

An impressionistic painting of a path lined with trees in autumn colors. The path is dark and leads into the distance, flanked by trees with vibrant red, orange, and yellow foliage. The background is a mix of blue and purple tones, suggesting a misty or overcast sky. The overall style is soft and painterly, with visible brushstrokes.

February 2016

Away

Manhattan High School for Girls

A literary & Art Anthology exploring the wandering and wondering of human beings

The Harry and Rose Kaplan Scholarship Writing Award

Manhattan High School for Girls would like to express its sincere gratitude to the Tuckel family for their contribution to our commitment to excellence. The Harry and Rose Kaplan Scholarship Award, created in memory of Dr. Tuckel's beloved parents, inspired the literary journal competition by raising the standard for written and artistic expression.

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Away

An Anthology of Literature and Art

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*“The world is full of magic things,
patiently waiting for our senses to grow sharper.”*

- W. B. Yeats

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Foreword

I often wonder what my students will look like in fifty years from now.

Will they still be fun and spirited, singing freely in the halls of their homes as they did in our hallways? How will they dress and what will they value? Will they be enrolled in continuing education classes, or in Grandma's Crocheting Mittens Club? Will they be sought after mentors, appreciated for their intuition and integrity? Our girls, will they be leading advocacy groups on behalf of community affairs?

In fifty years from now, what will our community crises look like — surely smartphones and social media will have long been buried with the bygone horse and buggy, so what monsters will the world have given birth to instead, and how will our grown women fight those battles? What will be with our beloved Israel? Where will we be as a Nation?

As all wonderers and wanderers, I am getting ahead of myself now, aimlessly ricocheting through thoughts both rational and irrational, wrestling with questions answerable and unanswerable, but is that not the power of thought? And is that not the power of the pen as it manifests the musings of our minds?

"Well, in my days, back in the days," they reminisce with sagacity, and oh, oh, oh. I wonder what they will share about us — us daunting adults in their delicate lives. Will they even remember us, their teachers at MHS, and if they do, will their memories be true to the way we wish to be remembered. And if their memories will be wrong, will they ever allow us to explain to them how different their memories are from what we had intended. But maybe they won't get stuck on the details. Maybe they'll just smile warmly with nostalgia and remember how much we cared and tried and believed in them. I wonder.

Though our realities are governed by time and space, our imaginations are not. The results are illustrated in this exceptional literary and art journal, *Away*, which inspired all of us to capture our wonderings and wanderings in artistic and written expressions. Many heartfelt thanks to Ms. Larissa Dzegar for leading this literacy enrichment project, to Miss Chani Schwartz for all the graphic layout and to Miss Magder for all of her editorial and organizational support. To our most masterful teachers, Professor Sartain, Mrs. Weiss, Miss Magder, Dr. Trapedo and Ms. Dzegar, thank you for encouraging us to wonder and wander and wonder and wander away.

Kafka reminds us that "Youth is happy because it has the capacity to see beauty," and that "anyone who keeps the ability to see beauty never grows old." So while I wonder what my students will look like in fifty years from now, I can see their smiles and hear their voices still full of song. And that makes me smile.



On Wandering and Wondering

By Ms. Dzegar, Literary Advisor

We all have a favorite piece of literature: rhymes that persist in our memory, characters that remind us of our better selves, and worlds so vivid they compete with our definition of reality. Memorable writing awakens; it seems to know us; it talks to parts of ourselves long forgotten; it heals. The work of a writer is to leave the reader changed.

My father recited Blake, Poe, and Byron to me as we walked to the bus stop every morning of my childhood, imprinting in me an ability to make emotional sense of my experiences. That lens, as sensitive and intuitive as my father, informs and guides me still. I would in turn tell him about the books I was reading (and re-reading; without fail, I would always return to Burnett's *A Little Princess*), and we would exchange worlds. I was a shy child, and my father respected my timid nature; these conversations deepened our knowledge of each other. Such is the preciousness of literature: it can explain who we are in a new way even to those who know us best.

What remains most vivid from those early morning walks is how I learned to see beauty in everything. Inspiration may never be within our control, but how we take in the world is up to us. An eye for the wondering and wandering of human beings demands an openness to being somewhere other than in our own minds. We must relinquish control and listen; our surroundings are always speaking to us. Stories wait for writers.

I urged students to find the stories they are meant to tell. I asked them, "How do you take in the world?"

Their answers are on these pages. May you be as changed by them as I was.

ONE

Through the Challenges

“There is no easy walk to freedom anywhere, and many of us will have to pass through the valley of the shadow of death again and again before we reach the mountaintop of our desires.”

– Nelson Mandela

Through the Challenges

By Estee Gerber, Editor

Every person, in different stages of life, faces internal or external struggles that either change who they are as a person, or help build their confidence in themselves. However, in order to triumph over the challenge we must have the perseverance to continue doing what we feel is true and just. Like Nelson Mandela once famously said, “There is no easy walk to freedom anywhere, and many of us will have to pass through the valley of the shadow of death again and again before we reach the mountaintop of our desires.” Mr. Mandela, who dedicated his life to combatting corruption and inequality, is reinforcing the ideal that although the passage to our goals and freedoms may be daunting, by keeping our faith and hope, we can reach our “mountaintop of desires.”

“The First Dance,” by Shalva Gozland, epitomizes the strong resolution of Boston Marathon victim, Adrienne, to live past her amputated leg, and others’ doubts, to work to do what she loves most again, dance.

Draisy Friedman takes a more mystical approach in her story of the struggle of the fallen moon, in her piece, “Silver.” “Silver” follows the story of the moon pushed from her home, the sky, and the discovery and responsibility of a long forgotten child. The moon pushes past her wonderment and call from home to search for a loving caretaker of the child, which she finds in a city guard.

Similarly, Nev Sivan Yakubov’s piece, “The Graveyard Girl,” is filled with other worldly gothic imagery and an outsider’s confusion on life. The narrator, Jane Parker, rises above the expected existence of her life to do what she finds peace in, being in the graveyard among the forgotten ghosts.

Shoshana Schwalb writes about an aryan boy who worries for the fate of his Jewish friend in “My Friend With the Yellow Star.” The story shows the uncertain future of both boys while reminiscing the past and shows the way the young German overcomes his questions on the future to wish his friend a happy, full life.

Likewise, in Shoshana Farber’s piece, “Is Anything Up There?” the narrator has to overcome his hesitations and fear of the monster in his attic in order to confront it and neutralize it. After the young child successfully scares off the “monster,” he is able to free himself from his fear of the creature and succumb to his exhaustion.

Dina Rochel Blumenthal’s painting creates a visual stimulus of influential places, ideas and inventions that are only available today because of people braver than us who fought for them and worked tirelessly to create them.

All these incredible and extraordinary works of writing are able to blur the

lines between reader and character. Reading these works is like trading places with the narrators. You're able to feel the accomplishment of fighting off the big bad monster. You're able to feel the pride of regaining what you and others thought you had lost. And you're able to truly feel along with the characters, as they hope for the future.

Silver

By Draisy Friedman

It was a cold night when the moon first fell from the sky.

Exactly who pushed her differs depending on who tells the story. The moon would place the blame on the sun, the sun would blame the stars, and the stars would insist that the moon left of her own free will, in a fit of misplaced rebellion. Yet no matter whose account you choose to believe, the result is the same. On a cold December night many, many years ago, the moon found herself no longer just a moon. Where before there had only been dirt and stone, there was now skin and bones, alive with something warmer than even the heat of the sun.

Equal parts mystified and delighted with her newfound form, the moon explored the cold surface of the earth. For more than half a night she wandered, until she could feel the sun threatening to rise behind her, pulling at her like a magnet pulls at a stray bit of metal. It was then that she realized that her time on Earth was limited, that when the sun rose over the horizon, she would find herself back in the sky, back in her home with the sun and the stars.

That was when she found the child.

Although the moon had no way of knowing this then, it has since been discovered that the child was nothing special. In those days, it was not uncommon for unwanted children to be discarded at the side of the road, or in dumpsters, or in the little nooks and crevices of half collapsed buildings. The child the moon stumbled over was just one of hundreds, albeit a particularly lucky one.

The moon picked up the child cautiously, the way one might pick up a carton of eggs. She had never seen a human being before, let alone one so small. Before, the moon's world had consisted only of herself, the sun, and the stars. But as the child let out a petulant wail, the moon felt her world shift, and expand to include the tiny girl crying in her arms.

Exactly how long the moon stood there no one knows. There are some who say that without the threat of the ever-rising sun she might never have moved at all. But the sun continued to rise, and so the moon was spurred into movement, knowing somehow that she must find a place where the child could live on, where the child could grow up protected and warm and loved.

And so she ran. She ran and ran and ran until she came to the gates of the city where an old guard stood. He had had a very long day, this guard, and was very tired and very grumpy and absolutely not in the mood of dealing with strange ladies carrying long forgotten babies.

Fortunately for the child, neither fate nor the moon particularly cared about

the old man's desires.

The moon approached the guard somewhat recklessly, for she had not been on earth long enough to know caution. The guard did what guards tend to do when confronted by strange women in the dead of the night. He drew his sword, angling it directly at her throat.

The moon looked the old man up and down, taking in the sharpness of his blade, the softness hidden in his eyes. She knew little of kindness, but warmth was all she'd experienced her entire life and to her, the guard burned brighter than the sun ever had.

The moon held out the bundle in her arms and for the first time spoke.

"Please."

The guard blinked, perplexed. Hesitantly, he sheathed his sword, taking a closer look at the girl standing in front of him. She stood still, seemingly not feeling the cold despite the fact that she was outfitted only in a simple silk dress. Her hair was bone white, and seemed to glow with something suspiciously like moonlight. It was her eyes, however, that unsettled him the most. He was fairly certain that no human could have eyes that silver. They bored into him, large and pleading and innocent, until he turned to look at the child lying in her arms.

Nobody knows exactly what propelled the man to take the child from the moon's outstretched hands. There are those that say that it was out of instinct, some small spark of human kindness. Others say it was out of fear. The most popular theory, however, is that when the man looked at the small bundle, he saw far more than just a child. He saw a new life, one filled with laughter and tears, a small child's hand clutched in his own, and, occasionally, a glimpse of silver eyes.

The guard looked up. Where the moon had once stood, there was nothing but a few footprints in a small patch of snow, lightly illuminated by the rising sun.

It would be nearly a month before she returned.

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Is Anything Up There?

By Shoshana Farber

Glowing green eyes. Teeth sharp as knives, maybe even sharper. Flaming red fur, smoke leaping from his mane. His breath, the foulest thing you have ever smelled, times ten. Haunting me each night, this was the monster that lurked in my attic.

I can barely count the sleepless nights spent tossing and turning while the creature invaded my dreams; the days I went to school exhausted, having lain awake all night, too scared to close my eyes. During classes I would start drifting off, only to be jerked awake by visions of the terrible monster.

My parents didn't understand. They didn't know what I knew nor hear what I heard; the endless scratching during the day and moans and growls at night, escaping from the hatch that led to the attic.

Some days I was so terrified, I couldn't eat. I got skinnier with each passing day. The kids made fun of me, taunted me.

"There's no such thing as monsters," they said.

What did they know? They had never lain awake, listening to the growls of the creature all night long. They were silly to say there was no such thing. I knew what lurked in the darkness.

I knew what I must do; devise a plan to protect myself and those too ignorant to believe. My parents kept insisting it wasn't real. They urged me to go to sleep. But I couldn't, not when I knew what was out there, up there in the attic.

And so I planned. I concocted strategies, built weapons, all the while pretending to sleep whenever I heard my parents coming to check up on me.

Each morning I went to school like any other kid, having hidden my weapons in the closet so my parents wouldn't discover my secret. At day's end, I quickly returned to my room to continue my work.

I knew what I must do; devise a plan to protect myself and those too ignorant to believe.

Finally, I felt I was ready. The time had come to slay the monster.

But as I approached the trapdoor, I again heard an ominous rustling sound from above. He must know I'm coming! I lost my nerve, deciding better to wait for another day and at least take advantage of the element of surprise.

After yet another week of sleepless nights, I said to myself, "Enough is enough!" I realized that with each passing moment the risk increased. I must do this now!

Staring up at the ceiling trapdoor to the attic, I saw the string handle shaking, as if it too was terrified of the impending showdown.

I steeled my resolve, slowly grabbed hold of the string and pulled.

Nothing happened.

I mustered my strength and pulled harder. Suddenly, the door gave way and a ladder fell in place right at my feet, as if the monster was expecting me, inviting me to my doom.

Peering up into the foreboding blackness, I placed a foot on the first step and sensed those glowing eyes, boring into my soul. Ascending through the narrow entrance I felt a ripping at my arm, those sharp canines, no doubt. Entering into the attic itself, I was accosted by the putrid scent of his smoky breath, while the heat of his flaming fur caused my skin to blister.

I knew I must keep my wits about me just to survive the battle ahead and save my friends and family. All was riding on me. I ventured farther in, the only light provided by moon rays penetrating the roof vents, eerily glowing and casting shadows on whatever contents were stored away in this horrid place.

Suddenly, in that dimness, I made him out. Hideous arms stretched toward me, with wires sticking out at odd angles. I pounced on him and wrestled him to the ground but became entangled in his strangling embrace. I was overcome by the offensive odor of mothballs that permeated his being. I had to keep going and finish off the monster once and for all. We rolled violently across the bare floorboards causing a huge ruckus that must have caught my mother's attention.

I heard her working her way up to the attic and starting to climb the rickety stairs. "No mom," I screamed at the top of my lungs, "You are in great danger."

Thankfully, that panicked shout must have scared away the monster. I felt him lose his grip and suddenly, with the flick of a light switch, my mother illuminated the attic. I found myself atop a mound of overcoats and hangers, scratched, winded but very much intact. And, there was no sign of the monster anywhere. I had succeeded in my mission.

That night and every night thereafter, I slept like a baby.

My Friend with the Yellow Star

By Shoshana Schwalb

I wonder what the boy down the street thinks. Does he know why he wears that light, iridescent, shiny yellow star. Well, I do. I don't exactly know what he did. But all I know is that he is not such a good person. My parents despise him. My heart says to me how could they hate this boy so much? How could they torture him? I think sometimes that his G-d is real and mine is like a blind man trapped inside a bottle who can't see or respond to me. I realize sometimes that my best friend is leaving me. I wonder what roads he will travel? What paths will he take? Will we ever go play in the pond in the country or searching for fireflies? My parents say he will be going to a camp.

One day, I asked my parents if I can go because I was jealous. My Pa punched me, my Ma scolded, they said that the camp isn't for me. One day we made plans to go to our favorite park together. When we got there a fat mean, nasty, man spat at my friend who wore that yellow star. We walked home that day puzzled, sad, and confused.

I remembered the time we went biking together. The sun was out that day. It was hot. The smell of the path smelled like the flowers my Pa got for my Ma for mother's day. I remember the sun hit my friend's hair. It looked like my Ma's favorite gold sequin gown. We rode down the path like there was no tomorrow. And for my friend with the yellow star, I didn't know if there would be. Would he think about me at night? Would he remember our sleepovers, especially the one when we pretended we were pirates and after that soldiers? And now I don't even know if in the future my friend will be any of those things. Will we both live to see our grandchildren play together on our grassy, flower filled front lawns? I can't imagine what it would be like to walk into school all by myself, with no one to hold my hand. We used to play tricks on the substitute teachers. One time we even put a jar of spiders in her purse. Would we ever be able to do it again? Will our memories still be like a kindling fire? Will the songs we sang together in nursery always be in his heart?

All I know is that I will always remember him. Who will defend me against the mean children down the street? I wonder if in the future he will be taller or shorter than me? I hope he will have a good life. I know my yellow starred friend

**We rode down
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won't always be there for me. I hope he remembers that I will always be there for him no matter how bad the time. I just wish my best friend luck on his lengthy journey. I hope he will remember me. The boy with the yellow star.



Crossroads

By Miriam Wilamowsky

The First Dance

By Shalva Gozland

The day I learned to stand up, I was lying down. The sun cradled me warmly on that blissful April morning. Spring was here, and Adam was finally home. It was lonely without him. But I was proud of my prince for defending our nation's skies.

We took a walk to our favorite coffee shop— the coffee shop that meant so much more to us than just decaf lattes. It was the coffee shop where we spent our last moments together before he took off for Afghanistan, where we talked about what it would be like if he lost a limb and where we pondered what it would be like if he didn't come back. And now, my husband was home safe. I couldn't ask for anything more.

"It's Marathon Monday," he smiled. "Then what are we waiting for?" I smiled back. We crossed onto Boylston Street, but within seconds my world would change. Forever.

BOOM. I buried my head into his chest, my body shaking uncontrollably, cold fingers gripping his arms, hoping they would save me from the world that came crashing down. "The next one's gonna hit," I cried, "the next one's gonna hit!"

POW. It stabbed my calf like a rusted machete. Teeth biting into its freshest prey. The parched ground quivered as it threw me to the concrete wayside, then showered me with all the gray ash it was made of. A barrage of shrapnel shell pierced the stinging raw flesh covering my bones.

"Adam! Adam, don't leave me! I love you! Adam! Please!" He lay beside me on the drenched sidewalk, but he promised me he'd stay for me. "Not today," he whispered, "not today." I looked down at a beet red waterfall of blood that used to be my left foot. Flaps of skin hung in its place.

I lay limp on the white stretcher, no longer the graceful, dazzling ballroom dancer my world had known the night before. Now I was a preschool arts and crafts project: shredded to pieces, lopsided, and taped backed together. A mess. I was a mosaic of the tattered fabric and dried blood of Boston's bravest that day.

"I'm a dancer," I screamed, part from the pain that struck and part from the fear that hit me. "You can't take my leg! You have to save my leg!" It was too late.

My leg was gone. Forever. My life was over. And I was never getting it back. Thirty-two years of dancing gone. Forever. Gone was my Waltz. Forgotten was my Tango. My Cha Cha a piece of history.

I gazed down. I lost my leg at the finish line, but it is only the beginning—

the beginning of a journey of patience, of love, of trust, of survival, of comfort, of empowerment, of inspiration, of meaning, of strength, of endurance, of perseverance. Because at that moment, I saw what kind of life I lived as it flashed before my very eyes, and then I realized what kind of life I wanted to live: a life worth living.

I can dance again. I will dance again. I am a ballroom dancer, and no one will take that away from me. My leg is gone, but I am here to stay. Prouder. Braver. Stronger.

I slowly sway to the music at the finish line two years later, with the love of my life standing by my side. I smile, knowing that Evil didn't get the best of me. I will never stop dancing 'till the day that G-d takes me back up, not when hatred pushes me down.

I am not a victim, defined by what happened in my life. I am a survivor, defining how I live my life. I am a fighter. I am a dancer. I am stronger than the bomb that took my leg.

I am Adrienne.

**I am not a
victim defined
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A World Long Gone

By Chaya Sara Malek

Water, a measly five letter word that our world depends on. Our society grows in number while water, the substance of life, depletes before our eyes. Global warming they said, lack of water I say. I wonder how much time remains on the clock before my child's sunken in eyes see water again.

All I see is hollowed out pits filled with nothing but a past memory. Rivers, lakes, and oceans dried up like a shriveled prune. I fear for my life and my family's lives as days go by without a trace of water. How can we live as a race with no water to sustain us? Fear consumes a man's mind. I wonder when this fear will pick itself up and find a new host to bother.

The Heat, a term the government uses to describe this inhumane life we live, has been going on for nine months and counting. Only once the rain stopped falling did everyone realize the magnitude of The Heat. I wonder if Mother Nature cares about the vast amount of forests, valleys, and parks all lost in the blink of an eye. The pain of a father not being able to run in the grass with his son is nothing I would wish on my worst enemy. Parks once filled with dozens of smiling faces are left vacant and unattended. No more lawns to mow or trees to prune. No more gardens to water or leaves to rake. Nature slipped through the cracks of our lives faster than we could help it.

**The lack of
water has
brought out the
evil in everyone,
each man for
himself.**

The absence of food has not gone unnoticed either. The little water that's available is used on vegetables and fruits. I haven't seen red meat in months. The government hides behind a thin glass wall about to be shattered from the cries of thousands. I wonder how much longer they think they can hide from the issue tearing us apart. The lack of water has brought out the evil in everyone, each man for himself. All must worry about their family and where their next meal will come from. I long for the day when brother and brother link arms again.

The worst of it all is that the government is doing nothing to end The Heat. The rich and wealthy live an affluent lifestyle throughout this ordeal with no plans to help the lower class like me. I envy the wealthy; they don't stay up turning throughout the thick and heavy night with the fear of supporting a family. They don't wonder where their very next glass of water will come from. While I, nothing more than a tramp compared to them, scavenge for water like the rest of the world. I wonder why they don't kill us now. What's the point of us living if we

don't have a life to live? But the truth is what is there for us to do?

Thinking back to a time when the essentials in life were free is hard to remember. It almost feels like a dream turned into a very real nightmare. The day water returns our lives will be a day to remember. I only realized the power of one simple item until that item no longer exists. I wonder when water, the paltry five letter word, returns.



Road to Happiness

By Dina Rochel Blumenthal

What Would Have Happened

By Elisheva Lesser

I always wonder what my life would be like today if the Holocaust had never happened. Both my grandmother and grandfather lived through and suffered the tortures of the Holocaust. It was a brutal time in the history of the Jews. My grandmother was just sixteen when the war broke out and she was quickly sent away from her home, along with all the other girls in her town, as soon as the soldiers invaded Czechoslovakia. Her father was sent to a labor camp. Her young mother and four baby brothers were left at home and were there when the Nazi's rounded them up and took them to Auschwitz where they were unfortunately killed upon arrival in the gas chambers. This left my grandmother alone, as she could not locate her father. She was sent to live with her cousin in Budapest who was living secretly as a child of a Christian woman.

My grandmother was given two sets of false papers. One set said she was Christian and the other was a set from Raoul Wallenberg that said she was Jewish but under the protection of the Swedish government. My grandmother said she was always afraid because if she gave the Wallenberg papers to a soldier and he chose to disregard her "protected" status, she would have revealed herself as a Jew. If she gave him the Christian papers and they were found to be a forgery, she would have been shot on the spot. Had anyone ever searched her and found that she carried two sets of papers, that would have been the worst.

This Christian woman also had a husband who my grandmother always thought was really a hidden Jew as well. She never asked and it was never discussed. This man was a chef and he was kind and taught my grandmother how to cook. She has always been an excellent cook. This cousin was blonde so people believed she was in fact a real daughter. My grandmother was dark and the people in the building were suspicious and taunted her that they would turn her in if she ever showed her face in their bomb shelter.

The first time my grandmother ever saw anyone die was once during an air raid when she was too afraid to enter the bomb shelter. Instead, she stayed outside under a covered space and lied down on a bench. It was very cold that night and another man was lying down on a different bench. He did not look well. He froze to death that night, as my grandmother watched. After the war, she was reunited with her father but found out the sad news about the rest of her family. Her father remarried and his step wife had little use for my grandmother, as she was a reminder of the horrors of war. My grandmother was sent to live in a hotel with some friends in Prague.

My family suspects that my grandmother experienced many other horrors of

the Holocaust but has chosen not to share them. They have clearly shaped her into the person she is. They have also shaped the kind of mother she is to my mother and in turn, the kind of mother that my mother is to my siblings and I. Despite having lived through obvious unbelievable trauma, she emerged a very strong and determined woman. She decided that “living well is the best revenge” and that she would live her remaining life to the fullest and at the very least, be source of pride to herself and G-d.

My grandmother moved to Vienna where she ate in a restaurant in which she met my grandfather. They got married and moved to Israel where my grandfather had to fight in many wars. My grandfather would be gone for days and even months and my grandmother would have no idea where he was fighting. They finally came to America on a boat to start their new lives. My grandfather went to college and received his CPA. Then my grandparents had my aunt and my mother.

I often wonder if the Holocaust had not happened, would I be living in Eastern Europe today? Would I live in Czechoslovakia or in Budapest or in Prague or Vienna? There was so much migration during the war and I wonder what would have happened if this were not the case. Would anti-semitism have chased the Jews away? Would they have lived well and flourish if Hitler hadn't risen to power? Would we still have the State of Israel today? What would it be like to have this big family of aunts and uncles and cousins who were taken away from me? Would my grandmother have been a different person had she not endured all these hardships? Would my mother be a different kind of person if she were not born the child of Holocaust survivors? How would that in turn affect who I am? Of course there is no way to know, but I wonder...

**Would my
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Wonderful Nonsense

By Shira Nabatian

My shiny black automobile pulls up in front of an elaborate white house; high arches with gold trimming span the top floor of the house. Tall pillars mark the entrance way, guarding towering white doors covered in patterns of gold. The saxophones, violins, and trumpets scream from inside. I hear Mr. Frank, the usual performer, letting his heart pour outside as he sings his soul out for all to hear. A slow grin spreads across my face. My driver opens the automobile door and I accept the hand offered to me as I slide out of the car. I head inside.

The second I enter I am assaulted by the crowd and loud noises. People are dancing everywhere. Laughter and shouts fill the room. Entertainment is any which way I turn my head. I take a champagne flute from a passing waiter and sip. I head further into the house, gripping my glass.

Three large arches span the performance stage. One arch with a violinist, one with a saxophonist, and in the middle Mr. Frank. I throw back my head, gulp the last of my giggle water, and accept a replacement flute. I head onto the dance floor; time to show off my new dress. I just got it yesterday, imported from Europe, the finest thread and beads. Perfect for twirling and shimmying. So that's exactly what I do. I let go. I let the night take over. I find a partner to Lindy hop with. As my partner throws me into the air, I feel eyes on me and I bask in them, my own personal sun. I hit all sixes. I spin onto the back terrace, slowing to accommodate the large number of ravers. And just then I hear a collective gasp.

Fireworks erupt in the sky; I grin and spin faster. As I spin I lift my head and stare. I am one with the night, one with the sky, one with the crowd.

Everyone claps and I clap, and the music is louder and we're louder too. Spinning, dipping, and soaring. This night is magical, I am one with the rhythm. Dancing is all we know, as we laugh and drink and forget the sun will ever come; for who needs the sun when we have moonlit nights like this? But, nonetheless, the sun does come, and we all proceed home. I slide back into my automobile and I'm gone.

I fumble with my keys as I enter my house. I close the door behind me, humming all the while. A light is on in the kitchen; who's already up? It's my mother.

**Dancing is all
we know, as we
laugh and drink
and forget the
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come; for who
needs the sun
when we have
moonlit nights
like this?**

“You’ve been drinking again” she states.

She looks down. She is holding a photograph in one hand, a handkerchief in the other.

She looks up at me, her face asking, how could I?

And I laugh and laugh.



Wonder Who?

By Shaina Reissman

The Graveyard Girl

By Nev Sivan Yakubov

I am the graveyard girl. I stay, all day, all night, sitting on soft ground that covers lifeless bodies. I watch the death swirl around me, feel it fill a void within me. The graveyard is my home. Out of it, I am a nameless face, floating through my duties, all the while my mind surrounded by a cocoon of death. At school, I do what I am told like a ghost, unthinkingly moving my limbs in graceless motions. I sit in the corner facing a looming wall. I do not speak, and I am not spoken to. They do not say my name. All I am is Jane Parker. All they see is plain Jane Parker. To them I am nameless. So I go to the graveyard surrounded by beings who once were. I am like them — forgotten, alone, helpless. My favorite section is the backmost corner. There lay the oldest, poorest, graves — miniscule stones barely marking the hints of their existence. And there I stay, dreaming of a world full of the forgotten.

I sit and see snatches of life quickly flit by, scenes from a hidden past. I smell the foreign scents of others' homes, strung together by the common perfume of death. I hear strings of voices, droplets of meaningless words once important. I feel soft textures, hard rough surfaces, and unexpected warmth, unusual in this sheltered grove. I taste exotic flavors, comfortable savors, and refreshing tangs. I think past thoughts, experience lost emotion, and become like the missing people who can no longer be. I live through them, and they live through me. They give me purpose. They instill life through their death. I find shelter in what others shelter from.

Sometimes, when the sky darkens, I am taken by two strangers who know me, leading me, their flesh on mine, to a place I know and yet do not. Their frustrated tones waft over me, entering my ears as senseless gibberish. I am forced on a soft cot and ordered to sleep. I cannot sleep in this unfamiliar abode, this house that exudes a sensation of repulsion. I spend the night in a dreamless daze.

When light begins to touch the sky, I am dragged from the mattress that I had been compelled to lay on, and given odd forms of nutrition. After forming my mouth around two spoons of dry gruel being pushed between my lips, I am gently shoved out the door. I am led to a tall, stone edifice, which I am obliged to enter. I sit in a stupor all day, until vicious peals invade my hearing and I slowly make my

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way away from the incomprehensible rumble that surrounds me. The farther I go the lighter I become. When I at last reach my shelter, I am no longer weary. I waft between the crumbling stones, looking at names faded away, people diminished to dust. I wander between the markers, wondering if I am becoming like them, slowly withering away. I soak in the spirit of serenity as I lay my body against a tree— fluttering in the windless gloom — surveying the mounds of earth surrounding me. I sit there, against the tree, and wonder, my body leaning for eternity, my eyes open in an endless stare, as I become one with my home. And just before I depart, I see a fresh stone, small and modest, with small words inscribed into it. It says, *Jane Parker, the girl who never lived.*

To Wonder and Worry

By Alexandra Kestenbaum

He looked so handsome in his uniform and put on a brave face as he waved goodbye. My father too, held it together as he hugged his eldest son. My mother was a mess. Her first baby was heading off to the unknown, to participate in whatever orders his unit received. Life in our house changed the day my brother left for the army.

Now, time seems to stop with every ring of an incoming telephone call. My mother's body tenses up as she takes in a deep breath. It's usually just the market calling to say her delivery is on its way or it's our aunt just wanting to chat. And though the call is not from him, she now wonders why he hasn't called yet.

When he finally does call, the subtle, but unmistakable blanket of fear covering our home suddenly seems to lift. He is always fine and either out with his unit or back at the barracks. My mother's face sparkles with delight, and probably also relief. He entertains all of us with his stories and his adventures.

As soon as my mother has said goodbye and has placed the phone down, that blanket— that shadow over us— returns. The evening news sets her on edge again. Every conversation inevitably turns to a discussion of what he is doing now, where he is going, whom he may be with and where he has been. There are many things my siblings and I wonder, but only to ourselves. We fear upsetting mother with our questions.

The situation in our country is grim and conditions are precarious. Terror continues to lift its ugly head in random neighborhoods and in unexpected places. Our land has become a place where one feels compelled to be on constant vigilance. Again and again, our thoughts turn to his safety.

Finding my mother in his room, sitting on his bed, and sighing loudly only add to my worry. The constant anticipation of his next call or text and the simultaneous dread when the phone rings just a bit too late at night is often overbearing. Living our lives is what we continue to do, but it hasn't been the same ever since that day our brother left.

Our household is far from the only one with these fears and wonders. There are thousands of families just like ours that would recognize the shadowy blanket

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that hovers over our mundane daily routines, over our happiest milestones, and over everything in between. A nation of parents and grandparents, siblings and children all hoping and praying, while worrying at the same time.

Knowing we are not the only ones is comforting, but when I really feel scared there is one comforting thought that soothes me. It is the knowledge that my brother has a mission to complete and a greater cause. A cause greater than any one person or family. We all support his dreams and salute his dedication to his calling, all the while wondering when he will come home at last.

An Adventure of a Lifetime

By Malki Einhorn

His sweet face, the anger hiding under his mask. He doesn't want to be there anymore so he calls out, "I'm going for a drink at the fountain." His parents look worriedly at each other, thinking the same thing, who knows what could happen at this campsite, but together call out, "Ok, don't go too far. We love you." He plans on going just to the fountain and back but he finds a cave. All that's running through his mind is, "I always wanted to see inside a cave!" He knows what his parents, especially daddy, say daily, "Don't go into scary places, they're dangerous." To allow himself this adventure, he makes arguments in his mind. They will never know. He feels like his body is a battlefield. His heart tells him to go inside, but his mind says no. The world around is like a captured picture and all that's heard are the crickets' voices. The raging water in the background calms him down just a little. They went on a camping trip and daddy dressed as a bear. It scared him. "I escaped their protective grip. I found this cave and now I sit and think. Daddy doesn't care if I'm scared; he scared me. I want to go, I NEED to see the inside of the cave- but I shouldn't go." The sky turns to a faded black, the shadow of his father could no longer be seen. He jumps up and enters a blackened world.

It's dark in here, like a haunted house, but he's not scared. He thinks, "Nothing will jump at me. I'll find gold and treasures." He sees a paper and runs to it, like he's walking on hot coals. He picks it up, and to his dismay it's blank, but in his head, he instantly sees a treasure map on it. At the end is a big red X and he knows he must get there. He starts the trail. He comes upon a stream and subconsciously realizes that it's just a small obstacle. After all, he thought, I did want to see what's inside caves and this must be one thing. He jumps into the ice bath and instantly jumps out. There is no sun warming the water like the stream he swims in with Daddy. He sees a few logs and ties them together with twigs to get across. It looks like the arts and crafts project of a 10-year-old. He uses it because it's his only choice. When he's across, he picks it up and it crumbles in his hands. He thinks, "I made it so far, what else can come my way?"

He walks peacefully for about five minutes. But then the haunted house begins. He sees something move. His body is an earthquake. With his quaking legs, he drags his body and forces a brave face. "Gather yourself together, you aren't a baby. Okay, it's just a bunny, it's not like it's a bear." He makes it. He musters more

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his mind says
no.**

courage.

This time he's expecting something. He doesn't want it, but once he finishes it, he gets the treasure and then returns to daddy. He takes a cautious step and his foot automatically feels like lead. A tear escapes his eye; he's strong and the prisoners only escape rarely, this should not be one of those times. He remembers seeing on TV that this is called quicksand, so he starts to wriggle his foot. It's reaching his thigh. He slows his movements and now it's only up to his knee. He continues that graceful walk for twenty more minutes. His body's a mess; he's freezing, there's sand all over him, and a few more tears roll down his cheeks. But the thought of the treasure rejuvenates him. He feels free, like he won a marathon.

This is a false treasure! The white teeth are the only source of light in this cave. It doesn't see him yet, it is still sleeping. He turns around to flee but there is nowhere to run. The only way out is past the disheveled creature. Remembering the overcome obstacles, he decides to go. His foot collides with a stone and he hollers in pain. IT awakens. He runs, but not fast enough. Its claws dig into him and he blacks out. His body doesn't know if he will wake up yet. His pain filled body didn't decide. Flashlights are in his eyes. He opens them to see police, firefighters, and his one and only daddy. He wants to stay awake but the pain is too great.

"He was always an adventurer," he hears his daddy sadly whisper, before his eyes shut for the final time.



Fear

By Talia Perlstein

TWO

Dreams vs. Reality

*“Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood
there, wondering, fearing, doubting,
dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared
to dream before.”*

– Edgar Allan Poe

Dreams vs. Reality

By Frumi Cohn, Editor

Dreams, like bubbles in the air, are happy and carefree. A place where we can escape. Be the person we want to be. Live in a better world. Dreams are a place where we are not judged. Dreams are safe.

In Chaya Sherman's "The Night Watch," a soldier dreams of his home and his kids, hoping that he will survive the night. Driving to his post with his friends, he imagines that they are on their way to a concert. In "At the Edge," Miriam Escott describes a woman who dreams that she is the most beautiful woman in the land. Sara Ringel's artwork, "Up," beautifully illustrates how everything is possible in dreams.

But people constantly struggle between their dreams and reality. In "Stella's Wedding," Rivky Kreiser brings us into the world of a grandmother who comes to the harsh realization that she is not part of her granddaughter's life because of a choice she made a long time ago. Rena Brodie describes how a daughter understood that her father's repetitive use of "I love you" were empty, shallow words.

We realize reality isn't so cruel. Nina Melon shows us in "Save One Life Save the World" that there are heroes like Nicholas Winton who saved 669 Jewish children during the Holocaust. Although Nina struggles wondering whether she would be able to do the same, she comes to the conclusion that it is okay if we are not the one to save the world. We must "simply appreciate those that can and do."

In "Lost," Meital Israel shows us how we must face our fears in order to conquer them. Alice stayed in Wonderland and she admits that "now I can never say that I have yet to fight the Jabberwock because of my fear dominating my emotion and logic." Draisya Friedman's artwork, "Wanderland," visually depicts Alice's struggle, creating a deeper connection to the character. Similarly, in "Bye-Bye Francesca," Aliza Frankel tells the story of a young girl who is living in her dream world with the perfect friend who likes everything she likes, but soon realizes that reality is much more exciting when people are different.

Rivka Lax gives us a glimpse into the future in "Forward or Backward?" where going to school is non-existent. Instead, kids are taught by "Computer Teacher" in the comfort of their home. Jack dreams of escaping from this "nightmare" and going to a school where human teachers will help him understand the past and the present. He teaches us that with effort we can turn our dreams into reality.

Whether we dream to escape to a utopian world where we're the hero saving the day, or a princess who resides in a beautiful palace, we can remain hopeful that these dreams aren't for naught. As Indian Statesman A.P.J Abdul Kalam

said, "You have to dream before your dreams can come true." In this collection of pieces, the characters begin their journey with a dream but must face reality in the end. We do not need to let go completely; we can hold onto our dreams to get us through reality.

I Love You, I Love You

By Rena Brodie

The four year old girl laid in bed next to her mother and tried to coordinate her breathing with her mother's. She held her breath and waited for her mother to breathe out before exhaling. With each deep breath, she wondered how long this would last. The next unpredictable longer breath would disrupt the soothing rhythm. She realized that in one instant something so wonderful, inhaling and exhaling at the same time as her heroine, can completely dissipate and become something awful and out of sync.

Her mother got out of her bed and kissed the top of her head. As her mother got up to leave, her father called "I love you" from across the hall. One night, one I love you. Her mother did the work but her father got the credit. The years went on and the nighttime ritual stayed the same.

As her seventh birthday approached, her mother was planning to make her a birthday party. Her mother and siblings worked quietly; she bought decorations and gift bags, ordered food and drinks, and coordinated the invitations and gifts. Her father managed to be loud about doing nothing. He came home, sat on the couch, and watched everyone work. Out of habit, he said, "I love you" to each of them, and out of habit they accepted.

After the party, the girl ran to her father crying about a girl who showed up late and stole her crown. Her father told her not to worry. "I love you," he said. "Just ignore her and cut her off. She was mean to you and now you don't need her." The girl, temporarily soothed, asked her father to take her to a baseball game, an event that her mother would not enjoy. "I love you," he said, and he promised her they would go.

The years went by and nothing changed. "I love you, I love you, I love you." Her father rubbed her back, drove her to her friends, and said "I love you" a lot. The girl would soon come to realize that it all meant nothing. She didn't like the back rubs, she didn't appreciate the rides, and the words "I love you" meant nothing.

**Out of habit,
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Her mother got a new job. It was a great opportunity for the family. Her new job took her to new places. Sometimes across the country, sometimes across the world. She would always try to minimize the amount of nights she stayed away from home so that the girl would be happy. On the nights that her mother was away, her father was forced to stay home. The girl and her father didn't spend any

time together other than the nights they had to.

The girl was going to graduate from elementary school at the top of her class. The school took the entire grade to a baseball game to celebrate the occasion. As she watched the game with her friends she remembered her father's promise and realized why the game filled her with joy. She had waited for this game for seven years.

The girl read a book that taught her that in every relationship at least one of the five love languages are expressed. The five love languages are gift giving, physical touch, quality time, acts of servitude, and words of affirmation. The girl knew this but she never applied it to her own personal relationships. But then she did. Her father promised gifts, but never delivered. Her father tried to make physical contact, but she wasn't interested. Her father only spent time with her when it was forced. Her father tried to do things for her, but they always were in the shadow of what her mother did for her. Her father expressed words of affirmation towards her, but she knew that he wasn't capable of acting beyond the words.

She realized that they didn't share a relationship of love, and all that was left was resentment. Her father picked up one Sunday morning and left. It took one second for the situation to go from wonderful to awful. He called once every month, and said "I love you, I love you, I love you," but the girl took his advice and ignored him. She cut him off because she didn't need him.



The Other Side

By Ayelet Buchen

At the Edge

By Miriam Escott

At the edge of town, beyond the river, there lies a house. A house set on a tired old lawn, the grass wilting in age. The groaning steps are set in front of the Once Red Door. The windows to either side of the Once Red Door are obscured by large drapes, sagging as if they cannot hold their own weight. The intricate flower boxes beneath the windows bear no trace of the vibrant pink petunias they once held.

Opening the Once Red Door carefully and quietly, as if afraid to wake the ghosts of the past, a woman slips through the house. Her white hair skidding out of the neat bun, she walks hurriedly into a room filled with books. Books all shapes and sizes are layered and sprinkled with blankets of dust. Books about mysteries fill the shelf near the window, next the books about fantasies, the books about tragedies, the books about books. Cramped in the small spaces between the bookshelves, splintering furniture wait nervously for the next object to be placed upon them. But they have nothing to worry about, as their owner has long forgotten they are there. The woman carefully walks toward the splitting wooden desk, the only piece of furniture not drowning in dust. She lowers herself slowly and sits gingerly on the creaking chair. Her head sharply turns and stares ahead, her gray eyes a fog

that obscures the wisdom within. Her eyes flicker to the window, piercing as if she can see beyond the patches of the thick drapes. Just as suddenly, the woman grabs a pen and starts to furiously write on a blank yellowing page of a book. The small black words seem to appear out of nowhere as the scritch scratching continues. The sound of light scraping goes on for hours and hours and hours.

The woman abruptly sits up, yanks the book, and runs up the bruised and battered stairs. The woman rushes into a bedroom where the wallpaper has quit its job quite some time ago. Heading straight for the closet, she pauses. Leaning heavily on the door she gathers her strength and waits for her aching bones to catch up with her mind. The air stills, waiting with bated breath, as the woman reaches for the lonely dress. If it can be called a dress at all. The effervescent pink

**The effervescent pink
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Around the torn collar
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has faded mostly into a graying yellow color, contrasting with the green patches that threaten to dominate. Around the torn collar thirteen sequins sit dully, far from their neighbors. The seams at the shoulders have given up and hang limply, waiting to be freed. The woman, oblivious to the state of the dress, eagerly puts it on. She turns towards the mirror, just barely able to see herself with just the leftovers of the afternoon sun. The skin near her mouth stretches into a shape resembling a smile.

The woman picks up the yellow paged book and turns to the first page. In the loudest voice she can muster she says, "Once upon a time there was a young lady," she looks at her reflection and nods, "and she was deemed the prettiest woman in all of the kingdom," she ends with a hoarse yell.

Across the river the invisible whispers of the neighbors carry to the woman's ears.

"There she goes again, wonder if she'll ever stop making up those stories."

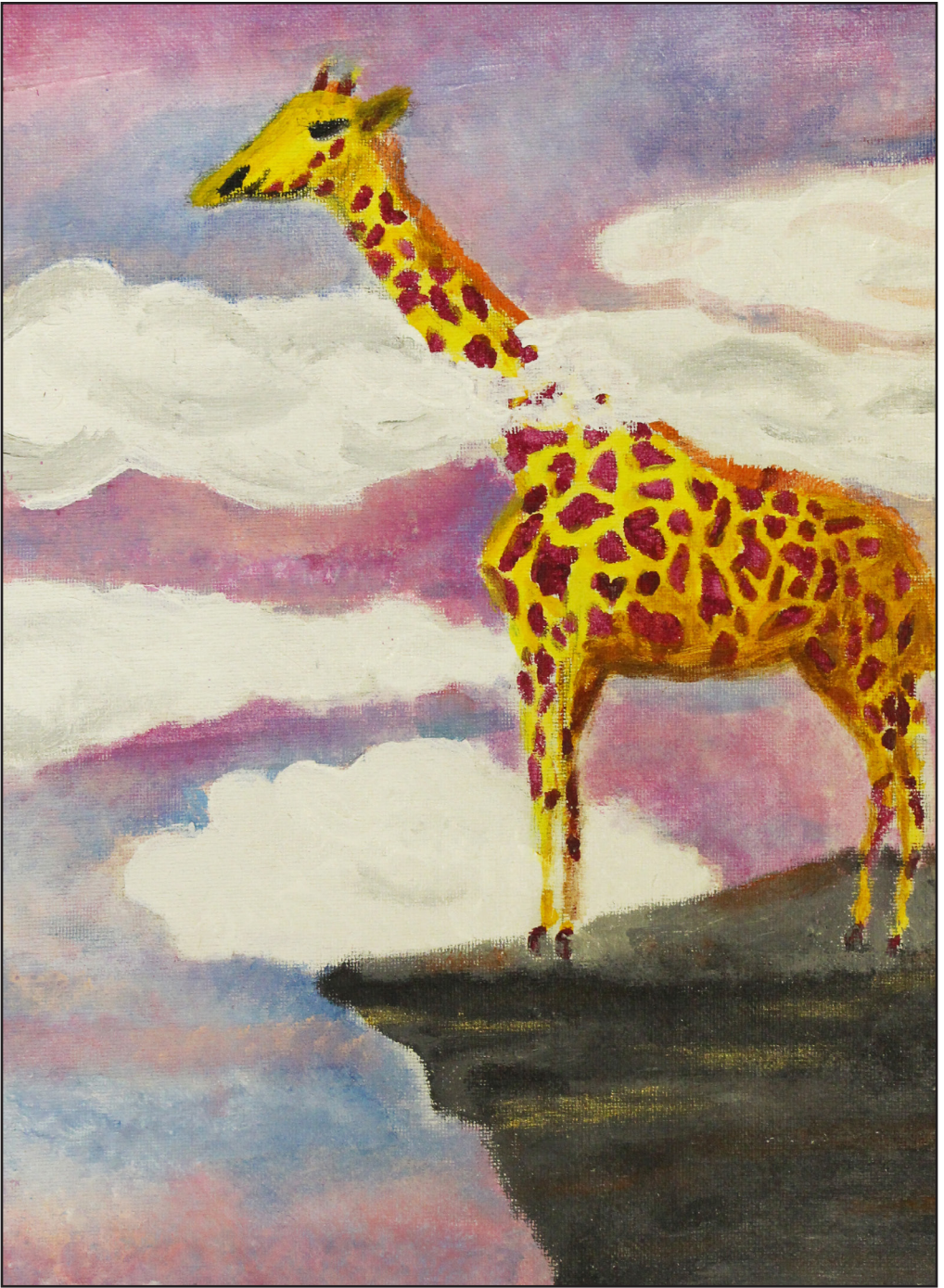
"I doubt it. She was lost quite some time ago."

"It's a shame, she's been living like this for as long as I can remember."

At those words the woman covered her ears, trying to block out the memories of her youth.

She remembers the cowering at the sight of a large shadow, rigid with fear, waiting for the inevitable punishment. She remembers the screaming, all that yelling, still ringing in her delicate ears. She remembers when she first escaped into books and how after she wanted more and more, vowing she will one day own that pink dress.

Once the memories pass, the woman quickly shoves them into a lockbox, wishing she could lose the key. What will finally push her over the edge, giving her freedom? She wonders what will be waiting for her at the bottom of the cliff of reality.



Head in the Clouds

By Bryna Greenberg

Bye-Bye Franchesca

By Aliza Frankel

I once heard Momma say that she can't be friends with Sophia any longer; their friendship just isn't healthy anymore. Momma also told me, "Dorothy you have to get rid of Franchesca." Does she mean Franchesca and I aren't healthy anymore?

Franchesca is my best friend. We do everything together. Whenever I go to the park, me and Franchesca always play on the swings together. She never argues to go on the monkey bars, because she knows I'm scared of them. If I'm afraid of something so is Franchesca. At recess it's always just Franchesca and I. Sometimes the kids at school make fun of us. They think we're weird because we only play with each other. I think they're just jealous that Franchesca and I have all the fun. Momma keeps telling me I have to branch out and have more friends. But Franchesca is better than any other friends. Right? I never need anyone else.

Yesterday, Grandma invited me to have a tea party with her, and I brought Franchesca with me of course. Grandma made these small cakes and cookies that Franchesca and I loved. We spent hours talking and laughing. Grandma and Franchesca are the funniest people I know. But sometimes Grandma's hearing aids don't work too well and I always have to repeat Franchesca's jokes. Then, when I say them loudly enough for Grandma to hear, she laughs as loud as a trumpet because Franchesca really is very funny.

Does Momma really know what she's talking about when she tells me that Franchesca and I can't be friends anymore? If I don't have Franchesca to play with then I have nobody else. I don't think Grandma would only like the swings because I like them. No one seems to understand me like Franchesca does. But Momma always says that friends don't have to love all the same things that you do. She says that "everyone was born different, and that's what makes life a little more fun and colorful." Franchesca always wears very pretty colors though; her clothes are never boring, and she sure is a lot of fun. Is Momma really right?

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Today Franchesca didn't come to school. At recess I was sitting on the swings by myself thinking how much more fun it would be if Franchesca was there. But then Lilly, the new girl in the class, came over and sat on the swing right next to

mine. I told her she couldn't sit there because it was Francesca's swing. Then she asked me if she could pretty please sit there because she was scared to play on the monkey bars with everyone else. We played together the whole recess, and had loads of fun. At the end of the day when Momma came to pick me up; she saw me talking to Lilly, and got so excited that she invited Lilly to come play after school. Lilly and I had so much fun together, and Francesca never even came.

Later I was talking to Francesca, and I realized it just wasn't so much fun to talk to someone who always agrees with me. Francesca's been saying the same thing ever since I've known her, and it doesn't seem funny anymore. All this time I may as well have been swinging on the swings alone. I looked at Francesca's glossy green eyes, synthetic factory hair, and soft stuffing filled body. Momma's right! My only friend can't be a fake doll; it really isn't very "healthy." I made up those jokes, and I swung on the swings myself. I had a lot of fun with Lilly, and maybe I could have even more fun if I play with the other kids. So I got up out of bed, brushed off some dust on my windowsill, and made it Francesca's new resting place. I poked her stomach as I set her on the shelf and for the last time she said, in her forever cheery voice, "Bye-Bye."

Lost

By Meital Israel

As she was coming towards me, I stared at her, quietly; it was Alice. There they were, her brown shoes that were once blue. Then her dress, which had rips, heavy pieces of mud and dead bugs. I inhaled, almost tasting the nauseating smell of ash and sweat that was radiating off her aching body. I looked back at Alice once more and came to realize that she had dark gray circles under her eyes. She was struggling to drag her tiresome, thin legs across the checkered ground. As she started walking, her body slowly fell. I ran to her direction but I was unexpectedly stopped by something peculiar. I was stopped by thorns. These were not regular thorns, they were thorns of a rose bush. After seeing these pointy porcupines, I recalled my last experience with the Red Queen... how can I ever forget? I spent days planting red roses with thorns for her. Sadly, planting these roses was worthless. The Red Queen decided to do nothing more to them other than to destroy them by playing croquet. I was mortified.

My memory was interrupted when I heard a familiar cry. Have I forgotten about Alice?! As I continued to run towards Alice, I realized that I was missing something; what happened to the thorns? By the time I looked back over my shoulders, the thorns disappeared. "How?" I thought to myself. I had too many questions but now was not the time to answer any of them. I finally stood face-to-face with Alice. This was it. I could ask her anything. Why? Because she was me. Technically, she was the other half of me. She was my other half, the half that remained in Wonderland. I, on the other hand, left the mysterious world of Wonderland and returned to Canterbury, England, where I continued my studies in the James Weston Canterbury Academy. Without hesitation, I finally ask Alice in Wonderland, "What will happen tomorrow?" She stares at me blankly and so I expand on my uncertainty. "Do you think I should have stayed in Wonderland? It could have been better for us. We would have stayed as one entity in one place." Then, to my surprise, her face shone with gleeful and attentive expression. Alice replied with a giggle, "You definitely missed out on the adventure that came along with this place." Although Alice was my other half, I did not expect an answer like this nor did I know the reason behind her optimism. Before I got to ask her anything else, she added, "So what if I just fought the Jabberwock or just walked through the terrifying forest filled with unknown animals and rodents, I was the one who experienced it. Now, I can never say that I have yet to fight the Jabberwock because of my fear

**She was my
other half,
the half that
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Wonderland.**

dominating my emotion and logic. If you would have stayed in Wonderland, you would have valued the most important lesson that I came to discover later on in my stay at Wonderland: control over your fears.” I looked at Alice with admiration and respect. I then came to an understanding that the person who I was looking at was me. There was one part of me that conquered my fear. I had not noticed, but I had it in me this whole time. I suddenly felt a warm liquid slip onto my hand; it was a teardrop. I was crying. Alice stretched out her arm while my hand met hers. We strolled through the spacious and desolate park that happened to be next to where we were sitting.

And so it was. This time, at the corner of my eye, I saw Alice looking at me with sincerity and amazement.



Up

By Sara Ringel

Stella's Wedding

By Rivky Kreiser

The sun is blazing down on my neck as I head into the service center. Spotting a Starbucks on my right, I walk over to wait on the ridiculously long line. I am so tired. I need to rest. Only I have no time to rest. I am here for the sole purpose of chugging down caffeine. I have to be in Brooklyn tomorrow. I have to see my only grandchild get married.

I wonder if my invitation got lost in the mail. I mean, Cleveland is pretty far from Brooklyn. Mail gets lost all the time.

“Stop deluding yourself, Meredith. You know you weren't invited. Sam hasn't spoken to you in 27 years. Why would she suddenly invite you to her daughter's wedding?” My thoughts are jumbled but the truth still hits me hard. The jab that comes from the realization that I am not a part of my daughter's life is sharp. I am bruised all over. I am aching. I need to sleep. Only I can't sleep because I have to see my granddaughter get married in twenty hours.

I made the mistake of missing a wedding once before. 27 years ago on Sam's wedding day, I slept at home. It was like any other day. I had my reasons. Sure I did. Then she moved to Brooklyn. I haven't seen her since her rehearsal dinner.

I've never met my granddaughter, and here she is going to be a bride tomorrow. Her name is Stella. I have a granddaughter named Stella. The sentence makes me feel as if I am acquainting myself with my own life. I wonder what color hair she has. I wonder whether she looks like Sam. For a moment I flatter myself and think that she could look like me. I guess I'll see tomorrow.

This time, I am going. This time, I bought a dress. It lies in a garment bag on my car's back seat. I look so different than the last time Sam saw me. I know she won't recognize me. With my gray hair and wrinkles, I barely resemble my younger self. I will come silently and I will leave silently. I will not ruin this day. I will not. I will not. I swear I will not.

I am at the wedding hall. I am wearing a sequined navy dress and flats. I am too old for heels. My feet feel unstable anyways, as I walk into the reception hall. I see the bride right away. She's at the opposite end of the room. She looks nothing

The jab that comes from the realization that I am not a part of my daughter's life is sharp. I am bruised all over. I am aching.

like me. She looks nothing like Sam. She looks like her ethereal. She is beautiful. Her nose is slender and her eyes are big. Sam stands next to her. Sam looks radiant. She reminds me of my mother at my own wedding.

Going to the other side of the room, I pass a group of people whom a grandmother is supposed to know. I am supposed to know a good portion of the people at this wedding. I know absolutely no one. I walk over to the bride. Both mother and daughter look up at me and smile.

“Congratulations,” I smile as my lips shake uncontrollably. Sam and Stella don’t seem to notice. “Thank you,” they murmur as their eyes wander over my shoulders. They are ready to greet their next guest. For a moment I wonder whether to reveal my identity. But even I know that it’s too late for that. I can only wonder about a different past. Taking one last look at my girls, I walk out of the hall. Relief sweeps over me as I realize that I have not marred Stella’s day. Relief feels soothing, so I get into my car and welcome sleep.

The Night Watch

By Chaya Sherman

My fingers and my toes start to go numb. My eyes are adjusting to the dark and I turn my head left and right to stay aware of any motion around me. A blink, a tiny moment of distraction can prove fatal. Most kids are afraid of the dark, but I don't think they know the dangers that are really lurking out there. My job is to protect them and make sure they never know, but I'm also scared. I'm scared that every person who walks past me will be the one who wants to kill me simply because of what I am.

I've been standing on this corner for a few hours since my shift began at nine. I walk back and forth to stay warm. I sit on the curb for a few minutes until it gets too cold, and then I stand up and continue my pacing. I shift my rifle from shoulder to shoulder and pray that I will not have to use it tonight.

It's funny. Jerusalem is not officially "the city that never sleeps," but it's almost one o'clock in the morning and there are still families walking around as if it is the middle of the day. I nod at the parents and smile at the children, and they smile shyly back. Some of the people ignore me, but many mutter "Todah Rabah Lecha" as they pass. My presence makes them feel safe. They don't see the fear built up inside of me. I'm here to protect them. But who's protecting me?

For almost a month now, this has been where I spend my nights. Every evening before I leave, I help my son do his math homework and I read a colorful picture book to my two daughters.

"Please Abba, just one more," they beg every night. As they sit on my lap in their fleece pajamas and look up at me with those warm brown eyes, I can't help it and usually give in. Finally, after I peel them off of me and give one more kiss goodnight, my wife hands me a thermos of hot black coffee and I have no more excuses to delay leaving.

Tonight is my turn to drive, so I pick up my friends Uri and Noam on my way into the center of the city. I don't really pay attention, but their casual conversation in the background is comforting to me. I hate these nights alone in the dark, wishing I was home with my family. Noam is complaining about his mother-in-law. He's been staying at her house because his wife is expecting and won't stay home alone at night. She's furious that he has to leave every night and will probably miss

I'm scared that every person who walks past me will be the one who wants to kill me simply because of what I am.

going to the hospital with her. I roll my eyes; does she think this is how we choose to spend our nights?

They're both laughing, but the sound is unnatural and forced. We try to pretend there's nothing wrong, and it almost works. If I don't look out the window it feels like we're off to a concert. But outside I see other officers getting into position at their posts, and the people in the streets are walking faster than they usually do.

I pull into the designated lot and we all gather our gear and say our good-byes before we split up for the night. I glance at my watch before I start walking. 8:47; I have thirteen minutes until I absolutely must be at my corner to relieve the first shift. The walk is really only four minutes, but I drag my feet. Every minute I stall is one less minute of being responsible for the lives of others.

My mind drifts back to my family. I hope the kids went to bed nicely; I feel guilty enough that my wife has to deal with them alone every night. I never tell her that each night as I leave, I'm wondering if I'll ever see them again. I spend the entire night hoping to see the morning. I'm not going off to war, but this almost feels harder. When I was in the army I was brave and never hesitated to step up to defend my home. But that was when I knew my enemy. Now, I cower at every shadow and whisper of the wind, never knowing which will take me away from those I love.

Forward or Backward?

By Rivka Lax

I was born into this life, I didn't have a choice. My parents did; they chose their "toys" over me. Since I was a little boy they used to tell me, "You are so lucky Jack. When we were your age we had to go to school in a big, horrible, dirty bus and sit in uncomfortable chairs for hours. All you have to do is turn on your Computer Teacher to give you all the information you need."

All I could think of in the moments like this was, "I wish I was born in your time."

People in my life believe that technology can solve any problem. The problems in my life began with technology. In year 2025, I was going to a great school and had a perfect family, but you could not find a more miserable teenager in the whole Manhattan.

I was lucky enough to get to know my grandfather before he passed. He was really the person who raised me. He was the one who made me question everything I saw in everyday life. On one of the nights that Grandpa babysat me, not some vapid robotic nanny everybody uses these days, he told me about the world he was born into, a world with letters, paper books and children playing outside. He told me about his friends who used to swim in an actual lake, not the fake-people-created-lakes that we had now. He showed me a picture of his parents and him in a forest, where they did an activity he called "hiking." They looked so happy together, so genuine.

I don't remember the last time my parents took a photograph with me. I can't even remember the last time we left the house together. I don't remember the last time they looked at me and said "Jack, we love you so much. We are proud of the person you are becoming. You are the best thing that happened to us."

**This world is my
worst nightmare
come true.**

Every morning instead of hearing, "Good morning Jack, we love you, have a great day in school," all I ever heard was, "I have to get this for work." These days parents don't walk you to your bus (Computer Teacher, remember?). Since the day I learned about school and buses, I keep wondering what my children's future will look like. Will they too have Computer Teacher or will they have human teachers to help them understand the past and the present? The last words my grandfather said to me before he passed were, "This world is my worst nightmare coming true."

I could blame it all on my grandfather. If he had never told about his life, I would never know any better. But I did know better and I just couldn't live this life anymore. One morning, after my parents left, instead of going to the school room, I got dressed and left the house. For a while I just walked around the city, watching people hurry by, I saw machines controlling everything around me, knowing we were the "unnecessary" children in this perfect world. Why do it, you ask. Why leave your perfect house and wander around the streets? I guess I hoped my parents would notice my absence and would come looking for me. Imagine my disappointment when I returned home at 11 p.m., which was my bedtime and my parents didn't yell at me. They didn't even realize that I wasn't home because it was a day before the big meeting and they stayed late at work.

The next day I went to THE COMPANY which created all the amazing machines in our lives. The skyscraper was so tall it blocked out the sky. In my world this skyscraper was the sun.

"You are not supposed to be here," said the Lobby Reception Robot.

"I don't care. Call one of the human workers here, please," I asked.

Minutes later I saw a man walking towards me.

"Mr. Smith, you are not permitted to be here. You are supposed to be home, listening to Computer Teacher."

"I want you to send message to the CEOs."

The man gave me a funny look. I knew why and I ignored it. I was here for a reason and I had to say what had to be said.

"I want you to tell my parents that the technology they created to make this world a better place destroyed their son's life."

When I turned 18, I was first person to open a school with human teachers and the first person to open a bus company to take children to that school. My parents haven't spoken to me since that day. As much as I miss them, I want to build a better future for my children. Thank you, Grandpa.

Manbugs and Mysteries

By Leora Lehrfield

I wonder if the world's list of wonders ever ceases, ever stops, ever runs out. I wonder if it ever reaches a frayed end and slips helplessly off those last few rough strands and falls, soundlessly, to where things are unseen and unheard.

There are seven billion worlds in this one world. Not in the cosmic sense – I'm not one to tell of physics and black holes and Einstein – but in the individual sense. Each individual lives in his own little world. And there are things happening in these seven billion microcosms – hundreds of things, every day. We take note of these things: we marvel at them and we cry about them and we question them. But we tend to marvel and cry and question only what we see in our own worlds. I notice when it's a bright, yellow, shining day in my world, but who's to say I'll notice it's raining grey in yours? If only everyone realized that his world isn't the only one, that there are billions of worlds as complex as his. If only everyone realized just how much wonder – all those inquisitive what-ifs and whys - takes place in all the minds of all the worlds. Every person looks around and creates countless questions during his lifetime. Take those hundred thousand questions, multiply those by seven billion and that's the start of the world's list of wonders and it keeps growing.

I live an entirely different life than that eight-year-old boy in Africa. While I sit in a large blue van, wondering which of the two raindrops on my window will slither down faster and reach the bottom first, he looks anxiously at his father, wondering if the crops he just helped sow will last the family through the upcoming winter. And although we're in such different worlds, sometimes we wonder the same thing; sometimes our wonders overlap and repeat themselves, making appearances in both our imaginations. Yesterday we both wondered if that classmate knew how much he hurt us with his words – two classmates on two opposite sides of the world, but in the same thought. We wondered whether he did not realize that he had just ruined our worlds, unaware that there were other existing worlds, or just didn't care as long as his world was still spinning steadily and strong. A week ago, we both

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wondered how people saw us from the perspectives of their worlds; we wondered what our worlds looked like from the outside, how it appeared to the enemy, the best friend, the ones in charge. This morning, we both raised our eyes to look at the sky and wondered why it is blue during the day but transforms into strips of all the colors, a bright orange glow surrounding the brilliant, deep yellow orb at sunset.

There are wonders that overlap in many worlds, questions that show their faces in my world and his world and their worlds. But there is also a string of new wonders being born every day: new experiences breed new questions and new discoveries. But what if one day the list of wonders will stop, and all the wonders to come are just recycled from the rope we have already toyed with our fingers? What if we have no new experiences that ignite the curious child in us? Maybe all the questions possible to ask about the blue sky were already asked – if not by us, then by her, or them – which just leaves us to ask them again. Maybe all the thoughts about the stiff blades of dewy grass (Is the green I see the green you see? Maybe you're seeing a purple lawn!) or the bewilderment at the spotted ladybugs (Are they all females? Are there manbugs too?) has already ran out, and we are re-using those questions. Does our curiosity ever fade, or do we just not care to question as much as we once did? I often wonder if we will see or hear or write one final wonder that concludes the list, or if new wonders will continue to form, like the eternal space of the universe, with no boundaries and limits, an endless string with an immeasurable number of never-ceasing wonders. But all I can do is look at the world— at my world, and hopefully into others as well — and wonder...



Dorothy in Blue

By Hadassah Herskovich

Save One Life, Save the World

By Nina Melohn

I wonder. I wonder if I was in his position if I would do the same. I wonder if I would have the determination to stand up against tyranny. I wonder if I would have the strength of character to disobey the laws of Nazi Germany. Nicholas Winton acted before thinking. Nicholas Winton acted on his innate feeling of compassion, saving children born into the atrocity of the war. The Germans calculated the use for each human being that they kept alive, often deeming children as “unnecessary.” Nicholas acted with his heart against these heinous laws by arranging a Czech Kindertransport to bring these children to safety in Britain. Through his valiant efforts, he successfully saved 669 children from a dreadful fate. He granted 669 children a new lease on life. He allowed 669 children to enter the world and create a future for themselves. I sit here and wonder if I would do the same.

I wonder what made Nicholas Winton different. In the winter of 1938 Winton was planning his early ski trip to Switzerland. Upon hearing of the atrocities around him he instead went to Prague to assist, changing the course of his life and history forever. While many turned a cold shoulder or simply shielded their eyes from the daily atrocities, Nicholas stared them in the face. He understood that he could make a difference. He understood that he had the power to help. While living in London, Winton successfully lowered the age of refugees allowed to enter Britain. While many obstacles presented themselves along the way, Nicholas persevered. I sit here and wonder if I would do the same.

I wonder what would have happened had Nicholas been too afraid to rebel. I shudder when I so much as contemplate that thought. Lives cut short. Generations with no legacy. Families never to be created. Luckily the list can end there because someone recognized the potential of a human being. Someone understood the value of life. And someone acted on this understanding, risking his life. I sit here and wonder if I would do the same.

I wonder what became of these 669 children. While I know they were granted a second chance at life, I wonder if they understood the value of life. I hope they infused every day of their lives with meaning. I hope that they live lives of conviction fully understanding that someone risked his life for them. Among those saved was Yitzchak Tuvia Weiss who became the chief Rabbi of Israel. Nicholas truly lived by the motto “Save one life, save the world,” a motto which was later inscribed in a ring given to him by those he saved. He understood their latent potential. I sit here and wonder if I would do the same.

I wonder why Sir Nicholas Winton humbly hid these deeds for generations. For fifty years he never breathed a word, truly living up to the title, “hero.” Didn’t

he want to announce to the world that he was the one? That he was the one who fought against the tide. Yet until his wife found the proof in a scrapbook nestled in a dusty box in their attic, the secret was safe with him. I wonder if he understood the never-ending ripple effects created by his act of selflessness. While he is no longer here, there is no doubt that his legacy is eternal. I sit here and wonder if I would do the same.

Unfortunately, pondering this haunting question leaves me feeling disturbed and disappointed. While I would like to consider myself selfless and caring, I recognize that I have limits. I am aware that there are boundaries I have difficulty crossing if they impede my everyday functioning. I care for my family and friends and will go out of my way to protect them from harm. I shed a tear when I am made aware of a tragedy outside my immediate support system. However, I cannot confidently say that I would act on these tears. I cannot confidently say that I would risk my own life and the life of my family to save the lives of anonymous people I do not know. I would probably leave this job for a real hero, of which there are so few. So with a saddened heart but realistic perspective, I do not wonder. I simply applaud and appreciate those that can and do. Thank you Nicholas Winton for being the hero I know I cannot be.

**For fifty years
he never
breathed a
word, truly
living up to the
title, “hero.”**



Alice in Wonderland

By Drais Friedman

THREE

Facing the Truth

*“Denial is the worst kind of lie...
because it is the lie you tell yourself.”*

– Michelle A. Homme

Facing the Truth

By Chaya Sherman, Editor

Human nature is to take the most painful truths and bury them deep inside of us where they can never get out. We think that if we cover a cut with a Band-Aid and pretend it's not there, it'll just go away, when really we need to acknowledge its presence and face the truth in order to treat the wound properly. Usually, the hardest part of facing the truth is the moment of revelation when our protective shield disintegrates and we are forced to open our eyes to whatever it is we were hiding from.

The little boy in Kayla Landau's, "The War Between Us," idolizes his father and dreams of growing up to be just like him. After following his father to work one day, the boy discovers that his hero has really been the villain the entire time. All his convictions and beliefs come crashing down in that moment, as he discovers the truth.

Even harder than discovering the flaws of a loved one is realizing the consequences of our own actions, as in Hadassah Goldstein's "The Final Click." One small mistake after a heated fight has an unforeseeable outcome and the protagonist must face what she has done. She learns to cope with the resulting feelings of "remorse and disgust" at her own behavior.

Similarly, in "What Did You See Danielle?" by Chaya Sarah Oppenheim, the death of a close friend sparks never before encountered emotions. After the funeral, when the mourners "lifted their heads, the new world they were now met with would always be off-kilter, unbalanced." They are unsure of how to move on and face living life without Danielle.

Sometimes escape is essential. In Avigail Ovitsh's "Escape," the protagonist does "the only thing I can do to stop the whirlwind of pain enveloping me. I go to my favorite place in the whole world— my escape place." That's how she spends her time. It's the only way she can cope with the ridicule of her peers, but at the end of the day, she realizes she must come back from her imaginative world. She must come back and face the truth.

Each piece, although distinctive and spanning varying years and places, comments on the human experience of overcoming denial and facing the truth. The challenges in every piece are different, but all are the cause or result of major changes in the lives of the protagonist which they must now overcome as they learn to live with their new reality.

Pictures From the Past

By Racheli Brunner

She stood there, picture frame in hand, wondering where her life had gone. She was staring at a young girl in the prime of her youth. Her golden hair flowed down her back illuminating her face like the sunshine on a warm summer day.

She remembered all too well the days her daughter lived. How could she not? She herself had been living them these 55 years. She shot out her arm. The whistling of her bones reminded her that she could no longer move that fast. She couldn't for a long time. She remembered the last time she felt this weak.

55 years ago.

Again, slower this time, she reached out, determined to pull the girl into her grip. If she could just reach her, everything would go back to the way it was, 55 years ago. 55 years of torture and pain. 55 years of never letting go. But it was no use. It was the end, or rather, it had ended long ago.

November 1, 1947. Winter there was a tired, treacherous thing. It was so cold that no sum of hours spent by the glowing fire could be enough to bring the color back into her icy swollen fingertips. The fever didn't help. Her face had been getting thinner and paler by the day. Her lips cracked when she tried to speak. Even that was nearly impossible. It seems many things were.

Her mama's eyes started to glimmer, as the tears began to flow uncontrollably. She had tried everything. Every doctor, every treatment, every way. They told her to give it up. They said things would be better that way.

But she couldn't.

Could she?

Today, there was no point in wondering. No point in going through that hourly torture that chilled her to the bone, or those flickering thoughts that flew at her every time she closed her eyes, making her head pound like the beat of a drum. No point in biting her nails down to their roots wondering what tomorrow would bring. Because there would be no tomorrow.

So she sat there, cradling her daughter in her lap, for what seemed like an eternity until her skin turned so white it seemed transparent and her heartbeat flew away. And that was it.

November 1, 2002. Staring at the picture frame. Fifty five years, gone in the blink of an eye. Fifty five years of staring at the picture of her daughter. Her daughter who died because she had given up. Her daughter, whose last breath blew out of her like wind on a stormy winter night with nothing to stop it. And all her life

she was left to wonder, what if? What if she had done more? What if her daughter had never been sick? What if, what if, what if... She lived fifty five years stuck in that moment, frozen in time. After all, what is life, but an endless span of hours linked together by memories.

And this was hers.

And she would never let go.

**After all, what
is life, but an
endless span of
hours linked
together by
memories.**



Daily Wonders

By Ruti Koenig

The What If Game

By Chloe Gertner

I would sit at my wooden desk, face smashed against my palm, as if my face was a window on a school bus, and I would wonder. The curls on my head were as wild as the brain hidden beneath them. My hair was something else. I think that even the number one circus master wouldn't have attempted at taming those Rotini spaghetti shaped curls. I didn't mind them; they kept me interesting. They definitely were responsible for my title as "biggest weirdo" in the school.

I'm not going to give you a sob story, because there really isn't one. I didn't mind, I had greater things to tend to. In fact, in retrospect, school was a pretty productive time for me. It wasn't productive in the way Mr. Smith, Mrs. Grant, Mr. Elliot and all the other teachers hoped it would be, but hey, you can't always get what you want. School was productive because that's where all the cogs in my brain started spinning, and that's where my imagination ran the wildest. Class would drone on and my teacher's voice became a ceiling fan in the background. Of course from year to year I would have to spend some time adjusting and turning each new teacher's voice into a fan. Eventually they gave up on me and I rarely heard a teacher ask, "Casey, what is the answer?"

I'll be the first to admit I was weird, but if you're doing what everyone else is doing, you're doing something wrong. While the boys would trade baseball cards and the girls would talk about whatever girls talk about, I would run into the risky world of what ifs. What if everyone in the world listened to the same exact song at the same time? What if all the kids in the world united and decided not to go to school one day? The world of what ifs was risky but there was an addictive thrill that came with it because it wasn't like most things in life that have a beginning and an end. There was no beginning and there was no end. The world of what ifs was a beautiful black hole. The interesting thing was that everyone felt the need to be with their peers in order to have a good time, but when I was alone, just me and my brain, I was the happiest.

I wasn't an anti-social teen who was angry and disinterested. I just didn't feel like I was placed in the right kind of society. I lived in a very small town with a very small list of what was tolerated. You wore this to school, you ate this for lunch, you came home at this time, and you went to bed at this hour. And then you woke up the next morning and repeated this same exciting cycle again.

I wanted to leave, but I felt bad. My parents loved the little haven they raised me in, but I had my own ideas. My dad worked in the deli. He would come home each night with the mixed aroma of smoked turkey sandwiches and strong black coffee clinging to his jacket, and of course he always wore a warm smile that every

small town deli owner has. My mom was simple. She was a woman who only knew love. She knitted sweaters and accessories, and all the townspeople would gather around and put their hands up to their mouths in admiration when they saw her work.

I felt incomplete. My brain was overflowing with what ifs that needed to be put into action. So I moved to Manhattan, a city where all the people who feel out of place everywhere else come to live together and embrace their titles, such as “the biggest weirdo.”

It wasn't easy moving, but I wanted it, so I made it happen. My early days were filled with hands that turned prunish from washing dishes all day and night. Life was filled with dirty aprons, bad smells, decrepit walkup apartments, biking between loud buses and cars to get to my destination, but there was happiness and a sense of belonging.

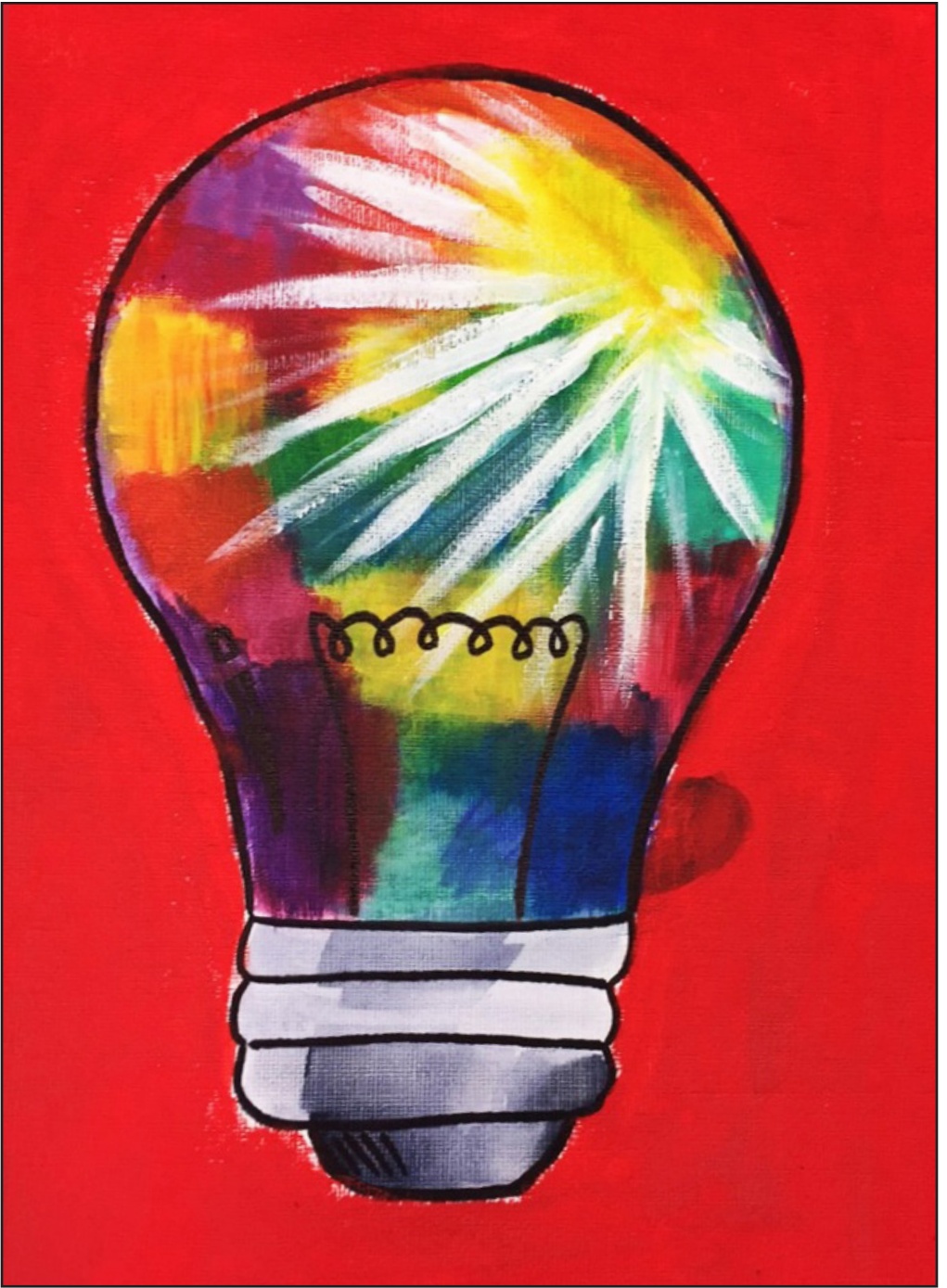
Since I was doing things like working in dirty kitchens, I found myself dreaming. In retrospect, I'm happy I went through that because I believe that you find your real and true passion when you're doing something you hate. I was miserable in the back of that moldy kitchen filled with industrial sized brass pots that I would have to stick my whole arm into in order to clean. But it was those soaked and dirty shirtsleeves, which represented my misery, which made me realize what I really wanted to do.

So I went out and chased my what ifs, and of course there were the naysayers who said no and thought I was crazy, but they were my biggest sources of motivation. I took my creativity and I created a goal, because you can't score if you don't have a goal set up for yourself.

Now I sit at a different wooden desk, in an office that doesn't seem at all like the typical kind of working office you would find, and that's because it isn't a typical working office. It's an office that brings to life the what ifs of those long school days and those tiring nights spent in a greasy kitchen. It's an environment where people who doze off in class and are considered “weirdos” come together, and the traits that make them weird are recognized as their most valuable trademarks. We, the weird ones and the outcasts, come together and create the endless algorithms

**So I moved to
Manhattan, a
city where all
the people who
feel out of place
everywhere else
come to live
together and
embrace their
titles.**

that allow you to pay with your credit card online, text your friends, have things suggested to you while you shop on amazon, and download apps. These algorithms that you can't live without, made their way into your life, because a curly haired boy with a wacky brain ran after a seemingly silly what if.



Sparks

By Hannah Balasiano

The Final Click

By Hadassah Goldstein

I still think about that night, the night I ended her life. The night I chose having my five seconds of fame over any chance of getting my best friend back and terminated Alex's social life, and eventually her life altogether. *She'll get over it, it's her fault she took those embarrassing pictures*, I told myself as I watched circles whirling until the screen read "Picture sent to: all contacts." Today on the anniversary of Alex's death, I wonder, *What if we hadn't got in that awful fight? What if our friendship hadn't paused? Would I ever want to hurt her in the first place? What if I hadn't pressed send? Would Alex still be here today? Would I be her BFF and not her killer?*

I sit in the park on the bench Alex and I would gossip and giggle on. Alex and I had one of those rare friendships that most people only dream of. We spent every moment together. Before Alex, I was considered a loser with no friends. Once I befriended Alex, I no longer had to desperately put myself out there, because I had Alex to attend to me all hours of the day. Whether it was strutting the school's halls together, ditching classes to go to the movies, sleeping over at each other's houses every night, or just sitting in comfortable silence in the park, we were inseparable. Not just because she was my only friend, but because she was my best friend, my human diary, my other, better, half. Every significant memory in my life consists of Alex standing by my side, motivating and assisting me with getting back up after my constant setbacks. When I cracked my phone screen and I needed a little ice cream to cheer me up, or had to cope with my parents' divorce, Alex was always there rooting for me. We stayed together through thick and thin and kept each other grounded through life's ups and downs. Click. It's all over.

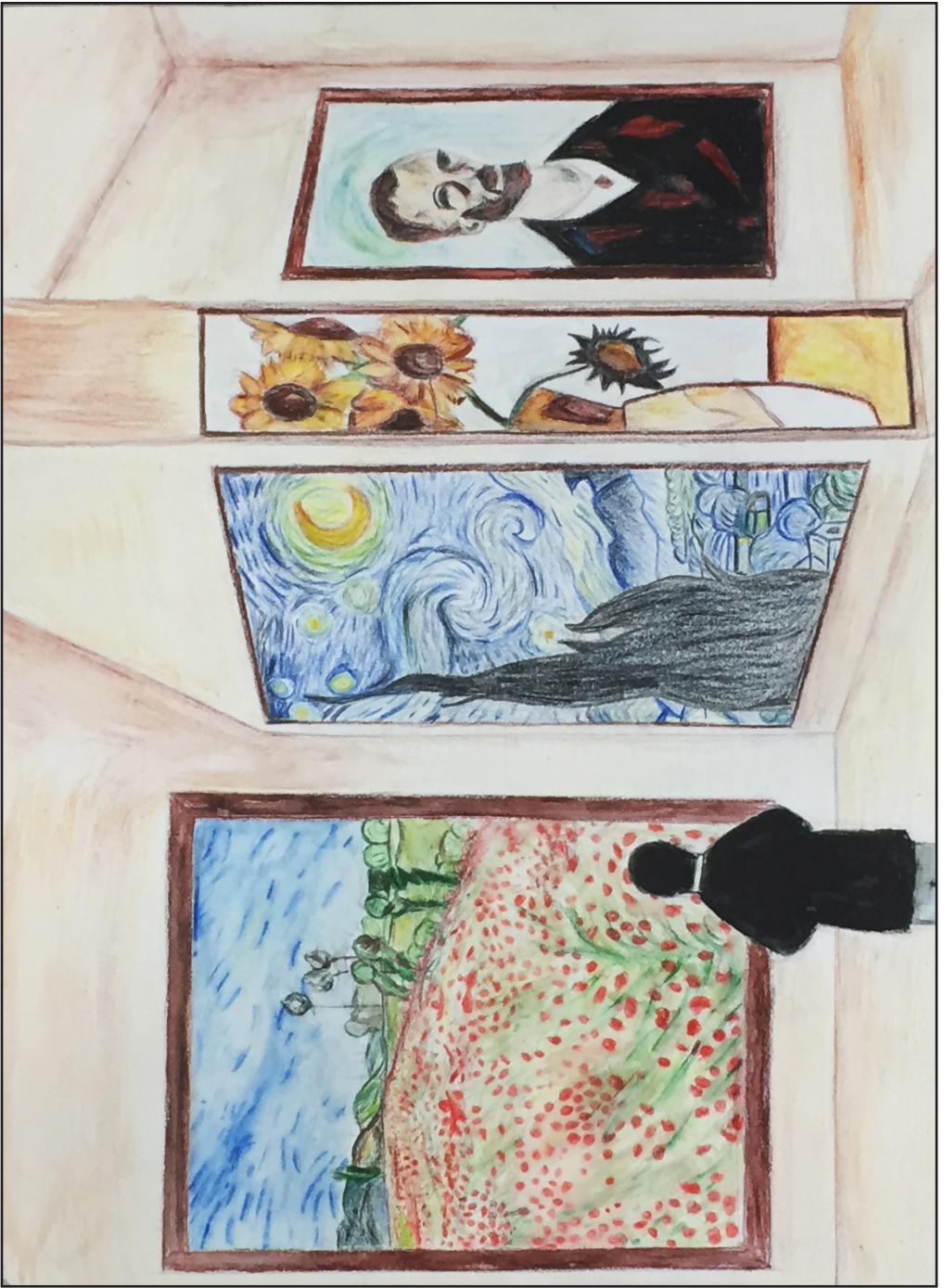
Alex and I had occasional arguments, but nothing as tense and hurtful as the last one. There were tears and insults that cut so deep, no words could be enough to heal them. Everything was said in the heat of the moment, but there was a look of disdain on Alex's face that struck me so painfully I wanted to strike back with a lasting blow. After Alex left, haze of red anger clouded my vision. I gripped my pillow tightly and buried my face deep into it, screaming everything I wanted to say to her, but it was no use. Nothing was going to help me alleviate this fury I was experiencing besides hurting her just as painfully as she did to me. No words could be malicious enough to make Alex know how livid I was. So instead of fighting back with words, I fought back with a click.

A picture, they say, is worth a thousand words. I hoped this one was worth a hundred tears, a million sleepless nights. I didn't think about how everyone else would react to the picture, only of Alex's humiliation. Only of her knowing the

terrible photo was out there. I never anticipated the judgment and harassment she would face. Something I would never wish upon anyone. She spent her last few weeks barely withstanding the torment. On December 4th, 2014, she ended her life. With one click she deleted herself, all the humiliation and torture.

Today on December 4th, 2015, I sit here on this bench, enough tears streaming down my face to cause a hurricane. Remorse and disgust consume every breath I take. I have no one to sit here next to me to make everything feel okay again. Alex was always the one to make my good times better and my hard times easier, but now I have no one because I took my best friend's life with the effortless click of a button.

**A picture, they
say, is worth a
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sleepless nights.**



Muesings

By Yaeli Berkowitz

The War Between Us

By Kayla Landau

I always wondered where he went everyday. He would rise at the time when the sky looked like blazing fire, although now we couldn't see it anymore because the sky was covered with a thick cloud of smoke. He would put on his pants, the ones that were the color of the peas Mama forced me to eat, and a jacket covered in something that looked like the stickers I got in school. Apparently, they meant he was important. He would slip on his mud covered boots and quietly leave the house. I barely ever saw him. Every day I would asked Mama, "Where does Papa go?" And everyday she would respond, "He's making the world a better place." But I never believed her.

It didn't seem like the world was getting better. At night I could hear loud booms and the crinkling sound of glass breaking into millions of tiny pieces. Mama would tell me they were just playing but I knew it wasn't true. I had to find out what was going on outside and there was only one way to find out. The next morning I arose at the time that the sky looked like blazing fire. I swiftly scurried outside the house and slid into the trunk of Papa's automobile. I heard the thumping of his muddy boots and then the roar of the engine. Finally, we came to a halt.

**My father had
always been
my true hero,
someone I could
only dream of
becoming.**

I peaked through the window. I saw a really strange sight. Men sat behind a barbed wire fence like the ones they use for the animals at the zoo. They all matched in blue and white striped outfits. Their faces were ghostly white. Through the pajamas, I could see their little bones popping out. They almost didn't look human. Papa got out of the car. He unlocked the barbed wire fence and went inside. He blew a whistle that sounded like chalk scraping against the blackboard. All of a sudden, the scrawny men scrambled into a straight line. My father began to shoot them one by one as if they were deer in the forest. "So this is what he does everyday!" was my initial response. And then my palms began to feel sticky and my throat was dry. My father had always been my true hero, someone I could only dream of becoming. "How can Papa do this?" I thought. My father was not making the world a better place, he was murdering Jews. This was war and I wasn't going to lose. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw my friend Joseph from school. The memories we had built together flashed before my eyes. He was next on line for shooting and I knew I couldn't let him die. My father, my own flesh and blood was about to slaughter my best friend. How can my father do this to me?! I thought he

cared about me. I thought he loved me. I thought he was civil. I thought he had a heart. And I decided he was not going to kill my best friend. I jumped out of the trunk and flew in front of Joseph to protect him, but it was too late. The gun had been fired. It was flying through the air like an airplane and it was aiming straight for me. And with a loud thud I fell to the floor. I could hear my father's cries of horror and shame. But I didn't care because I had won.

What Did You See, Danielle?

By Chaya Sara Oppenheim

She didn't know grief until she was in the girls' bathroom on the fourth floor and it hit her hard in the face. Dread had been tingling in her veins since minutes beforehand, when her phone displayed a missed call and ominously vague texts that weren't supposed to be received during a school day. Her hands were shaking when she returned the missed call. There was no answer. She called again, but hung up after the first ring; abruptly, she was struck with the definite knowledge that she didn't want to hear the voice on the other line. She also didn't want to hear her own voice; she wasn't sure she would even have one.

Three minutes later, at 11:14 am, her phone shivered with sorrow, finally whispering what she would've given anything not to hear. "Danielle died this morning. I'm so sorry." And that's when she started screaming. The news knocked her head backwards with so much force that she thought her skull would snap off her neck.

She couldn't breathe.

The hard yellow and white tiled walls closed in on her as she screamed, watching her with clean, emotionless faces. She frantically turned away from them to the mirror, searching for a face she could recognize. She didn't find one.

Her phone murmured a second time, a tactless friend pressing a topic when it would be better at this point to just let it go. One punch hadn't satisfied grief. It struck her once again. This time, she was backed up against a bathroom stall when the blow landed. "She fought hard. You should be proud." Her hands pressed out to balance herself, fingernails scraping across the chilled metal of the unsteady stall door.

The tears were instinctive- salty, silent screams that streaked down her face, until they realized they had nowhere else to go. Despite this, they continued to pioneer along their pointless trail; throngs of embittered droplets squeezing one past the other, waving their fists earnestly, intent on martyrdom or suicide, she wasn't sure.

The tears still swathed her cheeks an hour later, when she watched the cold city through blurry eyes on the way to the funeral. Brownd leaves clung in dried clumps to dead branches, cleaving to the pretense of life; every black car on the highway seemed to be a hearse. Where are you now, Danielle? The faces of the living that she did see were a mockery of life, lost skeletons scarcely coated in a thin layer of fleeting smiles and imaginary laughs, cold wind whipping their hair and stealing their voices.

She saw people heading toward the chapel before she saw the building itself, a silent brick building fluid enough to bend toward hosting any event, while stable enough to hold masses of bodies inundated with undulating human emotions. Inside the chapel, scores of people stood, stifled with pain.

She saw people she knew, at least. Familiar arms took hold of her, in that foreign place with hard wooden pews and faded red carpet and dust that hung in the air. She couldn't look them in the eyes, though. But they gasped together on that hard bench, heaving matching breaths with their shoulders pressed.

The world that knew you shook when you left it, Danielle. The shaking started feverishly: a violent shaking of the hands, fingers trembling, followed by the tremulous wavering of a voice, with crushed syllables and lost pitch, slowing down to the heavy shaking of the head, refusing to believe. Finally the shaking stopped; but when the remaining survivors lifted their heads, the new world they were now met with would always be off-kilter, unbalanced. Danielle was gone.

**The world that
knew you shook
when you left it,
Danielle.**

It was back at home, in a loneliness she'd never felt before, that she finally believed. Surrounded by tissues resembling nothing more than the crumpled white wet foreheads of mourners and scrunched eyelids choking tears, she wanted to bury herself in them and disappear. She closed her eyes and held her breath until she saw blue, a white blue, a bright blue, an ice blue.

What did you see, Danielle?

Escape

By Avigail Ovitch

It's happening again—the endless cycle of my suffering. As I travel down the faded blue corridors of Lincoln Elementary School, all heads turn to me, following my slow progress down the third floor hallway. Dozens of pairs of eyes bore into my head, drilling holes through my skull, allowing all my secrets to spill out onto the grimy floor for the entire world to see. Girls and boys turn to their friends who have not yet seen me, and whisper. They point and laugh. Then I begin to hear it. “Weirdo, Weirdo, Weirdo.” Giggling fifth graders and snobby seventh graders whisper insults about me into their friends’ ears, thinking I don’t know what they are saying. Thinking I can’t feel how they torment me. Their words shoot down the hall like poison-tipped darts, gathering momentum until they rip into my body, the poison slowly seeping into my bloodstream until it explodes inside my brain. Echoing in my mind, their taunts ignite a chorus of thousands of words that never leave my head. They play again and again like a record I can’t pause. “Weirdo, Weirdo, Weirdo.”

All I want to do is jump out of my bulky wheelchair and shriek until my vocal cords rip and my veins pop through my forehead. I want to tear down the hall and pound the face of the little fifth grader standing by her locker who seems so pleased that her particularly clever insult made her friends laugh. “Drool girl,” she said. I want to tell her that I’ve heard that one before. She’s not as clever as she thinks she is. I’ve heard them all before; the spiteful comments that tear at the corners of my heart and the sarcastic ones that make me want to thrash out in rage. I want to smash my fists through the trophy case outside the principal’s office, throw the fire extinguisher down the stairs and watch as students jump back at the shocking noise. But of course, none of that happens. I can’t do any of those things. I can never do anything. All I can do is sit in my chair like a weirdo, drooling with that annoying grin plastered on my face, my empty skull drooping to the side like a broken bobble head hanging off its wooden body. Then I do the only thing I can do to stop the whirlwind of pain enveloping me. I go to my favorite place in the whole world — my escape place.

I love this place. It is the one place of escape from my miserable reality. The only place where no one can make me feel inferior, where I can shut out the world and just breathe without being scared of what people will say about me. The one place where I can be left alone to be who I know I can be, but never have the chance to. There, I can be the thing I want most — a normal 12-year-old girl with too many friends to count, who giggles in the hallways, and laughs about hair, makeup, and clothing at sleepovers. Someone who dances in her bedroom after everyone has gone to sleep, and sings in front of the mirror to practice for a school

play audition. In my place, nothing stops me — not my sickly, pale legs that hang limp from my body, preventing me from running to see the world. Not my lips that don't work and can't utter a sound other than the gibberish of a baby gurgling to himself. Not even my brain, which works so much better than most people would ever realize, the one thing in my pathetic, broken body that does not give me shame. Nothing can stop me. There, in my imagination, I am free from the pity and sad faces of random strangers who pass me in the street. I am saved from the taunts of classmates who can't fathom the meaning of real pain. I go to this place for as long as I can, until a voice calls me back, a different one each time — my mother, my attendant Julie with the fake smile that is too wide for her delicate face, or my little brother with his toothless grin that everyone loves who was lucky enough to avoid my predicament. I escape there until the voice calls me back, away from the imaginative world I wish I could live in forever, back to the reality of my sad, little life.

**In my place,
nothing stops me.**



Searching

By Ashira Feld

Voices

By Hadassah Penn

My job is to mess with your mind. Those insecurities that flit about your brain like a cloud of gnats? That's me. My face looks chubby in these glasses. Are they talking about me? I'm not smart enough – kind enough – honest enough. I'm not paralyzing. In fact, I pride myself on my subtlety. Don't blame me for your fear of zombies, heights, or vaccinations, because my kind of work is more delicate—and considerably more constant – than that.



My job is to help you escape. Not physically; I don't control your arms or legs or lungs. But when you're in history class, and then suddenly you're lost in a daydream, that's my handiwork. I make the boring a little bit less boring and the ordinary extraordinary. I'm not always pleasant. Sometimes I'll lure you down a train of thought that you'd rather not pursue; sometimes I'll get a little bit too excited and you may temporarily forget about reality. You come back to reality – Wait. What was he saying? I wonder if – and then you're off again. I'm fleeting and insubstantial and hard to pin down, but without me, daily life would be such a grind. So I like to think that I'm pretty positive, when all is said and done.



My job is to inspire you. I have the power to cause a world of trouble, but I am also the impetus behind all creation, the what if that pushes you to discover and build and know – and the aha moment once you do. I can plague you for years so that you are never satisfied, or I can appear in a brilliant flash, setting you on a fast track towards scientific, social, or cultural insight. I can be frustrating: I'll never find it. There's just no answer. Or exhilarating: I got it! I understand now. I am not a tame beast. I come without warning and I can be gone just as quickly, but pay attention when I arrive, because I can change your life.

**I am not a tame
beast. I come
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your life.**



My job is to ground you, to take the wild current of your thoughts and turn them into reality. I help you decide which pursuits are worth pursuing, which thoughts should be developed and which abandoned. I don't need that right now.

That sounds plausible. I can learn from this. I have pretty good judgment, although I do slip up now and then. I am old-fashioned and hard-working; I am simple and righteous and fulfilling. I am not emotional, I do what must be done and I do it well. I do my best to keep you focused, on track and on task.



Self-doubt, imagination, curiosity and reason: we are not your most prominent voices, nor are we the most appreciated – yet we are some of the most human. We come and go, here and there and back again, but the key is that we always come back, when you most need us – or when you least expect us.

216 Francach & Luch Road

By Nechama Flohr

Three men with endless ideas sit around one circular wooden table in one building. They are here to discuss the world's biggest problem. This problem being world peace. They speak calmly at first, each man stating his ideas which are not ideas at all, being that his idea is the most brilliant and will surely work. I listen half heartedly and wonder why they think their ideas will be effective. World peace I conjecture means no war, but there will always be war of some kind. No one will ever agree on everything. After a while the men begin to discuss their "ideas" more heatedly. They are now arguing, perhaps even fighting. No, they are definitely fighting. I hear someone fall amongst the yelling. If this is how men who are discussing world peace solve their problems then I suppose it can never be accomplished.

My Grandfather told me this only last week, but it seems like ages ago. He would sit here in our gloomy, dimly lit family room, scowling at us children crowded around him and share his wisdom with us. "World peace!" he began in one of these tirades, his long grey whiskers quivering, "Men are trying to obtain world peace! What exactly is this 'world peace' they speak of you ask? Ha! They claim they can create a world in which there is no war!" He would yell the word war so loudly that we would all shake a little. This was the effect he hoped for. "There will always be war I tell you!" he continued shouting, "War against..." Now he paused and there seemed to be an intense struggle happening inside of him. His face was twisted into a part snarl, part extremely pained look. Finally, he spat out the word "Pests!"

We all gasped in unison and by now we were positively trembling. He was about to go on but my great aunt Miorla strode into the room and declared quite fiercely that my Grandfather "Had better stop scaring us unless he intended to lose his head in a terribly unfortunate manner." My Grandfather began to say that he was bound to die in ways more unfortunate than this, but decided against it upon seeing the look on my aunt's face. Instead, he furiously let my aunt know that all he was doing was teaching us a "life lesson which will come in handy at one point or another in our lives" and that we should "get acquainted with the fact that world peace cannot be obtained!" He then shuffled out of the room muttering things about "Fools!" and "Men!" When he was practically outside I heard him mangle to sputter "War against pests!" in a voice which left me at risk of dropping somewhat lifeless onto the dirty cement floor. Later, when everyone

**This week, my
grandfather
along with a
large part of my
family, is gone.**

else was asleep, my Grandfather came home and I asked him to finish teaching me his life lesson.

This was last week though. This week, my Grandfather along with a large part of my family, is gone. The rest of them are scattered throughout the city. I used my Grandfather's lesson and he was too old to use it; everyone else was never taught. That's why I'm sitting here now. The exterminator missed me, you see.



Where the Minds Roam Free

By Leah Genkin

FOUR

New Perspectives

*“It is a narrow mind which cannot look at a
subject from various points of view.”*

– George Eliot, *Middlemarch*

New Perspectives

By Hadassah Herskovich, Editor

So often we remain wrapped in our world, in our own bubbles of thoughts and emotions. We all have preconceived notions of how one should act. How one should think. How one should write. But when we take the time to wonder, to question our minds and let ourselves move past our comfort zones, we will be amazed where our open minds can take us.

In “Monkey See, Monkey Do,” Rena Seidemann ponders how the monkeys feel about people visiting the zoo. In a population so often self-observed and concerned with our own entertainment, it is nice to step out of the human mind for once. Tami Miller depicts the same experience of spring, from three different perspectives in “The Three Wonders.” As we age, we see the world through different lenses and each stage in life comes with its own unique viewpoint.

Noa Hacker explores current contentions from a scary perspective in her piece, “Bloody Horizons.” Terrorism is an extremely relevant topic today, and countless newspapers tell of the blood and evil. It is a bold and uncomfortable task to write from the point of a view of a terrorist, but Noa manages to push the reader to imagine this scary place, without desensitizing us from this raw and real issue.

Newness is not just limited to content though. Leah Bertram shows us how to look at a familiar story in an entirely fresh way. In “How the Cookie Crumbled,” not one fact from the original gingerbread story is changed, yet in another format, we get to see this classic fairy tale in a whole new way.

Gabrielle Hawk also plays around with structure in her piece, “Mr.Wall.” The text does not follow the typical prose format, and we are left wondering what exactly is going on in her character’s mind, or who her character is for that matter.

Whether we are seeing something for the first time or the hundredth, we always have the opportunity to look with a new perspective and write from a fresh angle. By clearing any current sentiments and associations we have from our heads, we discover that there are worlds out there waiting to be exposed and discovered.

The Reality of a Mushroom

By Rachelle Benedict

The air was running, pushing those in front, and trampling the little ones to create a frenzied stampede. The man's name was Cary and he passed through the leaves letting his feet give each one an individual tap on the head. The park was his place where he let everything go, where his questions were happy without sensible answers. He walked past the pond that was coated by leaves on top and wondered if it would be frozen as a skating rink for the winter. As he strolled he pushed his naked hands deeper into his pockets. He thought about the past and he thought about the future.

The future seemed pretty similar in his head to the past with no real direction or purpose. He followed his daily route and reached the highlight of his pedestrian experience when he landed at the landmarked statue of the characters in Alice in Wonderland. The characters spoke to him, their silence was louder than the small words he shared with his doorman or his friend Charlie the barista at the nearby Starbucks. He watched the statue standing there, mocking his emptiness.

Even the statue had more going on in its life, with Alice sitting atop a ram-bunctious looking group of mushrooms. Alice had the white rabbit beckoning her on one side and on the other side the mad hatter courting her with a smile. Cary saw the statue framed with leaves and watched his shadow sigh.

He looked up once more, ready to start his walk home, when he thought he saw the white rabbit wink at him. Intrigued, Cary moved past his usual spot, about 90 degrees parallel to the mushroom, where he could properly see all three characters posing for the statue. He looked into the white rabbit's eyes and remembered a question he had always asked his father. Where was the white rabbit running to anyway?

Cary remembered sitting on his father's lap as his father's big hands and legs stretched like the never-ending frontier. Cary had thought his father resembled a king, the most benevolent and full of hearts of them all willing to do anything for his one precious son. Every night, before his father sat down to eat, he would stop into Cary's room and they would discuss another part of the Wonderland adventure. Lewis Carol was their guide, minus the fanny pack. Cary's father would preach, "You see the white rabbit had a name and that name was Peter, Mr. Peter Rabbit." Cary's father continued to explain that Peter wasn't always a vanilla flavored rabbit, but his clumsiness made him fall into white paint from the King's roses turning his fur from a toasty brown to a wealthy white. Cary's father's eyes ignited, as he would weave through his version of the story, the colors of the moon unable to reflect his glee.

Cary's father would chant with his voice quickening for added drama, "Peter was running to the birth of his daughter who was to be the heir of the future rabbit legacy." Cary would laugh and laugh, excitement mixed with fear as the fantasy walked onwards. "Continue father," Cary would plea after they had agreed on a potential bedtime. Cary's father would slow down, matching his voice to the suspense level and say, "As Peter reached the side of his wife, Mrs. Maddie Rabbit, he watched as a strange looking creature was born. As he peered down at the screaming baby he jumped high in shock and despair and said 'Alas it's a human.'" Cary's father would tousle Cary's hair and say in a mocking omnipotent voice, "That was the story of how Alice Rabbit was born."

The next night the story would continue. Cary's father would explain how Maddie Rabbit put on her lopsided hat and left Peter and the new baby even though she still loved them, kind of like how Mother had left even though she still loved them. Maddie Rabbit went far away and even changed her name to Maddie Hatter. Cary remembered how his father would hold him extra close and hug his white furry dotted pajamas as if they too were part of the story and it hurt to see Maddie go. Cary's father would continue on many intricacies, and each night was a festival of imagination that included meeting a long caterpillar with an even longer list of questions and a mysterious Cheshire cat.

Cary's father told Cary that he reminded him of the caterpillar with the constant flow of questions. He would leave a kiss atop Cary's mushroom cut hair and shut the lights leaving him alone with his wandering thoughts and wondering mind.

With the vivid watercolor images of Wonderland in his head and the weight of looming sleep on his lashes, Cary would enter into the world of dreams. Cary's dreams took him to strange tea parties and he remembered seeing his face reflected in the visage of the caterpillar that asked many questions. Cary sighed once more as he remembered the fun he had had with his father and the story. As he slowly walked away, he smiled to his feet. He remembered the way his father had

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looked at him whenever he asked about Mother. His father, or the most benevolent king of hearts, would look him in the heart and say, “She was always pretty passionate – sometimes passion drives those to go slightly mad.” Cary thought about the caterpillar and its questions and as his meandering quickened to a walk with some purpose he began to wonder about the future too.

How the Cookie Crumbled

By Leah Bertram

Trauma victim's responses to investigators' questionnaire.

1. No one ever really gave me a name that I know of, on account of me not really being a person, but I've been called "Gingerbread Boy."
2. See above, but less than a year old I'd assume.
3. Male.
4. In a cottage in a village.
5. The crazy old couple I ran away from.
6. Well, what would you do if people threatened to eat you?
7. She said "Stop! Stop, little gingerbread man, I want to eat you!" That's pretty straight forward I'd say...
8. [Mumbles] Well... no, but I wasn't going to stick around to find out whether he wanted to viciously devour me as well. And it's not like he would stop her...
9. Fine. One person wanted to eat me.
10. It just was natural to run, I guess I didn't really have a plan per say.
11. Some barnyard animals.
12. They seemed to want to eat me too.
13. On account of them saying "(Oink Oink) Stop! Stop little gingerbread man! I want to eat you!" and "Mooooo! Stoooooooop! Stoooooooop little gingerbread man. We want to eat you!"
14. Well, how was I supposed to know that? They spoke to me, okay?
15. Yes, I did actually
16. I said "NO! I ran away from the little old woman, I ran away from the little old man, and I can run away from you too! So you all can run, fast as you can! Can't catch me, I'm the gingerbread man!"
17. No it wasn't necessary at all.
18. Yes, I do understand that mocking them could be perceived as offensive and perhaps baiting, but I was scared and I wasn't thinking. And anyway it was just the truth – I had run away from the fumbling cannibals and I could run away from anything else too.

**Well, what
would you
do if people
threatened to
eat you?**

19. For about half an hour more.
20. I was not!
21. Perhaps a drop too comfortable.
22. I'm sorry, how should I have crossed the river?
23. Well, honestly if I had stayed on the other side I would definitely have been eaten so really it doesn't matter whether trusting him was a reasonable decision.
24. He didn't give a name (muttered: clever scoundrel) ... but I can describe him.
25. Fox.
26. I don't know... a fox. Shouldn't you know what a fox looks like?
27. I'll try... um, like, orange-ish fur, and green-yellow eyes... black shiny nose... bushy tail, quite comfortable to sit on actually... probably covered in crumbs (sniffles).
28. No.
29. I'd like someone to eat *bim*.
30. He went "SHLLLURP!" right after I climbed onto his nose.
31. I jumped onto a floating leaf.
32. He didn't seem to notice that I'd jumped off, and he just swam away across the river, smug as can be.
33. I held onto his tail until he reached the shore. He kind of ended up pulling the leaf behind him.
34. I set up signals for help and hid under my leaf.
35. Would you go chasing after someone who'd tried to kill you?
36. Well, if you would then you aren't too bright after all, huh?
37. *silence and crumbs*



Oh What a World it Would be

By Elisheva Rosensweig

Mapped Life

By Michal Cohen

The tender skin on the pads of my fingertips brushes across the face of the map, clearing away all the dust particles that are still clinging to the tattered parchment. As I amble down the winding path, puffs of debris spiral behind me into the light breeze. The vibrant green foliage which surrounds me is draped with thick vines and garnished with subtle brush. The lanky birch trees maintain an intimidating stance, yet their branches seem to be outstretched in a welcoming manner. My eyes, an intense azure shade, flit over the map as I try to discern the paths that lie ahead of me.

The path I am following begins to fade and a shadow of two paths appear in its place. My eyes shift upward and I catch a view of the dusk sky painted in an array of burnt orange, magenta, and a subtle shade of pink. I am aware that the time to decide on a path grows near. Choices break through the barrier coated with oblivion which surround my thoughts. My body, racked with doubt, trembles, as my thoughts become keen and aroused. A hint of the moon protrudes from behind the trees, blanketed by the evening glow, as if summoning my decision. A wispy breeze slithers up my goose-prickled flesh, then climbs its way through my chestnut locks, goading me forward. My breath grows shallow as I approach the split in the road, my aching limbs begging for retreat. I find myself wandering through the forest, wondering which path of life to embrace...

One road has a spray of fragrant blossoms, thriving in the rich soil from which it abounds. Vivid colors reflect in my pupils as they sweep over the promising path. Each vibrant green blade of grass beckons me. A hum pervades the crisp air, and I can hear the birds chirping a mellow tune, laced with beauty and grace. A lazy smile creeps onto my face, as the air seemingly warms and gently caresses my cheek. Warmth blooms inside me as I peer into this comforting Eden; complacency pulls me, engulfs my inclination. I continue to survey this path that pulls at me. It is replete with berry bushes that each dangle enticing, plump fruit within arms reach, causing me to salivate. The freshly shorn leaves scattered across the ground are a deep auburn hue. Such beauty, such perfection!

Then, a haze drifts over the glistening crescent moon, like the uncertainty

**A hum pervades
the crisp air,
and I can
hear the birds
chirping a
mellow tune,
laced with
beauty and
grace.**

that begins to cloud my thoughts. As I cast my eyes towards the other path, I notice that it winds relentlessly this way and that and my stomach lurches. The wilted greenery embodies a vibe of despair. Thorn bushes garnish the dry land, bearing prickles strong and steady like spears, seemingly armed and ready to slice through my soul. The bare branches of the trees are outstretched like claws, prepared to snare the next vulnerable soul that passes by. A pit of dread forms in my abdomen, and emptiness courses through my veins. Yet, something draws me to it. Perhaps a curiosity for the dark side, or my thirst for a challenge. So I find myself wandering through the forest, wondering which path of life I will undertake...

My eyes, veiled with uncertainty, glance at my dilapidated map. The streaks of dirt running up and down the parchment make it difficult to decipher. Desperation is embedded in my pinched features, as my decision for which path to choose relies on the map. The road marks are coated with a layer of grime. At the latter point, where the two paths collide, there remains a clear marking — one resilient mark, determined to maintain its purpose on the map. It is this mark that professes with clarity that no matter what choice I make, I will come out victorious. It screams to me to wholeheartedly embrace my decision. My choices and actions, whether negative or constructive, will build my character, mold my personality and blaze their own trail. No matter which path I choose, I know I will leave an indelible mark on this world.

There is no obvious path, as the tempting road can be masked by a façade, and what lies behind the enticing sweet Eden may be cursed. I wonder if choosing that path will lead me astray, with its dizzying promises that may serve to lull me into traps that lead only to sorrow and remorse. Perhaps this golden path will lose its luster and grow dull leaving it void of thriving, as this path is straight and doesn't serve me the struggles which present opportunities to discover who I am, who I can become. As my eyes flit back to the barren desolate road, I wonder if the thorns protruding from the heavy shrubbery will protect me from looming dangers. Maybe the pain I encounter along that journey will sharpen my view on life. I stand there, wondering, wandering...

Bloody Horizon

By Noa Hacker

Heavens are crying, winds are howling and trees are shedding. Babies sobbing, toddlers wailing and adults whimpering. Children sprawled over beds of newly painted red flags and Koran pillows. Angry, sad and fearful parents sit and wail. Will we see them again or will we continue living through terror? A cloud of confusion hovers above us. Fog blinds our thoughts.

I halt. What to do? Where to go?

The pepper-spray bottle drowns in sweat. My lifeline slips by the seconds. Balancing on a tightrope, one wrong step will lead me to my downfall. The grounds of yesteryear reappear, filled with thorns and mud. Trying to keep my feet unsoiled, I tiptoe through the labyrinth while running a marathon.

Where should I go next, left or right, front or back? Where will I be in thirty-seconds, sitting in a cloud of holiness or accompanying the slithering reptiles? While being blown into the whirlwind of the tornado, a train appears in the horizon. Baby in hands. Muscles clenched. Hands stretched.

As the wind breathes onto my face, I know that I am doing the right thing. By now the wind is grasping for air, yet I force it to continue blowing. However, the vortex strengthens and I am swept away. To my dismay, the light-rail that used to be a beacon of safety is now a battle zone.

Unexpectedly, I come across narrow alleyway. With hands over my baby's mouth, we flee. As birds, we levitate over the fog. The commotion behind us seems to strengthen.

As a cheetah, I scurry for my life. As I search for my salvation, I just seem to drown deeper into the chaos. Blinding blood is spread on the sidewalk like cream cheese on a bagel.

As I enter the narrow alleyway, my panting slows down. I squeeze my baby and bathe her with tears. However, through my periphery I spot a checkered hijab. Black walls appear. My escape routes blocked off. Options float my mind. The ground seems so inviting and safe; it is full of crawling snakes. Bullets bounce off of barriers. With my morsel of strength, I throw my baby to the police man. I stutter my last goodbyes.

Hostile brown eyes pierce my paper white complexion. My hollers heard

**Blinding blood
is spread on the
sidewalk like
cream cheese on
a bagel.**

in Tel-Aviv. As I yank my purse, I pray. The fur of my beige pocketbook drips in blood. With rocks at my back, I lift my newfound parachute. Clamped between my fingers, I toss my purse like a bag of rice. Suddenly, my back became a fountain. A knife penetrates into my muscles. As I fall, I see my baby being evacuated safely.

Tears accumulate as my eyelids shut, not knowing that they will never open again.



Hole Hearted

By Gila Klein

My Time with Mr. Wall

By Gabrielle Hawk

That first day. Ha! That first day was so easy. It felt like a break – all the screaming voices around me finally went away. It was almost a relief.

I turn to my best friend, the friend I made only thirteen days after coming here, Mr. Wall.

“And how are you doing today, Mr. Wall? Long time no see, eh? See, yesterday I was over by that corner, but today I decided to try out this corner. Adventurous, aren’t I, Mr. Wall?”

I think someone squeezed my brain today. It felt kind of nice. Like a massage, just inside my head.

“And I got a new bowl today. See, Mr. Wall, yesterday I got a silver bowl. Today it was black.”

Ooh! I also have new sounds inside my head. They weren’t here when I first came. One of them is a screeching noise. Fingernails on the chalkboard of my brain. But I’m used to sounds like that, so I won’t pay it much attention.

“Oh, Mr. Wall. I just. Want. To. Sleep. Under the sky. Like I used too. I can’t stand this place. Sometimes, I cry myself to sleep. But I regret it because then I have tear stains all over my face when I get the bowl.”

Maybe I could sneak out of here. Take my spoon and dig, like in the movies. But I don’t have any strength left.

“Mr. Wall, have you ever been outside? Oh, you have? Isn’t it a wonderful place? I just wish I could go back.”

Yes, I used to be able to lift one hundred pounds with just my pinkie, but I couldn’t now even if I was able. A spile was inserted into my heart and drained all feeling on the thirteenth day. It started a few days earlier, but by then it was all gone.

“If they would just let me out once – then I could fill up my empty balloon of feeling again.”

I am a maple tree. A maple tree with no more sap. If only they’d let me out!

“I can’t take it any more.”

I can’t take it any more.

**If they would
just let me out
once – then I
could fill up my
empty balloon of
feeling again.**

I just can't take it any more.

I collapse into tears. A pile of nothing more than saltwater, ready to be soaked up by the floor.

"Mr. Wall.

MR. WALL

mr. wall."

I cry and I cry and I don't know for how long. But that's not even a new thing for me. Even with a clock next to my bed I never know the time. The clock makes no sense. It defined its own rules of time and forgot to tell me what they are. So I sit here, watching numbers change.

"I'm crying Mr. Wall! Why won't you COMFORT ME?"

I try not to hurt Mr. Wall because he's built, solid and sturdy. Not to be messed with or I'll just hurt myself.

"Excuse me sir."

That's a new voice. It's not mine. It's not Mr. Wall's.

"Excuse me sir, please stand. I'm here to bring you out."

Out.

"Out?"

"Yes, Out."

Does he know what this means for me?

"Goodbye Mr. Wall! Haha! I made it!"

I'll miss Mr. Wall. I hope he's not sad I left him alone.

I walk and soon I am Out. My throat suffocates with the influx of fresh air. I fall to the ground. I kiss it. But I do not call it Mr. Ground.

I am Out. After three years, I am Out. I am with people. No longer alone.

And I realize, that all along, Mr. Wall, was just a wall.

People of the Subway

By Serene Klapper

The tracks groan and protest loudly, as the heavy metal wheels of the subway car hammer across its back. People get on and off, not looking down, and not seeing me.

I lay pressed against the cold metal grate beneath the seats, my breaths short and my body plastered to the ground. I can hear music emanating from the earbuds of a man sitting above my makeshift home. Unable to move, I allow myself to be lost in the vaguely familiar melody.

As the day passes, an incessant stampede of feet and voices rush past. Each shoe speaks its own story. Some click, some squeak, and some pound and thunder. I pass time matching stories to shoes and gaits. She is a businesswoman—her shoes click hurriedly as she quickly makes her way to the platform. He is a hiker—his boots are solid and his steps are deliberate. Thousands of people must pass by today as they have every day since my arrival to this dismal corner of the world. Their voices mingle into a single, incoherent roar. A swirl of intelligible sound waves.

I hear one man plead to a crowd for aid, jingling a bag of coins and wheedling in a hopeful voice. That is the only time the car is truly quiet. I can hear the people above me shifting uncomfortably in their seats, and a mother tell her child, “Don’t stare now!”

At 3:30, the sounds of laughter, skateboards, and gossip, permeates the air. They speak of people and places I have never heard of, giggling loudly, full of energy. One girl sticks her chewed gum so close to me that I try to inch away, wishing I was not a victim to the wind, wishing I was not so frustratingly helpless.

As the evening lengthens, the voices change from those of excited children to the weary and sophisticated tones of adult speakers. They complain about their day and work and some do not speak at all, too worn out by the world to venture an interaction. The train grows old with them, creaking tiredly and delaying at every stop as it waits for people to shuffle on. The voices are hushed, and my mind, weary from days upon endless days of observing the literal bottom of this world, drifts. It is only when the subway car creaks to a complete halt that I am jerked back to awareness. A large, warm hand swoops underneath the seat and lifts me up, crinkling my exterior. “Plastic bag,” says a rough voice, “I can make good use of this.” And as I disappear into a pocket, I fleetingly wonder what is in store for me and what I will observe next.

Each shoe
speaks its own
story.



Two Faced (Flipped)

By Meryl Rubin

The Three Wonders

By Tami Miller

It is spring. The toddler wobbles out the front door, his mother chasing after him with his jacket. The toddler gazes up at the clear blue sky and is filled with wonder at its vast and magnificent beauty. He is enchanted by the sky and he sits on the porch staring up at it, until his eyes catch a glimpse of the green, freshly-mowed grass. He quickly jumps up from his chair and runs across the lawn, singing. He is filled with wonder at the ticklish sensation of the grass brushing against his legs. He plops down on the grass and again looks up at the sky. He takes a deep breath and is filled with wonder at all the fresh and beautiful nature around him. He wonders. He is amazed.

The fifth grader walks out into spring, a bounce in his step. After a long, cold and harsh winter, he is excited to move on into this blossoming, warm new season. He looks up at the clear and brilliant blue sky and immediately begins to wonder. Why is the sky blue? Why are there clouds on some days and not others? He sits cross legged on the grass and ponders his questions for some time, until he is distracted by the beauty of the newly-planted grass. How does

grass grow? Why is it so green? He wonders. He continues to wonder about the magnificent world around him until he falls asleep that night, wondering about the new discoveries he has made. He wonders. He is curious.

The middle-aged man hastily walks out of his house. He is headed to his prominent law firm in the center of the large and bustling city. It is the first day of spring and there is beauty all around him. But he doesn't notice it. He is wondering if today will be a good day at work. He wonders if his boss will approve his new initiative. He wonders if his client will hire him for her next deal. He wonders if he is cut out for the job. He wonders if he will arrive to work on time. He picks up his pace. He wonders. He doubts.

A wise old man sitting outside observes the three newcomers to spring, the toddler, schoolboy and attorney. He remembers how in his days as a young man he, too, was full of doubting wonders. How he, too, missed all the beauty surrounding him because he was lost in his worried mind. He wonders. What if adults wondered more in amazement and curiosity and less in self-doubt and worry? Would the world be a better place? A more pleasant place? He can only sit and wonder.

**How he, too,
missed all
the beauty
surrounding
him because he
was lost in his
worried mind.**

Monkey See Monkey Do

By Rena Seidemann

Who enjoys a trip to the zoo more? Us humans who gawk at the animals or the animals who gawk at us humans? We would all agree that the life of a human is much more exciting and diverse than the life of your average ape, and yet we get so excited when we pack up the family car and spend an afternoon at the zoo. What exactly are we expecting to witness these apes to do? I for one have been to various zoos across the country. On many occasions, I have seen nothing new. Show me a monkey on a laptop and I will be impressed but in the twenty or thirty times that I have been to a zoo since I was born, it might have been a different monkey and a different banana but the story line is always the same. Zoo keeper throws monkey a banana, monkey runs for banana, zoo keeper runs away from monkey, monkey eats banana, monkey pounds chest, zoo keeper still in hiding, humans on other side of glass howl in amazement as if monkey discovered cure for the common cold.

I was therefore wondering if these monkeys and apes were a lot smarter than we give them credit for, and perhaps are studying us humans more than we are studying them on those family excursions to the zoo.

Perhaps, just perhaps, this is what really goes on after hours at the local zoo. Once upon a time in a zoo not too far away from East 70th Street and Lexington Avenue, in New York, New York, Harry the zookeeper ushered the last group of visitors out of and far away from his favorite habitat. Harry had it up to his eyebrows with humans years ago, having spent too many years teaching high school girls. He much preferred the quiet respectful lifestyle of the ape. There was no competition when it came to dress and the debate over nail polish color was non-existent. The apes presented less of a challenge. They were creatures of habit and fine creatures of that.

So on that day Harry closed the zoo and entered the monkey reserve to hold his nightly meeting with some of New York's finest of the extreme left on Darwin's chart. "Alright fellas, listen up. We have another group of school girls coming tomorrow. It is those girl from Manhattan High, all two hundred of them, together with their teachers. As usual, I have prepared a detailed file on each one of the girls as well as a complete file on all of the teachers and administration. I would suggest that you spend the evening reviewing the individual files on each of the girls so that you will know exactly what to look for tomorrow to heighten the entertainment."

It was at this point that the eldest monkey, Bob, turned to Harry and said with all the frustration that monkey could muster, "This is really getting boring. All

those humans are pretty much the same. Sure, each human dresses a little bit differently, each human walks and talks a little bit differently, and yes when it comes to the ladies there are many different shades of nail polish. But by and large, Harry you've seen one human you've seen them all. Wouldn't it be wonderful if just once some human would surprise us and do something just a little bit different?"

"Precisely, my dear monkey. You watch these humans all day long in the hope of catching one of them doing something you would never expect them to do. It is that anticipation that draws your interest to observing these people that in many respects resemble us. You wonder why it is that these humans would spend thirty-five dollars a person to watch you eat a banana. Yet they do not come to watch you eat a banana. They really come to try to catch you in that one moment when you do something just a bit different. And that is why they bring their cameras and their journals."

"And guess what," continued Harry the zoo keeper, "those Manhattan High School girls had their own meeting in school today where some of the girls asked, 'Why are we going to see the monkeys again? All they do is eat bananas all day long. Show me a monkey on a laptop and I will be impressed.'"

**Show me a
monkey on a
laptop and I will
be impressed.**

Nature's Paradox

By Esther Mehlman

"Did you know that in the past four years there was an average of 4,921 fatal drownings, about ten deaths per day," my little sister blurts out.

"No one cares," I reply. She always spews non-sequitur facts that way.

As we head toward the beach, I feel the warm sand massaging the soles of my feet. My eyes are drawn to the razzle-dazzle umbrellas, contrasting sharply with the pale sand. Their blue stripes complement the azure of the glistening sea. I stumble over little sand mountains as I make my way toward the water.

"I'm going to grab a snack, want something?" my little sister asks.

"A Creamsicle," I reply. Somehow, the words "thank you" never make it passed my lips.

As I watch my sister walk toward the food stand, I think about the largeness of her arms. On her way back, I stare long and hard until I know she feels my gaze. When our eyes lock, I ask her how the diet's going. She looks the other way. I feel an aura of tension now, an uncomfortable barrier that wasn't there before. I know she won't be eating her snack anytime soon and I feel a sharp pang of something ineffable, a combination of guilt and disappointment in myself for just hurting her. Why did I have to say that? I feel stupid taking the Creamsicle, so I let it sit there and just kind of wait till there's an orange and cream puddle inside the wrapper.

Suddenly, something, a meteoroid perhaps, is headed in my direction. As it draws nearer and comes into focus, it resembles something round and threatening. I try and figure it out and then it hits me. All at once, my nose explodes like a stick of dynamite. I put my hand to my face and feel the smooth, silky texture of blood between my fingers. I can so imagine my sister with those clumsy arms of hers, elbowing me in the face. The words "I am going to kill you" form on my lips, but are hindered by the unfamiliar girl jogging toward me.

She glances at my face, then the ball, and back at my face. "I-I'm so sorry..." Definitely not my sister's voice.

So I pinch my nose and put my smile on. "Don't worry about it, it's okay." And it is. But why? What if it were my sister's graceless arms that collided with my nose? I know I would've ranted about her graceless movement and how she's clumsy and uncoordinated and needs to lose weight because that's usually what our conversations boil down to.

I pass her the ball and she walks away.

My sister peruses my bloody face with a genuine look of concern. "Should I

call mom?" she asks.

Something in my heart breaks a little bit.

I hold my head back and signal with a wave of my hand that it's okay, I'm fine. I let the sounds of the ocean caress my mind and wash away my stream of anxious thoughts.

I can hardly hear people laughing in the distance anymore. I close my eyes and inhale the brackish ocean smell. I want to feel the water tickle my toes this way forever. I want to watch the waves as they hypnotically claw sand, shells, and the remaining debris of fun-filled days into the deep. My mind wanders back to my sister's comment about those 4,921 people. As the gentle touch of water tickles my toes, I wonder how something pleasurable and seemingly innocent can be responsible for the loss of so many lives.

My sister perks up, "Isn't it interesting that-"

"What now?" She is so annoying.

"I was just going to say that humans are made up of 60 percent water," she mumbles.

I hesitate for a moment and then admit, "That is really cool, who taught you that?" She smiles wide and opens her fist, showing me a Snapple bottle cap that she found somewhere deep in the sand.

Maybe in some ways I am like the water. I can be gentle and forgiving, wasn't I just moments before? A mere stranger who gives me a bloody nose gets a smile, but never to a sister whom I'm bound by flesh and blood. Where's the logic in that? And yet, my little sister, what did she ever do to me? She may weigh a bit more than a 12-year-old ought to, yes. But why do I need to remind her of it? If I am as kind and gentle and gracious as I think I am, then why do I need to hurt her? A nice person would be nice to everyone, but a mean person wouldn't be nice to a mere stranger. So who am I?

I wonder how something pleasurable and seemingly innocent can be responsible for the loss of so many lives.

And water, what are you? If you're as pure and sweet as you claim to be, you

seem to be, then why do your actions betray you? Did you really scoff at 4921 flailing arms and legs? Did your waves not gracefully guide them upward but plummet down into the depths of your abyss instead? You flood their lungs salty water. You did not gently caress their bodies, as you do my mind. No, you smothered them and let them sink, forcing them to surrender.

Somehow, you bring both beauty and despair.

I wonder how that could be.

FIVE

Home

*“Where we love is home, home that our feet
may leave, but not our hearts.”*

– Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr.

Home

By Chloe Gertner, Editor

Home. It's the loom that intricately weaves the unique people we turn out to be. It's responsible for the small details that create the fabric of a person, like the love of peonies over daisies, the music notes that make us feel like there is an orchestra playing along inside our hearts, or the preference for chai tea over chamomile. It sneaks its way into our vocabulary, and we often find phrases rolling off our tongues that once bounced off and echoed through the walls of our home. Home defies the rules of physics; no matter how far out one journeys, how lost and shattered a soul may seem, or how much of a nobody somebody may feel, there is a magnet embedded somewhere in the world inside of us that pulls us back to the very roots we stemmed from. Home cannot be held down to one definition. To some, it's a brick house with a manicured lawn and a white picketed fence. To others, it changes a lot, and they can never settle. And to many, home is a feeling rather than a place.

In this section, the authors effortlessly illustrate the many definitions of home, and explore the dynamic of the natural longing we each possess for home.

In her piece, "Coming Home," Rachel Retter explores the terrifying feeling one experiences when a loved one goes missing by telling the story of Becca, a worried sister who cannot find her brother Davie. She also portrays the intense and emotional relief that Becca feels once Davie is found and connected back to the secure roots of home.

Similarly, in "A National Abduction," Deena Abittan depicts the hopeless and unsettling feelings the famed painting, "The Woman in Gold," has after being torn from its home during WWII. Deena takes the reader on the journey of the painting and its rightful owner, Maria, as both of them try to resolve the longing they have for the home they lost.

In her piece, "Trapped in Freedom," Devorah Pinczower also goes into the psyche of an individual who lost their home and security during World War II. She illustrates how a place we once loved can turn into something we are haunted by. In this powerful piece, the reader is let into the mind of a survivor who goes back to the place she once felt the safest in, but now is haunted by the traumatic destruction that went on there when she was a little girl.

In "Packing Peanut Perfection," Michal Treitel writes about an enemy driving one out from their home, but this time the enemy is a cockroach. In this humorous piece, Michal takes us into the mind of an extremely organized individual who has to look for somewhere else to call home because of a small little pest. The antagonist has to learn the hard way that a perfect home doesn't really exist.

Chynna Levin's "My Favorite Word," explores home from a new perspective. The reader is taken into the mind of a little girl who has to leave the home she loves. This piece portrays how a particular child feels when leaving a home they felt sheltered in, and how they adapt and come to love their new surroundings in Pocatello.

In her piece "Color Wonder," Esther Guelgfut talks about home from the point of view of aliens, and she illustrates the seemingly odd practices they follow in their homes. Meanwhile, when humans arrive on their planet, the aliens cannot grapple with our strange appearance and behavior.

Shoshana Chechik uses humor in her piece, "Meatball Express," to convey the idea that home isn't necessarily a house; sometimes we can find home and comfort in food. Shoshana takes the reader on a ride as a frustrated customer will not give up looking for the ingredients to make the perfect comfort food: meatballs.

Although life carries on and one can't live in the same home forever, there will always be a longing and a deep-rooted connection to our origins in our hearts. As Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. suggests, "Where we love is home, home that our feet may leave, but not our hearts."

A National Abduction

By Deena Abittan

The thick bristles of his brush kiss the palette, dip into the striking gold and cold crimson, and begin to swirl around the page slowly, gently crafting me. Gustave Klimpt has been commissioned by Ferdinand Bloch-Bauer to paint me as an everlasting memorabilia of his undying bond to Adele.

I have been mounted above the uninviting marble fireplace for thirty-two years now, a symbol of familial pride. The multitudes of dignitaries that have passed through these doors have gaped at my beauty and praised my intricacies. Even little Maria appreciates my beauty while she stares, entranced by all two hundred and seventy four centimeters of me.

Long gone are the amazed dilated pupils staring at me for hours. No longer am I the center of conversation, it has changed to the fate of Samuel the butcher and Ruth the seamstress. Just yesterday, instead of appreciating my beauty, Ferdinand urgently asked Adele what their “plan was.” I hope I will be part of that “plan.”

I am not. I am left here with no longer little Marie and her family. Marie still comes occasionally to visit me but her visits are not as long as before. When are Ferdinand and Adele coming back to claim me and restore my days of glory?

Glory is back but it is not the sweet taste of before. I have been torn from my home and now reside in the Belvedere gallery. I am still gaped at but not by the people I love or want. Now it is ugly men with scratchy harsh voices who sprinkle praise.

Maria is back! Though this time with silver strands instead of red, and creases in place of smooth porcelain skin. She has come to stare once again, but this time the folds around her mouth deepen and her eyes are hard. What have the war years done to my sweet Maria? I hear her talking to a tall man with a brown leather briefcase about justice and the Austrians. Has she come to finally take me home?

She has not. This is not my home. I belong back in Austria in the illustrious home of the Altmann's. My place is eighteen centimeters above the mantle of the fireplace in the large living room, not here in the icy white four-walled box of the

She has come to stare once again, but this time the folds around her mouth deepen and her eyes are hard. What have the war years done to my sweet Maria?

Neue Galerie in New York City. It is too noisy here; I miss the tranquility of Austria.

I no longer hear Little Marie playing the clarinet, now I hear the proud voices of tours guides showing me off. They do not understand that I am a painting, not an antique from the early Greek period that deserves to be displayed. I do not need this attention; I need my home and I need Maria.

Marie has only visited the Neue Galerie once, yet it was not to see me. She was escorted by a tall man with a brown leather briefcase who grins as if he had won fifteen million euro, and four fat men with long black boxes that are documenting every step Maria takes. No wonder Marie does not visit me; I am no longer a haven for her. The six years I was imprisoned have erased thirty years of memories. Those six years have caused Marie to forget me.



The 7 Wanders of the World

By Ariella Mause

Nevermore

By Ayelet Buchen

I don't need a mother. I'm doing pretty well on my own. I've got a bird's eye view better than a grownup's and a whole lot of friends that a mother would never approve of. I've also got some enemies, but mothers never know about the bullies who hate their kids anyway. My mother would probably think I look kind of strange, like a confused tree or something. That would make sense. I mean, I wear green from head to toe, and the top of my head is covered with the color of redwood bark. Say, I'm lucky that I don't have anyone telling me what to wear. Grownups are just overgrown grumps who can't remember how to be happy. At least the grownups who I know are. But who knows, maybe my mother is different. She gave birth to me, so she's got to be special somehow. I just want to know how special she is, even though I'd never want to spend a day with her. No matter how different my mother is, she is still a grownup.

I fly through the neighborhood, stopping by each window to check if there is a grownup woman who has my upturned nose and redbrown hair in the room. She'll look sort of elfish, like me, and she'll probably be crying over an old photo album or completely insane from depression. Never mind what I thought before. I guess she will be an overgrown grump, too, but at least she's got a reason for it. There's just no way to smile after losing me.

A little girl scrunching up her face and sticking her tongue out at some old woman snoring in a rocking chair... A redfaced man hollering into a phone as if the person on the other end is listening... A father glaring at his children while crumpling a markercolored treasure map that was once a shirt... Boy, I'm glad I escaped this messed up world. I only find a peacefulllooking home after searching for a half hour, so I relax on one of its windowsills and just stare at the back of a woman watching a small boy run around with a torn teddy bear for a while. I prefer trees and places higher than anyone else will ever see, but I guess this room would be my next option. The fireplace is probably pretty warm, and something about that wooden crib seems nice even though I would never fit in it. I can even pretend the room is a tree if I stare at the hardwood floor or the leafy wallpaper. These people keep the only window shut, but I would leave it open as a reminder that the stars miss me. That way, I would never stay away from them for too long. For a third of a second, when the small boy skidaddles around the grownup's back, I think he wants to see the stars, too.

**After scooping
him off the
floor and onto
her lap, she
tickles his nose
with her oddly
shaped one.**

But then I realize he is playing a game. I love games. I'm definitely going to watch this one and see if I can figure out how it works. Then I can play it with my friends! The boy hides behind the grownup's back. Hideandseek! I know that game. I play it all the time. I didn't think they did that in this world, too. I keep watching to see if the grownup is good at seeking, or if she is even going to seek at all. Maybe hideandseek is different in this world. Maybe it's just hide. So I wait a bit, and after some pretend confusion, the grownup spins around with an elfish smile. Gee, she sure knows how to make a bad hider think he is good at this game. I mean, he really chose an awful spot to hide in. It's not even a real hiding spot. But who knows, maybe this world's got low expectations when it comes to hideandseek and all the other important things in life. After scooping him off the floor and onto her lap, she tickles his nose with her her oddly shaped one. He does that funny thing that kids do when they're being tickled; he kicks his feet and his arms go all over the place, even though he isn't angry. The grownup tilts her head to the left to tickle the boy's nose at a different angle, and her barklike hair falls onto his face.

Uh uh. No way.

The only happy grownup in this world can't be my mother. It doesn't make sense. She can't be happy. Not after I disappeared. She is the only one with a reason to be a sorehead. This world is deranged. She should swap feelings with all the other grownups. She did more than forget me. Wendy is a better mother than this grownup, and all Wendy does is tell stories. She always knows where the boys are. Even when they're lost. All I want is to escape from this world again, to go back to my world where if I were to leave, my enemies would react like my mother did, but my friends would never forget me. But I can't get back. Not without my happy thought. I am stuck right where I am. I have no choice but to watch the small boy steal all of my mother's thoughts from me. If he doesn't stop, I will never get back. I fall onto the second car to the right where I stay until morning, a small, dusty light resting on my shoulder.

Meatball Express

By Shoshana Chechik

The grocery store. That's where I'm entering at 3:45 p.m. Twenty-seven aisles packed with food and all I want is some meatballs. I go to the refrigerator section wishing I had brought a coat. A fur one would have done nicely. I go over to the meat case and rummage through to find the chopped meat. It's all gone; "ugh." I then need to walk across the whole store to get to the other puny refrigerator section only to find null. I swear I went over it three times. I go to the registers and ask for the manager.

He comes over and I say to him "chopped meat?" He takes me over to the first refrigerator section I went to, rummages through for a few minutes, and then finds a thing of chopped meat that didn't look fresh and had a very soon expiration date. I say "thanks" weakly, disappointed at the last choice of meat, but what can be done? Now all I need is the olive oil, onion, breadcrumbs, and marinara sauce. I start by looking for the olive oil, praying it won't take long. I go to aisles Seven, Eight, Nine, Eleven and Twelve, but no olive oil. Literally everything else but olive oil; like, who needs peanut oil? I walk back to the registers.

"Olive oil?" I ask one of the employees. She raises her eyebrow telling me "it's in aisle Eight." "I already looked there" I state, and start to tap my shoe. She rolls her eyes and takes me to aisle Eight, where she looks by the oils, and, not finding anything, goes along the rest of the row looking. She finds it hidden in the corner, next to some bread. I thank her and put it in my basket.

The time is now 4:50 p.m., and I've been here for an hour and don't even have half of what I need. This time I'm just going to go through all Twenty-Seven aisles and see what happens. I got to aisle One. I walk down, nothing but paper goods. There are several types of plates including paper, plastic, and styrofoam. They divided them into sections. Aisle Two has items that no one knows why they're in a grocery store, like headbands and nail polish. Aisle Three has tissues and toilet paper. There are eleven different varieties of toilet paper, ranging from ultra-soft to ultra-strong, to those thin ones that are always on sale. I go through Four and Five and don't find anything. In aisle Six I find an almost expired tomato sauce. Well, I better finish these meatballs in three days.

I go through Seven, Eight, and Nine again just to make sure I didn't miss anything. In aisle Ten there are diapers. I don't know how they fit in, in the greater scheme of things. Eleven and Twelve have nothing for me, like toe socks, sock puppets, and other sock related items. How they fill up two aisles with this stuff? I don't know. In aisle Thirteen I bang into a shelf. A box of tennis racket shaped noodles fall on my head. Well, that might be something to put under my meat-

balls. Aisles Fourteen and Fifteen have candy; well, I got over that addiction a long time ago. Sixteen has snacks, like potato chips, salsa, and tortilla things. Who needs eight types of corn chips and thirteen types of salsa? Like, where are the important things that I need? I don't care about snacks.

Seventeen is the vegetables. Different colored peppers, lettuce, and all that other rabbit food. Then I come into contact with my enemy. Jalapeños. I walk right past them, not putting them in my meatballs. In Eighteen they are supposed to have onions, but all I see are different types of potatoes and garlic. Blue potatoes, creamy potatoes, Idaho potatoes, and seven other types of garlic. Squished in between two different types of garlic is a single onion, and not even the type I want. It's a red onion. In Nineteen I stub my toe and all my things go flying. I growl and kick the shelf. A box of do it yourself jello falls into my basket. I glare at it and start to pick up my things that fell. I go through Twenty, Twenty-One and Twenty-Two and don't find anything. In Twenty-Three there are beach chairs and sun screen. Who needs that in the middle of February? Twenty-four has rakes and sprinklers; things for the spring and fall. Like maybe they could carry winter products. Twenty-five has bakery products cookies, cakes, lady fingers, and chocolate spreads.

**Literally
everything else
but olive oil;
like, who needs
peanut oil?**

I'm getting desperate now. Only two aisles left and still no bread crumbs. I go through Twenty-Six which has ready made foods like chicken, sushi, and some dried meats but no breadcrumbs. In aisle Twenty-Seven a miracle strikes and I find the bread crumbs right away. Thank G-d! I'll finally be able to check out and go home, even though it's already 5:30.

I head to express checkout and what I see there almost makes me pass out. In a refrigerator compartment there are boxes of ingredients for meatballs; their bright red color stinging my eyes saying, "Meatball Express."

cool and comfortable breezes brought. The bright sunshine was tinted green from the fresh leaves, and birds flew high above them.

She raised her face towards the sun, revitalized, ready to face ordinary Mondays and coffee spills.

Color Wonder

By Esther Guelfguat

Talk has it that they are invading us. Mr. Tamali announced on the speaker that through the scope he saw the ship. For weeks we heard warnings from Venus that they were going to come and now they are. At least we have time to prepare; the scope can see objects from great distances.

I wonder what is interesting for them about our red planet. Mars is of a circular shape full of pores. Its color is red.

Red represents us. Fighters. We don't give up. Mars has many enemies including Mercury, Jupiter, Saturn and Neptune. Only Venus is our friend. Why? Because it takes no side in this fight for color. It is colorless. The other planets fear us. They are taught to feel this way since they are born. We know we will win. We are malicious, willing to hurt anyone who opposes us. We will emerge victorious.

Everything on Mars must be red. If not, the Red-Cross will arrest you and be quite "cross" with you. Therefore, our diet contains foods such as tomatoes, strawberries, beet cherries, red peppers, pomegranates, red beans, beets, raspberries and red apples. Many years ago there was a rebellion. For their foolish behavior we all suffered The Great Fire. A punishment never enacted until then. It was one each creature of the planet feared because it meant destruction of all our hard work since it would turn into ashes. We were taught since our brain was able to process simple ideas that never are we able to consume a food other than red.

I know that all the planets are similar in some ways for we all see The Great Light; some better than others. Perhaps it is our routines that differ.

When the Yellow Ball's reflection reaches the other side of the room, it is time to come out of bed. At morning meal, which always consists of red velvet cakes and tomatoes, we discuss our plan for the day.

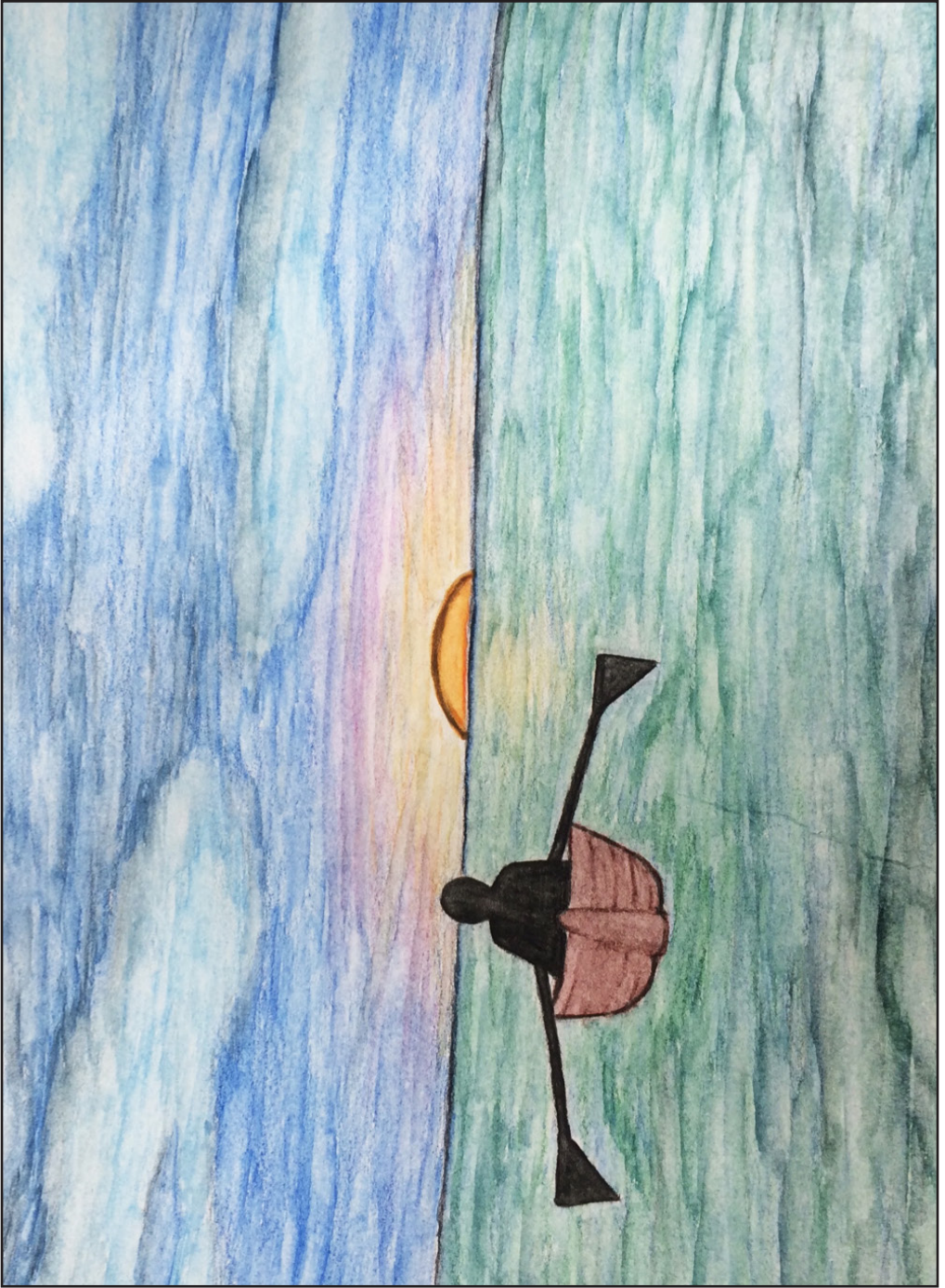
The day they arrived my plan was to continue digging our home.

Each family lives in one pore of the planet. On top is a special seal to protect us from large floating objects in space and spontaneous fire. The process of construction is tiring and arduous as we use our fingers to scoop the coals. Every day we learn more about our environment as we dig. For example, yesterday we discovered a shiny firm contraption most probably used for consuming food. It

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bed.**

survived The Great Fire only because of its material. We are still unsure what it is called because we have never seen such an object before.

Now those creatures from another cosmos have landed. We run into our pore. First it is vital for us to determine where they hold in the heated argument. I peak through the top. Their clothing is a color we cannot decipher. Not colorless for it has a texture to it. It is a tremendous change from our malicious red. A more pure innocent color. I wonder what its name is.



Wandering on Water

By Tziporah Braunstein

My Favorite Word

By Chynna Levin

Pocatello. Pooooocatello. Pocatellooooo. I let the word slide off my tongue, one by one, and shake my head. I just couldn't figure it out. How was this word meant to be heard? How does it want me to speak of it?

This word is a name. It is the name of a place in Idaho. We were all gathered around our little table on our thin, old, red rug. Mother had woken us up early, before the yellow sun had come to wake me up, and instructed us to wait for her. I looked at my brothers and shrugged. But when mother says to do something, we go. Mother appears holding my little sister, after a few minutes pass, and with tired, yet excited eyes, she gives us the news. "We are moving to a new place. It is called Pocatello. It is a town in Idaho. We will be so much happier there. There will be other children to play with in big parks, with plenty of water and sunshine."

I stare, shocked, at my mother. What does this mean? I can't possibly leave. I know that it is not very happy here, but that is a new, even scarier place. Mother says that Idaho is in America. I hear that America is very big. We don't even know anyone there. I turn to my younger brother of two years. His face looks how my insides look. How could we leave here?

Mother takes my hand and smiles a small smile. "You will love it there," she says. "I promise."

How could I love a different place? I know that here it is not safe, and mother is worried. There are so many lines on her face and her hair has turned a different color. We are not allowed to play with our friends like we used to. Now we must stay inside and be quiet.

I have made my decision: I shall stay. Mother can take my brother and sister, and I shall wait here for father. I know how to cook. I will make little crackers for myself. When father comes home, we will have a happy life and maybe mother can visit. I will not live here sad like mother does, for I see nothing to be sad about.

I turn to tell my mother this. She tells me that I will come with her. End of discussion. Even though I haven't finished discussing. I cross my arms the way she does when I do something naughty and turn my lips upside down. "No."

**Pocatello.
Pooooocatello.
Pocatellooooo. I
let the word slide
off my tongue,
one by one, and
shake my head.**

Now it is three days later, and we are all at the airport. Our plane is going to fly off soon. I have not talked to mother today, except for when I wanted some food. Maybe she will change her mind.

Poocateloooo. Pocaatello. Pocateeeello. I bounce excitedly in my seat. The word is fun to say. I stare out the window, wondering if this is how those birds feel. My seat is blue and has a long silver part that mother clicks over my lap. She says that this is a safety belt. I must keep it on the whole time.

I have changed my mind. I have had an idea. Mother calls these things “epipheenees.” I have decided that Pocatello is going to be the best place I have ever been. Father will come join us soon. I’m sure of it. Mother says that there are big trees there. She tells me that children like to build playhouses in the large trees. They call them tree houses.

My tree house will be so tall you will have to bend your head all of the way back and blink your eyes a few times before you can see it. My tree house will be so fun, I will never need a ball to play with, or a rope to jump. Maybe we can get a horse to play with. I will name him Tello, after our new home.

This will be an adventure. I think I will like adventures. These clouds will keep me safe. My mother sleeps, my brother puts his head on her lap and does the same. I hold my little sister’s hand and tell her all that I know about Pocatello. She says it like, “Pocateco”. I like that way. I shall say Pocateco too.

Trapped in Freedom

By Devorah Pinczower

The thin layer of skin covering my bones shivers, as the wind brushes through my threadbare dress. The sun beats on my head, where a few strands of my golden hair are starting to grow back. As I step through the gates, the ghost screams penetrate my soul, and my mind travels to that fateful day. My mother's arm was jutting into my ribs and there was a head of a young child pushing into my leg. I was shoved off the train and greeted by skeletons in human forms. Smoke billowed from the chimney of a building; the odor of burnt flesh choked my throat.

I continue trudging towards my future, my feet carrying me, for I have no idea where to go. They bring me to an office, where I inquire about my father and brother. They say it is too early to know, so they tell me to go home. But where is home? My mind travels to a small apartment at the edge of Frankfurt. It was an ordinary Friday night. The pleasant singing of my father and brother were flooding my heart and the steam from Mama's chicken soup was filling our home with a sweet aroma. Suddenly, a pair of boots knocked down our front door, and took my father and brother away.

I find myself wandering through the familiar streets of my city. As I pass my old school, I remember my childhood friends. I used to play with Elisabeth and Gertrud every evening after school, until the day when they told me to go home and never come back. I still can't believe that my best friends could be so mean. I so badly wanted to believe that we were still friends; but when I saw them come to take my favorite dolls and toys away, I knew that they always hated me.

As I continue walking, the cobblestone path pierces my raw cuts, but after all of my experiences, I don't even feel any pain. I turn around the familiar corner, and my knees bend, as I crumble to the ground, like a dying wallflower. My shul, my beautiful shul where I spend every Shabbos. I remember my brother proudly reading the Torah portion on his Bar Mitzva. I remember my heart beaming as I watched my father dance around the Bimah on Simchas Torah, with a smile that spread beyond the confines of his face. Tears gushed down my cheeks and formed a puddle where my shul used to be as I thought of all the holy sefarim that were

**Why should I
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and emotionally
murdering the
living?**

lost forever.

Is there anything left of the life that I once had? I thought back to a few days ago, when I was trudging through the forest as the bitter air speared through my bones. I remember how I wondered if I would ever get to see my family again, and see my old hometown. Coming back seemed like a distant dream, slowly drifting into nowhere.

But as I walk through the city, the ghosts of my childhood, I am haunted by the ruins of my past. When we arrived at the camps, my mother was pointed to the left where she was gassed to death and then burned to ashes in the crematorium. I would never again see her smiling face, never again be able to hug her and tell her how much I love her. I don't know whether my brother and father are still alive. So I am here alone, with no family or friends, in a country that destroyed the life I once had.

As I ponder my desperate situation, I suddenly feel strong inside. Why should I let Hitler be successful? Why should I give him the satisfaction of knowing that he was successful in physically killing the dead, and emotionally murdering the living? As I take one last glance at the remnants of my life, I decide to start building new memories, ones that will last forever and make the legacy of those whose lives were stolen from them live on. I turn around, never looking back, and start rebuilding my life.



A Window View

By Chayala Kazarnofsky

Coming Home

By Rachel Retter

The cloudy sky cast shadows over the gloomy New York street. Shivering slightly, I tightened my jacket and adjusted my boots. They were not waterproof, and the dark suede was leaking black dye from the heel. Trying to clear my mind, I focused on the inky patterns every footstep left on the damp sidewalk. Filled my brain with the dull thud my foot made every time it hit the ground. But my mind kept straying back to this morning. Today's chain of events started playing over in my head again, and I mechanically picked them apart like I had been doing the past ten hours.

"Becca?" Jenny's face, ruddy from the cold, appeared in front of me. "Becca, it's freezing! What are you doing, wandering around in this weather?" She tried to brush the water off herself but the rain was growing heavier. "Come on, I'll walk you home."

"I'm going to head home soon," I said quietly. "I just need some time to think."

"What did you say?" she asked distractedly, squeezing raindrops out of her copper hair. The icy wind had drowned out my voice. I opened my mouth to repeat myself, then closed it and watched silently as the droplets tumbled to the ground like glass beads. I didn't want to have to explain to her what I was thinking about. Somehow, saying my fears aloud would make them seem more . . . real. Instead I followed my friend down the street. As I walked, my dreaded suspicions twisted through my head. I took a deep breath, trying once more to push them away. But the more I tried to stop wondering, the more questions bubbled fiercely in my mind. I shut my eyes tightly, trying to stop the aching in my head. When I opened them, I saw Jenny looking at me.

"Are you okay?" she asked nervously. I could tell my silence was making her uncomfortable, so I forced a reply.

"I just need to get home, I guess," I said. "I need to check if they found anything. If he—" I took a deep breath and swallowed. Jenny's eyes widened.

"Becca, don't worry. I'm sure if anything happened, they would have called you right away. They..." Her voice trailed off as I shook my head emphatically.

"I left my phone at home," I whispered, blinking back tears. "I haven't been in contact with anyone for more than two hours. I've just been walking up and down the streets, trying to remember if—" I rubbed my temples, trying to think. "This morning, during breakfast— it's just so jumbled— everything that happened, it's all a blur. And all day I've been asking myself, is this my fault?" I began walking

faster, the wind stinging my wet eyes. “Is this all my fault?”

“Don’t say that! How could it possibly be your fault?” Jenny said, looking alarmed by the tone of my voice. I shook my head, unable to answer, and continued walking faster until Jenny grabbed my arm.

“Becca, we’re at your house.”

I looked up, and through my tears saw the blurry outline of the dark mahogany door. My hand found the cold bronze knob and turned slowly.

“Mom?” My voice wavered uncontrollably as I stepped inside, echoing through the hallways. The house felt so... empty. “M—Mom, is there any news? Did they find him?”

“Becca?”

A small voice was calling me from down the hall. I ran into the kitchen and froze; he was there, right there, sitting at the table. I raced over to him and wrapped him tightly in my arms, relief washing over me like cool water. He started talking, his voice muffled by my thick indigo sweater.

“Becca, I got lost. While I was walking to school— I got lost, and I didn’t know where to go. Then I saw a bus stop, and His small, eight-year-old face found mine, and his eyebrows furrowed over his warm chocolate eyes. “Becca, why are you crying?”

I wiped my tears on my sleeve. “We were so worried about you,” I whispered. “I was so worried. I thought—” More tears coursed down my cheeks and I tried to stop myself from shaking. “Your medicine— I couldn’t remember if I gave you your shot this morning, and I kept wondering if—”

“You did give me my shot today! Look!” His sandy hair flopped as he ran across the room to get his chart. “See? I got a sticker in my Monday box!” he said proudly. He sat down on the couch and started to count the rest of his stickers. I turned and walked unsteadily to my mother.

“Mom?” I said softly. “Mom, I — I couldn’t remember if I had given Davie his insulin today. And I kept wondering if the reason we couldn’t find him was

I didn’t want to have to explain to her what I was thinking about. Somehow, saying my fears aloud would make them seem more . . . real.

because —“ My voice was trembling. “Going without his insulin for that long— I thought he might be d-dead-and that it was all my fault.” I tried to stop crying, but the tears just kept coming. I had been going out of my mind from not knowing if I had remembered to give it to him or not. From wondering if I was the reason Davie hadn’t come home.

“Oh, honey,” my mother murmured, stroking my hair. “Oh honey, it’s okay. He’s here. He came back. Davie came home.”

Packing Peanut Perfection

By Michal Treitel

I keep my delirium contained in the color coded Post-It notes on each box. The insanity is locked away deep inside the drawers of my dresser, covered in no less than four layers of industrial strength bubble wrap. It's all smiles and no panic today. I walk around my empty apartment one last time. It's strange to see it without the ivory suede sofa in the living room and my hand-crafted vase collection in the kitchen. It's spotless, though, and I like spotless.

It all began with the cockroach. A couple of weeks ago, I was dicing melon into one-inch cubes when I discovered it strutting across my countertop with all the elegance and finesse of a pile of dirt. Each step contaminated another millimeter of my sterile kitchen. I took action the only way I knew how: I doused it in Purell and sanitized it to death. The invasion didn't end after just one intruder. I found more and more of them marching across the windowsills and around my recliner. It came to a point where I dreamt about them crawling up my arms, leaving trails of filth and disease on my bare skin. I tried everything to get rid of them, from traps to sprays to electric zappers, but to no avail. The insects were here to stay, so I knew I had to leave.

I arranged my kitchen utensils by placing the small ones inside the large ones like a Russian babushka doll. My clothing was organized alphabetically by brand and placed into clear storage containers. I lined the bottom of each cardboard box with styrofoam packing peanuts and piled some on top of my things as well, for good measure.



It took a while to get all of my things together, but I'm finally finished packing. I spray all of my possessions with insect repellent and I'm ready to go. My hands are balled up into fists at my sides and my heart is beating a mile a minute, but my smile is unwavering as everything is brought down to the lobby of my building. I hear banging and clunking as my carefully labeled

boxes are shoved unceremoniously into the elevator, but certainly the bubble wrap will keep everything intact. Maybe I should've used five layers.

The driver of the moving truck eyes me questioningly as I check and double check my clipboard to make sure I haven't forgotten anything. I dart upstairs one last time to make sure. It's just as empty as it was four hundred and thirty two seconds ago.

I let the driver know that he can start loading everything into the truck. It pains me to witness my belongings getting lifted by his filthy hands into the even

filthier vehicle. He leaves greasy fingerprints on each box as he stacks them on top of each other at random, paying no attention to shape, size, or Post-It note. This is not someone I can trust to transport my possessions safely. This man must be supervised.

“Excuse me, sir, would it be okay if I came with you in the truck?” I ask, as if he has a say in the matter. I won’t be taking no for an answer.

“Umm, sorry ma’am,” he answers stiffly. “I don’t allow passengers with me in the truck.”

“You’ll have to make an exception,” I reply without hesitation. He sighs and nods his head begrudgingly. I hop into the truck, placing a clean paper towel onto the seat before I sit down.

My mind races faster than the truck speeds down the highway. I picture myself opening the door to my perfectly clean, pest-free home. The marble floors sparkling, the smooth granite countertops gleaming. The spacious, airy kitchen with state-of-the-art appliances will be the perfect place to try out some recipes with my new neighbors. I can’t wait to begin my new life.

Suddenly, any thought of my custom made, shimmering silk tapestries vanishes when I remember that the cleaning crew came to tidy up the house over a week ago. The amount of dust that will have gathered since then will be inordinate. How can I possibly move into a house in which every square inch is blanketed in dust?

The truck comes abruptly to a halt. We’ve arrived at my new home. I can tell by the perfectly manicured lawn and sparkling white shutters that it’s as spotless as I need it to be. I spring out of the truck and up to the door, taking a deep breath before turning the key in the lock. My fresh start in this house will be more revitalizing than my favorite bottle of Febreze. I can taste the casserole my new neighbors will bring me tonight when they graciously welcome me to the community. Nothing can bring me down, not even a cockroach.

**I can taste the
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I open the door, beaming as I take in my new surroundings. The intricate molding on top of each wall is exquisite. The crystal chandelier in the dining room casts a kaleidoscope of color onto the ceiling as sunlight pours in through the large, glistening windows. I am just about to admire the elegant mahogany coffee table in the den when I see something small and furry move out of the corner of my eye. Bolting across the hall, like a band of criminals escaping prison, is a family of field mice.

Foul, muddy, field mice.



Another World

By Chana Steinberg

SIX

Seeing Beyond

“Your assumptions are your windows on the world. Scrub them off every once in a while, or the light won’t come in.”

– Isaac Asimov

Seeing Beyond

By Leah Bertram, Editor

Stereotypes. Simplified and standardized conceptions, snap judgments that stop us from seeing the truth. People get stuck seeing just the surface of a person: the criminal as a sinner, the terrorist as a soulless monster, the rich boy as a brat, the institutionalized woman as insane. In the mind of each individual lives another story, a story unique to them alone. Each of the pieces in this section shares a snippet of individual's viewpoints, demonstrating the incredible beauty of humanity, which can be found only when we choose to look beyond the external.

It is so tragic when people hide behind a stereotype, put up shields, and project personas in the hopes of protecting themselves. It is far more tragic when others fail to look past the façade, to see the vulnerability that makes humankind so special. Ayelet Huberfeld's "The Fighter" showcases a beautiful honesty; narrated by a sweet teenager who takes the time to wonder about a classmate no one ever notices. The story is graceful and powerful, as the girl silently observes another's struggles and finds the strength and beauty in a stranger's fight. Nechama Weiner's "Were is the Wonder" shares a similar message, as it tells of a little girl, who silently wonders about her sister who has gone to some mysterious "better place." The child struggles with a standard spelling quiz, her mind flooded with thoughts of her sister. Her teacher and classmates display only annoyance towards her disruptiveness, failing to see her pain. If they only would only take the time to look carefully, they would find a grieving and confused child hiding just below the surface.

In looking past the surface, it is easiest to find a common ground. Nature is therefore the simplest lens to view the world through – while it is shared by all it reflects a different message to each of its observers. In Talia Gerber's poetically written piece, "Esther's Sunset," she shares memories of her great-grandmother, in a story that reads like waves on the sea and the slow yet sudden vanishing of the sun. Talia conveys the beauty of a life filled with love and loss, taking her readers from a nostalgia laced beach house to Nazi Germany and back again. Hadassah Herskovich's "Sparks from the Moon" brings us into a different world, into the thoughts of an exhausted miner. Hadassah's piece has the rhythm of a country song and seamlessly blends hope with melancholy. In "Chasing the Sun," Rachel Jacobi tackles the stigmatized suffering of the mentally ill by using the sun to represent freedom, a universal need. Rachel brings us into the world of Bedlam, into the mind of a woman deemed insane and schizophrenic. Through her story's raw and painful truths, Rachel allows us to see a mother and dreamer rather than a one-dimensional diagnosis.

We are particularly harsh in judging those we see as morally lacking, to slap them with a label and assume they are no more than that. But even a sinner is a human, and everyone has a story to share. In Miriam Wilamowsky's "Robbed of Applause," a bank robber, a petty criminal, is shown to be a loving father. He is not – as one might have assumed – a bad person, but rather a man willing to go to any length for the sake of his family's happiness. Some crimes are less forgivable than theft and their perpetrators are deemed to be subhuman, and perhaps they do deserve that label. And yet even monsters have souls. Malkie Rubin introduces one such story in "My Destiny," written from the perspective of a would-be Paris bomber, a broken and misled young man dreaming only of a better world. Malkie shares his last minutes, flooded with doubt and with nostalgia and blind faith, allowing us to see beyond the Syrian in a suicide vest.

Sometimes it is no more than the bitter resentment of those who have suffered that leads to half-accurate assumptions. Yaeli Berkowitz uses a dual perspective in her piece "Through the Glass," to communicate the fallacy of snap judgments. The story begins from the perspective of a window washer, looking into a penthouse of a seemingly perfect family, scorning the rich little boy for his pampered lifestyle. The piece then switches to the little boy's voice, and finds him lonely in his large home, as he watches his family cope with death and disease. He has more in common with the window washer than either of them will ever know; they may well be seeing each other through a looking glass – not a window at all.

Those around us serve as a source of reflection, an opportunity to share what it is that makes humankind so special. Do not make the mistake of trusting your first assumptions. Always take the time to look twice and leave room in your heart and mind for the possibility of another story.

Through the Glass

By Yaeli Berkowitz

Pull. Grunt. Level up. Splash. Squeak. After twenty-seven cycles I replace my squeegee for a turkey hero sandwich, heavy on the mayo of course, and recline on the swaying scaffolding. Below, I see thumb-sized yellow cabs and kaleidoscopic blurs of the typical New York City rush. Fourteen minutes later, I rise and wipe my hands on my overalls as I swallow the last of my sixteen-inch sub.

Pull. Grunt. Level up.

I freeze and wait for the platform to balance itself out.

Splash. Squeak.

I scrape the filthy water to the left and an indescribable feeling overwhelms me, almost as powerful as the suffocating scent of ammonia. My brush reveals a scene that the typical person would describe as picturesque. A blonde, slender girl stands in the corner, drawing her bow across the violin that rests on her bony shoulder. In the opposite corner of the penthouse, a large butler serves the middle-aged couple seated at the table slices of lamb. The majestic woman watches the girl as she unfolds her napkin onto her lap. She turns to face the man who touches her hand and she smiles proudly. The man beckons a young boy to come sit at the table. The boy slides into a seat on the other end of the table, chatting with a youthful energy to his nodding parents. Love reverberates in the room.

I am nauseated, and it's not from the three hundred foot difference between me and the concrete. I want to pluck the young boy away from his Latin homework and drop him into Mrs. McConagham's 'foster hotel,' as I liked to call it, the building the New York projects where I grew up. The little chump in the bow-tie would certainly benefit from an upbringing like mine. Not that you can call it an upbringing, really; no one brought me up. Mrs. McConagham, the mother figure, was similar to a US citizen on a vacation abroad: completely detached from reality while sending in the rare absentee ballot for life-changing decisions. My friends were non-existent so I

had none of that positive peer influence garbage. I taught myself survival skills and independence. It was tough at times but I worked through it, void of those frivo-

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lous hugs and kisses and bold declarations of love. This boy, these people who seem to have stepped out of a Forbes magazine, are handed success on a silver platter just like their lamb and potato hash.

I shake my head and adjust my harness. Those people don't know what hardship is and they will never have the satisfaction of success that I have everyday.

Pull. Grunt. Level up.



Mother smiles at father. I see it from where I'm sitting on the sofa. I missed her smile, it's the kind that sends a warm feeling to your belly. I haven't seen her seem so happy since Grandpa's ninetieth birthday party. That was four years ago. Grandpa is dead now.

Mother's smile decided to hide when Doctor Dufus, (I know that's not polite, but he deserves it) told us Anna had Sarcoma. Her smile must've flown far away to some Island, taking with it a big suitcase filled with my old bedtime stories, Sunday baseball tickets, and secret handshakes. I like to call my penthouse the Hotel D'Anna because I see strangers in my home more than I see my parents. Our visitors give me pinches on my cheeks and then walk straight to Anna's room. They come in with balloons and stuffed teddies and come out quickly, without anything in their hands besides wads of tissues. Their stay is as short as that dirty window cleaning guy stays on our floor. I sometimes wish they would stay longer and keep me company.

It's ok though. Guadalupe takes care of me. She is our maid. She doesn't know English very well and she certainly can't help me with my Latin homework but she sure makes good scrambled eggs and she listens to me when I talk to her.

I want my entire, super long, life to be like this moment. I want Mother to smile, I want Anna to be strong like today and play her violin, I want someone besides for Guadalupe to listen to my exciting stories. I finish my homework and tuck myself in.

"Sweet dreams George." I whisper, "You are growing into such an independent young man!"

Esther's Sunset

By Talia Gerber

I squinted my eyes against the brightness of the sun, the rays so piercing they almost seemed to be seeing straight through my thoughts. I watched my reflection in the ocean and saw the way the sea sparkled, like fireworks in July. I walked along, the path ahead of me clear and bright. Determination coursed through me as I neared my destination. The sand was soft and squishy beneath my bare feet and there was not a cloud in sight as I watched the setting sun. Everywhere I turned, I saw more and more colors; new flickers of hope and happiness filling the sky. Rays of orange, yellow, pink, and purple danced as the sun sank beyond the waves. It was the sight my mom always refers to as a 'Grandma Esther Sunset.' I walked along, each step I took growing bolder than the next. The wind swept my hair all around my face. My confidence surged as my feet led me to my favorite place. The scent of potato kugel mixed with the salty ocean air and my happiest place emerged proudly ahead of me, urging my feet faster and faster along the sand.

I reached my destination and was enveloped in a sense of comfort; I had arrived at Great Grandma Esther's house.

Flecks of old blue paint fell onto my hand as I turned the doorknob, listening to the familiar squeak as I pushed the front door open. Memories came flooding back to me, faster than children tumbling down a river. Framed photographs of Great Grandma Esther as a child lined the sun-faded walls. I passed the grandfather clock at the end of the hall, pausing to listen to the steady and familiar sound of its ticking. Several minutes passed as I stood mesmerized by the clock's beat, remembering what Great Grandma Esther had always conveyed to me. "The ticking, my dear," she'd say, "serves to remind us all, that as Jews, as the Chosen Nation, we have incredible power to do whatever we desire each day. Don't waste a second, because just as the clock is always ticking, so is our time in this world."

I continued along the hall, going deeper and deeper down memory lane. I passed her big brown wicker rocking chair and its strong arms seemed to reach out and send me a hug. I remembered, as though it had not been too long ago, the times when I would sit on Great Grandma Esther's lap as she sat in that great big chair. Together we would rock, Great Grandma Esther and I, her strong hands holding me tight as she relayed stories of her stolen childhood.

It was her birthday, the sun was bright, the birds were chirping. Great Grandma Esther pranced around her yellow kitchen proudly proclaiming, "five, five, today I am five!" Orange, yellow, pink, and purple streamers hung from every corner of the living room, balloons covered every inch of the large sitting area, par-

ty hats were attached to each seat, and a huge 'Happy Birthday' banner stretched across the bedecked room. At the center of the room sat a sparkly pink cake, like a queen expecting her servants, a crown of five perfect candles waiting to be lit.

A sudden knock brought the festive preparations to a halt, and a worried expression clouded Mama's face. Five burly men in green uniforms stood at the door, and as Great Grandma Esther got a peek at them, she couldn't help but notice awful steel boots on their feet. Although Great Grandma Esther was confused, she was delighted that such official men had come to her party and she politely offered them the first slice of her birthday cake. The men smiled like the Big Bad Wolf and reached into their pockets.

Great Grandma Esther leaped back to the safety of her parents but the soldiers walked closer, their mocking smiles growing as they thrust eight bright yellow stars at the trembling family. "All of you filthy Jews, put these on now and come with us!" they ordered. Suddenly, dark clouds replaced the bright sun and sky cried out in horror.

And just like that, quick as thunder and gunshots, I snapped back into the present. I wrapped myself in the knowledge that no matter the time, wherever I may be, I will always be connected to Great Grandma Esther. My heart is with her and the other six million members of my family, dragged from birthdays and childhood into unthinkable sorrow. I will always have them by my side, in my hope, in my faith, and in my memories.

As Great Grandma Esther's sunset ended and the sky went dark, I watched five small, bright flames twinkle in the sky, specks of hope and happiness guiding me through the darkest times.

**Everywhere I
turned, I saw
more and more
colors; new
flickers of hope
and happiness
filling the sky.**



Emerald City

By Ayelet Landau

A Breath of Fresh Air

By Avigalle Deutsch

It was an ordinary Monday, and rows of empty numbered squares stared back at her. The sky was bleak and her screen dull, and there were spilled coffee stained piles of paper. She felt as if she was trying to sit on a balloon, and it squeaked and bent out of shape, but would not pop.

And so she found herself on the other side of the world as the sun's golden rays kissed the mountains good night. The world slept beneath the great full moon in the gray-blue sky. The stars added depth to the sky, and thousands of them were visible now, as they were not visible above the industrial skyscrapers and pollution. Her feet crunched through the greens as she walked her own way, stumbling over rocks and roots, branches and twigs. The dark was of many shades, far from the ugly yellow lights of the city. The world around her was quiet, except for the sound of trees healing, leaves repairing, and trampled paths reviving themselves from careless man's feet.

And as she reached the peak, the sun emerged into the pale purple sky, bringing shades of pink and orange with it. The world was golden-green through the thin canopy of the trees. The air was cold, but the sun warmed her; its rays surrounding her like a blanket. Its soft light reflected off the turquoise waves far below her, sparkling like a sea of glitter.

And the world began to wake up. The leaves uncurled, mountain flowers opened, and grasses smoothed out. Bleary eyes opened, life returned and birds began to sing. And although her throat felt like the rocks jutting out over the ocean, she joined their song, raising her voice in awe, at the raw and natural beauty. Far from the scrutinizing eyes of neighbors and friends, she twirled, danced, and giggled with the animals at the delight of the new day.

And she saw the smiles as bright as the sunrise waiting for her back home, and the empty squares full of opportunities and hope calling. Her heart longed for them suddenly, and the world around her could not quench the need for home.

She ran down the mountain, sliding and rolling in the lush green grass. The sun warmed the soil, so she took her shoes off as she ran. The air was fresh, pure, and sweet smelling and it mingled with the wonderful scent of the ocean that the

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Sparks From the Moon

By Hadassah Herskovich

Clank. I unlock the front door. *Plop.* I collapse into a wooden chair. *Cough.* *Clunk.* One of my boots drops to the floor, splattering mud. My blackened fingers wrestle with the laces of my other boot and it slides to the ground in a puff of dirt. *Cough. Bang.* I feel a weight off my head as an orange hard hat collides with the floor.

Ma sweeps into the kitchen. “I always know when my boy’s home. Can’t last five minutes without making a ruckus, huh?” Her eyes stare straight ahead, intentionally avoiding the muddy floor. “How was work today, Hon?”

I rub my back, and stand up.

“Same as always. Getting deeper and deeper into that mine every day. Sometimes I wonder if eventually we’ll just hit the middle of the earth.”

“Hm,” Ma busies around the small kitchen, opening and closing cabinets. “Why don’t you go wash up? Dinner will be ready in a few.”

My feet thud against the hardwood as I make my way to the bathroom. I bend over the too-small pedestal sink and watch as the water goes from black to brown to clear. My arms ache as I reach for the towel. Thud, thud. Ma’s waiting at the set table. Orange and red striped placemats are set underneath a plate heaping with chicken and vegetables. I nod in acknowledgement as I plow in and all I can think about is how I can increase the speed of my fork making contact with my mouth. Ma tells me something about Aunt Margaret coming to visit us out in Wyoming. And the new carrot cake recipe she got from Caroline. And how there was a whole new group of tourists that stopped into the gift shop today. I nod here and there and just keep stuffing whatever is on my plate into my mouth. When the “most exciting news that happened today which is never actually exciting” channel is over, I wipe my fingers on my pants and come out onto the front porch.

The moon
watches me as
my voice starts
making music
and my fingers
strum patterns
against my
guitar.

I sit down on the rocking bench with my guitar in hand. I caress the worn blue wood of the instrument and pluck some of the metal strings. It’s a full moon tonight. It glows yellow, almost like the sun. The moon watches me as my voice

starts making music and my fingers strum patterns against my guitar. I feel my body rising with my voice and suddenly I find myself in my truck. My guitar sits next to me and instead I'm accompanied by the radio. I follow the moon as I drive, letting it direct me. I haven't told Ma where I'm going and honestly I'm not sure myself. But suddenly I imagine myself just hitting the mantle of the earth. No more coal. No more mining. Just me and the center of the world.

Except it won't happen. Because I will never reach the end of the earth and we will never run out of coal. Just need to keep mining. And I just continue driving. Moon overhead.



Boys on the Subway

By Serene Klapper

The Fighter

By Ayelet Huberfeld

Hair flying, eyes streaming, she soars, feet barely grazing the ground. Her smile is boundless, unforced. In her eyes, tears glitter, kept in check by time. The scars on her heart pay tribute to the fights of eternity. As I watch, her cage crumbles, and she morphs into a new being. With every footfall, another remnant of her suffering detaches until she is completely exposed. For a few flawless moments, the thorns under her bed do not jab her, and she is at peace. She whispers an incantation to herself as she runs, "one day." By the time she reaches the end of the dusty lane, she is born anew. She is a child at dawn, ready to approach her life with excitement. But I saw her when she arrived. Her happiness has its limits.

Who is she? What strange creature is she? What demons pray on her, destroy her hope, make her ancient?

I spied her here for the first time last month. Her despair paralyzed me, forced me to watch her. Every day since, as I walk home from school, I have been drawn here like a moth, in hopes of seeing her again, to learn her secret.

And every day, she faithfully returns to reignite my curiosity, make me ponder her identity. She approaches, a mummy, and exits, a rainbow. I promise myself that I will approach her; ask her to unload her suffering on me; help me understand. But I never do. I just watch her from afar, never close enough to recognize her.

There she is. She materializes on the road, but her atmosphere is different. Head dangling, shoulders quivering; she does not transform into a butterfly today. She runs gracelessly, stumbling on air. Staggering forward, she grasps on to the space before her for support. She tries to propel herself forward, but her elixir fails her today.

As I watch, she slowly deteriorates, and by the time she reaches me, she crumbles in the dirt. I approach her on my toes, hands outstretched, afraid that with any abrupt movement, she will spontaneously vanish.

She attempts to rise from her heap, but her tortoise knees slump, and her body crashes to the ground. She sobs, the shock waves reverberating, twitching her body. Sensing me, her spine straightens, paralyzing her, forcing her sorrow back inside. I crouch, hands on the ground, a runner ready for the gunshot.

When her eyes focus on me, she explodes, reanimated by desperation. She

**What strange
creature is she?
What demons
prey on her,
destroy her
hope, make her
ancient?**

begs me to leave her alone; like I'm her executioner. She punches, scratches me, forcing me to retreat. But I saw her face. I can identify her.

The next day, the same face drags itself through the doors of my homeroom. The same bruises paint her face, but display no emotion.

I stare as she crawls into the corner, and fades into her surroundings, transparent. Nobody even notes her existence. I do not remember seeing her here before. We are all too preoccupied in our own immature, shallow contests to notice her pain. As we waged our cold wars, and teenage power struggles, we failed to see an actual fighter.

But I tore off her cloak of anonymity. I saw her. She can no longer hide in the scenery. I glimpsed her pain, and am determined to discover its roots.

Her presence plagues my mind all day, and when the bell releases us from our shackles, I ambush her where I saw her first.

I find her staring at the sun, as if to blind herself. She finally seems desperate to divulge her load on someone, and her explanation leaks from under her trembling lips, as if on its own:

“At home, I dream of being invisible, in order to remain whole. Hope he won't see me. But he does. So I fight back, and defend myself. I have lost for years. But yesterday, I defeated the devil.”

And at that moment, I hear sirens echoing in the distance, carrying me back to reality.



Self Portrait

By Hadassah Penn

Chasing the Sun

By Rachel Jacobi

Reflections of Mary Hollenbaugh, diary excerpt page 132.

Year 1813, Month 8, Week 3 at Bethlem Royal Hospital.

Discovered in 1815

Icarus chased the sun. Daedalus chased Icarus. I wanted to chase them both. It seems like such a terrible thing to want, but is it really? Has anybody ever experienced the blinding beauty of the sun and the freedom of soaring through a wide blue expanse that is as endless as an ocean, as viscerally as Icarus and Daedalus?

I wanted to see beauty so much that it haunted me at night. It came in forms of the past, in forms of sweetness and love and my beautiful daughter, all distant memories and sometimes delusions.

I have so many dreams, too many to count. Most aren't dreams; they are nightmares. Most people would agree that nightmares are worse, but they aren't. Dreams tease and taunt you with what you wish you could have, and when you wake up it's like a bucket of cold water; a hollow feeling slowly spreading from your chest down to your stomach. At least nightmares deal with the reality. They don't make torturous promises of what could be. They don't give hope. And if I knew there was hope, I would finally be driven to insanity. Sometimes I hear howls in my dreams. I hear the wind howling, I see coyotes in the distance. I see my daughter laughing merrily, skipping outdoors in our old gardens. My daughter is the greatest reason I have to escape Bedlam.

My dreams are also memories. I dream of when I was a child. I used to look into the mirror. I was a vain child. My mother would bring me out and present me to callers, and at dinner parties. I would stand there for a few minutes, a real live china doll with hair spun like sunlight and rosebud lips. I would bask in the attention, before my mother would nudge me away towards my nanny. What does my face look like now, I wonder? Vanity is a sin, but it still lives inside me. I don't want to know. I don't want to stare into a mirror and see sunken eyes, hollow cheeks, cracked lips, and a listless gaze. My daughter has a monster for a momma.

People wonder if Satan has a soul. He does. I live in it. People also say that the darkest part of a monster is its soul. This is also true. Bedlam is not much more than a glorified prison, only worse because that is merely a facade. Anything can lie under a facade. Anything. They call Bedlam a 'palace for the insane'. The facade of a wide brick building with imposing columns, and a great big dome perfectly embody the steel gray gloominess that lives inside the building, but it hides the horror and pain that comes with it.

I have been here for over eight months. I know how long I have been here because I am making notches under my bed, next to where I hide my diary. I am keeping track of the time for the same reason that I keep the diary; it is proof of my sanity. Because someday someone will come here and see that I wasn't suffering from, as Dr. Thomas Monroe so tactfully put it, "a generalized disintegration of psychic functions," Also know as a "breakdown in the relation between thought, emotion, and behavior." Also known as schizophrenia. Schizophrenia is such an unattractive word. It's symbolic of such ugliness. How does one prove they are sane? How does one prove they aren't insane? It seems so impossible. So far it is.

How do I tell Dr. Monroe and the rest of them that their treatments for my 'insanity' are useless? How do I notify them that I don't need cold baths every morning and night, that inducing vertigo will get them nowhere, and most of all that I can have walks in the daytime? Oh the daytime, the beautiful sun. Where has the sun gone? I never thought that I would have to wonder about freedom. If I were to escape, I would chase freedom like Icarus chased the sun. I would drink it, gorge myself on it. The walks give me a glimpse of the freedom I so long for. The freedom I want so much, and daren't hope for.

**People wonder if
Satan has a soul.
He does. I live
in it.**

Has anyone wanted to fade from this earth as much as I do? Cruel Mother Nature, letting those that want to stay leave, and drawing out the years of those that want to leave the most. I am encased in a wall of stone. I want so much before I leave. I want a chance to appreciate my life of the past, when I still had hopes for the future. One more time, I want to see my daughter and experience her beauty. Just one time, I want to escape the steel grayness that surrounds me, and taste the freedom of soaring through the bright blueness, under the golden sun.

My Destiny

By Malkie Rubin

I have 10 minutes to live and I am nowhere close to where I am supposed to be. I cannot fail.

My heart is beating fast as a race car and my mind is jumbled with thoughts of the past. The City of Lights is a swirl of mere colors, a distorted picture of my temporary hometown. My people have been oppressed by the Western nations and now we are the oppressors. The message we make now will have a forever impression upon the world. Even though I will not see the perfect state, I know my contributions will be everlasting. And for this reason, I must not be late, for my brothers who will die tonight are expecting me to join them promptly.

As I approach Le Petit Cambodge, the clink of glasses and laughter brings me back to the restaurants and cafés in Raqqa. Back in Syria, we lived the good life. The people were religious and we were able to practice freely.

As I face the holy places in the south, I can see the children running and laughing in the streets. I see everything changing. Assad comes in and takes over. He starts spraying people with chemicals that sting in their eyes and stop their laughter. People are dying. There is no sign of life anywhere. The land is desolate and the trees have shriveled and died. Bodies are piling up day after day with no end in sight.

Then, I saw my future. A man dressed in the clothes of war waves a flag over the capitol building. He declares that we are now free from the grips of the evil dictator, Assad. We will no longer die; and instead we will live. This man is my savior. He is Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. He is the leader of my new state, the Islamic State of Syria and Iraq.

On his request, I will flee with my traitorous brothers. While they are running away from their responsibilities to the Islamic State, I am running towards my destiny. With my clothing on my back and fire burning in my heart, I entered the first leg of my journey as a migrant on a boat. The waters churned in harmony with the pounding of my heart. I entered Greece, but I was greeted with bars and stern faces. Millions of people around me shouted: "Let my people in." I snuck around the men with badges and stepped onto the railroad to my next step: Germany. Trying to atone for their blunders in the 20th century, Germany gladly accepts me into their country for as long as I desire. However, this

I must not be late, for my brothers who will die tonight are expecting me to join them promptly.

is not my final destination. I stay in Germany for a few days, accepting whatever food they offer me. Then, I get on the next train to France, nearing my assigned location. What I have been told to do next counts immensely.

The sound of gunfire and blood-curdling screams breaks me out of my reverie.

I am still two blocks away and I have to get to where I am supposed to be. A gunshot sounds again. I freeze in my tracks. Am I too late?

I run up to the scene in Le Petit Cambodge, the dead stare at me with blank expressions. Was this supposed to be my destiny? Was I supposed to be a ruthless killer? Was this why I have wandered so far from my home? I tell myself, no. This is not who I am supposed to be. I am a person with feeling, a human, not a ruthless monster.

Where is The Wonder

By Nechama Weiner

Number four, Wonder. That's an easy one. W.O.N.D.E.R. Just like it sounds; no silent letters, no extra added letters. Sounding out the word, I slowly and carefully print the letters on the crisp, clean sheet of loose-leaf paper. Making sure to write each letter on the line, not letting it hang off, just like we practiced in our handwriting books. Carefully rounding out my O and adding the equal length lines to my E, I finish up the word. Now comes the hard part, using it in a sentence. I tap my bright green mechanical pencil on my desk as I think. Everyone around me is attacking their paper with words, and I just sit there with the sword in my hand, not having anything to attack with. As more time passes, I begin to tap my pencil faster and faster. Until it drops to the floor I don't even realize how fast I was tapping. The class looks up and pauses in their writing as the pencil rolls silently under the seat in front of me. Ms. Mendoza looks up from her book and asks if everything is alright in a concerned yet annoyed tone. I respond by quickly taking out another bright green mechanical pencil and pretending to write something down on my page, as if I figured out how to write the sentence. But I haven't.

I W.O.N.D.E.R. what it would be like to be happy. I W.O.N.D.E.R. what it would be like if Mom wasn't always crying and sad. I W.O.N.D.E.R. what it would be like if Clara hadn't died.

Saturday mornings, my favorite time of the week. Little Clara and I would jump out of bed and race down the hall to Mom and Dad's room where we snuggled in bed with them. Still in our pajamas, we'd all go downstairs and eat the yummiest breakfast. Mom fried up pancakes and stirred up her secret recipe of maple syrup while Clara and I helped Dad set the table. Our round kitchen table was perfect; it had just enough room for all of us. Clara never figured out how to eat the pancakes without making a huge mess. She always got the maple syrup all over her hands and then rubbed them in her hair, making us laugh and laugh.

After we cleaned up, we went to the living room and sat in front of the fireplace. Mom and Dad read us books while we drank chocolate milk. When we were done reading books, Dad told us silly jokes. Clara always giggled at them, making us all laugh along.

That Saturday was supposed to be just like the rest of them, fun and happy, but it wasn't. My Mickey Mouse clock blinked nine o'clock, the time when Clara and I would run to Mom and Dad's room. I was ready to go, but Clara wasn't up yet. I went to her bed to wake her up; I shook her arm a few times and softly called her name. She didn't open her eyes; she didn't wake up; she didn't even move. I was bored lying in my bed waiting for her, so I went to Mom and Dad's room

alone. When they asked where Clara was I said, “Oh, she’s still sleeping.” Mom thought that was strange so she went to check on her. That’s my last memory of that life, life with Clara.

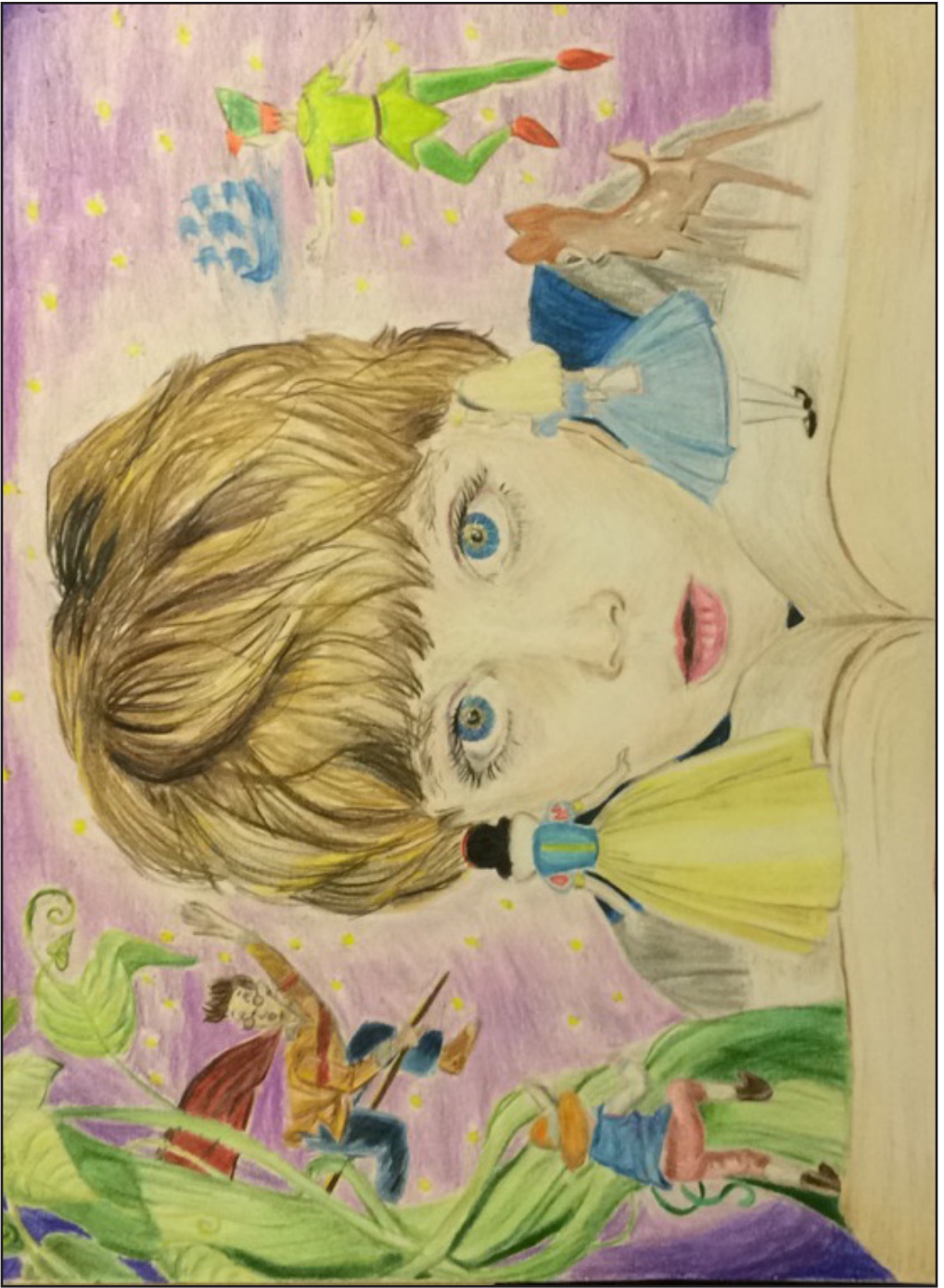
The rest of that Saturday is hard for me to remember. I didn’t understand why we weren’t eating pancakes and sitting by the fireplace laughing. Why was that Saturday any different than the others? But it was. I remember my mother screaming and crying over Clara’s bed, and my father running down the hall in a panic. I followed him because I didn’t know what was going on. He only had to look at my mother and he broke out in tears.

I remember looking out the window in the living room and seeing lots of cars pulling up to my house. My grandparents and all my cousins came and I wasn’t sure why; I knew that it wasn’t anybody’s birthday. Everyone wore black clothing and looked very sad, some people were even crying. Uncle Benjamin was sad too and he’s never sad; he’s always happy and making jokes. I remember being outside with my parents and lots of other people, but not Clara, she wasn’t with us. My mother was holding me and crying. I wasn’t sure what everyone was doing. Why were we looking at a hole in the grass with a box inside. But I didn’t ask any questions. I can’t remember anything else from that day, but I do remember hearing people say that Clara died. I don’t know what that means, and when I ask my parents they tell me that she was taken away to a better place.

I miss Clara a lot, without her I am sad and lonely. I wonder when Clara will come back so that we can have fun Saturdays again. Maybe she’s having so much fun in the better place, and doesn’t miss me like I miss her.

Ms. Mendoza’s voice calling for everyone to put down their pencils and pass up their spelling tests brings me back to the present. I knew how to use W.O.N.D.E.R. in a sentence all along; I just couldn’t bring myself to write it down.

**Everyone
around me is
attacking their
paper with
words, and I
just sit there
with the sword
in my hand, not
having anything
to attack with.**



Escape the Page

By Sarah Farber

Robbed of Applause

By Miriam Wilamowsky

They'll applaud my courage. They'll commend my devotion. They'll praise my passion. I just know it.



We. Are. Broke. Seemingly, three simple words. But they're not just any three words. They are my worst three words. I blur out Michelle as she performs her scripted performance of "Jim Needs a Better Job." I could perform it by heart by now, too. I know, November 5th. If we don't pay Jerry the Landlord by November 5th we'll be evicted. We have two kids; it's not just about us anymore. I know.



I skip down the block as if I've transformed into a six-year-old girl. I feel the ends of my mouth nearly touching my eyes, which are bulging with excitement. Yet the store I end up in front of does not sell candy or dolls. Its possibilities are greater. I can buy Michelle that necklace she thought she could never get but still keeps on a tab on her computer. And the twins. Oh, the twins. They'll grow up in a house they deserve to live in. Most of all, I'll never have to hear those three words again. They'll be banished, destroyed, lifeless; no longer able to control me. I may be broke but those words won't break me anymore.

**I may be broke
but those words
won't break me
anymore.**

I pull on the door handle and take the beeping sound as an invitation to enter. The four-digit code that will save my life is begging to be used. I notice my black clothing and regret dressing for a funeral. I touch my black ski mask and regret accessorizing for the North Pole. Today is a good day. My fingers punch in the four numbers as if they have a life of their own. Five. What am I doing? Eight. What have I become? Two. You can't back out now. Six. The heavy, black door swings open and my body freezes because I see it. I see the antidote to of all my miseries. I see the catalyst of my family's future. I see what my father was never able to: sustenance. I allow myself to gently pick it up. It's in my hands. The money is mine.



As the ceremonious blue and red lights flash before my eyes, I wait to accept my award. I wait for the men in matching costume to congratulate me. I have finally provided for my family. My family will finally be proud of me. The men reach out and I await their admiring embrace, but instead they pull my arms with cold,

blank expressions. They drag them behind my back and I feel a cold metal pressing against me. “You have the right to remain silent, anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law”.



As I stare at the orange reflection in the cell window, I wonder. Since when is providing for your family a crime?

No applause, awards or praise went out to the world's most devoted husband and father.

