little golden girl so smug  
Nestled in your mother's sturdy arms.  
With a fiend's smile, an errant blush  
You steal your way into her troubled heart.

Dark sister is all alone  
Trying vainly to win what love you stole  
Clinging  
Fruitlessly  
To mother's sturdy arms,  
But mother has eyes for only—  
Lucifer's child in seraphim masquerade.

You dance into hearts  
With chimerical laughter.  
Dark sister cannot.  
She wears her soul on the outside  
Draped in dead leaf finery.

But you,  
Little witch,  
In your gauzy gown of cherubim feathers  
Nestled safely in your mother's sturdy arms;  
You wear your black soul inside  
Its twisted schemings locked away from loving ears.

But sister knows,  
Sister knows,  
Knows your demon coyness,  
Knows mother's blind devotion

Yet still she clings  
Vainly  
To mother's sturdy arms  
Trying to regain a stolen throne.

## Challenge of Artistic Mediums

*In response to "The Petit Bras of the Seine at Argenteuil"*  
*by Claude Monet*

A lingering smell, perhaps imagined,  
Of gloss and turpentine,  
Draws from the earth  
He who left oil breadcrumbs in 1926.

And now that you stand before me,  
Your innards visible,  
I am moved to pry,  
Even to interrogate.

Why do you defy your paints?  
Viewed through an ill-adjusted lens,  
The Seine blends with the sky  
Blends with the trees.

There is an epicenter,  
A bold blackness,  
Attempting to hide sheepishly  
On the left-hand corner of your work.

Those boys  
Whose idle hands rest,  
Stand, prominent, in nature.  
I am there.

What ill-inspired thought  
Led you to salvage  
This pictorial dirge  
And to preserve it in time?

A cutting dullness evokes  
An active indifference—  
A need to look,  
An unwillingness to see.

This flatness, a wasteland,  
Is a war between  
The hollow darkness of human touch  
And the monotony of foggy spirits.

Thank you for the light.

Alexandra  
Day  
Grade 11  
Greenwich  
Academy  
Greenwich



Though I fear it is dusk,

The ambiguity allows  
My denial to take effect.

*So in this sour, modern dawn,*  
You have made weapons  
Your paints,  
Tools of your war.

And if I, in the National Gallery,  
Going about my twenty-first century life,  
Am taken prisoner,  
What compensation do you offer?



## George

Sara Nowak  
Grade 11  
Plainville High  
School  
Plainville

Today he told me that he tried to kill himself when he was fifteen. He went to the woods near his house and made an incision in each wrist. It was over a girl, so he said, and his family to an extent.

Always the one to speak bluntly, never holding back what's on his mind!

I can't say I understand his past. After he cut himself, he claims to have gone back into his house, knowing he had made a mistake. His father, a man whom I've known for a greater part of my life and have feared, wrapped his wrists in a towel and took him to the emergency room without asking any questions. One can only wonder if my grandfather understood, one whose own life was less than worth living. From what I've gathered, he wasn't the best father around, but he was good enough. Strong enough to deal with his own misfortune and man enough to pull my father out of his (before he was able).

If he didn't have that sudden realization of his attempt being a mistake, I wouldn't exist. My life would not have been the only one affected. Many of his students might never have picked up a pencil, or found hope in their own artistic talents. It's funny; you never can tell just what is hidden in a person's mind, not even a close friend. Then again, it works both ways. He undoubtedly has no idea how rapidly he derailed my train of thought with his quiet revelation. I can't quite say that my life or image of him shattered; I just had not expected at that moment to peel another layer off the rotten onion.

We were on our way to the bookstore, just planning to have something to drink together, some swill in his case (the strongest coffee available), and tea in mine. It was a Monday, but it felt like a Sunday—hopeless and empty. I never really felt right on Sundays. People are supposed to relax and contemplate their religion. With atheism, what's to contemplate? Our excuses, reasons? Nobody wants to hear them. At my age, most pass it off as a phase. He understands



ugh, for he lost his religion long ago. Most likely when he was an altar boy, when he witnessed the tragic events of his upbringing, assuredly while he married. Then again, it could be that his lack of faith developed during these seven or eight years, as he's overcome the forecast of his internal storm, multiple sclerosis.

It pains me to even write about his illness. When I try it just sounds inadequate and pitiable—far from what he wants. Every time I think about someone reading my thoughts on his health, I fear the insincere place their reactions come from. Nobody understands. Who has memories of their father walking around with a cane for the greater part of her life? Nobody I know, save my sister. Who's had to dial 911 at the age of nine, while her parents were just minutes before quibbling at the breakfast table, before her dad suddenly became enveloped in azure?

The answer to that one is debatable in my case. Now, years later, I cannot remember if it was I who actually made the call, or if it was my sister, as she does. Just another excuse for the two of us to argue. However, I do vividly recall giving my address to a female voice on the other line. I did leave the eerie safety of my sister's bedroom to go into the kitchen at one point. In the sequence of events I cannot recall when, but I did see him: my dad with his eyes hiding in the back of his head. My mom was trying to hold him still in the chair; to prevent him from hurting himself. I saw the paramedics rush in through the front door. I think I may have even opened the door myself. We were left alone for a little while—I don't remember what we did. I don't remember crying. But auntie came, and we were all right. When she was there, later that day, I went outside on the back patio and sat on a swing. The image of this swing seems out of place in my mind. We never had a swing hanging from a beam of the deck. But I was swinging on something nevertheless, and auntie was trying to talk to me, and then my dad popped outside. He had just gotten home, and for one of the first times in my life was uneasy in his presence. He may have had a bandage on his arm, from an IV or something, and he definitely looked shaken. Conscious of each step yet intent on reaching me, he had experienced a fright that most are never able to imagine.

It couldn't have been later that day though, could it? Seems impossible. Then again, the whole absurd memory as it plays back seems an impossibility too. When I see him these days nothing about him triggers the memory in my mind. He may not be able to run, but he's still walking. He may not be too sharp sometimes, but he knows literature and music better than anyone else willing to talk to me. Although he may not have major connections, or a recognizable amount of refinement, there's nobody else with which I'd rather spend my Saturday nights. He's my trusted consort. Unlike friendships between two unrelated people of similar age, with this one, every minute counts. I don't have the privilege of maintaining a loose grasp, allowing my friend to surface when he wants, allowing him to live without telling me most everything. I need to know where he is. I need to know that his front walk is shoveled after a snowstorm, that the ice is cleared, that the wet leaves have been swept. I need to know when he has a cold, when he hasn't gotten a good night's sleep and when he's on new medication.

He is still the epitome of independence. With about five different classes a



week, he gives his all to every student who walks into his life. From what he tells me they don't seem to mind his limitations. They remain focused on his gift for art. They, for the most part, aside from the free candy and humor, are just happy to be in his presence. I believe that too, for he is the only person that keeps me grounded and replenishes my confidence after even the deepest plunges into sorrow.



Lindsey  
Ravizza  
Grade 11  
Coginchaug  
High School  
Durham

## Helicopters

We called them helicopters;  
Those seedpod leaves  
Green like spring,  
And in pairs.  
Fluttering, twirling in a spinning descent,  
down,  
down,

down.

To land softly on the quiet, shady grass,  
The backyard near the creaky swing set.  
My friend and I,  
Dashing to catch them—clasp them—  
Between our small fingers.  
Our bare feet pounding  
Across the pungent grass  
In a race for a mere leaf, nothing else.  
A leaf.  
Some rested on the damp grass,  
Missed through laughter  
Echoing in the sunlight which  
Shone through the verdant canopy of maples  
In golden patches that lit our own small utopia,  
Where all was green,  
and fresh,  
alive,  
and full of hope.

And the piles—  
hers on the wooden picnic table bench,  
mine at the end of the dented metal slide.

The piles of helicopters:  
The little whirling leaves  
Captured by innocent hands,  
Were enough.

## Broken Identity

Jane An  
Grade 12  
Farmington  
Senior High  
School  
Farmington

I was Chinese by appearance, but I felt as if I had no true understanding of who I was, where I'd come from or what I was to become. The sixteen years of my life consisted of three countries, three languages, eight schools, six homes, three passports all heaped together in one chaotic mess that refused to make sense. Everything was scattered around me like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, fragmented and disconnected, with no one to sort them out or put them together. One day, quite suddenly last March, my grandmother died and everything changed.

She was a soft-spoken woman with delicate hands. Though her hair was very gray, her skin was always youthful and fair. She lived in the bedroom across the hall from me for four years and then she was gone.

I was at school the day she left us. They called me down to the office and told me to call my parents. My mom answered the phone—she was supposed to be in New York, and I wondered why she wasn't there. Upon hearing the news, waves of shock and nausea poured over me, and I dashed out, my whole body shaking.

Heaviness hung in the air back at home. My grandmother's bed was empty and cold. The silence of death now slept there. My parents and I drove to the funeral home without a word to make the funeral arrangements and to dress my grandmother one last time in accordance with Chinese tradition.

Her body was extremely thin, frail, and pallid. The normally pink quick to turn blue, her nails had turned gray. Her lips were a purplish blue and her hands were stiff and cold. She was naked except for the plain, white underwear that wasn't hers. She was devoid of all life and spirit. Death robs us of everything.

I looked at my mother, the strong, composed, and dignified woman I knew her to be, and she had tears streaming down her face and was drawing each breath with great difficulty. I sometimes forget that she, too, is mortal.

Chinese tradition dictates that it is the eldest child's responsibility to dress deceased parents in preparation for the afterlife. My mother was the only child; therefore, the task fell to her and to her alone. Weakened and drained as she was, she insisted on dressing my grandmother because she had not been able to do so for my grandfather when he had died. I was elected to help. One day, the duty will be mine.

My dad pulled out the clothing, one by one, from a yellow plastic bag that had been kept in my parents' bedroom closet for two years, and handed it to me. A purple silken jacket, padded with soft cotton and elaborately embroidered—it was so large it almost swallowed her. My grandmother's stiff arms fit easily into the giant sleeves. The silk pants were much too long for her four feet, eleven inches. I carefully lifted my grandmother by the waist—she couldn't have been more than eighty pounds—while my mother put them on her. And then there were traditional black shoes made from corduroy cloth with simple white soles. Someone had thought to buy them two sizes bigger; I slipped them on my grandmother's swollen feet. I wondered if it was my mother who had carefully prepared all of these things for my grandmother beforehand, knowing that this day would eventually



Yiyin Chen  
Grade 12  
Simsbury  
High School  
Simsbury

come. Is all of life a preparation for death?

By helping my mom dress my grandmother, all that I had learned about being Chinese—my origins, heritage, and culture—embraced me in a way it never had before. Strangely, it was on that dark day that the fragments of my life painfully pieced themselves together. My sense of self became made up of my countries, languages, and experiences all put together to make a beautiful mosaic with the Chinese piece of my life becoming the essential part of me and everything else easily falling into place around it.



## Except for Me

everyone likes stars  
pretty and petite  
demurely twinkling  
in the heavens

except for me

i like clouds at night  
if i had the time  
and the clouds are out  
i would sit after dinner  
in the middle of the road  
and stare at the sky  
until 3 a m

everyone thinks  
that clouds are gray  
before a storm

but when the sky  
looks like dirty lint  
and the stars are too weak  
and hide their delicate shine  
the clouds are bright white

they advance proudly  
along the skyline  
gliding smoothly  
powerful cloud priests  
know magic i do not understand  
but i can almost touch  
the edge of their pristine robes

late at night  
seconds go by without cars  
and in the hushed silence  
i can hear the oratory of the clouds  
their deep rumbling voices  
commanding their subjects  
to bow down

the clouds can give  
and take life as they wish  
cloud kings are wise  
they know when we behave  
and when we worship  
the stars too much

i like to watch the clouds  
and feel powerful too  
everyone likes the stars  
except for me  
i know a secret  
clouds dont need to shimmer  
and i dont need the stars



## Two Days in the Life of an Aspiring Rock Star

August 29, 1999

I am not writing this because you know me or because I have ever had you over my house or said "hello" to you in the hallway, but because I am human just like the rest of you and I have a story just like the rest of you, and right now, I need somebody to hear mine.

I am not asking you to try to understand me because I haven't even done that myself yet. And least of all I do not want to be pitied because I believe there are people in this world who have it much worse than I do. There really are. I do think that my life holds any more value than yours or your best friend's or anyone's. Honest. All I really want is for you to listen and believe that this isn't a journal even though that's what my dad calls it when you write your thoughts down. But I'm writing to you, not to my paper.

That's because the last time I tried to write things down my parents found my notebook and read it and got worried, and now they take me to Dr. Colbrook's office on Wednesdays. But I don't mind because Dr. Colbrook who lets me call him Steve just asks me questions about when I was younger. I do think that is dumb though because I'm sixteen now, and that is the same age I was when I wrote things down, and that's what made my parents nervous. But he's a nice

Eric Lewis  
Grade 12  
Westbrook  
High School  
Westbrook



man, and I think he's only doing his job like he's supposed to.

My dad yells sometimes that Steve costs a lot of money and why can't I just be normal like my sister. He only says this to my mom though when he doesn't think I can hear him. The walls in my house aren't very thick.

I should tell you that I love my dad just as much as my mom and my sister. I really do. I think I just scare him sometimes.

Anyway, I guess you should know about my life at this moment so you can understand later. Since the beginning of the summer, Maria and I have "broken up," my best friend isn't my best friend anymore, and I have bought seven CD's. As a wise man once said, "Smells Like Teen Spirit."

I need to go to sleep now. It's getting late and school starts tomorrow. Did I tell you that I am going to be a sophomore? I am, and I'm not very scared like I was on the day before school started last year. Steve says that is because I am more experienced. He gets paid to tell me that! I already know a lot of things he tells me, but I think he feels smart and I don't like to make him not feel that way because the certificates on his walls say that he went to two very good colleges. I'll talk with me.

I'm sorry, I ramble sometimes. I really should go to bed.

September 3, 1999

It is Saturday now, and I do not like sophomore year. My classes are harder, but that's not all. Everything is changing very fast for me.

On Wednesday, I was walking home from school like I do now, and the air smelled like autumn. It is early this year because usually it still smells like summer right now. I remembered hearing John who is smart say in science class that this is all because of El Niño, and he is probably right because my dad said that the TV weatherman talks about El Niño too.

Anyway, when I was near the beginning of my road an old, beat up, rusty car that I knew very well pulled up next to me. It was Maria! I had not really seen her or talked to her since she told me she loved me and then said she needed to be alone because she was sad all the time in the same night. That was June, and I have missed her terribly. But I should stick to the point like my English teacher says.

So Maria asked if I wanted a ride, and I said yes since my legs were tired and especially since seeing her made me miss her even more. I should tell you that she is a senior and has had her license since the first month we knew each other. That was helpful because I hate asking my parents for rides since they are always busy with their friends or TV shows or something important like that.

Maria was very happy the whole ride from the bottom of my street to my house and asked me questions like how have I been. I still don't know why she was sad all the time in June. But the good thing is that she said she wanted to catch up, so last night, she picked me up around six and we went to the diner to eat and talk.

I did not like anything about the whole night and that is why I am sad today. This whole "let's be friends" philosophy that we were trying is bullshit really. We talked about her search for colleges and what Mike's mom's friend



ghter said about Mike's girlfriend. It was typical of my town and not like our conversations, to be entirely honest with you. After that we went to the movie theater and caught a "chick flick" that Maria wanted to see. She never used to like that kind of stuff. Come to think of it, she was even wearing pink. Maria doesn't wear pink. She didn't when I knew her, anyway.

When she was driving me home was the worst part.

"Brendan, I need to tell you something, and I'm not sure how you will react."

"Okay," was all I said, but I could tell by the sound of her voice that she was afraid to tell me whatever it was and that it probably wouldn't make me very happy. It was the same kind of voice that Steve used when he called my parents into his office at the end of our first session and my mom cried because she didn't want her son to be on that medicine because her brother was on that medicine, and it made him crazy.

"I have a new boyfriend, Brendan, his name is Matt Braun. I really like him a lot. I just thought you should know because I care about you a lot, and you're one of my best friends."

"Okay."

I really am a good pretender when I try.

For the next ten minutes the car ride was very quiet because I was thinking like I do too much sometimes. I knew who Matt Braun was. He is the one with huge arms and a really nice car, and he was the one who was very popular because of these things plus his football. I hated him because my sister liked him once in eighth grade, and it was because of him that she cried for a whole week, all over a stupid dance and some alcohol he drank or something. I should tell you also that Maria and my sister are in the same class, but they're not friends.

Anyway, Maria finally pulled into my driveway.

"Are you still sad all the time?" I suddenly asked.

Maria looked at me very weird like she didn't know me. Then she looked at the clock and I could see in her eyes that she was uncomfortable.

"Brendan, you know that we could never be together. You know that, right? I mean, I'm two years older than you! I'm going to college next year for God sakes! That wouldn't be fair to you, left here all alone."

She forgot that I would be left here alone anyway next year. And having someone to call and write letters to and to miss, even if you can't hardly ever see them, is better than not having anyone at all. She was wrong about another thing too because I didn't know that we couldn't be together until right at that moment and it hurt like a thousand knives stuck into my skinny body.

"I'm sorry," I said. "It was nice talking to you. Goodnight."

I opened the door calmly, stepped out of the car, and went inside. I kissed my mom, told her yes, I did have a good time, and went straight to my room.

If you ever have a chance to listen to the song "Round Here" by the Counting Crows I think you should. I put it on last night in my room and stared out my window, trying not to think about Maria or my sessions with Steve or school or anything at all.



I think that if you could take autumn with all the leaves falling off the trees and the green turning to gold, and then the sudden brown of winter with the coming chill in the air and the sudden clarity of the moon at night; the aching melancholy felt as the summer rolls away behind you and the world of winter wraps itself around you; if you could take all this and all that it means and feels like, then you would understand what I felt as I stared out my window and listened to the song.



Carrie Scace  
Grade 12  
Miss Porter's  
School  
Farmington

### cairn

My mother says as soon as  
the puppies eat dry food  
we're selling them.

I look at their short bristle fur  
and see dollar signs in the pattern  
of their brindle coats.

Holding one in the hem of my shirt, I feel  
its heartbeat next to the pulse in my stomach,  
harmless curved claws scratching my hands.

I want to tell her that one day  
a thousand little terriers  
will greet me each day at the front step after work

barking short, trembling cries of welcome.  
I'll gather them into my arms  
and know the good of a thousand hearts

drumming in stuttered syncopation.  
I'll look at the elderly woman on the bus  
in white sneakers and flesh colored tights

and wonder if she sees the pawprints on my jeans  
the way I see white cat hair  
on the lapel of her jacket.

## ZiOn.

Eli  
Rosenblatt  
Trumbull  
High School  
Trumbull  
Grade 12

become accustomed to

things, the first breath in thick air  
lined out and in, in and out  
ing the instruments of pavement as I watch

melodies  
ed like  
ked like a string of immigrant workers  
are striking hard.

ATER WITNESSING your solitude

spread out covering bricks  
egan to write with a gap in my smile

my smile faded away, I walk by you every day give you second  
oks, not only (because you second looks) because you drop  
ear bombs above the sidewalk.

rait, you are *the* sidewalk walked upon. imparted, part of  
the concrete slabs. you are man-made.

you are man-made  
humanity hath shut ya eyes?

our eyes, hair and those eyes  
moist clouds floating in smoke  
arling about the buildings  
ubway rolling under in precise song  
mooth cutting in capillaries

I feel like I should be writing only for you.

you are without a pen and  
hout more of a story.

I have become your dinnertime storyteller  
folktale mailman, a griot yelping.

I focus  
my eyes back up against a graffiti delicious wall  
hungry with dreams  
we cannot match geography but unite in photography  
our visions reflective  
projected in image.



## Honorable Mentions

Alexandra Asal	Richard D. Hubbard School
Abby Bertini	Henry A. Wolcott School
Rachel L. Binaco	East Lyme High School
Anna Brissie	South School
Ermine Isha Brown	University of Hartford Magnet School
Kuvi K. Chebelyon	Juliet W. Long Elementary School
Emily Claffey	Memorial Elementary School
Jeffrey Cohen	Danbury High School
Cassandra Davidson	Bedford Middle School
Adrienne Debigare	Rocky Hill High School
Lauren DeFilippo	Sacred Heart Academy
Melani Deniger	Daisy Ingraham Elementary School
Kelly Dennen	Latimer Lane Elementary School
Peter DeRiemer	Riverside School
Michelle DeSarbo	Mercy High School
Alena Dillon	Fairfield High School
Amanda Dimas	Long Hill School
Emily Dykes	Leonard J. Tyl Middle School
Megan Fitzgerald	Mohegan Elementary School
Bianca Gildea	Sweeney School
Melissa Gombos	Jennings Elementary School
Edith Hanson	Burr District Elementary School
Kia Hellrigel	Niantic Center School
Payton Henry	Center School
Tameshia Henry	Metropolitan Learning Center
Kara Hoffman	Wamogo Regional High School
John Kelly	Regional Multicultural Magnet School
Laura Kilbride	New Canaan High School
Mikaela Koivisto	Pomfret Community School
Erica Kousz	RHAM Middle School
Mackenzie Lane	Riverfield Elementary School
MaryClare Langan	East Ridge Middle School
Sam Lavin	Colytown Middle School
Tyler Lefebre	Daisy Ingraham Elementary School
Gregory Loebell	Avon Middle School
Tyler Longfellow	Roosevelt Middle School
Sara-Caitrin Mandelburg	Samuel Huntington School
Shannon Mantie	Rockville High School
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Meg O'Connor	Emerson-Williams
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Ranae Wetzel  
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Canton Junior Senior High School  
Litchfield High School  
Middle Gale School  
East Hartford High School  
Western Middle School  
Wheeler Middle School  
East School  
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Stonington High School  
Trumbull High School  
South Windsor High School  
RHAM High School  
Torrington Middle School  
University of Hartford Magnet School  
Academy Elementary School  
Southeast Elementary School  
Griswold High School  
Vernon Center Middle School  
Pine Grove Elementary School  
Hockanum Elementary School

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Georg  
Carey  
Carol  
Susan  
Jason  
Danie  
Mary  
Jill D  
Jeri L  
Jessie  
Andr  
Sue I  
Mark  
Maur  
Melie  
Janic  
Anm  
Barb  
Helen  
Joyce  
Wilm  
Barb  
Nanc  
Jacki  
Susan  
Jim J  
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Rena  
Debe  
Barb  
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Donn  
Carol  
Jenni  
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Jini  
Kim  
Merr  
Sally  
Julia  
Jacqu  
Susan  
Pene



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Carey P. Blocker	William H. Hall High School
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Jason Courtmanche	RHAM High School
Danielle Curiale	Bethel High School
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Jill DeRosa	Middle Gate School
Jeri DeSantis	Robert E. Fitch Senior High School
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Sue Driscoll	Long Hill Elementary School
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Helen D. Giles	Riverside School
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Deborah Kess	Slade Middle School
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Miss Porter's School  
Julian Curtiss School  
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New Fairfield Middle School  
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Westhill High School  
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