

Write to Roar:

The Remote Edition (Year 2)

Riverdale Kingsbridge Academy

Literary Magazine

2020-2021



Editorial Staff:

Maureen Flanagan
Awet Ghebretnsae
Desiree Hernandez
Masamitsu Jindo
Megumi Jindo
Ethan Kaufman
Sophia Kline
Jesse Koblin
Sam Lombardi
Ashley Maurad
Emelia Messinger
Julia Miranti
Katherine Moquete
Dalya Pinero
Samantha Trombone
Andrea Velez

Faculty Advisor:

Abbey Hope

Foreword

Dear Fellow RKA Tigers,

As an unprecedented school year winds to a close and we look at the bounty of our work, we gather this edition of Write to Roar to celebrate the fact that creativity *can* persevere through adversity. In fact, if art is the pursuit of beauty, then the roaring and quiet beauties we've found in this year's unique circumstances are collected within these pages. Whether appreciating the beautiful tranquility of nature many of us re-discovered with our newfound time, or the sonorous beauty of solidarity as social justice entered the limelight, the sterling works of Riverdale Kingsbridge Academy contained herein are undoubtedly a sign of the times.

I am proud to acknowledge that this roster of writers, editors, and illustrators represents the best of the artistic and literary tradition at our wonderful community school. From our accomplished high school submissions, to the impressive works of those in the middle school ranks, every single contributor gave Write to Roar something to be proud of. As such, we peruse through this book and are reminded of the ineffable and inexorable creativity, spirit, and expression of youth, both in our school and across the world.

Enjoy the 2020-2021 edition of Write to Roar!

Wishing you a happy summer and all the best,
Jesse Koblin, 12th grade

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2020 in a Nutshell

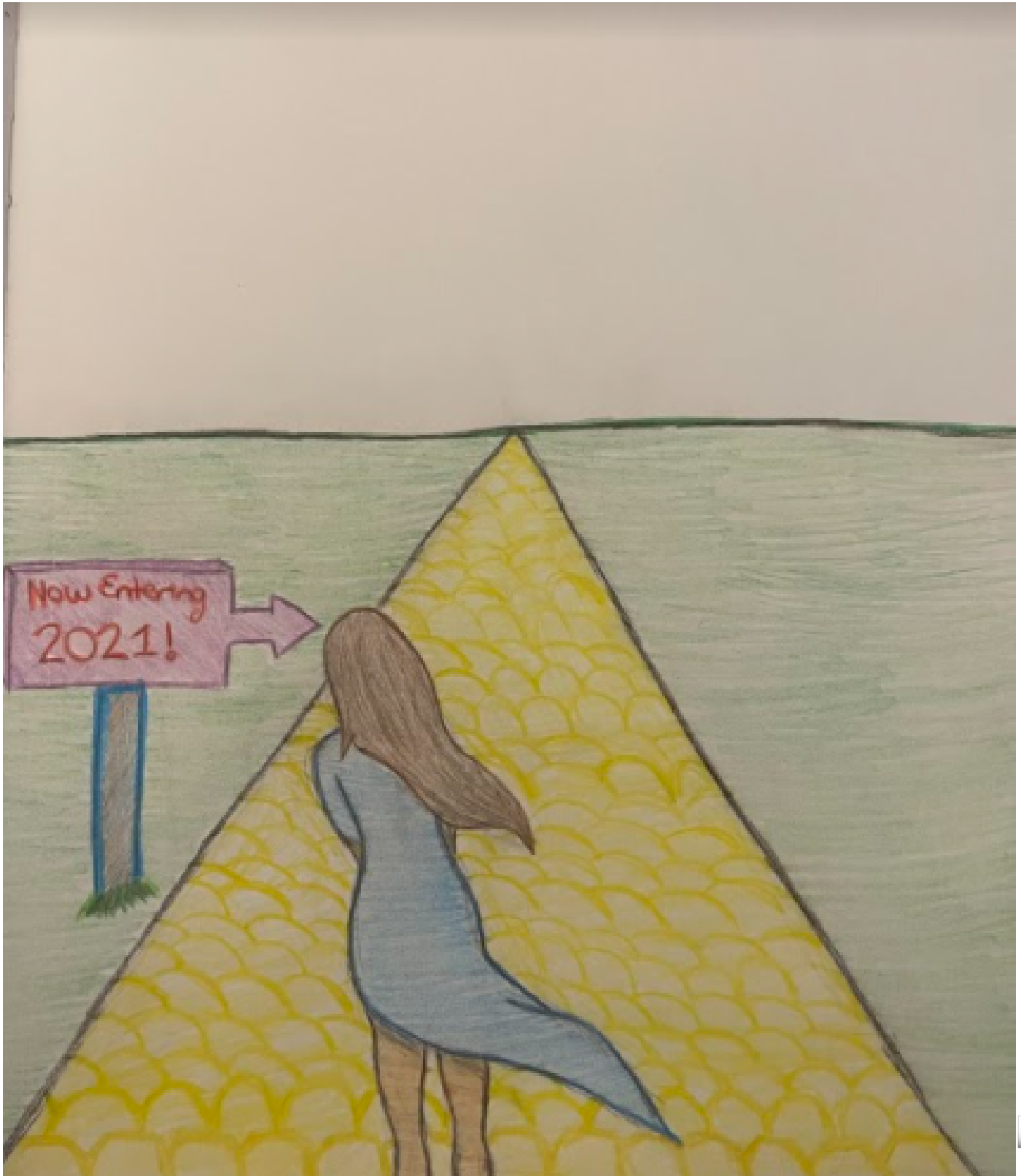
By: **Ethan Kaufman**

2020 is done and it was definitely no fun
Kobe dies Black Lives Matter too,
Joe Biden won and we all said woo hoo
And who could forget about that terrifying virus
COVID-19
We were all so desirous to get rid of it
But now we're in the middle of quarantine
And it is so boringtine
Masks up and 6 feet apart
It's even hard to put things in your shopping cart
Kids go to school virtually
And now that's cruelty
Sports play to no fans
But there are still cams
Sesame Street's 50th
Super Mario Bros. 35
Eddie Van Halen dies too
But you know what
We will all rise
This infamous year is at its demise
And now it's all over I'll pay for your fries
So let's all say goodbye 2020

Hello 2021

Yellow Brick Road to 2021

By: **Katherine Moquete**



2020

By: Masamitsu Jindo

2020

The year we didn't waste a penny
The same year of the corona
The same year where some are eating a banana
The same where some are battling
The same where siblings are snitching

But the year is not about that
It's about perseverance, being hopeful, and not being a rat
We all are being thankful and cheering
At the people in the front lines who are persevering
And going through the pandemic together
We are a team, united, just like fruits in a blender
But most of all, we are hopeful,
Always looking at the light in the end of the tunnel
We will get through the pandemic together
We are a team, united, just like fruits in a blender

Social Justice

“Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.”

— **Martin Luther King Jr., Strength to Love**

What Cultural Identity Means To Me

By: **Youbin Kim**

Identity is the one thing everyone can experience on their own, for which it is simply unique to the individual. My experience with cultural identity is quite fragmented. Naturally, I never felt more Korean or more American. I moved to America when I was 1 year old, and have lived here ever since. I have no such recollection of the year I had once lived in Korea, but it lacked any kind of significance in the big picture. Moving here was a fresh start and an opportunity to begin my life and find my identity here.

Every summer spent suffocating within the dull, white brick walls of Korean school. Practicing the Korean national anthem every morning. Holding my breath through clouds of cigarette smoke on Koreatown sidewalks. Rice cakes and kimchi stew, and the incessant beeping and the foggy white air of the rice cooker.

With time, my connection began to disintegrate. I stopped going to Korean school every summer and rapidly lost my grasp of the language. My memory of the hangul alphabet went hazy as my hands started to go numb from just waiting to text my mother that I returned from school. I gripped my phone for minutes, sounding out each letter in my head, desperately searching for the right combinations. My mind went blank as I sunk into my chair, gravely disappointed that I had let go of the only way I could communicate with my mother.

Around the same time, I had developed a strong disliking for onions, coupling with carrots and bean sprouts. These foods were staples in almost every Korean dish. I started avoiding kimchi and any Korean food altogether. I had then begun my strict American food diet, going out for sandwiches and pizza every week. The vibrant red letters of “Burger King” always caught my attention on the way home from my aunt’s home. We always made a stop at a fast-food chain restaurant, eating high-calorie burgers and fries with too much salt. The kitchen smelled like onions and raw meat, a familiar and welcome scent now turned to an unpleasant experience as I immediately pinched my nose, walking by mother’s dinner.

I often feel lost, amorphous, and displaced. Suspended in a limbo, between east and west. No heritage, no roots. A lot of this was my fault. I spent so long marinating in the racism and vitriol projected onto me, absorbing it into the pores of my being. I rejected all the traits of my otherness, all the things that jeopardized my quest for assimilation into white America.

Sometimes I really don’t know who I am. I’m forever stuck between two worlds with no bridge between them. No parallels, nothing to draw similarities from. But maybe that’s okay. Perhaps the beauty of the human experience lies in the struggle to pick up the scattered remnants of identity and assemble them into something that can support our weight. We make our identities. For the time being, we are the artists, and we are the art.

I Won't Let Anyone Tell Me Otherwise

By: **Julia Miranti**

I am a smart, strong, human being.
I won't let anyone tell me otherwise.
This is my female body, I get to choose what's best for it,
I won't let anyone tell me otherwise.
I get to wear what I want, when I want,
I won't let anyone tell me otherwise.

Just because I am a smart, strong woman with an opinion,
doesn't mean I am dramatic.
If I feel I need to do something that's best for my body,
you don't have a say in it.
When I wear clothes to show off my body,
it's not for you to look at and say "She's asking for it."

I am not an object,
I don't want to be objectified.
I want to be heard,
Don't speak over me.
Respect women,
and we will respect you.

Right After I Say ‘I’m Half Chinese’

By: Gabriella Guterrez

Right After I Say “I’m Half Chinese”

“You don’t even look Chinese!”
Maybe not, but what if I did?

If I had slightly smaller eyes
Would I have to worry about getting
Beaten or spat on in the subway
While others observe?

If I had straight black hair
Would they call me a “chink”
And tell me to go back to my country?
That I “don’t belong here”?

If I had thinner lips
Would I have to worry about my Paw-Paw,
an elderly woman, every time
She goes grocery shopping? I do.

Would I avoid spas in fear of
Being murdered by a white man
Who was having a “bad day”?

The world has been hit by disasters:
Racist hurricanes,
Tsunamis of wrongful deaths,
And divisive media earthquakes.

And as people have their opinions
Scarfig down Asian cuisines and
Going home to watch anime,
Their silence is loud. Deafening.

I may not look Chinese
But what difference does it make?
I may be half, but the embers
Still burn in me.

Aspiration

By: Anisa Jan

Clouds can cover the world in darkness
Shadows can embark its negative touch with regard of farness
The way you see a world of pain is hard to obtain
With the struggles here and struggles there it's hard to retain. It's hard,
It's hard to see the world of vibrancy when all is shown is a world of emptiness.
Our planet is black and white with no sound and all you can say, think:
What to do? Oh what to do?

Our world is unfinished it's yet to reach for the sky and we have the might
Yes, we have it, to reach it oh so high.
With a collision hand in hand
With music as such of a band,
We can accomplish this and see our world as it once was.

We should stand together and finish what He created and embrace us,
Embrace our stripes and bright stars
Take on the world one step at a time
Anticipate a better dream
Show the world through our gleam,
We are united and diminish this cloud;
Say it out loud,
We are proud.

Our world is filled with clouds and to seek tranquility we must diminish ambiguity
We must reach each others hearts,
Decline those darts,
We must seek to finish our world; erase our pain
Rid those saddened hearts from what They have caused.

Seeking a better world full of color requires We the People to color those grays
Leave the past astray and embark on the journey of togetherness.
We must dream a better dream,
Believe in magic
Walk with promise as our new leader advises a new chapter of our new story.

Our planet is unfinished and with desire we can acquire the rainbow after the storm.
Hope in a better world, a world of color the way it should have been.
We will climb
Yes We will climb the hill, full of aspiration.

Me for Me

By: **Emelia Messinger**

I am who I am, and I will not change for you,
And no matter what you say, you won't make me do it.

I will stand up for me
And for all that I believe
But I will not stand for someone who has no ground to stand on
Because if you cannot stand
I won't stand for you

And when it comes to the time where there are sides
I will choose the one that I believe
Even if they lose
Or if they achieve victory
I did it to stand
I did it for me

And so I will not change
I will watch others change around me
Making me change for me
Not for you
For anyone
Or anything
Stay true to you

"Don't allow anyone to tell you how to feel about yourself, but YOU! And you have a right to be exactly who you are." - Michelle Obama

Women Power

By: Megumi Jindo

I know a woman who is strong.
I know a woman who is loving.
I know a woman who can give good hugs.

I know a woman who never gives up.
I know a woman who can be funny.
I know a woman who should have more confidence in herself.

I know a woman who doesn't love herself.
I know a woman who has not found herself yet.
I know a woman who is altruistic to the point that she does not think that she is good enough.

I know a woman who is brave.
I know a woman who is truly kind and empathetic.
I know a woman who tries and tries but can't live up to people's expectations.

But the woman should know that she should not have to. I wish she could embrace who she is and just live her own self.

I know a woman who is giving.
I know a woman who is inspiring.
I know a woman who is woven of threads that are all beautiful.

I know a woman who apologizes a lot because she knows that she did something wrong, though she should not be apologizing.

I know a woman who is overprotective because of the strong love for her children.
I know a woman who always tries her best no matter what but always gets let down.

That woman is my mother. And though at times, it can be hard to cooperate with her, she's all I have.

I know she has been through dark roads but even then,

I love her very much, inside and out.

And this is a poem dedicated to her, to show how I understand who she is and that I love her even when at times, I don't show that I do.

Thank you for everything.

Can Our Younger Generation Escape Brutality and Oppression in America?

By: **Karlah Culver**

When parents find out that they are expecting a child, it is one of the greatest joys that they may feel in life. It is important to them to properly raise their children as a way to pass down their legacy and feel a greater sense of purpose in the upbringing of the future generation. Most tend to offer advice from their previous life experiences to ensure they are raising conducive and progressive members of society. A perfect example of such is Ta-Nehisi Coates, who wrote a nonfiction book entitled, *Between the World and Me*, which is written in the form of a letter to his son, Samori Coates. From the beginning of the text throughout the entire book, Coates persistently emphasizes to his audience, most specifically his son, the importance of understanding how the following topics affect the lives of African American people: racism, police brutality, the establishment of a self-identity, the condemnation of the American Dream, and how unrealistic it is to believe one person in a severely divided society can bring change. Due to the current societal climate of systemic racism, oppression, and police brutality, African American parents have taken more of an active role in preparing their teenage and adult children, particularly sons, on how to address these matters. It is saddening that this has become a standard practice in the upbringing of African American children, but it is the only way that their parents can feel some sense of comfort that their children will be secure when they are alone in society. A central allusion that is concurrent throughout the text is the fear of our younger generation surviving police brutality and oppression in America.

I believe that the way Ta-Nehisi Coates oriented his relationship with his son in his earlier years will play a major role in Samori's outlook on life. In conjunction with what Coates has discussed in the text, in his attempt to protect Samori from the atrocities that he will face in society, there are conversations that other parents are having with their children of color about this saddening reality. During my research, I revisited a video entitled, *Black Parents Explain How to Deal with the Police*. This video explores a panel of parents and children in which the parents explain to their children how to safely interact with police and include methods that the targeted audience can do so as well. One father-daughter pair in particular that truly stood out to me were Ariell and Antjuan. Antjuan states that he and Ariell rehearse lines that she may need to use if ever stopped by police, which are, "I'm Ariell Sky Williams, I am 8 years old, I'm unarmed and I have nothing that will hurt you." (*Black Parents*

Explain How to Deal with the Police) Watching this video was heartbreaking, being that primarily African American parents must teach their young children how to address law enforcement if ever approached, which is not a common practice for parents that are not of color. Coates presents this same parental fear as he states, “And I am afraid. I feel the fear most acutely whenever you leave me.” (Coates, p. 14) Taking a pause on the research element, I began to think of a personal experience in which I have had the same fear voiced to me by my mother; being that I now have a car and will soon be on the road alone she fears that I may be stopped and harassed by police. I can recall a time in which I was simply moving my car due to weekly Wednesday alternate side parking, a police cruiser drove past me and I immediately became flustered with fear. The fear that I wouldn’t be able to walk back to my home because my black body would be harassed and degraded. My mother has also shared much concern for my older brother, who is a 31-year old African American male that lives in Queens and drives as well; he has been a victim of systemic racism in terms of the cyclic pattern of African American males entering the correctional system at alarming rates. Starting at age 18, he has been in and out of correctional facilities, partially due to his actions and partially due to false accusations made by police officers. Most recently, he was imprisoned for a year and a half for allegedly possessing a deadly weapon while on probation; he then went to trial where he was found not guilty and released immediately. It is truly disheartening that it took a 2-week trial with 3 testimonies after 18 months of being degraded, held in unsanitary conditions, and being viewed as guilty, and then released into society as though no wrongdoing had been done by one party. My brother’s story is the same tale told time and time again, same story, different day, different black boy. My mom blames herself for not teaching him better; since he was born in 1990, neither she nor his father were inclined to teach him about his possible future interactions with police as the matter wasn’t as prevalent as it is now. This conversation is a new and frightening thing for my mother to have and she is afraid that since my brother did not have the “conversation” that he might fall victim to this matter in particular. Thus mirroring the same fear expressed by Coates through, *Between the World and Me* and in the video *Black Parents Explain How to Deal with the Police*.

In continuation with my research, I connected this allusion made by Coates to what is expressed in the text, *The Hate U Give*, by Angie Thomas. The nonfiction text is largely centered around the main character, Starr, who is sparked to participate in racial activism following the death of her friend Khalil at the hands of “Officer 115”. Starr mentions in the text that her father, Big Mav, has had conversations with her on how to interact with law enforcement. “ ‘Starr-Starr, you do whatever they tell you to do,’ he

said. ‘Keep your hands visible. Don’t make any sudden moves. Only speak when they speak to you.’... My parents haven’t raised me to fear the police, just to be smart around them. They told me it’s not smart to move while a cop has his back to you.” (Thomas, p. 20 & 23) Following this scene, Khalil is fatally shot by “Officer 115” which incites a new role in Starr’s life, propelling her throughout the rest of her story. Even though this story is based on a fictional event it has occurred too frequently in nonfictional times. According to statistics, “Over the life course, about 1 in every 1,000 black men can expect to be killed by police.” This statistic coincides with the fact that, “a black man is 2.5 times more likely than a white man to be killed by the police during his lifetime...that black people fatally shot by the police were twice as likely as white people to be unarmed. Those findings align with many studies published since 2015 suggesting that racial biases do influence police shootings.” This projection is alarming for most African American people. Furthering the presumption that police violence is one of the greatest threats against black males; lately presenting itself as one of the leading causes of death for adolescent men. In recognition of how statistics are determined, this conclusion is based on demographic patterns of police violence showing higher violent encounters with law enforcement occurring with African Americans. With that in mind I found it best to indulge back into, *Between the World and Me*.

I then reverted back to Coates’ story that included some commonly known victims of police brutality; such as Micheal Brown, his personal acquaintance, Prince Jones, John Crawford, Renisha McBride, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, and too many more. He specifically references an occasion in which Samori experienced his first emotional reaction to this matter, following the verdict of Micheal Brown, “You stayed up till 11 P.M. that night, waiting for the announcement of an indictment, and when instead it was announced that there was none you said, "I've got to go," and you went into your room, and I heard you crying.” (Coates, p. 11) To which Coates follows with, “I came in five minutes after, and I didn't hug you, and I didn't comfort you, because I thought it would be wrong to comfort you. I did not tell you that it would be okay, because I have never believed it would be okay.” (p. 11, Coates) I believe that the mechanism that Coates uses to address his son’s feelings in this circumstance is better than the normal way parents console their children when they are angry. Instead, Coates does not tell his son that everything would be okay because he did not want Samori to believe such a false narrative. As Coates does know that there still is a guard and toughness his son must carry being a black boy in this new age of racial bias. Even though Coates does not explicitly state that he has prepared his son, via a conversation, for any future exchanges with the police it must be understood that he is doing so

throughout this entire book. In the text, Ta-Nehisi Coates constantly states how it is natural for the black body to be continually broken by outside forces. Therefore it is easy for his son to comprehend that he must prevent the degradation of his own precious black body. Furthermore, I appreciate that Coates continuously tries to prevent the projection of his feelings onto his son to ensure he is not presenting a biased opinion to an impressionable individual, such as Samori. Therefore, he is allowing his son to be smart instead of fearful of the police as they are supposed to be who we look to in times of distress. To which Coates even says, “I did not want to raise you in fear or false memory. I did not want you forced to mask your joys and bind your eyes. What I wanted for you was to grow into consciousness. I resolved to hide nothing from you.” (p.111, Coates) Even with this, I can infer that after witnessing multiple public cases in which an African American male has been assaulted and/or killed by law enforcement as well as his father’s wisdom and testament to its validity, Samori may still be fearful that the same could happen to himself.

In high tense situations it is important to be wise instead of fearful as you may react differently out of fear. I believe that it is absolutely okay for black parents to be fearful of their children entering into society as it has not been promising for most black adolescents. However, I do believe they should not project their fear and insecurities onto their children being that we are at a mental age where we are highly persuadable; thus potentially leading to a creation of fear every time we enter the public alone. I believe that they should mirror the method that Coates uses; he acknowledges that he has been fearful of surviving in the age of police brutality and oppression and shares the same concern for his son. Leading him to continue his pursuit of protecting his black body; but frequently states that he does not project these feelings toward his son. Instead, he educates Samori on what he may face in the future based on Coates’ prior experiences in this society. But he then informs him on how to protect himself. Therefore, promoting a positive decision making opportunity for Samori on how to critically think if ever in the presence of the police to prevent an unfortunate event from occurring.

In essence, surviving in a world that has constantly been oppressive to a respective race will always pose a difficulty for African Americans. Hence, inciting fear in the hearts of parents raising our future generation. Due to the current climate it has been generally unappealing for people of color to want to raise their children in this society due to the fact that they do not want to live in constant fear. The fear that one day they will receive a phone call stating that their child is in intensive care after an incident with a police officer, just as Dr. Jones had to endure following the shooting of her son Prince Jones. It is discouraging that there is a stigma of extreme violence by the individuals that are placed into

our communities to provide protection, justice, law and order. Consequently, these officers are protecting the American Dream that has intrinsically invaded the African American community negatively. But thinking back, how can we answer my original question, “Can Our Younger Generation Escape Brutality and Oppression in America?”; well, Barack Obama has a few suggestions. On his organization website, the former president has a section dedicated to “Reimagine Policing” in which he provides steps that we can take to reform and “combat police violence and systemic racism within law enforcement”. He has proposed 4 steps: Review, Engage, Report, and Reform.

1. Review: “Cities will review their police use-of-force policies and/or ways to redefine public safety and combat systemic racism within law enforcement.”
2. Engage: “Cities will engage with their communities and include diverse input, experiences, and stories in the process.”
3. Report: “After the review, cities will share the findings with their community and seek feedback.”
4. Reform: “Cities will change their use-of-force policies and strategize ways to redefine public safety and combat systemic racism within law enforcement.”

In the effort of reform and the promotion of a positive future, I believe that if precisely followed these steps can enact a trend of “reimaging policing”. While it is important to yearn for a brighter future with hopes of change, it is critical that we address that all is not well; and that the fears that our ancestors faced centuries ago while confined to a plantation are still mirrored by parents staying awake late at night praying for the protection of their loved ones.

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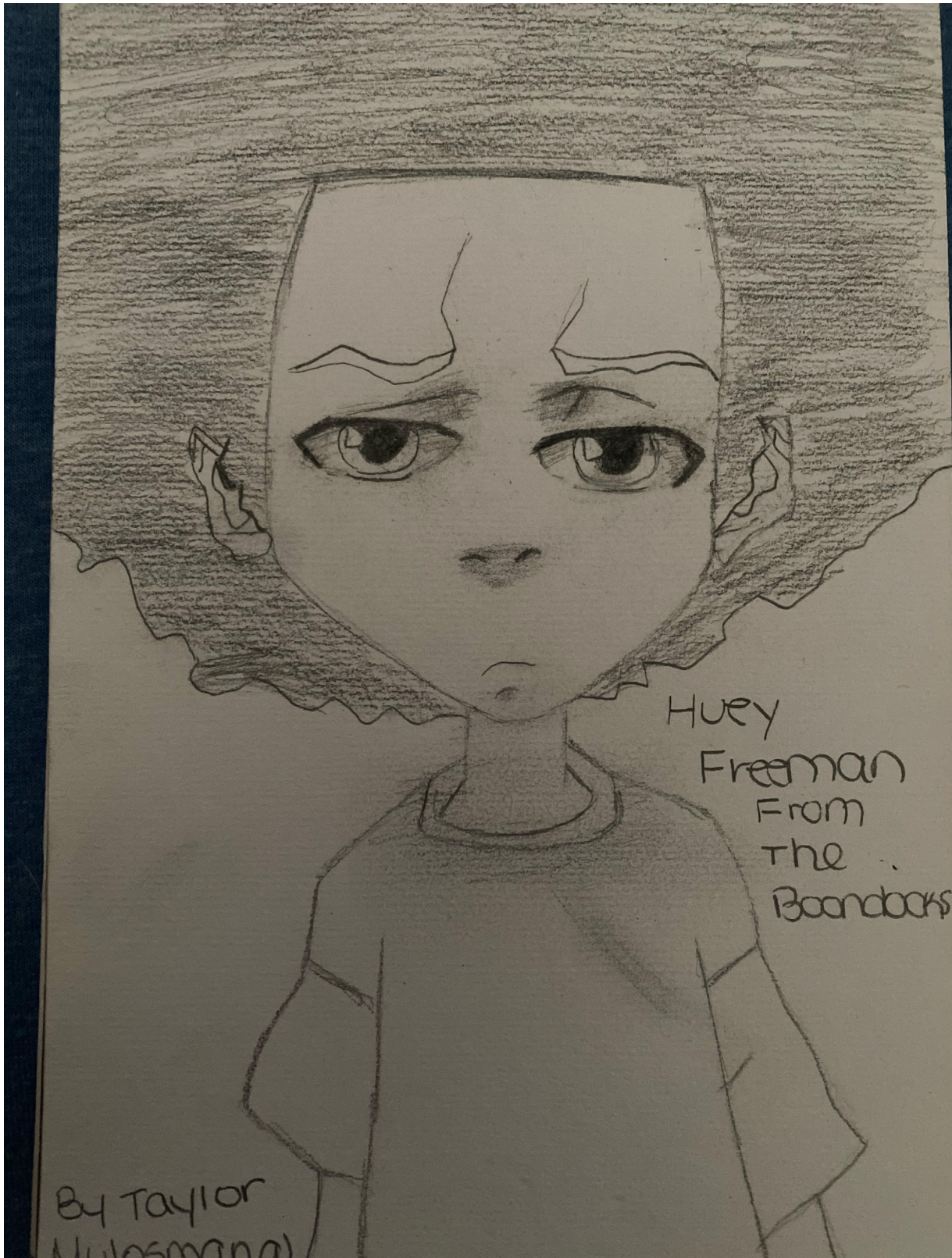
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Huey Freeman

By: Taylor Mulosmanaj



The Myriad of Nights



“The darker the night, the brighter the stars”



“Each night, when I go to sleep, I die. And the next morning,
when I wake up, I am reborn”



-Mahatma Gandhi

“Without the dark, we’d never see the stars”

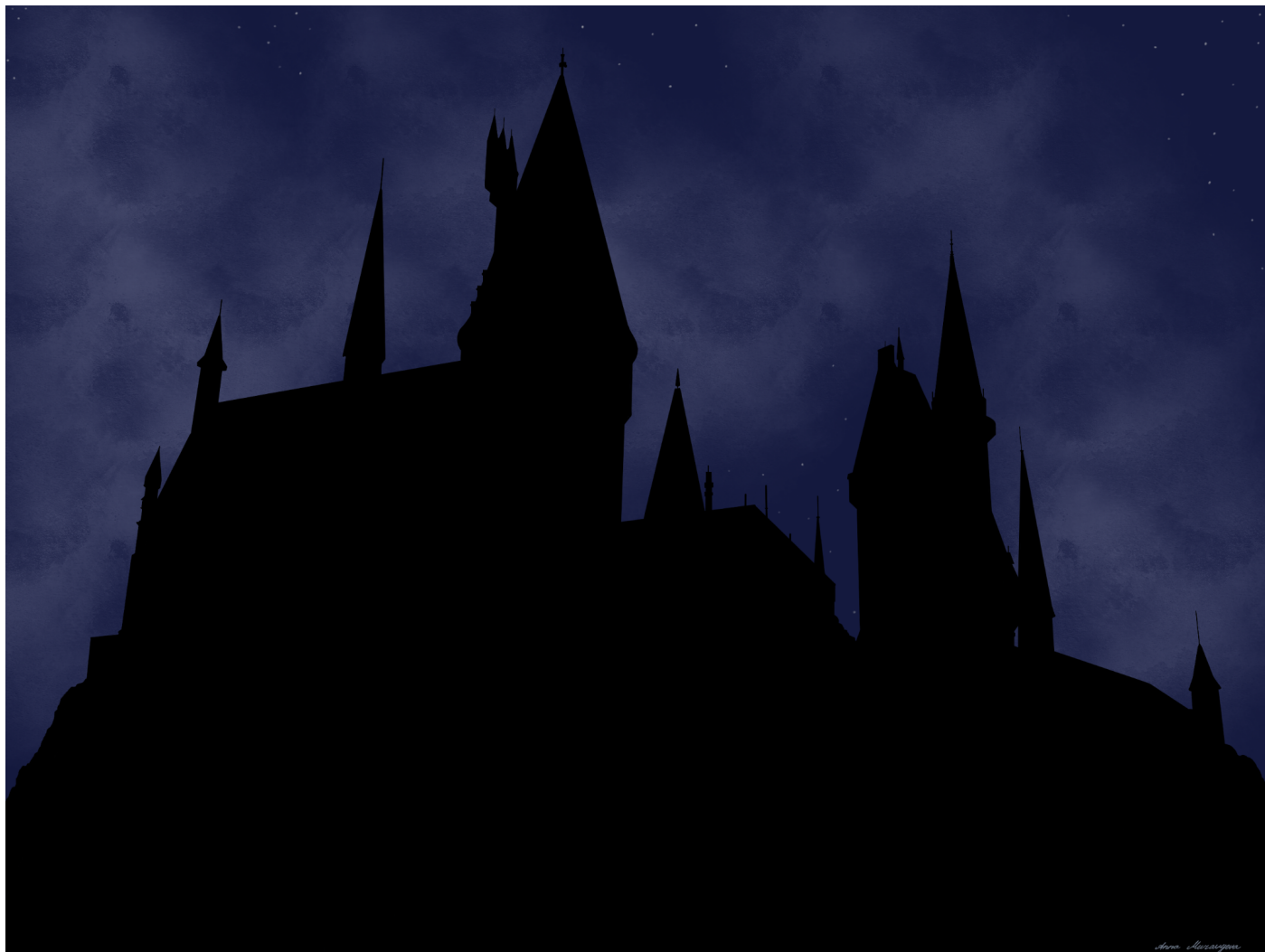


- Stephenie Meyer



Mysterious Night

By: Anna Muravyeva



The Moon's Dark Embrace

By: Desiree Hernandez

With the moon comes an embrace of darkness, where the last kisses of the sun disappear into nothingness. But do not fear its darkness, its icy grip does not mean you any harm, no it protects you. It watches over you and its light, although little will still keep you safe from what haunts you and keep you on your path to safety.

Keep your eyes ahead darling, you can't see it, the moon won't allow you to.

The moon knows that these creatures, damned by Satan himself cannot cross into the light. That is why you must stay on the path, the moon can only shine its light here.

I know...

I know that you want to give in to the voice in your head. He's telling you to stop running, to give in to the pain of the cuts against your delicate feet, to finally sit down and rest.

That the beast right at your heels won't hurt you...

But you must keep going my dear, for if they catch you...

You won't make it to see the sunrise.

For when the sun rises and you hear the music of the birds then and only then will you be safe.

Untitled

By: Anna Muraveya



Gold Alights the Dark

By: Megumi Jindo

She was crying. Her tears flooding down the sidewalk, hands covering her face, grasping the tears that were about to fall. Not looking where she stepped, she turned the corner and fell down, into the deep hole of nothingness.

☆☆☆☆☆

As she fell, her brain was blank except for gold strips of confetti that flew around her thoughts. Words that she couldn't catch, but she knew what they said. It said, "They forgot me," "I am alone," "No one is here," "I tried my best," "You weren't there for me when you were supposed to be." Words that made her heart dig deeper into the darkness she was now being whipped into. Nothing could really stop her from feeling this dark pain. She tried to find the light, the light that always let her out of these times; but there was nothing this time. And so, she felt abandoned.

Suddenly, there was this gold strip of light that was flung to her through the dark hole, through her dark heart, for this hole was her heart and her heart was the dark passage, a pit with no light.

She grabbed at the strip of light but no matter how many times she did, she couldn't grasp it. She tried and tried but nothing changed. Nothing changed because she didn't have the heart to change. Meaning, she didn't have the heart to change herself, to stop trying to grab that light, to stop trying to want to be alone. That light was the light that was a fake. It looked like it was filled with warmth but inside, it was going to fill her with overflowing hatred, regretfulness, sadness, and madness that would change her forever. But not knowing that it was a fake, she kept grabbing. Kept trying to hold onto that light. And at last her heart found what she, herself was trying to look for, and grasped-which was the strip itself. And so, she grabbed it blindly and caught it. And she was enveloped in this hatred. Her eyes turned from golden brown to such a dark brown that it looked black. Her hair turned from brown to black. Her fair skin turned into a crinkly, papery skin type. Her fingernails grew into claws. Her shirt formed ravenous wings in the back and her legs turned to black thin legs that were supported by sharp claws.

Hatred and this darkness had taken everything away from her. For now, she was hatred, itself.

☆☆☆☆☆

But what she didn't know was that there was this small piece of light that was still intact in her heart. A little piece of life that was left with her.

☆☆☆☆☆

An image popped into her head. It was her, her mom by her side. They were laughing, ice cream in their hands and the chocolate frost smudged on her nose and cheeks. She looked so happy. But then she was pulled out of that image as the darkness once again took over. She was still asleep, wrapped with a cloud of darkness. She was still the hatred, the raven. But then, another person popped into her head, another image. The image of where it was her friends. The same friends that made her feel like nothing and made her cry. It was images that flashed as soon as one popped up-they were go-karting, roller skating, baking, shopping, talking, laughing, hugging with happiness, doing homework together, and riding bikes-competing with each other. She realized that she missed that happiness, that life-badly. She was craving for it and so she brought her hand out. Her hands went through them and she was bursting. Bursting with happiness and lights of gold and warmth. She realized that though she hated them, she had forgiven them-because they were humans, after all.

Eye of the Night

By: **Zoe Arcement**

The warm yellow glow illuminates the world for those who walk the night
Their dark secrets are exposed by its brilliant light.
Night creatures and plants have now awoken
And the silence of the hour has been broken.
Plants stretching up towards the moon
As the dance of the fireflies makes them swoon.
The mighty owl hunts its prey, creating great fear
While the beauty of the moon makes the wolf shed a tear.
With the soft, calm water under a midnight sky
The rest of the world sleeps safely under its watchful eye.

At dawn, the bright sun wakes up early bird wren,
But the moon will take over when it reaches dusk again.

Sleep and Awaken

By: **Masamitsu Jindo**

Every day is rebirth and death again
This is just like the cycle of rain
Happens always and every day
This is the way
Of Life
Even when there is strife,
It still happens
We sleep and wake up. And in the middle, we are laughin'.
Angry, mad, sad, still happens, most of the time being in your zen
We wake up and sleep again

Untitled

By: Anna Muravyeva



The Nights

By: Megumi Jindo

In the nights

There is so much to
dread, there is so much to wait
for and yet I can't

shake off the feeling
that this will not end. When will
this end? When will they

stop, cease to exist? I
used to love the night, hearing
the crickets when I sleep;

the footsteps from up-
stairs, the cool wind coming in,
and when the bright lights

go off. Now all I
can feel is the ghost trail-
ing footsteps of them.

What was not feared is
now feared. What is prologue
is past. How can I

be pacified when the
whispers of them are on me?
The conditions are dire.

Will it get better?

The restless sleep continues
with no end in sight. Will I
ever see my dreams again

or can I grow still?

Every day there is always a challenge
to face. But with hope,

your friends by your side,
and looking forward
for the future, you can live
through it. When you can't

find hope, just find at
least one thing to look forward
to. One thing towards
the future.

One thing.

These are the nights.

-----ღღ▽-----

“Sometimes the world sucks, and people suck, and life sucks, but with a few good friends, you are never truly alone. You will never be alone.”

- “Soul of Stars” by Ashley Poston

“Where there’s a will, there’s a way.”

-George Herbert

Untitled

By: Anna Muravyeva



The Darkness in Us All

By: **Emelia Messinger**

You may be known as nice
Those words are all you hear
But somewhere deep inside of you
Is something we call fear

This is something that can lash out
But it sometimes hides
It's the darkness in you
The black dragon that you ride

You can't make it go
It is in us all
It drives us to the brink of hate
Then pushes so we fall

This dragon is full of rage
It keeps it all inside
Till the one day that you feel it too
And on that dragon you shall ride

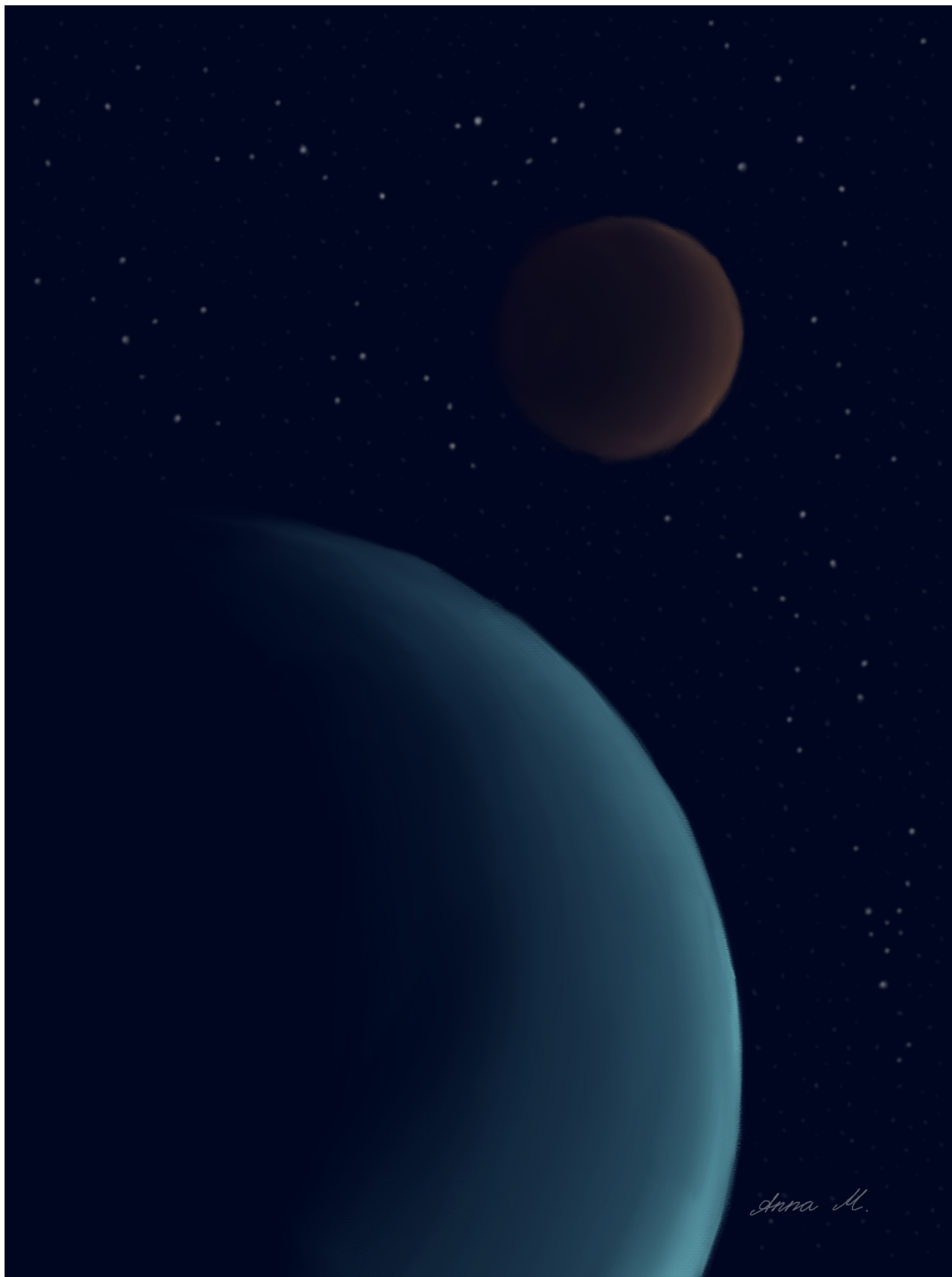
And if you can't escape
The darkness in us all
When you reach the brink of hate
You surely will then fall

And once you have lost for good
There is no coming back
You lost all the good in you
To the darkness in us all

Now the darkness has your soul
There is no way out
Do know that your end is near
Cause of the monster doubt

Sempiternal

By: Anna Muravyeva



The Flame of The Orange

By: Megumi Jindo

There was a loud screech and all hell broke loose

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

And that...was the cliché ending but this time, it was for real.

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An orange nonflammable beak breaks through a crystal shell. Another crash, a fire-color claw steps through. A breath of flame through the sudden, acute night, reflected by the moon and its waters below.

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

So, a phoenix arose in the night. Out of the fire of smoke and sweat. Out of the shadows of darkness. Out of the swift mist of dust. And....this phoenix was reborn with the joint hands of the people that held the grips of the world.

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

The phoenix flew through the clouds, rushing up through them, and then flew straight. Straight through the distant sparkles, and through the windy, navy sea. The phoenix was searching for something. Something....

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And...it found them. The people with ragged clothes. The people who had their hands up, red smears of paint dripping from their cheeks. The people who were surrounding a fire, some children sitting on logs. Some hugged their mom's left leg as the parents, as the daughters and sons threw their hands up and cried. They cried, - tears of fear and dolor. Tears for the unknown. Tears for the flying orange myth.

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And as the people saw the phoenix, the people's tears ran down harder, and they began to sing an ancient song in a foreign language. A song of twined joy and sorrow.

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

The red and orange bird has come back. To save us as it once did in the long-past. Once, can it only come back but now it has appeared again. Twice, is a dark omen. But the rain shall rain and the sky will part, to let the bird through. Flames, it blows. Flames of earth, mist, crust, and a tonic of bitter love it throws. The people will be people and they will forever shout for those who can only whisper, those who have no voice, and fight for those who are maimed... those who cannot fight for themselves. We are indispensable and we climb the invisible ladder as the world forgets who it was but we have not. We will renew it and we will stand up for those who have forgotten the forgotten.

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

So the phoenix swept down, through the crowd, and as it did, there was a twinge of touch on its golden feathers. The phoenix turned and the hazel eyes saw through the young boy who touched the wings of the delicate. The phoenix saw the pain that the people had endured as the world evolved and the other people forgot who they were. And a tear slipped from the boy. And in that second, the phoenix flew swiftly through the towns and through the tepees with only fire as their light. Fire, as their warmth, as their friend.

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

The phoenix kept going through the town, looking, trying to find a reason to be the savior. The phoenix flew through the curtains that held the door in their homes and then through all that, it saw the people that sacrificed so much for the people who did not understand. It saw the scarce plantation they had left and then the phoenix, saw the rainbows of bridges that descended from the sky. A message; *this land, this people will be the salvation. They are blessed.* But the phoenix did not give in, it kept on looking...flying...trying to click into something.

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As the orange blur kept flying, it saw the things that everyone did not. *Discourage, wretched, minor, hopeless, lost in spirit.* And pain... pain was the key because the phoenix had seen destruction once, in the past...but nothing like this. There were cities burnt, farms not fed, stores destroyed and people crying. But...it was not just that, the phoenix flew farther into the area. There was another side, another place, another universe where people were laughing, dancing but as it looked closer, they were just robots and so the phoenix kept on flying, trying to find the actual people.

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The phoenix dived and then slowed...because *the people who were supposed to be the people, were not people.* They were laying in their beds or just sitting in cushioned chairs, but in their hands were blue...blood. Blue blood, from the phone they held in their hands. Blue blood...from the electric wire

vibrations, from all the texting and absorption of the screens that had infected the human blood. *What happened...* The phoenix was utterly shocked for the first time in centuries.

☆☆☆☆☆

The phones...there was something wrong with the vibe of it... And as the phoenix drew closer, the sudden realization was so strong, that the phoenix almost fell hard. The phones...were where the lost souls were. Where the actual people were. The people that the phoenix thought they were (the ones that were sitting in the chairs), were actually not *people*. They were robots. Robots, depicted to look like humans, or they *were* humans but not the souls - the hearts, were stuck in the phones of the former owners. *What happened to the people...* And the phoenix rose up, and the robot-people did not flicker.

☆☆☆☆☆

The only way for the people to incarnate would be to want to come back, for even heaven could not force them to.

☆☆☆☆☆

The people did something that surprised the phoenix - they did not wish to go back. They did not wish it and part of it was because they did not know what was right nor wrong and another, is because they did not want to live in that reality.

This life.

☆☆☆☆☆

These people - the souls - had forgotten their roots and had forgotten who they were. They were lost. And, these souls did not know that it would be this way, till the ends of earth...

☆☆☆☆☆

The phoenix rose up to the air again, above the people, and went back to the people who were humans. And those humans were now on their knees and they praised the phoenix because they knew what the phoenix would do. *It would sacrifice.*

☆☆☆☆☆

And so, *for* the people, the phoenix would offer itself in exchange for a new nation. And *for* those people, the phoenix would scream through the flames of ashes that everything will be alright. The phoenix's heart, yearned for ease on the people. It felt how much the people had undergone and so...it flew up to the night sky and screamed flames. *Flames of red, orange, passion, sympathy, pain.*

☆☆☆☆☆

And through that, the people sang the song and raised their hands as they swayed. Red paint on their cheeks, one stripe down the center of their cheeks, and ragged clothing - dark pink, brown and blue gowns, t-shirts, and dresses blew as the wind shifted. The wind shifted to the phoenix who had caught the attention of Heaven, at last. And that phoenix only had one more breath left, one more sprout of energy, and as it blew *for the people, for the world, for the future*, it fell.

☆☆☆☆☆

The phoenix fell through the clouds. Its work was done. And all it yearned for...was peace, relief from pain, and this world. And *that* phoenix swiftly fell - an orangish-red blur in the starry sky.
A falling star in the dark. A falling fire in the smoke.

Nature

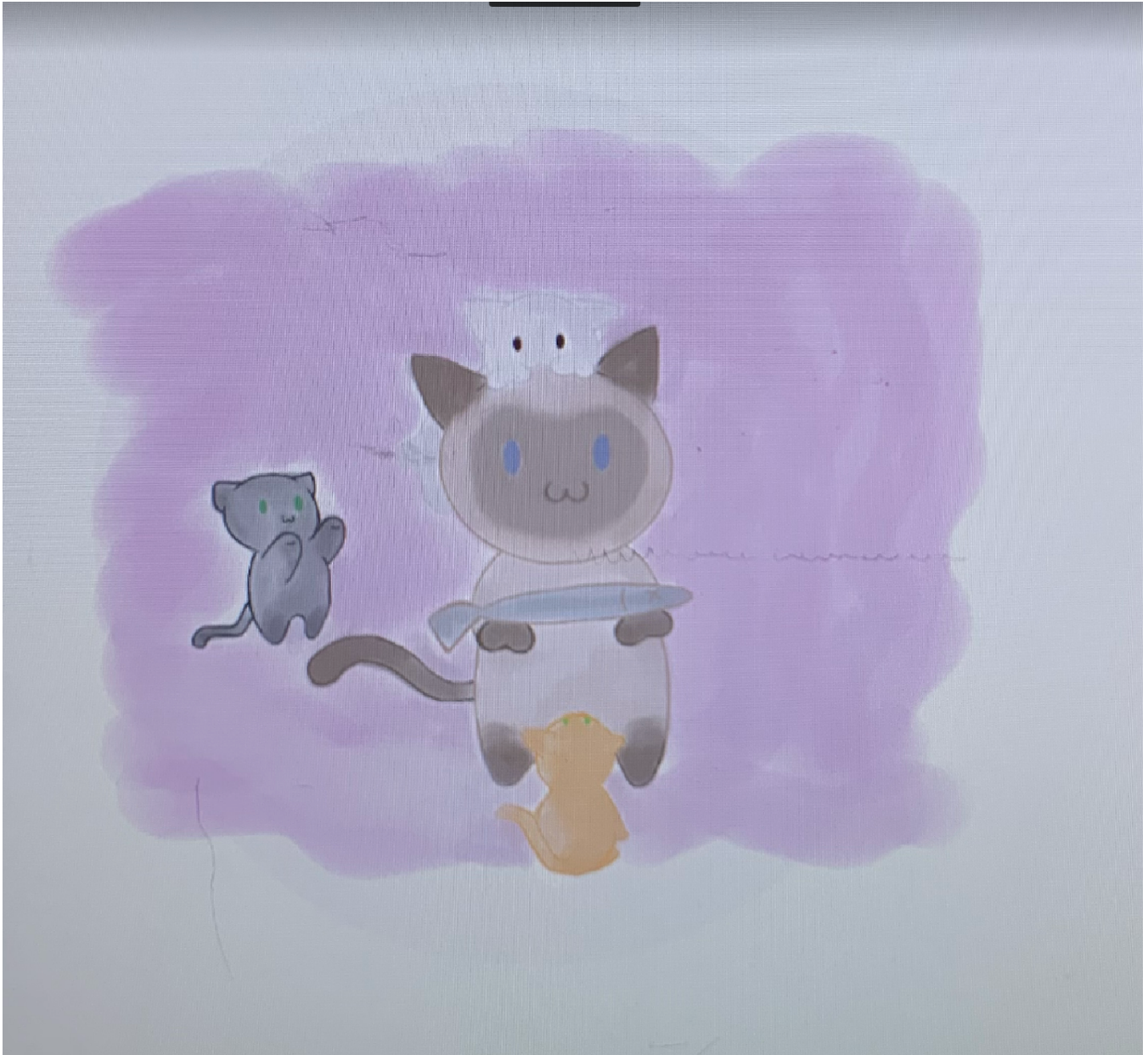


Untitled

By: [Anna Muravyeva](#)

Henry and the Felines

By: Mia Vasquez



Peep

By: Mia Vasquez



NOT SNOWFALL FOR ALL

By: **Ethan Kaufman**

It felt like it hadn't snowed in years!! It was a crisp winter day when I woke up to see a fluffy white powder cover all of the bushes and trees and cars. I ran downstairs.

"Mama Mama, it's snowing!!" I screamed.

"Yes Jackson, you're going to need your big winter coat today." She said.

"Do I have to? it's so itchy." She said that I could get sick if I didn't.

"I made you your favorites for breakfast."

"frosted flakes and waffles with powdered sugar. Yum! Thanks Mom."

She then poured the milk into the cereal, and put powdered sugar on my waffle.

"The sugar looks like snow," I said. After eating, I brushed my teeth, and put on my winter clothes (yes, even my itchy coat). I went with my Dad outside. When we got outside, I started kicking the snow around.

"Come on Jackson, you'll be late, and so will I." Dad said. Dad worked at a department store, so I got all of my presents there. During lunch in school, I wasn't focusing on eating, because I was talking to my friends about what we were going to do when we go outside. We said we were going to have snowball fights and build a snowman.

Just then the lunch aid blew her whistle and said "we can't go outside today, there is too much ice on the ground." I walked up to the lunch aid and pleaded with her saying I wanted to go out. But she said "no." I said to my friends, "we could play at the playground by my house." They said okay. After school, I said to Mama, "I'm going to the playground to play with my friends."

She said "oh no you don't, you have chores and homework to do mr."

I said "okay," and I plopped down on my bed and started my math. I looked outside and saw my friends building a snowman. I tried to finish as fast as I could, and I finished my math and writing. I looked outside again and I saw my friends having a snowball fight, with uneven teams, because I wasn't there.

Now time for my chores. I cleaned my room and made my bed. Everything took about 45 minutes. I finally put on my jacket and scarf and boots and went outside. When I got outside I said "hi gu-," but when I saw them, they were walking away, and they were laughing and laughing and laughing. Inside I said to my parents, "it's not fair, Dad wouldn't let me play in the snow before while walking to school, it was too icy to play outside during recess, and my friends left before I could play with them."

They said, "well to make you feel better, we'll let you open a Christmas present early, it's only two days away."

"Fine," I said. I unwrapped a present with lots of little Christmas trees on it and opened the box under it. My Dad said "it's the blue and red jacket you love from the department store."

I put it on and said "It's not itchy!" The next morning the snow was gone, and that was the last snow of the winter. Now that I think about it, that was a little early for the last snow of the winter. But then it was spring, and then summer, and fall, until finally the snow was back, and that time it was snowfall for all.

Evening Winter Day and Forest Shimmer

By: Sofia Sadijra



Untitled

By: Ella Cox



Untitled

By: **Anna Muravyeva**



The Dragon With a Heart That Weighs a Ton

By: **Masamitsu Jindo**

Looking upon the dark sky,
Wondering why,
The dragon came to me
While I was resting under the tree,
Came down quick like rain,
In a drain,
Then gave a roar like thunder
While I wonder
The dragon gave me the power to save
before they die, before they appear in their grave
Returned to the night sky
Quick like a fly
Looks like a demon at first sight
But inside, I know I'm not right
It was a good one
With a big heart that weighed a ton
The dragon nice as a flower
Gave me the special Power

Lady Demon

By: **Masamitsu Jindo**

Everynight as we all are asleep
One is not in the deep
Dark part of the mountain
A monster wakes up
First to drink a cup
Of pure blood
Tasty as a plant bud
Then go out to eat
Meat, not wheat
Eating the body first
And leave the head to be cursed
And go back to the deep
Dark part of the mountains while we are still asleep
She lives an immortal life
Not found by any, even with a brain sharp as a knife
Still out to eat, never staying in the same region,
This is Lady Demon

Repeating Seasons

By: Masamitsu Jindo

The world is made out of many seasons,

All for different reasons,

Spring

Is what bring

Flowers

And Showers

Summer

Where you see many different colors

With the Sun out

There's Nature, that's what Summer is about

Fall

Where some girls go to the mall

And you see these leaves

On the ground, so sad, and now that's when you grieve.

And Finally winter

Where you're inside being warm and having fun while playing with glitter

But outside, you see snow,

When you know

It's Christmas time

This just repeats, repeats, and repeats, and that's all fine

Untitled

By: *Anna Muravyeva*



The World Around Us

Sharon Gannon Quote: "What we see in the world around us is just a reflection of what is inside of us."



Untitled

By: [Anna Muravyeva](#)

Coquito

By: **Dalya Pinero**

The *coquito* man never missed an opportunity to hit up Van Cortlandt Park Village in The Bronx. He would show up outside the entrance to my elementary school, pushing a cart full of different flavored *coquitos*. “Coco, Rainbow, Cherry, Mango!” He didn’t speak much English, so we would gesture to the flavor we wanted, or have our parents order for us in Spanish. Any kid with half a brain knew that the rainbow *coquito* was the best. We didn’t know what blend of flavors made it so, but we would clamor around him, waving our parent’s money, and watch him load the stuff into a Dixie cup. The sound of the metal scooper scraping against the side of the vat was music to us. Grandma always got the coconut flavor for herself. I was disgusted. How could she eat something so tasteless? “*Muchacha*, one day you will understand,” she would say. I thought she was crazy.

One day, long after elementary school, I returned to the neighborhood. It looked just as I remembered it: narrow streets clogged up with double parked cars in front of the school.

There was the *coquito* man, who had barely aged a day, setting up shop. I dug a dollar out of my back pocket and offered it to him. “Flavor?” he asked. I was tempted to point to the rainbow *coquito* vat, like I had always done as a kid. Something held me back. “Coco,” I said.

He smiled, handed me a Dixie cup full of *coquito*.

I ate it quickly. It tasted like I imagined a tropical island would taste. Sweet, yet savory. I bought another one to eat while I walked back to grandma’s apartment.

She smiled once she saw the *coquito* in my hand



Love Haiku

By: **Awet Ghebretnsae**

If fighting is love
I want to be your soldier.
To live life with you.

The Lonely Bridge

By: **Masamitsu Jindo**

It's a cold, cold, cold day,
Too cold to play
Where I lonely walk across
With my own tomato sauce
For my lovely family, waiting to have food
Hoping not to be rude
I hurry home, tomato sauce and me
But I stop and see a tree
Ah, how lonely it's standing
With no one by it's caring,
This cold night
With no light
Too cold to itch
On the cold bridge.

A Pack of Cigarettes

By: **Jueun Jin**

“Smoking is prohibited within this area”

The man plucked out a fresh cigarette
Pure, untouched, harmless
Click. Click. His thumb snaps the lighter. The spark is ignited.
Sir, hopes the tab, please, please do not burn us
But man would not kill us, would they? For in America we trust

Yet helpless, violated, it burns uncontrollably
Exhaustion puffing out of it's lips in smoke
The once tranquil stick, now ablaze
Hoping to resist the fingers' choke
But its refusal to man's control was a masked death, bespoke

What once was so innocent
Now used, tainted, betrayed
Man saw purpose no longer to the damaged piece
Tap. It plunges back to earth as Man disposes of virtue
‘But we must hide it from masses for such littering will bring dismay,’ Masquerade!

Now this cigarette, this black man
Was passionate, strong, yet still
Until the system lit chaos to a flammable bit
And claim their purpose is simply to illuminate the country's potential; we will just distill
Yet even after one has fallen, they continue to burn, and burn, and burn what has already charred

America has been stuck in this recurring cycle
For four hundred years too long
This game is called the American Dream, full of pain, anger, sacrifice!
Must meet its end for all of their wrongs
For to this nation, each and every distinct body belongs
America must meet Justice.



Untitled

By: Anna Muravyeva

The World of Mirrors and Chaos

By: Megumi Jindo

Ugh, my brain did it again. It's 10:29 at night and I swear the scraped-off piece of wall paint looked like a bug moving. I hate it when it does that. Anyway, I was thinking about something. What was it? Oh, right. My profile. I was wondering what my countenance was on my face. If I had freckles like the woman on the TV News channel. Did I have green eyes like her? Full lips? I don't know. And I *don't* know and I know this sounds fake and so surreal but it's true. I don't know what I look like except for the fact that I have straight dark, dark brown hair. Yeah, I know, you still think I'm lying. But I'm really not. As my mind starts to shut off, one last thought sticks with me. Will I ever know what I look like?

☆☆☆☆☆

I wake up as the voice of the daily news reporter's voice drifts up to my room from downstairs. It's the girl with the freckles, I think and I go down the stairs. I say good morning to everyone and slide onto the sofa next to my grandpa.

"So, Grandy, what did I miss?" I ask.

"Morning, Lorenza and you didn't miss much so you're good. Go get dressed for school or you're going to be late." He says while side glancing at me from the TV.

"Ok, thanks, grand," I reply. As I get up and look over to the kitchen, I notice that mom wasn't in the kitchen as usual.

"Grand, where's mom?" I ask, worried that something was up.

"She left for work early today because the government office called as an emergency."

"Ok..." I reply, mystified about what the emergency was and went upstairs to get dressed.

☆☆☆☆☆

As I listen to my favorite music by Astrid S, I ride my usual train and arrive at school just as the morning announcements start. I slide into my seat next to K (a.k.a Katashi) and notice that her hair that's usually pink was red today.

"How do you always dye your hair so perfectly without having anything to look at, to help you?" I ask, curious.

"I don't know. I just know where I'm doing it or where I am aiming." K replies with pride in her voice.

"Wow, you gotta teach me one day on how you do that." I reply astonished.

“Ooh, yes! Sure, what color would you want? I have blue, pink, red, blond dye. Any colors that you want from there? If not, I have to buy from the True Blue Dye Superstore.”

“Oooh, how about blue?” I love the color blue so I bet that color would look good on me.

“Uh, I mean sure but blue wouldn’t match your-” K gets cut off as she tries to speak on one of my countenance that I have.

“No, you shouldn’t do that color because it wouldn’t match your-” K gets cut off again as she tries to speak. It’s most likely because of that cut-off alarm in our bodies. So, in our country, Equeena, there is this law where we cannot say what features other people have. Or describe their features to them. This is because it will keep peace in Equeena, or so they say. I don’t know if that’s actually true or what but I know that my mom definitely believes the government -which is obvious because she works in the government- but K does not. So she’s trying again to tell me why I shouldn’t put blue dye in my hair because it doesn’t match one of the features that I have on my face. But no matter how much she tries, it won’t let her tell me. The alarm system that we have in our bodies cuts us off. We don’t know how that came into our body but we just have it and for now, I’m pretty sure there’s no way out of it.

“Ughhh, I hate this alarm thing. You know what, I think you should get blonde dye because I think that would make your hair look good.” K says while observing my hair and face.

“Okay, cool,” I confirm and turn around as our teacher comes into our history class. Maybe, one day our history class will talk about how we got these alarm cut off’s in our bodies and the true side to why it’s so bad to not say how other people look. Because, really, what can be that big of a deal of just knowing?



I wake up to the sound of the reporter doing the News again. This time, she sounds like she’s amazed but scared. I go down to see what’s happening. I look at my grand as I slide into the couch next to him. He just keeps staring at the TV screen and his jaw is dropped. I look at the screen and my jaw drops too. “Everywhere we look as you can see is that everyone has a mirror and is looking at themselves since the day before yesterday morning.” The reporter says as the TV shows us in a circle. As the reporter goes near to a young girl with brown curly hair and hazel eyes, she asks, “So, where did you get that mirror?” “I got it from my dad.” She replies, still staring at herself in awe.

“And what does it feel like to look at yourself for the first time?” She asks while trying not to catch herself a glimpse in the mirror so that she doesn’t get in trouble by the government.

The young girl replies, saying “I don’t know. It’s really cool and mesmerizing. And I cannot believe that I am so pretty like look at those eyes! Right, don’t you agree?”

“Ah, okay, yes I do.” And the reporter turns back to us leaving the young girl walking away while still looking down at her reflection.

“As you can see, there seems to be a spread of mirror disease or some sort. So many people are addicted to themselves and it’s almost been 2 full days and all they do is look at themselves but I guess it makes sense if you haven’t seen yourself in years and-.” The TV screen goes black.

“What happened?” I ask grand, surprised.

He replies saying, “The government probably turned all the news connections off so that people don’t hear about how they can see themselves anymore.” Then getting off the couch, he looks at a nearby antique clock and exclaims,

“Lorenza, you’re going to be late for school! Go!”

Omgg. I forgot. I rush up the stairs and yell back, “Thanks, grand.”



The second I get to school everyone is swarmed around each other. K comes to me skipping, waving a mirror in her hand.

“Heyy, Enz, did you see this mirror thing yet?!”

Today her hair was green, it made her green eyes pop out a lot. Like a lot. It-

“Do you want to see yourself?” she asks, interrupting my thoughts.

“Uh...no, I’m fine,” I reply. I didn’t want to see myself yet because I could get into trouble with the government, especially since my mom was part of that. If they find out that I had a mirror and saw myself I would get arrested. Also, I was kind of scared to see myself. I don’t know how everyone had the courage to look at themself and how they were not even arrested by now.

“Are you sure, Enza? Cause it’s okay. You won’t get into trouble plus you have such beautiful-”. She tries again, “You have such beautiful-”. “Ughh, I hate how it doesn’t let me tell your eye color like we already know what we look like. I don’t get this. Can I please show you?” K insists.

“K, I know but I still don't want to get in trouble so just in case, I won't,” I reply.

“Oh, okay.” She says shrugging, and goes to join a group of girls giggling at their reflection in the corner of the room.



When I get home, I find my mom in the living room. Her eyes closed and her fingers folded together on the wooden table. She opens her eyes, sensing that I was standing in front of her, confused at what she

was doing. Usually, I would find her in her office room, the door closed with the sign of Do Not Enter hung up.

“Hey, Lorenza, how was school?”

“Good”. I reply. I always gave a one-word answer because my mom didn’t have time for a detailed answer.

“Lorenza, have you seen the mirror yet?”

“No”. I replied, wondering where this was going.

“Would you like to see it?” She asks, her hand going inside the purse that she had on the wooden seat next to her.

Breaking my one answer rule, I exclaim, “But you’re in the government! Aren’t you against looking at yourself?!”

“Yes..., I was. Until we got this in our hands from America who got it from Germany and I decided to try it out. To see what we were against...and then I saw this and I fell in love with it. So, do you want to try it out?”

“I’m not sure,” I reply nervously. I didn’t know what I would look like. Yes, in some parts, I wanted to know what I looked like but I didn’t want to be addicted to the mirror or be disappointed by it.

Thinking that I was nervous because she thought I would get arrested, she assures me saying, “It’s okay. You won’t get in trouble or anything because even everyone in the government has this. If anything, we would be getting in trouble because these mirrors got out of our control and now everyone has them-it was supposed to be a secret, just for us to see so, it's okay.”

I still didn’t know what I should do but I wouldn’t know what I looked like until I actually saw myself and if I wasn’t going to get arrested...then I decided I would take the chance to just try it.

“Okay, I will try it,” I say and mom hands me a silver lined, rectangle-shaped mirror. She watches me as I turn the mirror around so that the metallic silver/glass part was facing in my direction. I still haven’t looked at the mirror directly. I was kinda scared, to be honest, but excited.

“Okay, here goes,” I say and I look down at my reflection. I gasped. I had straight dark brown hair, peach skin with freckles running across my nose. I had green eyes and pink full lips. An image clicks in me.

O-My-God.

☆☆☆☆☆

Nobody told her that she was famous. Nobody told her that she was the reporter that she always saw on the Daily Morning News because it was a dream inside a dream. Nobody told her that she looked at

herself every day. Nobody told her that her voice sounded like that. And even she didn't know that that was her.



Twix

By: **Marcia Ortega Sara**

Happy Place

By: **Jesse Koblin**

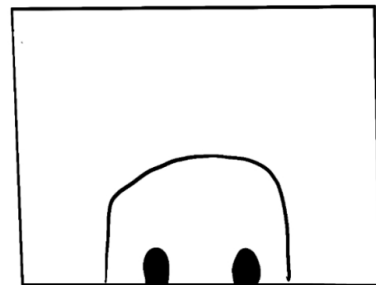
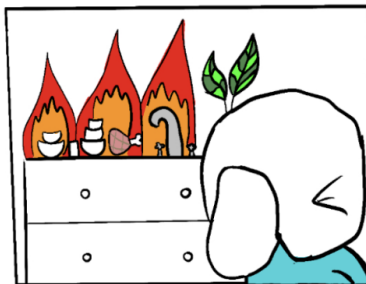
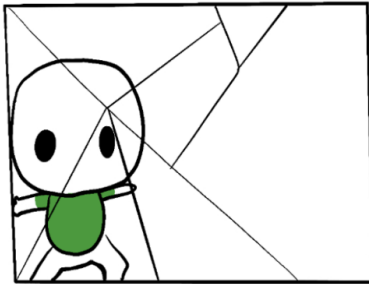
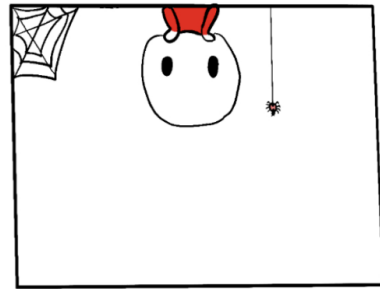
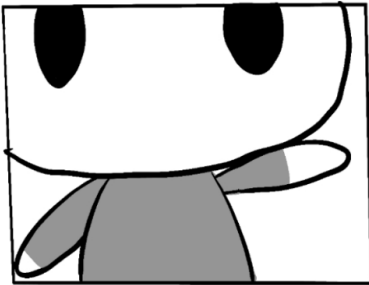
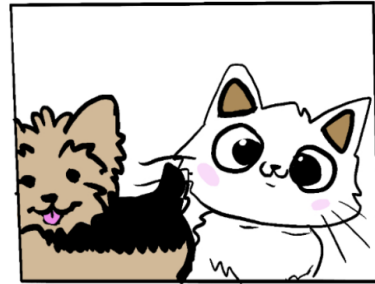
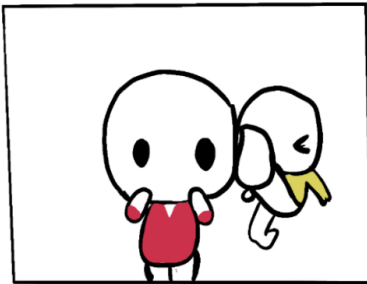
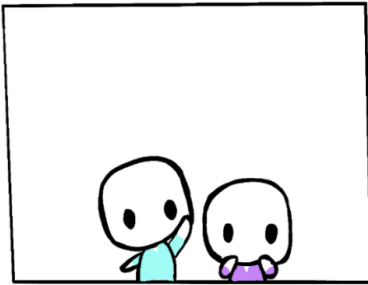
In vogue,
Legislature, drive by, advertise,
Destroy, rebuild, Socrates, gemstones,
Disparate, France, peace, appetitive,
Meaningless, emissions, barbarism,
God, Senate, Big Pharma

STOP.

The world evaporates with one click.
Cicadas are castanets in July air
And I am feline, sprawled across the sofa,
In waning thought ringing Voltaire:
“Illusion is the first of all pleasures.”
This illusory night holds close all its treasures;
The staccato beat of TV static
Life in explosions of monochrome pixel,
And warm winds through wisteria thistle,
Blowing over me, midsummer gusts
aromatic
Heavy with musk of sweat and love.
My eyes grow heavy, and
The walls, written in metaphysical weave,
Cease to exist as I cease to perceive
Sleep takes hold in night’s perfect stillness
in dreams, only governing is
Blissful ignorance, amidst illness

Zoom Calls

By: **Sienna Rodriguez**



WHEN A MAGIC MAN WISHES

By: **Ethan Kaufman**

PART ONE: WHEN YOU WISH UPON A STAR

They said I was strange, and they weren't wrong. They kept saying "there goes little Mr. Pete Peter Peterson, such a strange little enigma." Since I'm only 7, I don't know what enigma means, but I don't think it means something very nice. It's also not very nice that they say "Mr. Pete Peter Peterson" when I'm a girl; named Petunia Peter Peterson. Pete for short. They may also think I'm a boy because I wear old hand me downs from my older brother. Maybe they think I'm a boy with long hair. Oh yeah, I also have a beard!!

Last month I overheard my brother wishing on a falling star. I heard him wish I had a beard forever, then he produced a little chuckle. I quietly re-said what he had said to myself and I said "that can never happen." Then I went to bed. The next morning I woke up with a great big full grown beard. I tried to shave

it off but then, just as I was about to shave it off, the razor broke. I then got a pair of scissors but they weren't strong enough. I then got out a knife, put my beard on the cutting board, and went to chop my beard off. And, don't be worried, my beard was so long I wouldn't be able to cut my chin off. Just as I was about to cut it off, my Mom came in and said, "Petunia Peterson, what are you doing!" Now, my back was turned to her, so she could only see the back of my head and the knife. She then grabbed the knife out of my hand-then she saw it. She let out a great big scream.

"AAA AAA!!!" It was so loud my beard almost fell off. Of course, my Dad and Brother came into the room. My brother let out a grin of shock, confusion, and excitement as he realized he had made me grow the hairs on my chinny chin chin. I had told my parents that my brother was responsible for this and I had told them everything that had happened up to that point, but they didn't believe me. My Dad then said, "Well, for now I'm going to take you to my barber. He can cut anything."

So, we went to the barber shop. When we got in, all of the barbers were so frightened they wouldn't do it. When we got out, my Mom said "okay, all throughout the week there will be shooting stars. Tonight Paul will wish on a falling star. We will all have to hear him saying it-that way we can see if his wishes are true." By the way, Paul is my brother.

That night Paul wished my fingers would turn black and white- just like a zebra. My parents said, "That can never happen!" Sure enough, the next morning my fingers were zebra-designed. My parents were at a loss of words, they believed us. I was not mad at my brother, in fact that day was one of the best days of my life. And let me tell you why.

PART TWO: THE CIRCUS IS COMING TO TOWN

My Dad's job was that he was a party planner. This time he was planning when the circus was coming to town. The best part about his job was that we would always get to go to the events for free. This time I was kinda scared because of my beard, and my zebra fingers. My Dad had to go, so I decided to put a bandana over my face-just like a bandit. Half way through the show there was a big breeze, because the circus was outside. Then my bandana flew off! I was so embarrassed. Just then the ringmaster caught a glimpse of me and, after the show, went up to greet me. He wanted me to join the circus! Of course, I knew I would be traveling away from my parents, but this was a new opportunity for me, I could be accepted again. While I know only what I think of myself matters, I still really wanted to go. The ringmaster asked my parents if I could travel with the circus. They said yes. He then took us backstage and had my parents sign the papers saying I could go. The papers also said that if I got hurt, they could not sue the circus. I then started to recognize the ringmaster from somewhere- but then it hit me, he was one of them. No, he was one of THEM! One of the people that called me a strange boy. I asked him how he didn't remember such a diverse child as me. Then he said "Oh. So you're that bearded kid my twin brother saw." "Twin brother," I said. He said "Yes, my brother Joe, he's the manager of the supermarket. Me Shmo, runs the circus." And finally, my Dad put pen to paper.

PART THREE: PSYCHICS AND PSYCHOS

Now hey, I didn't know my wishes would come true. I just saw some shooting stars in the sky and, since I had never done it before, I made a wish. I just thought of the dumbest I could think of as my wish. I know It's not normal for wishes like that to come true, and I also know It's not normal for a 7-year-old girl to get a full beard overnight. So, what else could it have been. And no other person could get zebra fingers. But, but, but, but, but, but, but, but, on that night, the night my sister was asked to go join the circus, I asked if I could join too. The ringmaster asked what qualifications I had to join the circus. My sister tried to say, but I cut her off saying "my talents work overnight. Come stay at my family's place and I can show you."

That night there were more shooting stars, and I wished that the ringmaster's arms and legs would turn into jelly for a half an hour starting at 11:00 AM. The ringmaster was in the room when I was saying it and he said, "That can never happen." The next morning the ringmaster wanted us to come to the show with him.

At the start of the show, the ringmaster was showing off magic tricks to the crowd; when he was about to do a trick with a glass of water, the water just fell on the floor. He then dropped to the floor and started screaming things like, "What is going on!!!"

"Get some help!!" and "This is NOT part of the show!!!" I looked up at the clock, and it read 11:00 AM. The ringmaster was taken backstage by some clowns. They took him over to me and my sister and he said, "Your wish came true, it came true! Well kid, welcome to the circus. You will be the psychic."

PART FOUR: ON THE ROAD AGAIN

“We will leave in exactly one month” the ringmaster recited.

I thought it would be so cool going with the circus.

I would get to sleep with the lions and dance with the bears! But in reality, me and Petunia were in a closet-sized train car, smelling like animal poop, and getting car sick all the time. I've been on long road trips before, but this was a whole other level.

Sometimes the ringmaster would come to check on us and the clowns would bring cards and some of the baby animals for us to play with. And sometimes, Mom and Dad would surprise us in the audience and would even sometimes come on the road with us. Usually they would just video chat with us. When we arrived at our destination, it was just meant to be.

The lights shining down on me, it just felt right. The ringmaster would pick a member of the audience, and I would predict their future. Sometimes I would say something so silly and stupid, the audience just laughed and laughed and laughed on. They just ate it all up. There were also special effects to make the top of the tent look like there were shooting stars in the sky. My sister was pretty great too. She learned how to juggle and ride a pogo stick. We were on the road for a little over a year; it was so exciting, and so much fun- until the incident.

PART FIVE: NO

“NNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!”

PART SIX: FINALLY, DANCE WITH THE BEAR / THE INCIDENT

“I wish me and Petunia could wrestle a bear.” That's what I said to myself on August 15, 2020. Petunia was not in the room to tell me that was crazy then. When she came in, I decided not to tell her. The next morning, ringmaster Shmo called a team meeting to order. He said “Everyone, our strongman has gotten sick today and now there is nobody to wrestle the bear. I would not expect any of you to d--” “I'll do it,” said Petunia, and everybody gasped. Then I said “If Petunia is doing it, then I am, too.” More gasps. Shmo then said, “Alright, then. You two will wrestle the bear.”

So there we both were, inside of the cage, they were about to let the bear out, and I was starting to have second thoughts. They let the bear out; I then climbed up the fence to safety. I said, “Come on, Petunia!” But she was paralyzed with fear. Now, this bear was not really trained, so it ate Petunia. Her last word was “NNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!”

Everyone was balling, crying at what they had just witnessed. It was all my fault.

I never did tell anyone about how “the incident” was all my fault. And as the contract stated, my parents could not sue the circus. Shmo was terribly sorry and even closed down his circus.

PART SEVEN: ONE LAST WISH

30 years after the incident. I was now 41 and retired from running my very own non-animal circus. I was now married and had recently just been crowned a father. I didn't feel like a good father, because of all

of the events you just read about. Everyday I would wish and wish that my sister would come back- even when there were no shooting stars in the sky. One night there was a shooting star, and I, of course, wished my sister would come back. But she didn't come back the very next day. My powers had worn off. My wife, who knew about my gift, said, "It's okay," and "It was not your fault." I would always reply with, "But it was my fault."

A few nights later there were more shooting stars in the sky and I knew nothing would happen, but I wished. And, I invited my wife to wish with me. And I could not believe that she wished my sister would come back.

The next day there was a knock on the door. I answered the door and there was this lady I had never seen before, and I didn't know what she was doing here or why she was here. I said, "Who are you?" and she replied, "I'm your new neighbor, Ms. Petunia Peter Peterson."

PART 8: EPILOGUE

Paul did most of the talking, as he had more to say. But he asked me "how?"

I said, "The last thing I remember is being right with the bear, and kid me was lying on the floor, dead. Nobody except the bear saw an adult me, or me without the beard and zebra fingers. He went to attack me, but just in the nick of time I just floated away. I ended up here. The house next door said Petunia Peterson's residence. This house said Paul Peterson, so I knocked on the door. I also have no clue what happened to my fingers and beard, but what I do know is that when a magic man wishes, It's always alright in the end."

We Both Don't Care

By: **Malcolm Shealy**

Even if you swear
You dare
To never cover your face
Not anywhere, not anyplace
People recommend it hear and there,
But you don't care
But look at that guy on the news, he hates wearing it!
"Me too, I don't like it a bit!"
Just beware...
COVID doesn't care.

Untitled

By: **Anna Muravyeva**



I Am From

By: **Anastasia Malakhova**

I am from coffee machines
from waffles and milk
I am from the 3 bedroom apartment on the fifth floor

That smells of Russian salad
I am from the pathos
The cherry blossom
whose long gone limbs I remember
as if they were my own.

I'm from apples with honey and togetherness
from my mom and grandma
I'm from online shopping and leaving the lights on
and from picking up new hobbies.

I'm from the best thing to happen and intelligent
and you get what you get and you don't get upset
I'm from spending New Years together in my living room
I'm from New York and Russia
Borscht and pelmeni
From my parents moving to America
Packing everything important to them in a few bags
Black and white photos of my family
Under my bed

With rips and rough edges making it all the more valuable

The Afterglow

By: Megumi Jindo

“Don’t go.” I told the light.

This was my 5th time I said that and the light was my friend, and she had to go because she was sick.

Why did she have to go? She could not leave me alone, by myself.

“Let go,” She said.

“No.”

No, I did not want to let go. I did not want to be all by myself, in this dark, haunted life. And she was the only thing that was always there for me, always brightened up a day, a night.

“Please don’t go,” I said again.

I gripped on the bottom of her navy shirt. She turned around, looking at me, face pale, lips chapped, eyes hollow and dark circles under her eyes, like she hadn’t slept for weeks. Her dark- straight hair rustled as the wind blew forward, to where we were standing, on my doorstep at night. Her mouth turned into a grim line as she said,

“Bryce, let go.”

“No.”

So she yanked out of my grip, turned around, and said,

“I need to go to get better and I told you that a number of times. The rehabilitation center will help, okay? Don’t worry, I’ll be back and then we’ll be able to have another day in the sun, looking at the sunset on the mountains and we’ll actually be able to talk.”

I started to open my mouth but she cut me off.

“Actually, *talk*. Instead of me, wincing in pain every few minutes.”

Noticing the look on my face, she said, “And, you might be fine with me being how I am now but I’m not and I can see that you don’t like the condition that I am now either.”

I shook my head and started to open my mouth again to speak but she just gave me the look and continued,

“I *know*. I know that outside you might be happy being with me but I know that inside, you want me to get better, - go to rehab so that I can actually talk, play, have fun with you again. So, I’ll go. I’ll go to get better for you and for me, okay?”

I bit my lip, trying not to spill any tears that were bubbling, and nodded. I feared that speaking would break the tears and let them spill.

She looked at my eyes and sighed.

“I won’t die or anything. It’s only for 3 months.” *For now*, was the unspoken word. And we both knew how dire her condition was, - that not dying seemed like a 1 percent chance of not happening. She had to go to therapy for her legs to move properly and she had to go to the doctor every few days to check on her lungs because she had been coughing every few days and still was. Terrible coughs but not enough to be tuberculosis. So every time we got together, - which was like every day - she would always be in some kind of pain and I ached for my friend who was in pain but I also missed how things were before this disease dawned on her.

So, I would let her go for my friend. For me, her future, and for her family. And I did not stop her as she walked forward into the dark road, until she was a tiny piece of fairy dust.



As my mom drove in her grayish silver car, the sun reflected myself on the car window. Forests and seas passed by me. The seas sparkling, the birds flying in the air, screeching. The car ride was quiet, the peaceful kind with “Afterglow” by Leroy Sanchez on the speakers, repeat. I looked at myself in the window, brown hair, light brown eyes, pink-full lips, long sleeve turtleneck-brown colored shirt, and black jeans. I looked sad, worried-for Leah, my friend,-but at peace. Was she okay? Way better? Healthy now? No pain? And those thoughts lingered with me as the sun followed me all the way to the rehab center.



I walked into the rehab center, asked the nurse there to tell me where my friend was and she led me to her room, her clogs squeaking as she went and the smell of Clorox wafted through the air. She stopped in front of room #31 on the first floor and she walked away, telling me to call her if anything happened. I walked in and pushed the green, purple, blue curtain aside and saw her, laying in bed, sleeping. Her face was paler than before but peaceful. I sat down on the blue cushioned chair next to her. I didn’t know if I should wake her up or not. So, I let her sleep and instead held her hand. As soon as I grabbed her hand, her eyes fluttered open and she jolted, wincing, holding her side. She looked around and then saw me, on the left, smiling, and she smiled too, but it didn’t quite reach her eyes.

“Bryce, you came.” Her voice was sad but happy.

I saw her face, a little mad and I immediately regretted my decision of coming.

“I wanted to surprise you,” I said, looking at her face. It didn’t soften.

“What for?” She said tersely.

“So that I could see you, talk to you.” She said nothing.

“I missed you,” I said. It had been 2 weeks since I finally got to come, begging my mom to drive me. She blinked and then softened but then hardened again. At least she understood.

“I told you that I don’t want you to visit me until I am fully better. So that I could surprise you, and actually be active.”

I looked at her face, unyielding and I stood up, deciding to leave. I grabbed my purse and she yanked on my hand,

“No, don’t leave, it’s fine,” She said. I looked at her and then I sat down after a minute.

“So, what have you been doing?” I asked, tucking a strand of hair behind my slightly pointed ear.

“Just sleeping, taking my medications, doing stretches and practices so that I can fully get my legs to work.”

“And your lungs?”

“It’s good, I’ve been drinking water - trying to soothe it and the doctor’s been giving me pills to help with the coughing.”

“So, everything’s been getting much better,” I said, happily. I could not wait until we could sit in the grass, sun shining through the meadows, laughing, talking.

“Basically,” Leah replied. She looked up, seeing the look on my face, she smiled knowingly. And we kept on talking, till there was barely light in the streets.

I suddenly got up, seeing Leah’s face filled with exhaustion and I became ashamed for only thinking of me and not seeing how tired she was. I waved and closed the door after me, not knowing that I wouldn’t be able to see her until 4 weeks had passed.



That 5th week, on a Saturday, I was sitting on the couch, watching TV. I was seeing but not seeing. I was having a bad day starting with me, tripping on my dog, standing in front of the door and a few minutes later, I cracked my eggs on the floor though I had aimed for the bowl. I slipped on the eggs, as I was cleaning and now my back hurts. I looked outside, at the sun, and thought that at least the sun was shining and nature was happy. I suddenly turned around as my mom ran down from upstairs, eyes alarmed. She said one word and I followed suit, quickly, into the car. We drove to the rehab center.



I walked into her room, pushing away the curtains. There she was, in a white gown, coughing terribly, doctors around her and even her family were there. What was this? Her last moment or something? Leah suddenly saw me, eyes widened and she tried to sit up, but the doctor on her right, pushed her down, keeping the breathing pump on her. I rushed over and I sat on the chair as I saw Leah’s mom motion everyone to get out, to give her space. And so, we were left with a few doctors and nurses.

“What happened?” I asked, gripping her hand as if she would disappear right now, my knuckles white.

“I was trying to get something from the shelf.” I looked where she pointed. She pointed at a white canvas, looked to be in the middle of some scene with two girls. Not caring about what it was, I spoke,

“Are you kidding me?! Leah, you could have died, you know you’re not allowed to get up. You-”

Leah cut me off,

“I know, okay. I just wanted to do something for you.” She looked at me, eyes watering, “And the doctor said that I could paint instead of moping around, so I decided to do that.”

“Leah-,” I started.

“But, I won’t do it anymore, okay? So, don’t worry about me.” I looked at her, eyes narrowing. I did not believe her because she always loved to be in action. But for the sake of her, I nodded. And so, we spent another few minutes until it was time to go and I left.



The next day, things came crashing down. I quickly got into the car again, mom driving me to Leah and I swear, every time it was sunny, something bad happened.



Leah's mom told me that Leah had been painting this time, and actually retrieved the canvas successfully but then had collapsed with the effort. She had painted after her few hours of recovery but then her lungs caught up, and she had the doctors surrounding, again. But this time, I was told to wait outside, and the doctor came out again, with her glasses on the tip of her nose, sweating and she shook her head. She spoke to Leah's mom. After a long moment, her mom looked at me and my mom rubbed my back, telling me that she was here. Leah's mom spoke. And all I heard was the last part, reverberating in my head again and again. *Leah had pushed the limit, her lungs were broken. The doctors could not fix her again. She will live but for only a few minutes more.* And that was all I needed to hear, before I barged into the room, one look at my face, and everyone was out.



I gripped her hand, tears overflowing but not spilling. Leah's eyes were the same as mine. My only friend was about to die and I could not stop it. So I just held her hand, her family surrounding us, tears in their eyes as well. Her little brother held her other hand, and nothing was said as she took one last breath and slipped into the void that had been waiting for her. Sun streamed through the window, the lights were off, and she was illuminated with the rays of the sun, glowing.



Holding the painted canvas of us, on the mountains, looking at the sun rising, I cried. I cried on the way home, the sun following again. I cried about all the things we could not, we *would* not do anymore. We would not talk anymore. We would not laugh together, on the grass, laying down, looking at the clouds. We would not march angrily to the teacher, when we got a bad grade on the test, demanding to know why we failed. We would not have the moments where we free-drove in the sun, the top of her white car window down, and music streaming aloud. And I had known it would end like this. All the signs pointed to it. All the books of friendships signaled it. I had known but I had hoped. As these thoughts flew through my head, I hugged the canvas tighter, as if it was my lifeline, tears spilling. I watched the world go by and I held on. I held on to those memories, as I closed my eyes, felt the sun on my skin. Exhaustion caught up and I fell asleep.

Untitled

By: **Anna Muravyeva**



What It Means to Me

By: **Emelia Messinger**

Fun

When

you took me to my house after school, you said we should stop at the park, and we did. I used to be scared of this place, since it was filled with unknown people, and unknown dangers, but when you were there, it was fun. You made it fun. You gave it fun.

You were fun.

Hate

When

I was full of hate, at my brother for being mean, you came in through the door. I took out all my hate on you, and yet you didn't leave. You stayed and then you helped me. You let me into your world even though I shut you out of mine. You never hated. You never had hate.

Love

When

you asked me to go to a dance with you, my heart flew. I was told to keep this to myself. My friends said that you were too cool. But I still went with you, and I had the time of my life. That was love. Why my heart flew for you, I don't know. But it did, and that is love. I feel love. Love for you.

Dry

On

our field trip, we were told to bring water. I forgot. When we got lost, when we strayed from our class and were stuck alone, it rained. You kept me dry. You gave me water to keep my throat from getting dry. You got wet. Your throat got dry. Yet you stayed protecting me from and with the dry.

Draw

I

learned to draw from you. I hated to do it. I yearned to leave. Yet you made it fun for me. You started with a cat, then a dog, then a tree. Soon I never wanted to go. Then I had to leave, and I missed the lessons. They never happened again, so I never drew again. Until we met again.

Pet

You

were my dog. My parents couldn't get a pet, so you were my dog. I fed you and walked with you and told you everything. You listened and then helped me. You were my dog.

Elephant

An

elephant was chasing me down the street. But you jumped in front of it, and it stopped. You weren't scared, you weren't mean, you were brave. You were kind. You saved me from the elephant.

Ground

Wherever

I was bullied in school, they pushed me down. When I was crying on the ground, you helped me up. You stood up for me, you defended me. You were the ground that helped stand me up.

Flower

You

always called me your flower. You grew me, you watered me, you gave me sun, you gave me care. If I drooped or was bitten, you came right away, and brought me back to glory. You never gave up on me, you stayed and supported me. I was your flower, and I am your flower.

Door

You

opened every door when I was locked out. You never shut your door, I was always welcome. You let me leave, you let me stay. You were kind and didn't yell, nor did you slam the door. It was always open to me forevermore. But then one day you closed it, only for a second, but that second was so long that it made it more a minute. Then it stretched longer, to an hour, day and year, and when it opened up again, there was no one there.

Traffic

When

I learned to drive, you showed me that red was stop, yellow was slow down, and green was go. But I never got it right. Yet you stayed with me everytime I did it wrong, and got me through the traffic (that I happened to cause).

Sky

You

showed me the pictures in the sky. The pictures of the stars, the pictures of the clouds, the pictures of the colors, and the pictures of the sun and moon. You let me try to imagine what they were, and never disagreed, even when I said a cloud train was a bird. You taught me not to look then judge, but to really know the thing I see for what it really was.

Tree

You

showed me a tree that was big and green. It was a maple tree. We sat in the shade in the summer, and counted the leaves in the fall. It was our tree, our maple tree, that only we could see.

Book

For

my tenth birthday, you gave me a book. Its pages were blank, and I filled them with my heart and soul. I wrote down all of you for you were what I thought about. You never left my mind, especially after the closing of the door. But this book is my memory of the time before.

Box

This

box is the one in my attic. It has everything you. When you shut the door, and I couldn't get in, I made my own place to go. It was just like you, except empty. It has your name, all your information, and anything I found of yours. But the one thing it is missing is all that you have done, but that is all lost to who knows what.

IDK

By: Megumi Jindo

Under the translucent
world at night, thoughts whirl through my
mind. About regrets, dreams, wishes;

even my mind looks at
translucent shapes in the dark
which I hate so much.

If we could turn back
time, no one would learn anything.

No experiences nor

life lessons to be learned.
But we could also fix things for
good. Still, maybe there is

a reason why it didn't
turn out right, the way we wanted
to. That's fate, life, you.

The Sparkles of Summer

By: Megumi Jindo



Crystal Clear

By: **Emelia Messinger**

If I told you that I was born in the beginning of time, you wouldn't believe me. If I told you my mother was yours too, you wouldn't believe me. But you should still know the truth, whether you believe it or not.

☆☆☆

When you told me that I would live as long as the Earth, I thought you were kidding.

"Mom! Jack bit me again!" I yelled as I ran across the plains of the Earth. It was a newly born planet, and my brother, mother, and I were its only inhabitants. I thought that when we had lived long we would leave the Earth, but apparently we were to live forever. I was told this at age eight, three weeks after my birthday.

"Nyla! Come here, sweetie!" my mom called one day.

"What is it, momma?" I asked. She had said she was giving me a late present. Maybe this was it!

"I have to make something clear to you. You are the child of the Earth, along with your brother. You are the symbols of male and female, and you, not your brother, will stay that way forever, you will walk this earth forever, alone, with no one who sees you. This is what the Star has chosen for you, so you must respect the decision. Is that clear!?!"

"Yes mother, crystal clear." I said, holding back my tears. *Why me!* I thought. *Why do I have to live alone forever, with no friends or family?!?* I guess the answer was simple. The Star said so.

☆☆☆

When you said my brother wouldn't, I thought you meant later, not now.

The next day I ran to wake Jack, and found a knife through his heart. I ran to my mother, but she was smiling with joy, for she had killed him.

"Why momma? He was your only family and my brother and the only one in this family who loves me! And then you take that away!" I screamed at her. And all she did was smile, and then she was gone.

☆☆☆

When you said forever, I thought I would eventually leave.

So I am still here today, waiting for my end. I want to join my brother, and leave my mother behind in all her misery. I want to leave, mother, mother earth. You are not who or what I want or need. You are just an evil spirit, full of anger and hate. No love or kindness at all. I hope the Star chose your destiny, for you deserve yours. I do not, the Star did not. That is clear. Crystal clear.

And she never left the earth.

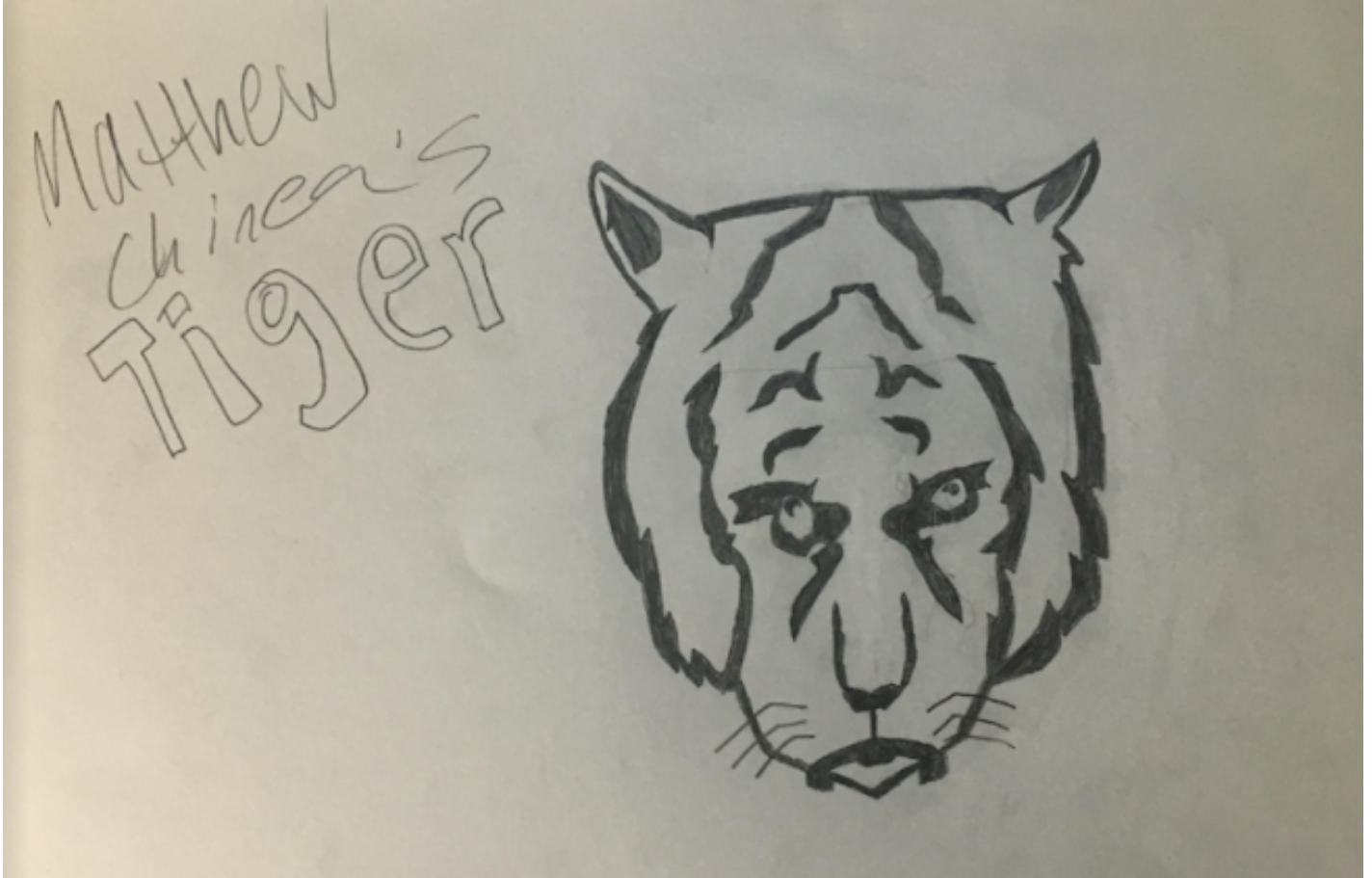
Untitled

By: Anna Muravyeva



Tiger

By: Matthew China



Thanks for reading!

Hope you enjoyed it!