

Manhattan High School Literary and Art Awards

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. Barbara Tuckel's beloved parents, inspired the literacy journal competition by raising the standard for written and artistic expression.

*Harry and Rose Kaplan Scholarship
First Place Prose Award*

Tzophie Ulano

*Harry and Rose Kaplan Scholarship
Prose Honorable Mention*

Avigail P. Deutsch

*Harry and Rose Kaplan Scholarship
First Place Poetry Award*

Cherri Citron

*Harry and Rose Kaplan Scholarship
First Place Art Award*

Tamar Dan

(Oh!)occasions

An Anthology of Literature and Art

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*“There are as many special occasions
in life as we choose to celebrate.”*

– Robert Brault

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Foreword

By Mrs. Estee Friedman-Stefansky, Principal

I remember the first time I struck the match to light my very own Shabbos candles, the first time my mother offered me coffee as she was pouring her routine morning cup, and the first time I knew it would be the last time I would see my beloved grandmother. So many memories fill our minds as we enter the space of reflection. Some memories are light and amorphous like abstract art while others are bright and defined like figurative art. Some of our memories we created as we planned those occasions; other memories we created after the occasions planned themselves.

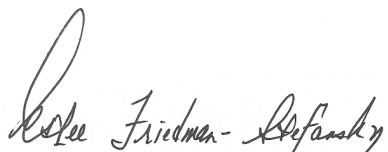
As humans we crave control. Daunted by the unexpectedness in life, by the surprises that often arrest us and remind us of our vulnerabilities and limitations, we love being able to plan. We anticipate how we wish to visually and spiritually capture an event — how we wish to re-experience it after it has passed us. Ceremonious — we love beginnings, middles and ends and knowing that we can easily access and retrieve our memories when we are feeling nostalgic. Indeed, life is marked by a spectrum of occasions. Since the beginning of time, humanity has categorized occasions. Every generation adds theirs and bequeathes a calendar of the standardized occasions we ought to celebrate such as Memorial Day and the Fourth of July. However, the calendar doesn't capture the first pair of toddler's shoes, your first date, and the first time you offered an earnest apology.

And yet, in our memories, some of the most precious occasions are the unexpected ones, absent in the formal code of universal observances. They are distinctive and personal, and it is often impossible to share with others the stature of those occasions. In fact, those occasions become our little secrets which strengthen our identities. Unlike standardized occasions which we celebrate with a community, we choose to share these personal experiences with a particular loved one. Those occasions are the moments when we feel the most alive — aware of our humanness, the capacity of our soul, and the blessings of life.

The Literary and Art Journal you hold in your hand captures the best written and artistic expression inspired by the theme of occasions. I am very proud of our students who demonstrate esteem for communication and connection and who are dedicated to their own growth and development. I am grateful to Dr. Shaina Trapedo who continues to inspire all of us; she advances our students' skills and helps them access their voices, and for that and more, we are all very grateful.

A special thank you to Mrs. Chani Kanowitz for her artistic talent and for laying out this journal. Thank you to our exceptional teachers: Mrs. Raquel Benchimol, Mrs. Rivkah Nehorai, Ms. Caroline Drew, and Mrs. Chani Kanowitz for contributing to the efficacy of this project. I commend our student editors, Nechoma Flohr, Noa Garfinkel, Hindi Medalie, Ahuva Mermelstein, Alicia Russo, Elona Ryba and Tamar Spoerri, who demonstrated excellent leadership on this school-wide project.

(Oh!)ccasions encourages us to recognize the surprise in every breath of life, and the occasions yet to be created.



Relee Friedman-Spefanaky

Editors' Foreword

By Nechoma Flohr, Hindi Medalie, Elona Ryba

Dear Reader,

Manhattan High School's annual Literary and Art Journal publishes short stories, creative nonfiction, poetry, photography, illustrations, paintings, and digital art that offer original insights, unique perspectives, and uncommon observations. Crafted in connection with this year's theme, (Oh!)ccasion, the pieces included here are informative as well as reflective, and reach beyond personal experience toward universal meaning. Whether dystopian fiction set in the future or a personal essay based on the world we live in now, the writing included in our journal pushes the envelope on creativity and aims to reach the reader in new ways with rich detail and a distinctive voice.

We hope that as you enjoy this year's Literary and Art Journal, you are inspired and delighted by the student body's meditations on everyday moments and once-in-a-lifetime events. In the process of reading submissions, we were awestruck by the diverse angles used to approach life's most compelling experiences, from celebrated joys to acute sorrows. We discovered the subjective yet sublime value of the moments we mark as occasions, be it as monumental as the drafting of the U.S. constitution or as seemingly trivial as catching the last train home. It is this wide spectrum of perspective that builds our lives into a series of occasions that enable us to become shapers and celebrators of our surroundings. From the musings of a mother on her daughter's twenty-first birthday to the tale of two brothers coming to America, we hope this anthology of literature and art invites you to reminisce and reframe your own life's encounters.

Lastly, we would like to take this occasion to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the ever hardworking Dr. Shaina Trapedo for her extensive assistance in ensuring the quality of this publication truly reflects the highest standards of excellence. Of course, these pages would never have made their way into your hands without the expertise, vision, and unparalleled patience of our outstanding Director of Technology, Mrs. Chani Kanowitz. We also owe boundless gratitude toward Mrs. Friedman-Stefansky for continuously granting all of her students countless occasions and the capacious means to express our creative selves. Lastly, we extend a heartfelt thank you to our peers who submitted thoughtfully crafted poetry, prose,

and artwork for consideration. American journalist and writer Joan Didion, best known for her literary journalism and memoirs, confesses: “Writing fiction is for me a fraught business, an occasion of daily dread for at least the first half of the novel, and sometimes all the way through.” We recognize that the act of art-making is never simple or easy, and we are grateful that you took the occasion of this publication to challenge yourselves in new and compelling ways.

Warmly yours,

Nechoma, Hindi, and Elona

Artifacts

By Adina Feldman

Papa had us dress in our Sunday finest. After all, this was a special occasion. He had been invited to America to lecture on the Egyptian artifacts he uncovered on his most recent expedition. It had been three years since Papa's last archeological discovery and I could tell he was beginning to lose faith in his profession. I still remember the day Papa came back from his trip and delicately unwrapped the precious amulets, scarabs, coins, and beaded jewelry for us to see. How we all danced and laughed around the kitchen table.

Finding these artifacts meant everything to him and to our family. He proudly announced that Jacob and I could now have anything we wanted in the world, and since he was an excavator, we knew he meant it. A porcelain doll, toy cars that raced, trains that moved by themselves, pretty dresses that spun, and endless chocolate. It had been so long since we had chocolate I could barely remember what it tasted like. Still, sweets were not as special as finally having Papa home again and being able to leave Aunt Polly's small apartment. Papa teased us saying that the museum that hired him had acquired us all; Papa, me, and little Jacob, together with the artifacts from Cairo, were all coming to America.

The week before, our voyage arrived. To ensure all of the invaluable items arrived in America safely, we received first class tickets aboard the newest, most advanced ship that would bring us to New York in just one week's time. The liner promised its passengers utmost luxury, including a library for women, a smoking room for the men, a gymnasium, restaurants, and its own olympic-sized swimming pool. After counting down the days, the night before our departure, Jacob and I chatted in our beds till dawn, practicing our American accents with words like "waw-tur" and "baahth" instead of water and bath.

Papa teased us saying that the museum that hired him had acquired us all... together with the artifacts from Cairo, were all coming to America.

Skipping towards the gangplank, I reached my hand into my pocket one last time, and my heart dropped. I frantically patted my coat and searched all of my pockets for the ticket that wasn't there. I felt my throat

tighten as I looked up at Papa, only to see him waving three tickets playfully in my face. In my excitement, I had forgotten I gave my ticket to him for safekeeping. The boarding area was densely packed with people of all ages. Crowded together were men standing tall in crisp suits with silk handkerchiefs, women young and old in the most beautiful travel coats I had ever seen, and so many children we would be able to play with. As different as we were, I could feel that we were all inexplicably bound together by the hope and promise that comes with new beginnings.

Jacob swatted my hand away at my attempt to straighten his cap. I rolled my eyes and sighed as I pulled at the collar of my new dress. It had been over a year since I owned anything new and I was still getting used to the feeling of stiff fabric against my skin. Suddenly, as if an invisible stick was prodding us all from behind, crowd moved as one to the front of the dock. Startled by the sudden commotion, Jacob gripped tighter onto my coat, but soon his caution gave way to curiosity and his little hand dragged me further into the bustling crowd. I grabbed Papa's arm and pulled him along with us. Audible gasps and exclamations of wonder projected from the crowd as the object of everyone's wonder slowly glided into view.

At first, it was impossible to even recognize that the massive thing that loomed in front of us was a ship at all. Its enormous size added to the ship's otherworldly appearance, and the blinding combination of sun and reflective metal gave the vessel a celestial glow. Four red and black towers exhaled billowing pillars of smoke skyward. Rows and rows of silver cabin windows gleamed bright and inviting. Toward the top deck I could make out chairs and tables similar to those in a restaurant or movie theater. Hundreds of staff and crew members gathered on the top deck waving down at us and clearly enjoying the commotion and excitement they were creating. The ship seemed to stretch for miles, in length no doubt longer than Buckingham Palace herself. Finally, at full mast, the noble flag of Great Britain waved proudly at us. This flag had seen wars and revolutions, triumphs and failures. It had been here, representing our country since the seventeenth century and now it was here again, heralding a new age of modern technology and transportation.

As the ship pulled into the dock, Jacob and I smiled at each other in delight, echoing the gasps and shouts of excitement that came from grown-ups and children alike. After complaining that I was too short to see, Papa

hoisted both me and Jacob on his shoulders.

“Think it’s good enough for us, Alice?” Papa jested.

After we were able to make it to the first-class line without being trampled, I managed to catch a glimpse of the line adjacent. Hordes of people dressed in what seemed like layers of unkempt garments and ill-fitting suits waiting at the bottom of the deck. I couldn’t help but feel a little indignant when I noticed faces near me avert their eyes in disgust. I felt only sympathy. After all, a few short months ago, that would have been my family.

“How will they all fit?” I asked in concern when I noticed I could not see the end of the line for the third-class passengers. I smiled as Papa tussled my hair and reminded me that the only thing I had to be worried about was having a good time. Right before I looked away (I had always been cautioned that it was rude to stare) I saw a girl, about my age, holding tightly to the hands of her little brother. Her bright blue eyes met mine and she and the little boy waved; Jacob and I smiled and waved back while being urged forward by the pressing crowd.

“Jacob!” I shouted as he tripped and dropped his brand new teddy bear, unimaginatively named “Teddy,” down, down into the dark waters off the dock. As Teddy sank, Jacob began to cry. Papa consoled him telling him that we could get a newer, better Teddy in America. After all, President Teddy Roosevelt was American, and that is where the best Teddy bears came from.

Only then did it really hit me that we were going to America. America! Home to hope and possibility, where dreams are fulfilled and chocolate is given away to children on the streets. I took a deep breath as I tried to let the hardships of the past three years roll off my shoulders and sink below with Jacob’s bear. From now on, I was a new Alice, a young carefree Alice who never had to wear the same dress for weeks, and never had to share her half a piece of bread with her little brother. I took a step forward, straightened my shoulders, raised my chin, and cast one last glance at my ticket, before offering it to the ticketmaster’s outstretched hand. *Date: April 10, 1912, Destination: New York, Ship: RMS Titanic.*



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Whose Woods These Are

By Peri Feinberg

After Hour Disco

By Chayala Hauptman

The binder is the party animal. Hogging the dance floor, disco moving, pulse beating, ruffling his papers. He pushes everyone away because of his size. He tries to be friendly and open arms wide, but merely ends up swallowing those who come close. The pencil case is the party planner; each pen, each color tasked with a feature of the party. Red got the DJ, Blue ordered the food, Green arranged the most exclusive venue, Black organized the guest list, and Pencil took care of all the nitty-gritty details that may have been needed to be erased and redone. The music pulsates and vibrates the smoky floor, black light illuminates the walls and a disco-ball shines a light that is ever-changing in wavelength. The spiral-bound notebooks are what some would call a “clique,” yet a civil war has erupted subtly underneath the facade of their vibrant colored covers. Black Marble, Salmon Pink Sparkles, and Kelly Green have decided to put their spat behind them for tonight and are the brats by the punchbowl, snobbing out the loose change that left its comfortable hiding spot in the folds of the knapsack to venture out into public. The party drags on til the early morning, the party-goers falling on their faces, becoming stationary. The music from the iPod, that had not been turned off, drones on, and the disco-ball, which is an empty snapple bottle, projecting through its prisms the flickering light in the hallway, continues to shine, light waning as the sun comes up once more.



Rough Draft
By Noa Garfinkel

Rarity

By Musia Kirchenbaum

One dollar a week for four years. In the land where streets were said to be paved with gold, she slaved away. Hour after hour, week after week. The old shoebox began to split at the edges, stuffed with dollars and borrowed treasures.

Four years after she stepped off the boat on Ellis Island, four years after she escaped the remnants of her old life, she was finally able to afford a single luxury in her otherwise bland life, a set of china set. She carefully walked the narrow aisles in the fine crockery store, accurately aware of the meaning of the expression “like a bull in a china shop.” Old cups, fragile plates and bowls were haphazardly stacked on the shelves and boxes of silver cutlery lined the walls.

As she was tiptoeing past the plates, an antique china set caught her eye. It was exactly what she was looking for—white with blue trim around the edges. After handing a wad of painstakingly straightened bills to the cashier, she took the china home. In the evenings, her calloused fingers traced the smooth edges and her tired eyes followed the dainty azure lines. When she invited friends over, or women she had hoped would become her friends, she bragged of the set’s rarity, craftsmanship, and hand-painted pattern. Unlike the polished service for twelve, the broken English stumbling over her foreign tongue was never able to adequately express the joy she felt owning something worth displaying on the highest shelf.

**She bragged of
the set’s rarity,
craftsmanship,
and hand-
painted pattern.**

The china traveled with her from the tenement building on the lower east side to a small brownstone in Brooklyn, but it remained unused. She celebrated her wedding and her citizenship on a casual set of white plates spotted roseate blossoms and the birth of her son, as well as his engagement, on blue ceramic dishes. Years passed, yet no occasion was ever deemed special enough for her precious china.

The china remained untouched until her memorial service. The small brownstone in Brooklyn was packed with people, and her son, now a father, wandered the halls of his childhood home. He walked towards the kitchen and in the corner of his eye, he saw the china set, neatly stacked

on the top shelf. He thought of his mother's journey, of her hardships and her troubles, and when he looked at the fine china he saw her strength, endurance, and legacy.

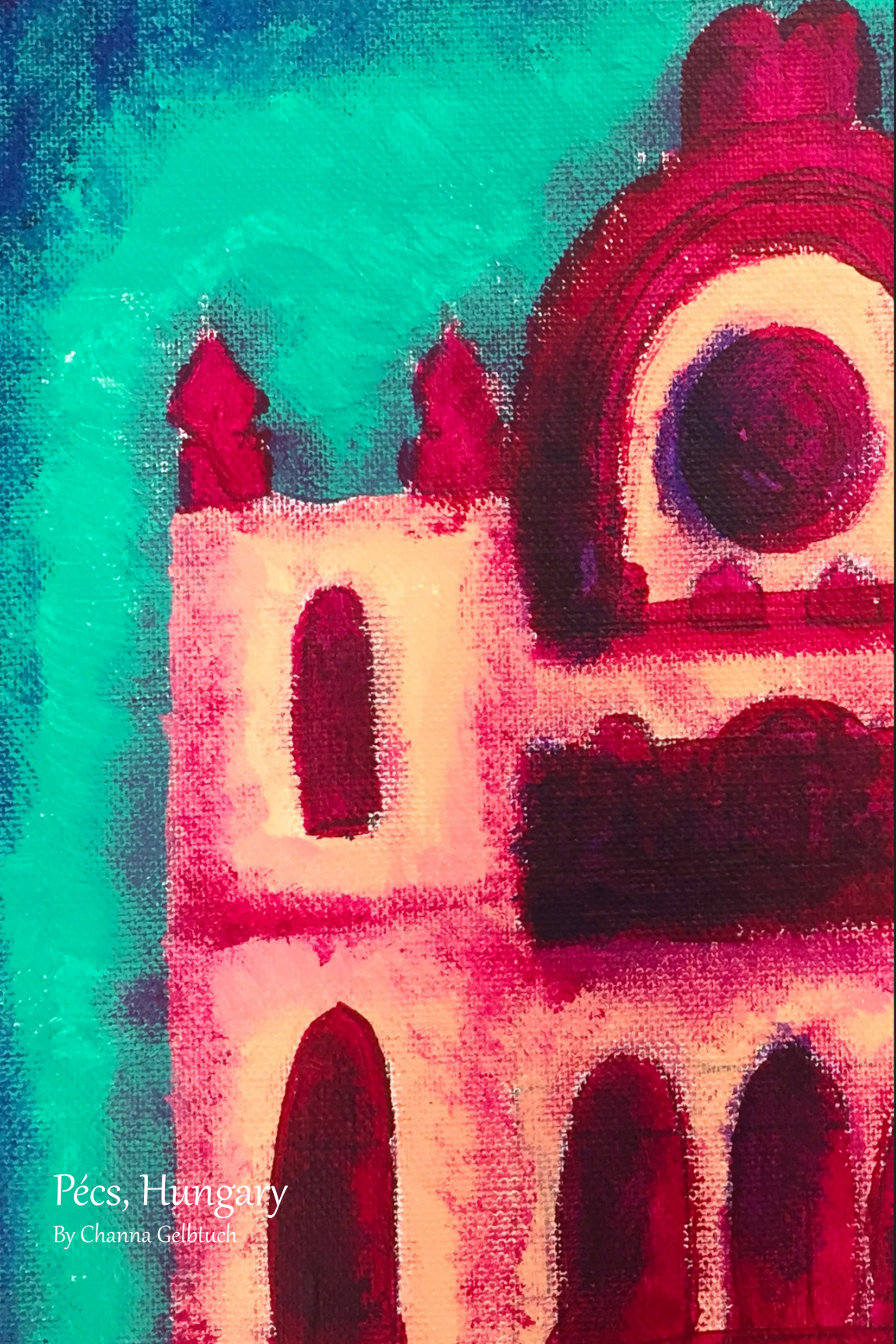
Her son took the china and packed in the back of his car and, among the shrieks of his children, promised himself he would put the china to good use. His wife unpacked it, admiring their rarity, their smoothness, and their hand-painted edges. They glanced at them once in a while, often around the holidays and their anniversary, but they never took it out. Instead, the son opted for basic ivory dishes at home and birthday dinners at restaurants. Life passed on and the delicate azure trim was adorned by dust.

Years later, when he was going through his wife's old items, he came upon the long-forgotten china set. Once again, he packed it away in the back of his car and gave it to his granddaughter as a wedding present. Glowing with happiness, she accepted it, promising to use and treasure the generation-old heirloom. She placed it on her highest shelf, displaying it for all her visitors and guests, bragging of its antiquity, its rich history and journey, but she never brought it out.

As the years went by, her children grew up. Her son received a scholarship and she made a celebratory dinner served on paper plates emblazoned with "Congratulations!" When her daughter's new fiance came for dinner after the engagement, she used simple white plates she received from a friend who moved.

After generations, the china was still clean, forever untouched by greasy food, dish soap, and sticky fingers. She would often sit and admire it while pouring over old photo albums. She would spot the china in corners of the sepia-toned pictures, sitting on its perch in the background, always seen but never touched.

Feeling nostalgic, she shuffled over to the cabinet, longing to touch proof of the past, a beacon of her family's history. Her frail hands picked up a single plate, but she was unable to bear its weight. The china fell to the floor with a deafening crash, splintering into thousands of missed opportunities. Shards of dinners, graduations, birthdays, and weddings blanketed the marble tile, all still waiting for that special occasion.



Pécs, Hungary

By Channa Gelbtuch



Debrecen, Hungary
By Leora Lehrfield



Miracles

By Ilana Brunner

They come
They go
They're fast
They're slow
They're sudden
They're rare
And are everywhere

Practice Makes Perfect

By Ettie Guelfguat

Coming to America

By Esther Bertram

Morris was trying to sleep. When he was asleep, he didn't smell the disease and filth that surrounded him, but just as he was about to drift off to dream of a better place, a persistent voice woke him.

"Pst, Morris. Morris, are you sleeping?" His little brother Sol nudged him.

Morris rolled over, his eyes still shut, "Sol, how can I sleep if you're yelling in my ear?"

"I'm not," Sol whispered, "It's just that—"

"What, what is it?" Morris interrupted.

Sol was quiet for a moment.

"I think we made it to Amayrica" he said, breathless, as if the name itself was magical. Morris opened one eye and squinted in the darkness.

"Oh, Sol. It's America, not Amayrica, and anyway how do you know that we're there?"

"I've got a feeling" Sol replied, sounding slightly dejected.

"I've got a feeling too," Morris grumbled.

"What's that?" Sol asked.

"I feel tired. Good night."

Morris rolled over and curled up under his thin, raggedy blanket, planning to fall back asleep and dream of lovely scented smelling places like bakeries and flower shops.

"Well, I guess I'll go up to the deck alone..." Sol grinned, knowing he'd win this battle.

"Huh? Are you crazy Sol? Ma'll kill you!"

They both glanced wearily at their mother, asleep next to little Rebecca, but Sol shrugged and pivoted towards the exit.

"Sol!" Morris said in a loud whisper. "Sol!" he tried again.

"So—oh, forget about it!" He hurried after Sol, stepping carefully over the sleeping men, women, and children, pressed together like sardines in a tin. Morris caught up to Sol and they bounded up the rickety stairs together, finally reaching the deck. For a while they just stood there in silence, their eyes closed, breathing in the briny air. Morris thought back

to a few months ago, when life had still been normal. On school break he would go to the shops in the city with Ma. Despite Morris's vocal objections, Ma spent most of the day in Gold's Perfume and Cosmetics Shop. He used to hate the musky air that he could feel on his skin. The sharp overpowering odors would sting his nose and hang on his clothes long after they left. When they left the shop, he'd close his eyes and take a deep, cleansing breath, and his mother would laugh and laugh. How silly he was to not have appreciated the perfume back then.

"Sol, what are you thinking about?" Morris asked his younger brother. Sol opened his eyes and turned towards Morris.

"I'm thinking about the downstairs cabins. I hate being below deck so much." Downstairs was steerage, where Morris, Sol, and their family had lived for the past few weeks. There were dozens of other families living there too, their babies cried constantly, and the smell of dirty clothes, unwashed bodies, and seasickness became worse each day. Venturing up to the deck from the downstairs was like coming into a new world.

"Morris! Morris! Look! Amayrica!" Sol suddenly shouted.

Morris squinted into the cold fog as a tall statue grew larger, closer, and clearer. She was unlike anything he'd ever seen before— a towering greenish bronze woman in a flowing robe, sandals, and a crown. But what captivated Morris the most was the torch she held high over her head. Morris could almost feel the heat emanating from her flame travel over the icy waters and fill him with the warmth of hope and optimism.

He turned towards Sol. "How many times do I have to tell you? It's America, not Amayrica."

Sol looked up at his big brother, who seemed much smaller now with the giant green woman in the distance behind him.

"Morris, it's not just America, it's our home."

**The sharp
overpowering
odors would
sting his nose
and hang on
his clothes long
after they left...
How silly he
was to not have
appreciated the
perfume back
then.**



Accomplishments

By Tamar Dan



Certain Teas

By Chaya Trapedo

A gentle Sunday breeze filled the air as people dawdled along Pine-wood Lane, some entering local shops and others strolling with carriages and dogs. Among them was an old woman with hair like cotton and glasses that covered most of her face. She drew her thick periwinkle shawl closer to her body and continued on her way while her cane tapped the concrete in a steady rhythm. She walked a bit more and abruptly stopped outside of a cafe.

As usual, upon entering the cafe, the scent of coffee brewing caused her shoulders to sink. Since her husband passed nearly seven years ago, the cafe had become her second home, or at least an easier place to be than home. As soon as the little bell above the door to the cafe sang, a young woman with honey-colored hair positioned herself by the register. Her scattered freckles and her leaf-green eyes flavored her joyful disposition.

The young waitress smiled and said, "Good morning, Mrs. Schmidt. Large chamomile tea and a raisin bran muffin?"

The old woman nodded her head and returned the waitress's smile. The waitress punched a few buttons on the cash register.

"That'll be five dollars and thirty-five cents."

The old woman reached into her wallet and pulled out a neatly folded ten dollar bill.

"Keep the change, Jess," the old woman said as she extended her wrinkled palm toward the girl's smooth one.

"Thanks, Mrs. Schmidt. We really appreciate it."

Jess dropped the generous tip into a mason jar on the counter. She was a senior at Claremont College and had been working at the cafe to help pay off her loans since she was a freshman.

"It's my pleasure, Jess," Mrs. Schmidt replied and returned her coin purse to her coat pocket. "And please, call me Barbara."

She made her way over to a cozy armchair in the back of the shop. Mrs. Schmidt eased herself into the seat, letting go of her worries from the past week as she sank into the tufted cushion. By the time she had sat down, Jess had started walking over, balancing a tray with a warmed up muffin, steaming tea in a wide-brimmed mug, and a few sugar cubes.

“Here Mrs. Schmidt,” Jess said as she gently set the tea tray down on the side table. “Enjoy.”

Something seemed to suddenly dawn upon Jess and she added, “Oh, I almost forgot! I’ll be right back,” as she disappeared to the backroom of the cafe.

Moments after Mrs. Schmidt had begun to sip her tea, the serenity in the small cafe was dispersed by four teenage girls rambling in, oblivious to the people around them.

“OMG! Mackenzie, you’re, like, the cutest for taking us here for your birthday,” one of them uttered in a volume that was reserved for cheering squads.

“I know, right? Alexis told me that this place was super-cute ‘cuz it’s like so retro,” boasted Mackenzie. She had straightened tawny hair reaching down her back and was wearing heavy makeup. All of them were.

Alexis flipped her blond locks in reply. “What can I say? I have the best taste!”

They all laughed and plopped themselves down at a table next to the window looking out to the street. From there, one of them called, “Hey, can we get, like, four vanilla lattes and a muffin?”

Responding to the call, Jess returned from the back and sighed at the sight of a few of her regulars getting up to leave. She traced the cause to the group near the window. She walked over to their table and said, “Sure. What flavor?”

“Vanilla. I said that already.”

Mackenzie turned her head away from Jess and announced in an audible whisper, “Wow, that’s already lowering the Yelp review.”

Jess took a breath and confirmed, “Vanilla lattes, right.”

“Obviously! What else could it have been?”

Jess ignored their eye rolls and her urge to scream.

“And the muffin? What kind? We have blueberry, chocolate, marble, cranber--”

“Blueberry,” interrupted one of them, without looking up as her

thumbs rapidly tapped the screen of her phone. “Like, low-fat or gluten-free or something.”

“Sounds good,” Jess forced out and left to prepare their orders.

While waiting, the girls grew louder than ever as they looked out the window and mocked people walking by on the street. When this got repetitive, they snapped selfies as Alexis directed her voice to the counter and demanded, “Hellooooo, where’s our stuff? It’s taking forever!”

At that second, Jess came out with a tray carrying the lattes and muffin. When she placed it on the table each girl grabbed her order and started gulping immediately.

“That will be fourteen dollars and twenty-five cents.”

“Do you take Apple Pay?”

“Yes, by the counter.”

“Ugh, that’s all the way over there.”

Mackenzie placed a twenty dollar bill on the table. “I guess you can keep the change.”

They all smirked as Jess returned to the backroom.

“I think I donated those boots she’s wearing to Goodwill.” They all erupted in laughter.

Amidst the giggles, Mackenzie teased, “Honestly, Chloe, I don’t understand why you ever wore those in the first place.”

When they had run out of conversation topics, the girls tried to take a group picture, and in the commotion, knocked a latte off the table which splattered all over the floor. For the first time that day, they grew quiet, then exchanged glances. Without a word, they all got up and left.

For the first time that day, they grew quiet, then exchanged glances. Without a word, they all got up and left.

Mrs. Schmidt had seen the whole event unfold. Without even thinking, she hobbled over to the spill and slowly knelt to clean up the mess with napkins from the dispenser that was on the table.

When Jess emerged from the kitchen holding a large box, she almost dropped it at the sight of Mrs. Schmidt on the floor. She rushed over and begged, "Oh, Mrs. Schmidt, please don't clean that up. I got it." She bent down and took a spare towel from her apron pocket and sighed, "Really, Mrs. Schmidt, it's fine."

"Don't worry, Jess. I'm happy to help. And it's Barbara."

The two women worked side by side until the floor was dry.

Soon after Mrs. Schmidt returned to her armchair, the whole staff of the "Fits to a Tea" cafe approached her.

"Mrs. Schmidt, we just want to say how much we appreciate what a great customer you've been all these years."

Jess smiled and opened the box she had been holding earlier to reveal a carrot cake with cream cheese frosting and a single candle.

"Happy birthday from all of us."



Coffee with Maman

By Ayli Tavakoly

Time Machine

By Golda Schuster

There once was a boy who was 18
Who created the time machine
He put in some shoes
And he put in some screws
But he didn't have salt that was green.

So he went to the grocery store
But they said "Sorry, no more,"
So he hopped in a car
And went very far
All the way to Singapore.

When he got to his destination
According to his observation
His journey reached its end
For the salt he would spend
To complete his time machine creation.

Then, as he stepped into his abode
He tripped over his pet toad
The salt went flying
And he went crying
Until the roosters crowed.

After more green salt he did get
This time taking a jet
He took out the funnel
Leading into the tunnel
Of his machine's upper left net.

As he sprinkled the green salt in
He started to hear a violin
As the machine whirred
Everything blurred
And his whole world went dark and dim.

Once all was still in the air
And the boy started being aware
He looked at his surroundings
Everything was outstanding
He thought nothing could compare.

Now the boy was in trouble you see
And he thought, "Woe is to me
Who can not figure out
What to put in the spout
to get back to reality?"

He tested some honey from queen bees
And he tested a moldy piece of cheese
But all it gave was hot air
And so he started to despair
Of ever showing off his expertise.

After a few more times of trying
He discovered that grapes that were dry-
ing
If put into the machine
Along with gasoline
Then homeward he would be flying.

When he reached his lavish homestead
He entered and thought in his head
"If I'll allow,
Enough adventures for now,"
And went and crawled into bed.

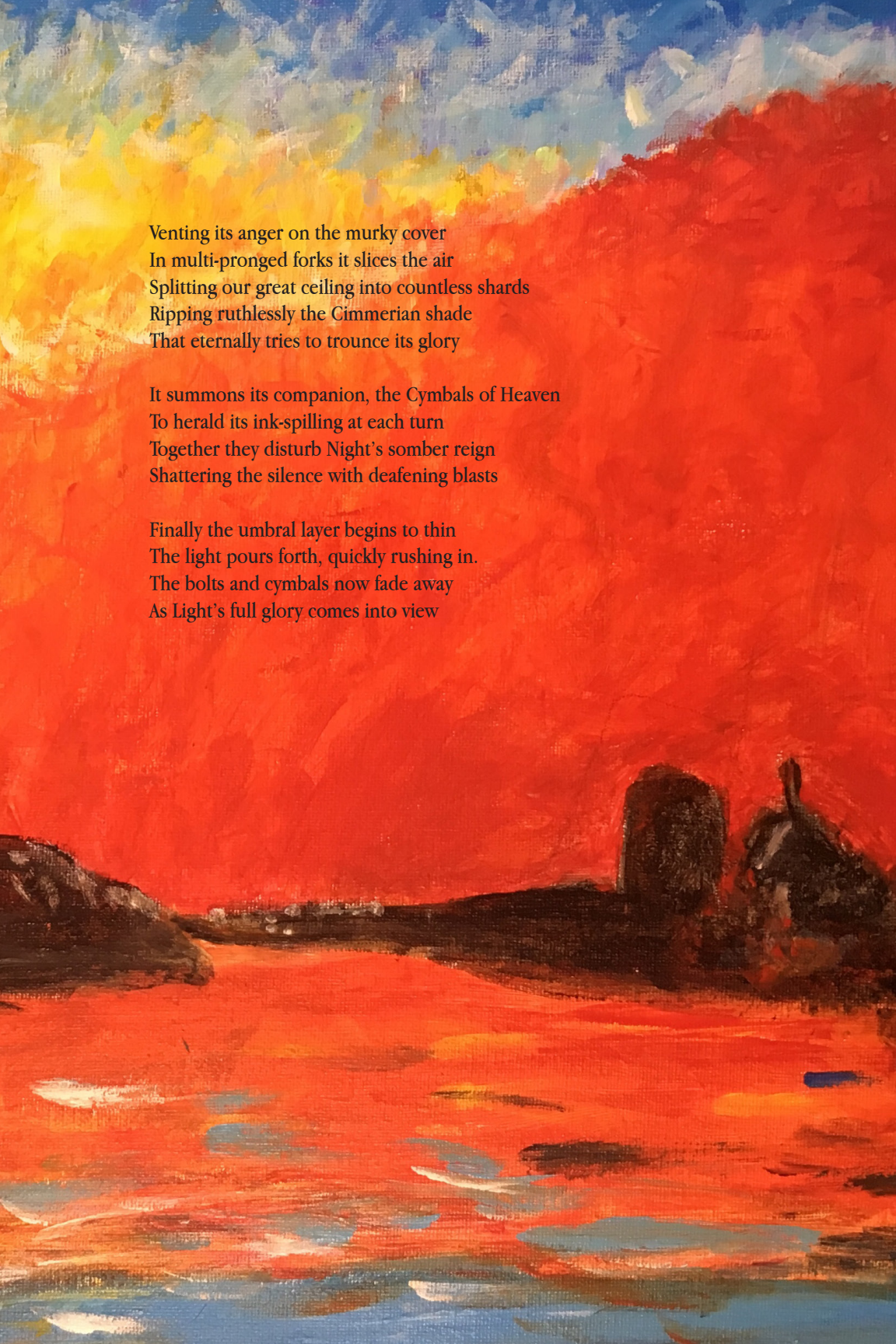


The Fury of Light

By Fayga Tziporah Pinczower

Striking, scraping at the shadowy sky
Inscribing its glory in the opaque parchment
Rearing its horns through the onyx shroud
The silvery pen composes its grievance
Its nib slices, trembles and darts
Writing a lament of endless fury
It spills a drop, creating a brilliant flash of light
Ruling the heavens for but a moment
Lashing, tearing at the tenebrous gloom
Fragmenting the skies with its violent strokes
Rending apart the roof of our world

Sunset
By Esti Samel



Venting its anger on the murky cover
In multi-pronged forks it slices the air
Splitting our great ceiling into countless shards
Ripping ruthlessly the Cimmerian shade
That eternally tries to trounce its glory

It summons its companion, the Cymbals of Heaven
To herald its ink-spilling at each turn
Together they disturb Night's somber reign
Shattering the silence with deafening blasts

Finally the umbral layer begins to thin
The light pours forth, quickly rushing in.
The bolts and cymbals now fade away
As Light's full glory comes into view

Climbing the Wall

By Hadas Feygin

“Isn’t that your dad?”

As my friend and I approached the school, sure enough there was my father, near the top of a ladder, drilling holes into the brick exterior of the school building.

“What’s he doing?”

“It looks like he’s installing a security camera,” I mumbled as I tried to pull my hood closer to my face to hide the blush that had begun to creep across my cheeks.

“Why?”

I froze, unsure whether to lie to her face or tell her the embarrassing truth because I knew exactly why my father was there. This wall-climbing caper must be another one of my father’s “arrangements.”

After leaving Communist Russia at the age of seven with his mother, out of necessity, my father became quite industrious. While his mother took odd jobs to pay for food and housing, my adolescent father approached school with the same discipline and focus as one would full-time employment. Eventually he saved enough for tuition to pursue a degree and from there went on to build his own business in computer programming and cybersecurity by means of networking and an impeccable work ethic.

Experiential learning taught my father that education is the means to a life of financial and social security. He has always been committed to giving me best schooling he could afford, which often involved negotiating with board members to reduce our tuition in exchange for services like upgrading the school computers and installing a new security system. I knew immediately that my father was standing up on that ladder for me.

My mind wandered away from my friend’s question toward the conversation I had with my father last night. When I complained about having a Samsung instead of an iPhone, he told me he would never have dreamed of voicing such petty grievances to his mother at my age. Of course, he added, there were no smart (or “dumb”) phones when he was a teenager, and how I’m always asking for things I don’t need.

Part of me knew he was right, but I still chose to sit in silence and push around the food on my plate as he went on about how hard he works for this family. Countless nights I’ve come downstairs when the house was

dark and silent for water to find him sitting at the table, still working. I know he's sacrificed time, sleep, and pride to show me that a quality education is an invaluable commodity. A mixture of shame and pride rendered all my counterarguments useless.

"Why is he there?" she asked again.

"Dunno," I answered. I chose not to explain my father's presence in an attempt to preserve my social status and not to be viewed as the "poor girl" whose father is the handiman or something.

However, my silence became irrelevant. By lunchtime it was apparently public knowledge that my father was the schools new "tech person." As I approached the lunch table where my friends sat, I couldn't help but hear that they were discussing me. Once they noticed my presence, the silence hit. We all sat uncomfortably eating our lunches for a few moments until one of my friends was brave enough to voice the question that they all shared.

"Why didn't you tell us?" she asked.

At first, I was stunned by the question. It's definitely not what I had expected. I anticipated a few poorly formed jokes about my dad secretly being Spider-Man or a spy for our principal; instead, they were genuinely excited.

"It's so cool! Maybe he can get us keys!

"Ask him for the WiFi password for us."

"Will he put cameras in the classrooms? If so, our parents can spy on the teachers!"

The initial and ultimately unmerited embarrassment I felt witnessing my father's efforts on my behalf dissolved into gratitude. Their speculative chatter went on and all I could say was, "I'll ask."

**Part of me knew
he was right...A
mixture of
shame and pride
rendered all
my arguments
useless.**



Beauty from Within

By Adielle Rosenblum

Gifts

By Odelia Barsky

Each one comes in different packaging
Sometimes with bright, crisp paper
Sealed with love and well wishes
Some in layers and layers of wrapping
(Taking patience and persistence to unveil)
Others come in rotting envelopes
Shoved in through a small slot
Its true content camouflaged within
(Taking time and experience)
To see it for what it is
They never seem to come straight to your doorstep
As they are
In all their glory and goodness
Oftentime, I wonder why,
Why don't they stick themselves right under our noses,
And advertise themselves as treasures
Why don't they proudly label themselves for what they are
Then I realize
Life wouldn't be full of wonderful surprises
And we would miss the fun of unwrapping
The gifts we've been given
If each one appeared
Neatly labeled
"Miracle"

A Casual Lesson on Spectroscopy

By Shira Zelefsky

“Daddy?” asked Calvin, after coming home from his first grade orientation. “Why is the sky blue?”

“Well my son,” explained Calvin’s father, “it’s actually quite simple. See, the sunlight is white, meaning it’s made of all colors, or wavelengths, of light. We see shorter wavelengths as colors further down the rainbow. The light from the sun remains white when it’s shining straight down onto you. However the light that is shined towards the sky gets scattered by all the little particles floating in the air. These particles scatter the shorter wavelengths more than they scatter the longer wavelengths. Therefore we see all the blue light that gets scattered all over the sky.”

“Oh!” replied Calvin, excited that finally someone gave him an answer that made sense; unlike his teacher who simply brushed off his questions with reminders to put away the blocks when he’s done building and updates about recess and dismissal times.

“Daddy?” asked Calvin, pondering the answer he was given further. “Yes?” replied his father. “Then why isn’t the sky purple if the purple wavelengths are shorter than the blue ones?” His father thought about this for a moment and then replied “I’m sorry Calvin, it seems you’ve stumped me on this one.”

“Daddy?” asked Calvin, coming home from soccer practice the next week, “Why are plants green?”

“Well my son” explained Calvin’s father “it’s actually quite simple. You see, plants can’t move around to find food, therefore they have to make their own food. The plants make their own food through a process called photosynthesis, which may sound complicated although really it’s pretty straightforward. This process happens in all the cells in the plant that are above ground, specifically in the parts of the cell called the chloroplasts. The chloroplasts take energy from the sun’s rays and turn it into food. This food can then be converted into energy for the cell to use to carry out all its daily tasks. The way the chloroplasts can soak up all this energy is through a pigment called chlorophyll. The chlorophyll absorbs all wavelengths of light except for green light, which instead, is reflected towards our eyes. Because plants need to make a lot of energy they have a lot of chlorophyll which makes them look green all over.

“Oh!” replied Calvin, grateful to have someone to continue to take

the time to answer all his questions. As Calvin continued to contemplate this answer, another question arose in his head. “Daddy?” asked Calvin “why then isn’t the chlorophyll black so that it absorbs all wavelengths of light so it can make even more food for the plants?” Calvin’s Dad pondered this question but he couldn’t think of a good answer. In the end he admitted that Calvin had stumped him, yet again.

“Daddy?” asked Calvin, after waking his father up early the next Sunday morning “Why is a black hole black?”

“Well you see son,” explained Calvin’s father “black holes have a lot of mass, and gravity acts stronger on things with more mass. Because black holes have an unimaginably high mass their gravity is so strong that no light can escape it. This way light only get sucked in and no light can escape out from the black hole into our telescopes. Because we can’t see them we call them black because that’s how our minds understand something we can’t see.”

“Then how do we know black holes exist if we can’t see them through our telescopes?” asked Calvin.

**You don’t need
telescopes
to know that
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After all, seeing
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“Well son,” replied his father, “you don’t need telescopes to know that something exists. After all, seeing isn’t always believing. Using many different physics and mathematical techniques we can figure out the presence, location, and size of a black hole. For example, scientists may notice that a star that is far away seems to be in a different location than expected. If the math works out, scientists may say that a black hole was between them and the star, pulling on the light coming from the star. Because of this pulling, the light may change directions a bit so that by the time it reaches us, it seems that the light was coming from somewhere different than it really did”

“Daddy?” asked Calvin, once again contemplating the implications of this answer. “Does all the information about the things that get sucked into a black hole get lost forever or is there any way to retrieve it?”

Calvin’s father thought about how to answer his son’s question. Re-

triving knowledge. Now this would require thought, research, and further consultation and discussion. And besides, it was too early for inquiries like these. Perhaps later that afternoon he would have the time for such casual conversation with his son Calvin.



Tall Tales

By Shoshana Escott

Sky

By Esther Bertram

On the way to school
the city is blue.
But not in the winter,
when the morning is red
and gold and orange and pink.
On the way home
the city is blue.
But not in the winter,
when it's dark and black
and bright and awake.

Rise Up

By Tova Schwartz

Justice is Blind

By Gitty Boshnack

The Monday after Thanksgiving, Judge John Plinth was called to court to ordain marriages. He didn't particularly enjoy "marrying people off," but when clerks were on short supply, even justices had to enact marriages from time to time. Judge Plinth sat down at his desk nodding grimly to his deputy to send in the first couple.

The couple sat down. The man was tall with a toothbrush mustache and the woman had a mild skin tone with billowing blonde hair.

"Names please," Judge Plinth droned.

"Sheila Samuels and Marcus Lester," said the woman.

"Forms?"

Documents were passed forward.

"You may turn and face each other. We are gathered here today to celebrate the union of..."

Though the content of the speech proclaimed the vital importance of loving, honoring, and cherishing another based on the judge's tone, you'd have thought he was recording the audiobook of *An Analysis of Napkins and Their Rivals: Paper Towels*. As soon as he finished, the couple got up and left.

"Next couple," the deputy announced.

Though this couple did not resemble the first, a broad man in navy suit and a slim woman dressed in a colorful sari, the ceremony was exactly the same. Suits. Boots. Heels. Veils. Rings. By about the fifth couple, they all began to look alike.

By 3 o'clock, the judge was equal parts bored and annoyed. Maybe it was because he preferred facts to faces, or didn't believe in the institution of marriage, but the happiness in his courtroom grated on his last nerve. The smiling eyes of the woman in the hijab and dimples that came into view when the elderly man said "I do" were baffling.

Maybe, if people got married for logical reasons, like insurance or taxes, it would make more sense, but they all seemed to be going through with this

**Suits. Boots.
Heels. Veils.
Rings. By about
the fifth couple,
they all began to
look alike.**

binding procedure because of the highly-subjective and variable emotion of love.

Finally, at approximately 4:50, the last couple of the day barreled through the door and into the office. She was barely above 5'1" and her hair was an electric shade of blue, closely cropped against her head. He looked twice her height, wearing ripped jeans and a chain necklace.

"Name," Judge Plinth solicited.

"CZ and KT," they answered in unison.

"Legal names," he snapped.

The couple exchanged a glance and the women said,

"Constantine Zonapolous and Kimberly Thompson."

He continued on in the formal, rigid way of speaking and began the ceremony: "We are gathered here today to celebrate the love that Constantine and Kimberly have for each other, and to recognize and witness their decision to journey forward in their lives as marriage partners..."

"Can you at least try to mean what you're saying?" demanded KT.

"K, calm down," the young man whispered.

The judge looked up from his papers, blinking a few times as if a puff of air had just hit his eyes for a glaucoma test.

"Excuse me?" His glare met hers: "This is legal text I need to get through. Nothing to concern yourself with."

"No!" KT shouted, "This is not just a formality or a legal issue! This is *our* wedding! This is how we establish our eternal commitment. This is all we've got because this is all we can afford. A thirty-two dollar ceremony at City Hall to commemorate our steadfast devotion to each other, a promise to be by each other's sides, forever, lovingly and legally. So, do me a favor, and at least try to mean what you're saying."

The judge's mouth dropped open. He was completely astounded. This was by far the most exciting thing that happened to him since he entered the office at 8 AM. Judge Plinth tried to empathize with CZ, whose eyes pleaded that he make their ceremony, a little like any other wedding. Her pleading eyes communicated desperation mingled with hope. He then understood that it was humiliating to have your marriage ceremony in a

court, but he also realized that to this couple a City Hall marriage was the only way to eternalize their love. So, Judge Plinth rose and injected his voice with sincerity. Though he didn't understand love, he understood commitment.



*Madame Secretary
and the Dignitaries*

By Chayie Safrin

A Parachute for New Beginnings

By Dina Rothman

The gown was perfect! After she had altered it to fit Gittel, who wore it last week to her wedding, my friend Chana, who knew how to sew, altered it to fit me. She had to hem about three inches and take it in around my waist; I am shorter and even thinner than Gittel, though that is not saying much, none of us resemble the people we were a few years ago.

This is the fifth time the “wedding gown” has been worn in the past two weeks. In the DP camp everyone is eager to marry quickly, to start a new life, a family. The “gown” is actually a parachute that was used by John Scott, a US Air Force pilot. After he descended over Germany to fight against the Nazis, Sgt. Scott then helped liberate Buchenwald. Ever since he witnessed the horror of the concentration camp, Sgt. Scott did everything in his power to help us, the survivors. When need infinitely exceeds resources, creativity flourishes. That is how Sgt. Scott’s white parachute was offered to serve in the post-war effort.

So Chana, who was a professional seamstress before the war, almost as if by magic, transformed the nylon fabric designed for air suspension into a beautiful gown that also makes hearts take flight. Tonight, as I take a leap of faith and marry Chaim Markovitz, I will wear the gown. Chaim and I grew up in neighboring villages in Poland. His father was a member of the *Ger Chasidim* while my family was *Bobov*. However, Chaim knew my brother well and our fathers knew each other because they were both in the spice business. The bitterness of our union isn’t lost on any of the guests. Unfortunately, as we are both sole survivors, all we have left of our families are memories. We will cling to these memories as we create new ones and maintain our old traditions together. I know my father is looking down from above and is happy for me, and that my mother would approve of my chosson, Chaim.

**I am shorter
and even thinner
than Gittel,
though that
is not saying
much, none of
us resemble the
people we were a
few years ago.**

Living in the DP camp, you develop an awareness of the different moods that emanate from a crowd. You discover that the buzz of excitement mingled with collective hope is almost palpable. As I peek through

the dressing room door into the large room where the wedding ceremony will be taking place. I see the entire camp cramped inside. Suddenly, my eagerness to never upset or disappoint my future husband is extended to them as well.

I hear someone playing the violin. A melodious tune fills the room. I wait a few seconds and take a step out of the dressing room. The aisle is empty, as if it is waiting for me to start walking. I feel all the guests' eyes on me, as I begin to walk across the ten foot stretch to my destiny. I feel both nervous and excited when I see Chaim standing under the chuppah, waiting for me to join him. Four of his friends are holding the poles of the outstretched *Tallis* that will serve as our bridal canopy. Although not by my side, I can feel my mother's support as I glide down the aisle. I catch traces of my father's voice as the Rabbi pronounces the blessings and Chaim stomps on the glass; a sound that echoes the all too recent noise of harsh destruction. Wishes of "Mazel Tov" and festive music fill the room. Everyone seems to share in our *Simcha* as they smile, embrace, and bless us. Our joy is their own.

Another wedding, another new beginning. And while our new beginning is marked by today's occasion, everyone here is aware of their own need to start anew. We all have to rebuild. The shadows of our lost families dance with us and give us the strength to keep going. We owe it to our lost loved ones. We owe it to those who gave up their lives so that we could endure. Chaim and I hope to move to America, to start over while carrying on. We plan to work together to make new, beautiful memories together as we continue the heritage of our families and raise our children as we had been raised: Torah observant, proud Jews.

We must live life to its fullest, and like a parachute harnessing the wind, these moments will carry us through.



First Time

By Mia Lubetski

When a Princess Falls

By Cherri Citron

You are going to fall off many cliffs,
and end up
so far, far away
from the tall castle you were raised in.
So you might have to lift up your long silk skirt,
but you will learn to climb back up.

Once in awhile, you will be caught by a dragon,
and you might be surprised,
because *who believes in dragons?*
But that dragon,
big,
purple,
kind of ugly,
is definitely real.
And you'll have to fight tooth and nail to escape its cave.

You might overcome all the challenges life throws at you,
but chances are,
you'll never end up back in that stone palace.

But you will get back up,
and isn't that enough?
Isn't that a miracle?



Fly Away

By Chavi Golding

CHAVI

Some to the Wind

By Nechoma Flohr

The wind had blown away all their dreams in the night. When the family awoke the next morning, feeling odd and half asleep, they peered out the windows and saw that the prairie, previously spotted with sunflowers and poppies, was a barren, dusty landscape. There was only rust colored grass as far as their eyes could see. And though they could only see so far, they all knew it stretched on to infinity. The family clutched window sills and with a feeling not unlike abandonment, stifled a collective sob and withdrew their heads with a horrific shudder.

But you stayed a moment longer. You saw the dreams, not all, but some, tumbling through the short grass. You let out your sob and fled the house, half tripping over stones, and chase the dreams as they spread farther and further across the prairie. For lifetimes you ran and ran and ran, as if in one spot through the unchanging landscape. You chased the dreams until you reached the cliff, and lunged forward to grab one just before it fell, but your mother's voice, howling in the wind, stopped you.

"But there is a dream, right there, please!" you shouted.

She didn't hear you.

"Right there! It's right there!"

You flailed your arms toward the airborne dream as though it was you about to drop off the edge.

"Come home."

Your mother's voice dragged you backward, back across the limitless prairie and toward the house and its confining solitude. You tried to resist, dug your heels into the dirt, which did nothing except make small mountains of sand beneath your feet and tore up the grass as you were lurched away.

And then you saw one more dream, and as it got closer and you realized it was one of the biggest and most important of the crop. You grabbed it, but as you were pulled upward with it, your own heaviness pulled you back down to the grainy earth. Your arms strained to the point of breaking and you were forced to let go. You shouted, at the top of your lungs, so loudly that you saw your own voice carry

**"Come home."
Your mother's
voice dragged
you backward,
back across the
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and toward
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its confining
solitude.**

far away across the prairie until it reached the beyond the cliffs and into the canyon below. It spread to the other side and weaved, twisting into cracks, making you, your cries, part of the canyon. Your voice, like the dreams that had slipped through your fingers, became more distant and almost unrecognizable. And what if you forgot them entirely? The thought was too horrendous to bear. You tried again, begging your mother's voice to hear. You could see that there were still a few scattered and trifling dreams left, if only you could hold on to just one.

You knew it was too late though, didn't you?

The house came into view, once small and peaceful, transformed to a hideous patchwork of wooden planks, its windows now boarded up so your family wouldn't have to see the awful, desolate prairie. Your horror at the alteration was so great that you now wished all that was left of you was your voice in the canyon. Everything had blown away with the dreams. You knew this now, but you also realized you would have to remain. All the dreams were gone, except *this* one. And you knew you should not let it go. So you brought it into the house with you. Then, you wrote it down, this one dream, like a consolation or cure for all the forsaken others. One dream to keep you company in the loss of everything. And maybe, one day, it would become many, and you could give some to your family. Some to the house. Some to the prairie. Some to the canyon. Some to the wind.

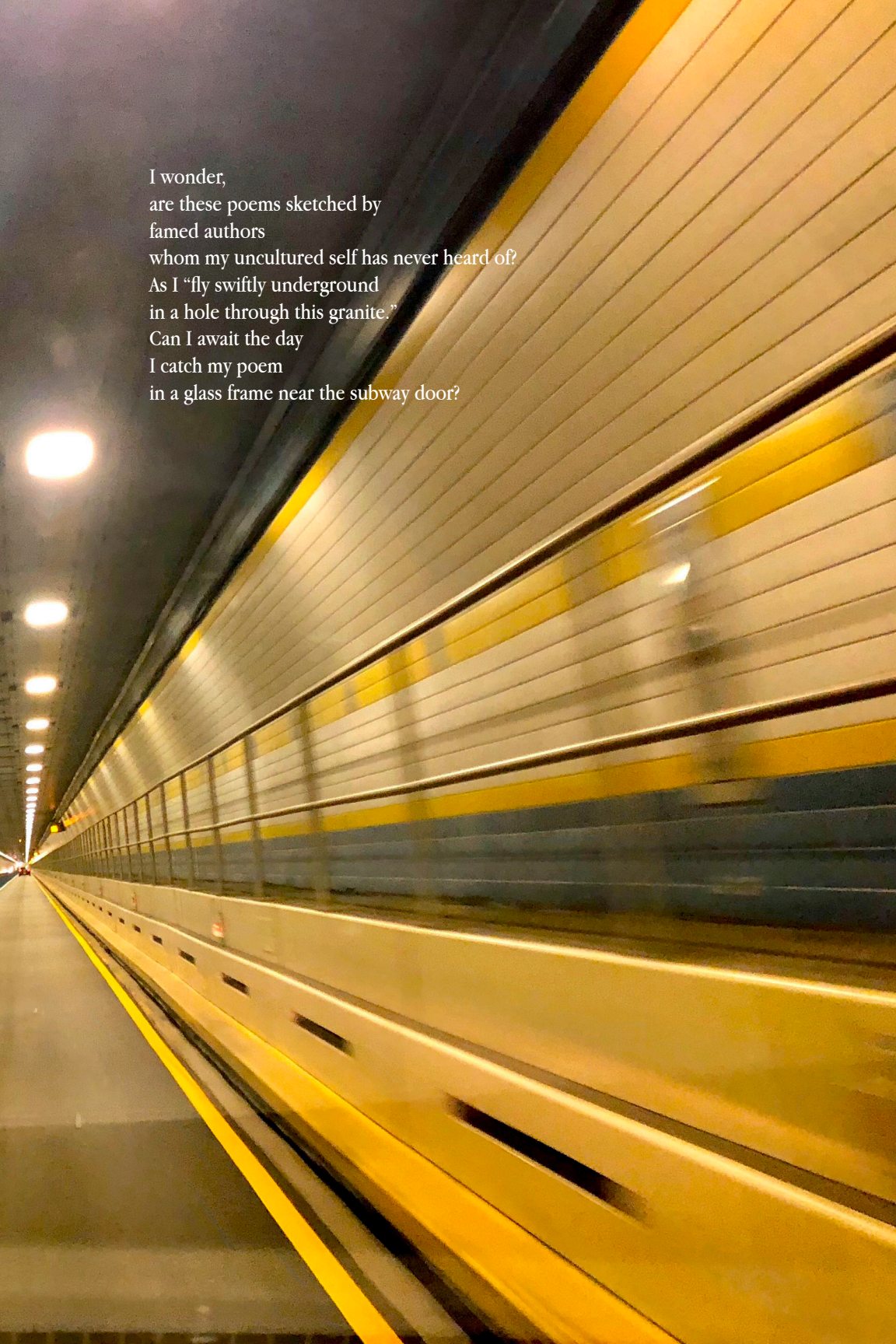
Poem by an Unpublished Author

By Leora Lehrfield

Another poem
about the subway.
But instead of all the different subway-riders,
about
the simple, timeless poems they read,
Striking poems about mirrors, about Heaven,
Delicate poems painting a New York City morning and a blade of grass
dressed in dew,
about the subway,
about poetry itself.

Vanishing Point

By Shoshi Farhi

A photograph of a high-speed train in motion, blurred to convey speed. The train is white with yellow and grey accents. It is in a subway tunnel, with a yellow safety line on the platform edge. The tunnel walls are lined with horizontal panels, and there are several circular lights on the ceiling. The perspective is from the platform, looking down the length of the train.

I wonder,
are these poems sketched by
famed authors
whom my uncultured self has never heard of?
As I “fly swiftly underground
in a hole through this granite.”
Can I await the day
I catch my poem
in a glass frame near the subway door?

Equipped

By Chedvah Lamm

A rush of air conditioning met her face as she entered Staples and headed straight for the aisle lined with Jansport, Under Armor, and L.L. Bean backpacks. She assessed a canvas bag for its sturdiness. Will it hold twenty-five pounds of school supplies for 275 days a year? She examined the zippers on a corduroy bag. Will she be able to quickly close and open this when she is in immediate need of a pencil? Will a red leather backpack shield her belongings when she is caught in a downpour?

A girl in a Wildfox sweater made a beeline for the bubblegum-colored Adidas backpack with only two pouches to fit all essentials and skipped off without a second glance. She gravitated to the massive, coal-gray Swiss Army bag with numerous zippered pockets to provide a secure cocoon for the academic journey ahead. The manufacturer's warranty guaranteed that this bag was a good investment in her future.

On the first day of high school, she entered the school building with her head held as high as she could, given the thirty-pound weight on her back, feeling gravitationally and mentally grounded.

"Excuse me," a girl said after bumping into her bag. She moved to the right to give her room to pass. Her balloon of excitement deflated slightly with each stair she climbed toward the freshman classrooms on the third floor. She squeezed through the narrow spaces between the desks until she reached her seat. When class began, she noticed glittery pens emerge from gold zippers of mini Michael Kors and Lululemon knapsacks. By the end of the day, after

**By the end of
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bag felt infinitely
heavier.**

navigating hallways and receiving syllabi, handouts, and textbooks, her bag felt infinitely heavier, and each glance at her industrial strength bag from a passersby in the hallway added ounces of unnecessary weight to her shoulders.

Yet, as she heaved the bag onto her back after the final bell, the padded sternum straps were suddenly comforting. She reminded herself of her goal. She wanted to stretch her mind, satisfy her intellectual curiosity,

cultivate communication and leadership skills, and develop social responsibility. This was just the bag she needed to fit all of those ambitions inside. It would carry her through after all.



The Crown of Creation

By Rina Szpilzinger

Blessings and Protection

By Orly Setareh



From One Look

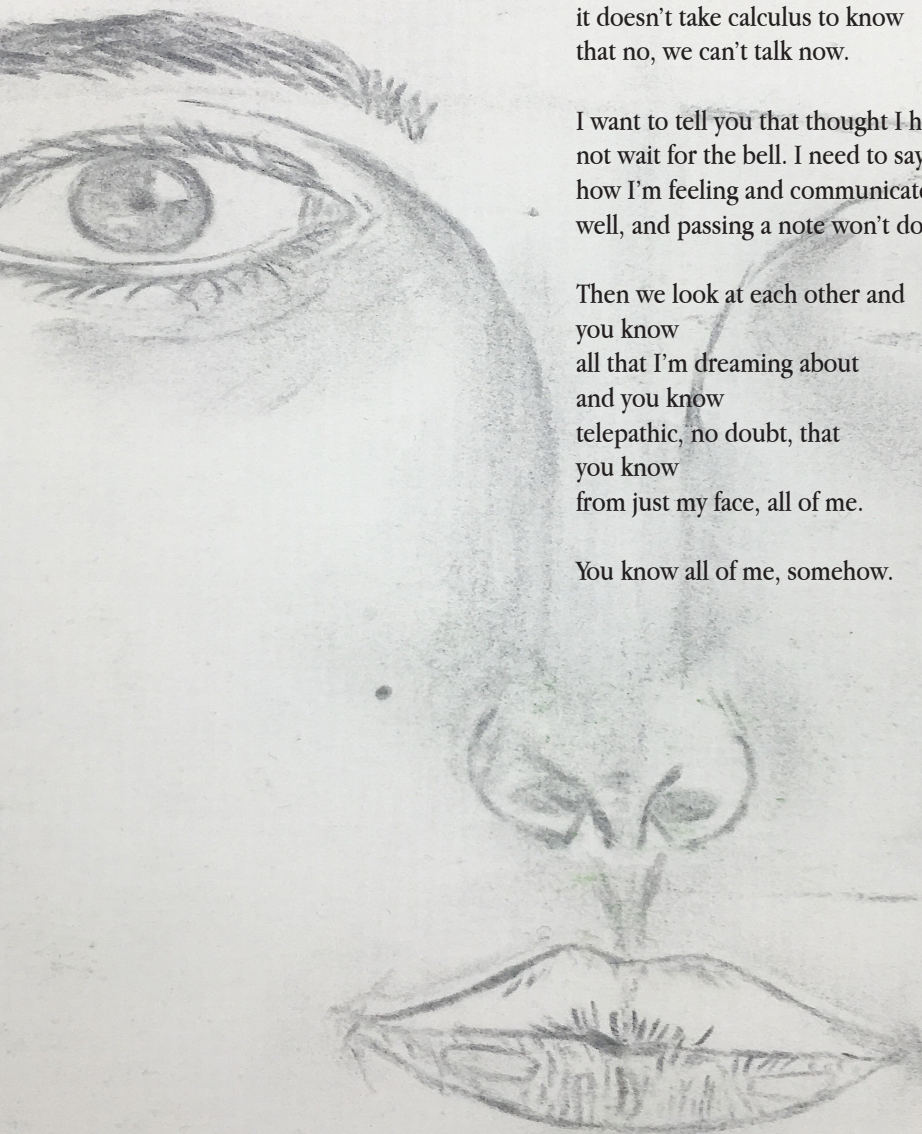
By Tamar Spoerri

Five desks are in between us
and two sharp eyes will see us—
it doesn't take calculus to know
that no, we can't talk now.

I want to tell you that thought I had,
not wait for the bell. I need to say
how I'm feeling and communicate it
well, and passing a note won't do.

Then we look at each other and
you know
all that I'm dreaming about
and you know
telepathic, no doubt, that
you know
from just my face, all of me.

You know all of me, somehow.



Me

Henny Weiss

First Day

By Hannah Setareh

The alarm goes off. My feet leap out of the covers, but my mind is still on my pillows. Morning light streams through the shades as I park my exhausted body in front of my white desk, and stare at my reflection in the vanity mirror that may be older than me. Why did a pimple have to grow right on top of my upper lip last night? My hair is taking flight in every direction and there's nothing I can do to tame it. Disappointment covers my face like a charcoal scrub.

"Marla, you can do this," I tell myself. "You've got all the tools: Doc Martens, your slightly expensive bag, and your reinforcements from that shopping spree at Sephora." I get to work.

First with the hair, combing it down so hard it may as well come out. Then, apply the foundation, concealer (for the pimple I had just named Bob, because why not), bronzer, to warm up my pale face (that has never seen sunlight due to the comfort of my room) and some highlighter, just enough to blind anyone whose eyes happen to land on my cheekbones. White turtleneck? Check. Statement blazer? Check. Red and white crew socks to peek through my hard earned Doc Martens? Check. New day, new start? New year, new you? Check and check. One last stop in front of the full length mirror. Yes. Today is the day. I offer myself more words of encouragement while examining myself in the mirror one last time: "Looks like you just came out of an LA salon! You got this, Marla." A hesitant smile, forced wink, and less-than-optimistic eyes reply to the compliment.

One Doc in front of the other, I practically skip down the hall making my way to the front door, fantasizing about the amazing day ahead. All of a sudden, I hear mom yell, "Honey, you don't want your favorite breakfast today? I made it special for your first day!"

And then it hits me. I smell my mom's tried and true pancakes with extra butter and cream, and then consider the "new me" about to walk out the door.

**My hair is
taking flight in
every direction
and there's
nothing I can
do to tame it.
Disappointment
covers my face
like a charcoal
scrub.**

“No thanks, not hungry today.” Who needs those extra calories? I’ve grabbed my bag and am ready to leave when my mother catches sight of me and eyes me up and down in the doorway. Her face changes. I can’t read it. It’s not approval, but it’s not censure either.

“I knew something was up with you. Who wouldn’t want my pancakes on the first day of school?” she retorted.

I feel my face react to her comment. My compact mirror comes out of my bag faster than lightning, and I stare, yet again. Something is wrong. I know exactly what.

My feet carry me to my room faster than they carried me down, despite how much heavier my Doc Martens feel now. First the makeup comes off, and my face feels a few pounds lighter. Both the turtleneck and the blazer fly off with the sensible concession that “this stuff is way too hot for September.” Articles of clothing fly all around my room until I find it: my favorite graphic tee, perfect for the first day of school. I exchange my Docs for my old Converse. Much better. I catch my reflection in the mirror and I flash a peace sign to myself.

“Pancakes never hurt anybody,” I whisper, as I follow the sweet scent of comfort down the stairs.



Don't Forget to Season

By Miriam Kirschner

Soup

By Sarah Setareh

I think soup is underrated. Cakes seem to get all the hype, but what about soup?

Soup has been, and will always be, the most perfect food for any occasion. At least, that's what my grandma seems to think. She believes that soup is the ultimate panacea. It is the cure for anything and everything. Feeling sick? Go drink some soup. Just had your heart broken? It's nothing a little soup can't fix. Your favorite Oreo flavor got discontinued? Soup.

I used to accept the soup-cure with open arms, but after consuming enough soup to fill the Atlantic ocean, I figured I should get to the bottom of my grandma's seemingly irrational prescription. Is it just an old lady thing? I got my answer by conducting an experiment.

After meticulously crafting a detailed report of the cow-eye dissection I did the other day, I marched over to my mother to tell her about my lingering nausea and overall slimy feeling. After listening to my story, her face scrunched up as she looked up at me and said, "That sounds like an upsetting day. Sure you don't want soup to make you feel a little better? How about a little vegetable, or split pea?"

I guess it's not just an old lady thing: my mom seems to believe that it's an elixir as well. I did further research and scoured the internet for some type of scientific proof, but even Google didn't seem to have an answer. Then I sat down to reflect. What makes soup perfect? After thinking it through over a bowl of minestrone—the ultimate brain food—I think I got my answer.

Soup demands respect.

It starts off as a blank slate with just plain water as its base— a natural element that is basically a human right. After that, soup is just water plus creativity and resourcefulness. In times of famine, add potatoes or cabbage and you save your family. When serving Duchess of Cambridge, throw in a lobster, butter, sherry and an immersion blender.

The preparation process gives soup its gravitas. Peeling, simmering, tasting, seasoning, restasting and adjusting to get it just right, and, in just a few hours, voila!

Soup doesn't see age, class, or culture. It doesn't matter if you're 2

**Soup demands
respect.**

or 92, rich or poor, from Queens or the Queen of Morocco, interested in cooking or not, everyone eats soup.

Unlike burgers and fries, ice cream and donuts, soup can't be downed in one gulp. It requires mediation with a spoon, and must be sipped carefully or else it will punish you for your carelessness with a burned tongue. Soup is what you eat when you feel like coats and central heating aren't enough and you need the warmth inside you. When the world is cold, soup is the temperature of comfort and the food version of a hug.

One of the best feelings in the world, in my opinion, is coming home after a long, dreary day and being greeted with a bowl of soup, though there are as many types of soup as there are occasions you can think of. A snow day might require a split pea or French onion with extra cheese, while getting your appetite back after the stomach flu might call for chicken noodle. Matzoh ball soup makes a Friday night dinner a Shabbat meal, and Cholent (which, I submit to you, is just an extra hearty version of soup) is necessary for Shabbat afternoons, regardless of the weather.

Soup holds a very dear place in my heart and I believe everyone should have a favorite soup. Not only do I eat it for dinner and lunch, but for breakfast as well. My mom and dad have been making soup for breakfast since I can remember. Nothing wakes you up and gets you ready for a demanding day like a steaming mug of butternut squash soup with a sprinkle of cinnamon.

So, I say, forget cake! Forget pasta and pizza. Why not forget solid foods altogether? Soup is the future. The possibilities are endless.



Early Dismissal

By Mali Wolfson



The Miracle of a Storm

By Miriam Gluck

The yellow grass goes on for miles and miles
A gray sky all around
Leaves blowing in the wind, gather in piles
For a second, there is no sound
Then sheets of water pour out of the sky
Concealing everything in a hazy sheen
Heavens weep onto the dirt, its tears ending in a sigh
Beating up the pale yellow grass, raging and mean

Probability

By Ayala Cweiber

I didn't study for my algebra test last night. Not because I forgot, but because the marker stains on my desk were far more interesting than graphing a system of equations. I didn't study because I suddenly felt the urge to redesign my room, my house, the world. Instead, I watched funny cat videos until the clock read some time near 1 AM and I just didn't feel like it was worth it to start.

Walking down the stairs to my classroom I can't help feeling that I *should* feel guilty for not studying the entire night, but I don't. I'm not nervous for the test either. I just wish I hadn't decided against getting a cup of coffee before school because I'm practically sleep walking. Not because I was up late studying like the rest of my classmates, but because I was up late doing absolutely nothing.

Everyone sits silently, bent over, their noses nearly touching their papers as the test administers itself to us. Why are they so furiously focused? Leaning into the paper that way kills your posture, and it isn't like the distance between your face and the page is directly proportional to the distance between you and the grade you want.

I stare at the wall ahead of me, my right hand tapping my pencil against my desk with no particular beat. It is half an hour into the test, and the rest of the class must be up to question 17 already. I'm done. I finished the test 10 minutes ago. Except for question 3. I spent about 5 minutes writing down possible answers before resigning to stare at the cracks in the pale tan wall. The question mentioned something about a 90 degree angle, but all I can think about is how it's 90 degrees in this room, and I wish I could leave. I glance at the clock. 15 minutes left. The second hand is moving too slowly. If I stare at the clock, I can hear it ticking, almost like in a cartoon. Tick, tick, tick. My hand taps my pencil along with the seconds. Tap, tap, tap. 6 minutes left. I might as well try number 3 again. My answer is $X = 50$.

Leaning into the paper that way kills your posture, and it isn't like the distance between your face and the page is directly proportional to the distance between you and the grade you want.

Tick, tick, tick.

The teacher calls time as the bell rings. Some girls groan, but stand and turn in their tests, while others barter for more time. I'm already out the door, slinging my bag over my shoulder, clutching my binder, and halfway to my next class. I have to get out of the hallways-- the become interrogation rooms after a test. Girls corner each other, comparing answers, talking about how unfair it was, saying, "I failed. I definitely failed." I am halfway up the fourth floor stairwell before a classmate catches me.

"What did you get for question 3?" she asks. I pull my binder closer to myself and shrug.

"Oh, I don't know if I got it right..."

She pushes for an answer and I tell her I got 50. Her face falls as she tells me her answer was 75. Somehow, I feel the need to comfort *her* even though I'm the one who probably failed.

"I'm not the best person to ask. I didn't really have time to study last night."

Off she goes to confront another girl and I continue on my way.

Waiting for your grade is the worst part about taking a test, especially when the teacher says "I'll have it done by next Wednesday," but returns them the Thursday after. The class erupts: girls begging for extra credit opportunities, some tearing up over the marks below 80 on their papers, and some suppressings smile as they not-so-discreetly glance at their marks. Maybe there are students who cry over tests because their parents pressure them. Or maybe it's because they set their own high standards. Or maybe they just had a hard day. To me, it's nothing more than a piece of paper.

The girl who sits behind me taps my shoulder.

"So, what did you get?"

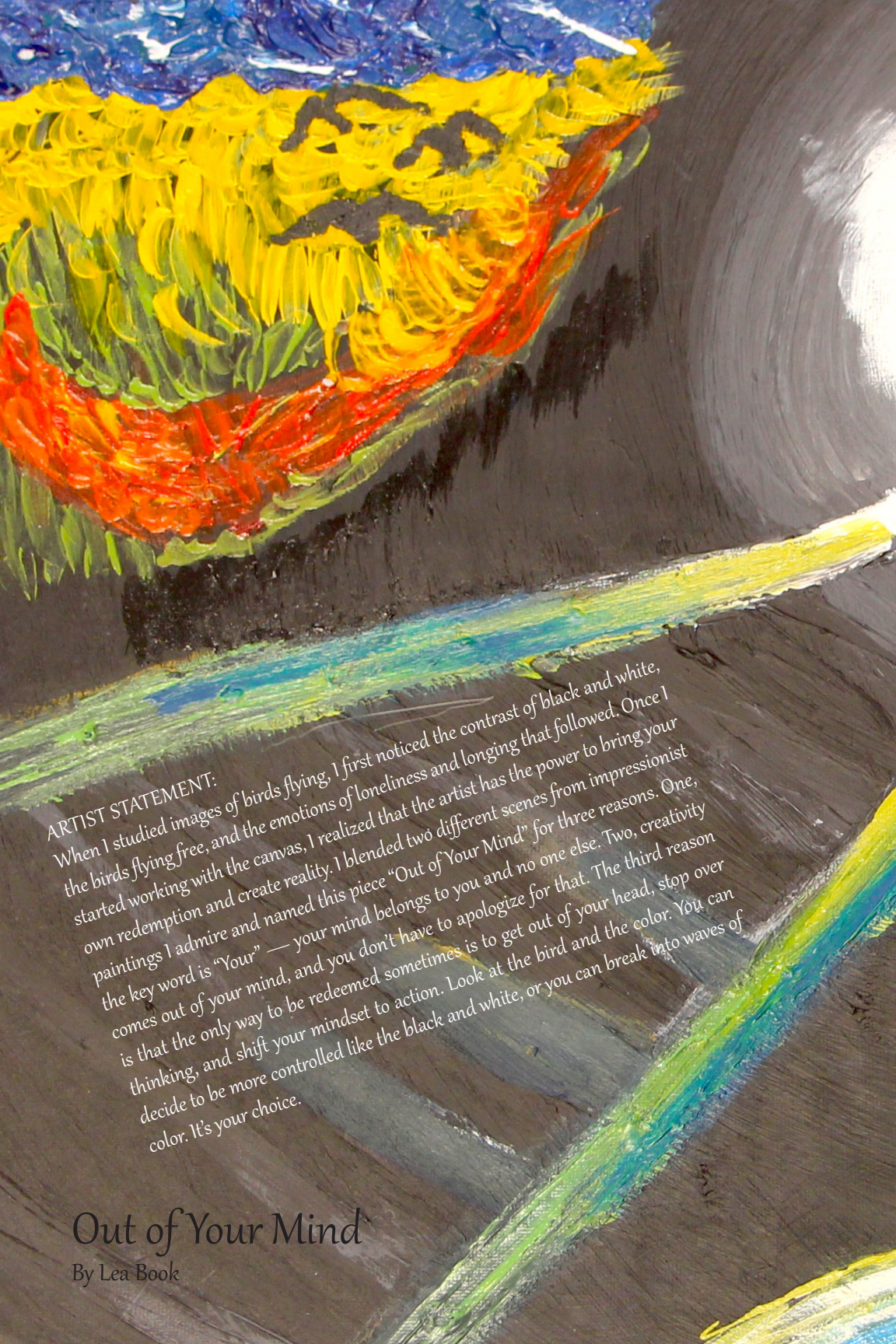
"I did fine," I reply, without even glancing at the test my teacher placed there facedown. Seeing that she won't get anything else from me, she turns away, losing interest. I look at my test. My expression gives away nothing, but the two digit number written in red pen at the top of my test has a clear, uncluttered meaning. The funny thing about numbers is that each digit has an unequivocal and uncontested value. 1 always signifies 1, in every language or culture. 0 always represents the same value-- nothing--

and never changes no matter how many other zeroes you place behind it. X , like all of us, is a character, or variable, in an equation that represents a value, sometimes more than one. It isn't concrete or constant like a numeric symbol, yet when "solving for x " there are many aspects that are not taken into consideration. X can never just be X . It always has to be assigned a worth. Too often we take "If, then" statements as facts. If $X=50$, then $Y=8$. If I got a 55 on a test, then I'm a failure. If I got a 100, then I'm someone's version of success. Maybe that's why I don't like algebra. Solving for X just never appealed to me.



Sand HeART

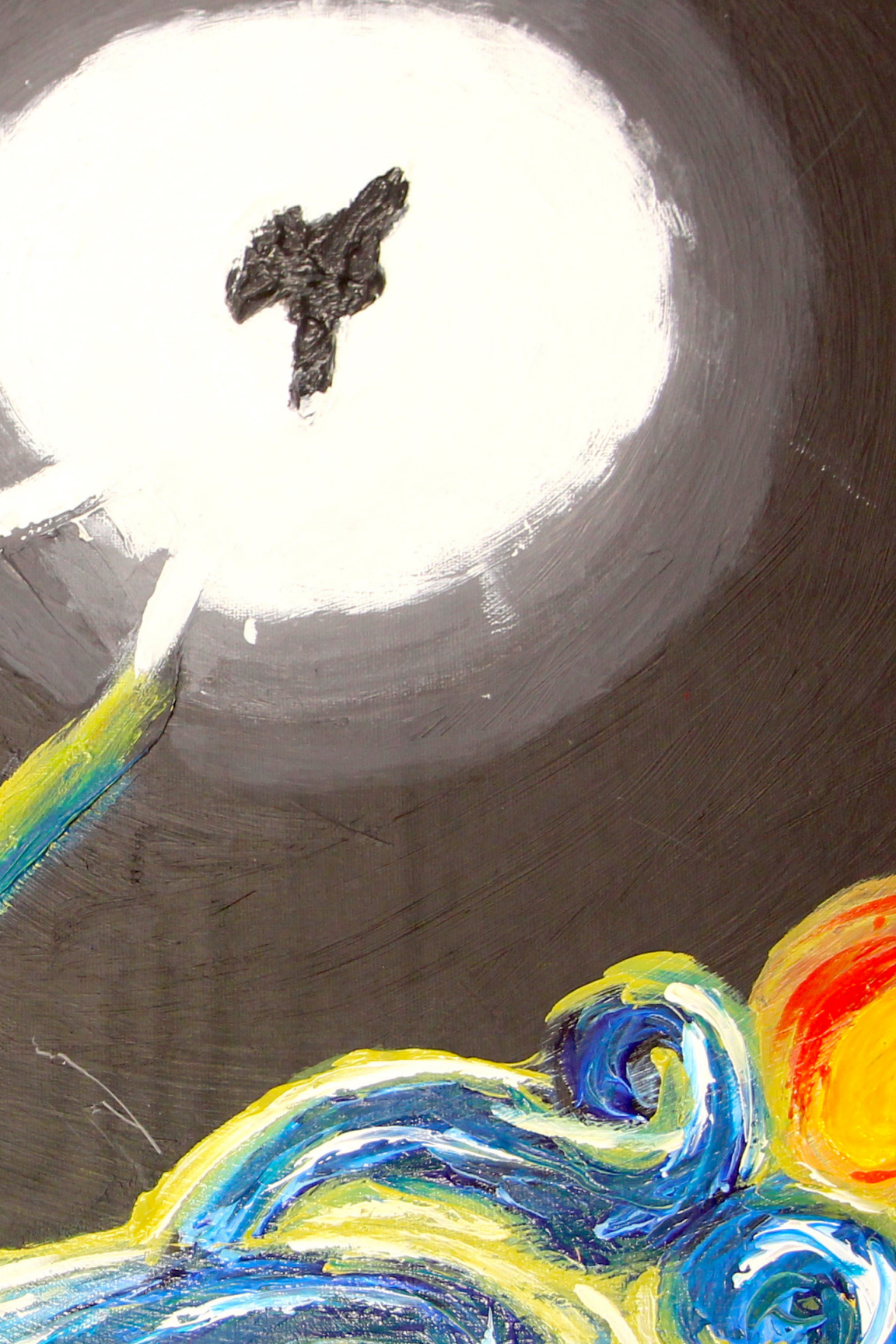
By Esti Schreiber

An abstract painting featuring a dark, textured background. In the upper left, there are vibrant, layered brushstrokes of blue, yellow, green, and red. A diagonal band of yellow and green runs across the middle. The lower right corner shows more textured brushwork in shades of grey, black, and white, with a diagonal streak of yellow and green. The overall style is expressive and textured.

ARTIST STATEMENT:
When I studied images of birds flying, I first noticed the contrast of black and white, the birds flying free, and the emotions of loneliness and longing that followed. Once I started working with the canvas, I realized that the artist has the power to bring your own redemption and create reality. I blended two different scenes from impressionist paintings I admire and named this piece "Out of Your Mind" for three reasons. One, the key word is "Your" — your mind belongs to you and no one else. Two, creativity comes out of your mind, and you don't have to apologize for that. The third reason is that the only way to be redeemed sometimes is to get out of your head, stop over thinking, and shift your mindset to action. Look at the bird and the color. You can decide to be more controlled like the black and white, or you can break into waves of color. It's your choice.

Out of Your Mind

By Lea Book



Ex Nihilo

By Rachel Fogel

The study of life,
is in biology entirely.
The complex story of our minds,
learnt in psychology perfectly.
They'll say science is the answer,
quite definitely, eagerly, and reliably.
But, life is out of nothing,
created miraculously.



All Natural

By Rena Kesler

Ready?

By Hanna Gerber

“Are you ready?” Mommy asks, her eyes wide and sad looking. I can already see the tears gathering in her eyes. I hope she doesn’t cry today. That would just be so embarrassing.

“Of course!” I reply gleefully. I put on my most grown-up smile to convince her. Even though Mommy keeps saying that she can’t believe her “little baby” is growing up, although I’m not sure why she insists on calling me “her baby.” I can’t wait to “grow up.” And today is the day.

My class has practiced walking down the aisle in our royal blue caps and gowns and up the three stairs to the stage all week. Samantha trips everytime and I’ve caught Michael picking his nose. They’re such babies. I don’t think they realize that graduating from Kindergarten means transitioning from little kids to big kids. Goodbye to afternoon naptimes. No, Ms. Paisley, none of us like lying on sticky bright yellow mats when we could be having tea parties and playing dressup. Goodbye to our so called “bathroom helpers.” Thank you very much, but I know how to wash my hands by myself. Last week, when we visited the first-grade classroom, I got a good look at my future and I loved it. Hello to a much greater variety of brightly colored markers beyond just red, blue, yellow, and green. I am ready for crimson, turquoise, amber and chartreuse, as well as scissors, and subtraction...

At morning drop off, my mother gives me one more look before I officially become a kindergarten graduate. She gives me a quick kiss on my cheek and a tight squeeze. “I’ll see you soon, honey.” I give a quick nod and run into the classroom, eager to begin my debut down the graduation aisle.

**I’m not sure
why she insists
on calling me
“her baby.” I
can’t wait to
“grow up.” And
today is the day.**

After circle time, playtime, and lunch, we begin lining up in height order and make our way to the auditorium where the parents are waiting by now. I’m first in line. Ms. Paisley always gives me the special stars, the kind that are super shiny and match my gold scrunchie, for being ready first. I have a whole collection of gold star stickers under my bed and mommy got me a special box with a lock to keep them safe. I heard that in first grade, we get rainbow stickers instead of gold stars. I’m so excited!

Standing right behind me is my best friend Jessica. She seems extra

wiggly today. When I look at her, we both jump up and down excitedly and shout, "Yay yay yay!" Ms. Paisley turns and gives us a pointed look which means we need to be quiet and get ready. I hear the music play and know she's about to open the doors. Most of my classmates seem nervous, but I'm not. Even though she calls me "her baby," once in a while my mommy says I'm "a very mature young lady," so I know I'm ready. Well.. okay, if I'm being completely honest (which Mommy says I should always be) I might be a little nervous. It's just that the older kids are so big. They kind of look like giants. And the elementary building is so much bigger than the nursery school building. What if I get lost...?

"Lea, did you hear me?" Ms. Paisley asks, snapping me out of my thoughts. "I told you to get into your correct line." I nod and begin walking. I start down the aisle, but I can't get my other foot to move. My heart starts to flutter like the butterflies we released last spring. The fluttering gets stronger and stronger until I feel like I can't breathe anymore. Suddenly I feel my feet moving, but I'm not sure where I'm going. I push through the big red doors of the auditorium and slide onto the ugly stained tile floors. My face feels wet. Out of the corner of my eye I see Ms. Paisley's signature yellow block heels, the ones she only wears on "special days." She crouches down until she finds my eyes.

"Lea, honey, is everything okay?"

I nod, because everything should be okay. This is the day I've been waiting for since I first got to this school. But suddenly the crimson and turquoise and amber colors don't seem too exciting. The big scissors and new math feel very big and scary. I squeeze my eyes tight and gently rock back and forth. Ms. Paisley extends her hand to me, a second chance to walk down the aisle. I want to reach her hand, I really do, but, as my tears drip down my face, I shake my head.

"I can't," I croak. Ms. Paisley nods and clip, clop she disappears down the hallway.

After what seems like longer than naptime when you can't fall asleep, my mother appears by my side. She looks at me, and with her super-special-mommy-sense, she immediately knows what's wrong. She lowers herself to the floor and gives me her proudest smile, the one that always

makes me smile back.

“What if I can’t do subtraction, or what if I don’t know how to hold the really sharp scissors safely, or what if the big kids don’t like me . . . ?” I sniffle, trying to choke back my tears. I need to be brave I tell myself.

Mommy pulls me in for a hug and just holds me like that for a while. Letting me cry and wipe my nose on her sweater.

“Elementary school can seem scary, honey, but you have your friends and family always here to support you. Whatever happens, daddy and I will always love you. Never forget that.”

I nod, my lip still wobbling. She gives me one more “you can do it” look and says, “It’s okay to be my ‘baby’ and ‘mature lady’ at the same time.”



These Feet

By Jenny Rapp

These feet
Travel the same path
Every day
To the bus
Chase the bus
Miss the bus
Every day
Nice new shoes
On rainy days
Boots
In the blazing sun
Hours
Hanging under a desk
Over the hill
To the park
Every Sunday
They hang
From the swing
Waiting for someone to push
But nobody comes
Time passes
Shoes shrink
But
These feet
Still chase the bus
Every morning
Still hours
Under the desk
Sometimes they dream
Beyond the hill
Beyond the park
Far beyond this city
Away
But for now
Maybe they can just
Reach the floor



A Walk in the Park

By Tamar Dan

Playtime at Mr. Branolli's

By Chani Shulman

Every Sunday, when Marta Dahlberg takes her children (Sissy and Nathan, age seven) on an afternoon stroll, they somehow always end up in front of Mr. Branolli's toy store. Sissy and Nathan try their best to act surprised as they near Mr. Branolli's.

"Look! Isn't that Mr. Branolli's toy store? Since we're here, maybe we can go in... just to look."

After their third consecutive Sunday at the toy store, Mrs. Dahlberg began to sense this serendipity might be staged. She tries to maintain her "parental cool" by reminding Sissy and Nathan that they have enough toys and should save their visits to Mr. Branolli's for special occasions.

"If we go every week, it will lose its specialness, and then it won't be exciting enough as a birthday treat," Mrs. Dahlberg reasons. But, she purposely puts up a weak fight. After all, she wants to go in as much as they do.

By Sunday number seventy-six, the best Mrs. Dahlberg can do to protest is a "C'mon, please?" Sissy proceeds to the next part of their routine and opens the toy store's door, motioning for her mother to stop this silliness and step inside.

"Thank you, dear," Mrs. Dahlberg says as she enters obligingly. Nathan follows, too busy eyeing the new toys to say "thank you." Sissy closes the door behind her and immediately runs to the counter to introduce her guest.

"Mr. Branolli! I brought Doggie with me. He wants to meet you."

Mr. Branolli turns around to meet the stuffed toy dog that he has heard all about. As Mr. Branolli introduces himself to Doggie, Sissy admires Mr. Branolli's smiley-face tie and matching suspenders. (Mr. Branolli never let his eighty-two years of age interfere with his fashion sense.)

"Sissy, you've got a wonderful friend here," he smiles at Sissy, who had been anxiously waiting for his approval.

Sissy admires Mr. Branolli's smiley-face tie and matching suspenders. (Mr. Branolli never let his eighty-two years of age interfere with his fashion sense.)

Mr. Branolli waved Mrs. Dahlberg over to the counter to show her the new toy he made. All the toys displayed loosely on the shelves are Mr. Branolli originals. He believes that toys should never hide inside boxes like manufactured toys do; otherwise, how would the children be able to test them out? With the focused delicacy of a surgeon, Mr. Branolli lays out his newest marionette puppet before Mrs. Dahlberg.

“Isn’t he cute?” he asks while playing with the strings to make his puppet dance.

“Oh, it is adorable! How long did it take you to make it?”

“Just over five days,” Mr. Branolli answers with pride. “Do you want to keep him?”

Mrs. Dahlberg laughs and says that her playtime days are long past. Mr. Branolli frowns at such a thought.

“Plus,” she continues, “our shoe-box apartment could not possibly accommodate a third toy collector.”

Beyond budgetary concerns, as the toys were more than reasonably priced, Mrs. Dahlberg fretted over the issue of space ever since visit five, which is why she implemented the “one toy per visit” rule, much to Sissy and Nathan’s dismay. Although, Nathan tries to work past this rule by taking two toys to the register and telling his mother and Mr. Branolli (with great perturbation) that he simply cannot decide which one to buy. Mr. Branolli thought Nathan should be rewarded on account of this cleverness, and so when bagging one of Nathan’s toys, he tried to sneak in the other one too, free of charge. But, as he attempted to do so, he realized Mrs. Dahlberg was eyeing him sternly. He removed the added item, ashamed.

As indecision registers on Nathan’s face, a knowing smile spreads across Mr. Branolli’s face.

“Marta, I have wonderful news! You can tell Nathan that he can buy two toys today because everything is half off!”

Before Mrs. Dahlberg can tell Mr. Branolli that it isn’t the money that keeps her “one toy” rule in effect, Mr. Branolli adds with an unreadable smile, “We’re going out of business.”

A lump forms in Mrs. Dahlberg’s throat.

“I’m . . . I’m so sorry,” she stammers.

“No need to apologize! I have been looking to retire, and this is definitely the way to go.” He chuckles, but stops upon seeing Mrs. Dahlberg’s doleful expression. She turns around and for the first time since entering the store, she realizes they are the only customers. She watches as her children play on the plush carpet with all the toys they could get their hands on, an easy feat as Mr. Branolli always felt that high shelves had no place in a children’s toy store: “All toys should be accessible to the best customers.”

“Well, it seems children today would rather have toys with buttons and gadgets. Toys that are programmed to talk, walk, and dance. Toys that come in boxes,” Mr. Branolli says while fiddling with his marionette puppet. Even if Mrs. Dahlberg could have brought herself to meet Mr. Branolli’s eyes, he wouldn’t have returned her gaze.

Mr. Branolli interrupts Mrs. Dahlberg’s thoughts.

“Should I tell the children?”

As Mrs. Dahlberg looks up from the floor, she hardly recognizes the man standing before her; she has never seen Mr. Branolli so solemn, so sad.

“No. Thank you. I will tell them later.”

Mrs. Dahlberg does not want her children’s reaction to further upset Mr. Branolli.

Suddenly, Nathan trots over to Mr. Branolli and his mother, balancing a handful of toys in his arms.

“I can’t decide between these six toys,” Nathan says matter-of-factly, trying not to lose grip on the herd of animals and fleet of trucks in his arms.

Mr. Branolli laughs and pulls Nathan in for a warm, Mr. Branolli hug. (Nathan cannot tell if this means his trick worked.)

As Mr. Branolli bags Nathan and Sissy’s toys, Mrs. Dahlberg wanders through the store, feeling a sudden surge of nostalgia as she considers the playtime spent here over the past one and a half years. How could she have ever thought that the frequency of their visits would dull its wonder and significance?

As the Dahlbegs head towards the door one last time, Mr. Brannoli

turns to Mrs. Dahlberg: “Marta, just because we’re closing doesn’t mean anyone has to stop playing with toys, including you.” He slips her the marionette puppet. She smiles and silently nods at Mr. Branolli. Sissy opens the door for her mother and as she turns to leave, she gives Mr. Branolli a hearty wave.

“Bye Sissy!” Mr. Branolli calls out. “And bye Doggie!”

The Dahlbergs head home, each holding their own toy bag. Halfway home, Nathan stops to put his bag down.

“It’s so heavy! Can you hold it?” Nathan implores.

As Mrs. Dahlberg investigates the contents of the bag, she discovers the cause of the extra weight. Six toys are inside. She rolls her eyes in amusement.

“Let’s hold it together,” Mrs. Dahlberg suggests. Both Nathan and his mother grab a handle. The three of them walk home together with plans of playtime in their shoe-box apartment.



Piano Keys

By Sarala Levy



When Life Gives You Limes

By Nava Schwalb



Tea Party

By Leah Harris

Seeing Clearly

By Goldi Goldberger

Sometimes inspiration comes in small, seven-year-old packages. My mother had been telling me for weeks that when I get back from summer camp I must meet Ora, our neighbor's daughter. She didn't tell me much about her other than she's adorable, loves to dance, and is blind. Having worked with special needs children in the past, I felt prepared, though slightly relieved that Ora couldn't see my face when we first met.

At first glance, her shoulder-length bob and thick bangs that extend far over her false lashes make her look like a typical little girl in need of a haircut. However, if you keep looking, you'll notice that her eyes aren't quite symmetrically shaped and the irises are too blue to be real. That's because they're not. Ora was born without eye sockets. When she was an infant her parents elected for her to have reconstructive surgery, and the doctors created slits for her striking, yet artificial crystal blue eyes. Most people think Ora must be unaware of her surroundings and doesn't know what's going on, but unlike popular misconception, one disability is not a harbinger for others. There's no fooling anyone. Ora "sees" everything.

Despite her petite frame, Ora's personality is larger than life. She never stands in one place for more than thirty seconds, as if her body has been invited to a dance party and she's not waiting for the music to get it started. She also doesn't wait for others to match her engagement. Within just the first few minutes of talking to her, I learned which dolls she likes, how she styles their hair, and why carrot muffins are her favorite food. I'm sure she would have never anticipated that after talking to her, I spent an hour crying in my room because I felt overwhelmed, sad, grateful, and inspired. However, there's something about Ora that pulls you to her like a magnet, it's impossible to stay away from her bubbly personality and positive energy.

She never stands in one place for more than thirty seconds, as if her body has been invited to a dance party and she's not waiting for the music to get it started.

After several playdates, Ora and I developed a genuine friendship. We had sleepovers and swim parties. We chatted on the phone. Most re-

cently, we spent an afternoon shopping for ingredients and baked carrot muffins. When Ora walks through the aisles of a grocery store, she extends her arms and lets them drag across the items on the shelves. Like most seven-year-olds, she has a natural curiosity, and that's how she explores the world around her. And while I'm delighted to go on outings with Ora, I'm also grateful that she can't see people's reactions when they first realize that she's blind. When the store clerk approached us, I could tell from his distorted eyebrows and shrugged shoulders that he was frustrated by her knocking things over. Although I was bent over gathering objects to return them to their rightful places I was able to see his face drop when he got close. All he had to offer was an apologetic expression as he rushed away.

Although I'm disappointed by people's stares, active avoidance and whispers, I understand where they come from. What frustrates me most, however, are the compliments that I get paid after spending time with Ora. "Wow, you're really amazing," "I can't believe you do that," or "I could never." These comments anger me because any kind of disability, whether blindness or illness, is not contagious and spending time with someone whose company you enjoy doesn't merit a medal. What exactly is the point of sharing that with me? It doesn't make me feel pleased or accomplished--it frightens me. If everyone took that approach, and the response to difference was widespread avoidance, we could never function as a wholesome, growing, and thriving society.

I often imagine what I'd say if people would stick around for more than a moment after meeting Ora and show acceptance and genuine interest in who she is as a person. I always wish I could explain her name to them. "Ora" is the Hebrew word for light. I'd explain that her disability to see doesn't affect her ability to bring light into people's lives. She is eager to learn and gain independence, just like all children, and adults. Like "normal" children, she gets excited to crack the eggs and have her turn at mixing the batter. When I ask questions like, "Where is the sugar?" or "Is the ice cream shop open?" Ora responds by saying "I see it's on the shelf," or "I see the shop is open!" Just by being herself, Ora inspires me to make myself available to others. The inspiration that comes from encountering differences, whether they are intellectual, physical, emotional, or cultural, is what makes this world a truly glorious sight to behold.



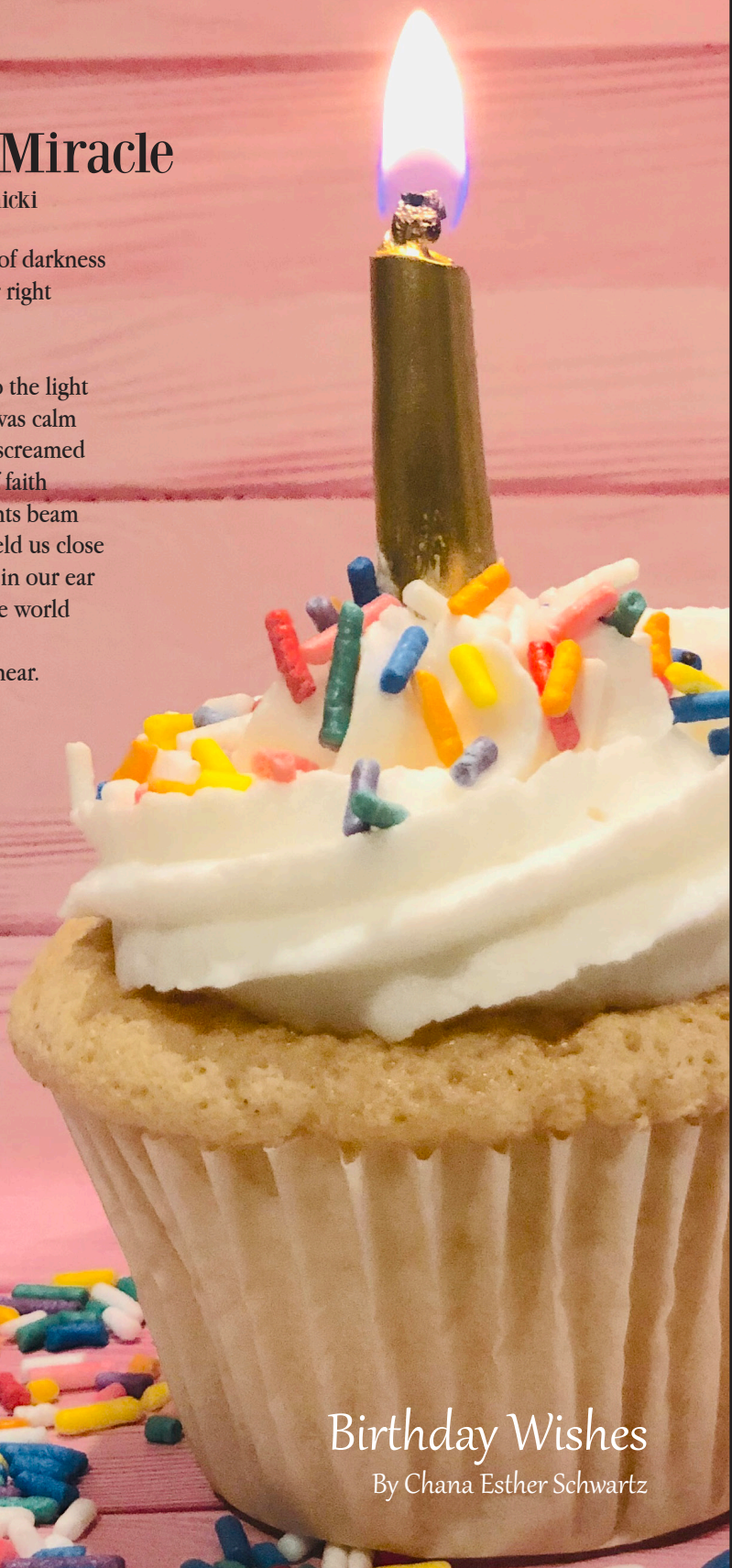
Clock

By Ayelet Wein

Little Miracle

By Leora Wisnicki

Out of a world of darkness
Can't tell left or right
No name
Just a number
We jumped into the light
No one said it was calm
We kicked and screamed
But that leap of faith
made our parents beam
Our mothers held us close
And whispered in our ear
"Welcome to the world
Little miracle"
As she held us near.



Birthday Wishes

By Chana Esther Schwartz

Pictures Don't Do Justice

By Ayala Cweiber

I want

To write about the sun

But I'm sure we've all seen that

I want

To write about

The sun that rises over the crest of the mountains in South Dakota

As you stand watching from the cliff of an opposite mountain

Overlooking the valley of fir trees swaying in the breeze

And the early birds are chirping

And a horse whinnies occasionally in the distance

I want to write about

The little pink orb in the sky

That at first I didn't even realize was the sun

Framed by perfect orange yellow and blue clouds

My sun

Rose into the sky

As the moon and stars receded on the other side

And I

I tried to take pictures

But it didn't look the same

Everything or Nothing

By Myriam Weiss

Is there innocence where there is no cruelty-
Is there jubilation if there is no emptiness-
Is anything a miracle if everything is a miracle?
That babies grow into full fledged adults-
Infertile seeds into lush flowers-
Villains become heroes.
Everything is a miracle.
Does that make nothing a miracle?



Ner Tamid

By Yael Zuckerbraun

Migration

By Sara Nordlicht

He circled. Round the birchwood tree, over the schoolyard fence, he went, in upward reaching spirals. He let out a guttural call, telling others to join him. The brisk fall wind buffered him ever skyward, he fought to maintain control. Another joined him in his circling, then five, and ten. They came from all directions, joining in the circling and calling. It was that time of year again.

Down below, in the schoolyard, the girl bid goodbye to her friends. Did anyone hear her? She felt alone, ignored, a mere bystander to her supposed friends' conversations. She kicked at the mud-brown leaves that were in her path, and wished she could hear the ice cream truck again, that it were still summer. But no, September was here, and the recess bell had replaced the truck's song. It was no replacement, really, no replacement at all.

Above her, the birds continued their annual gathering for migration. The strong winds, golden trees, and growing protective layers of feathers told them it was time. It was time to go to where it was warm, and they were busy preparing for their journey, informing all who would listen. They settled, then raised up again. And on they circled, gathering more and more members, in sweeping large circles, black silhouettes against the pink-orange sky. Their pace quickened as their numbers swelled to fifty, then a hundred. It was nearly time.

Walking home, the forlorn figure continued on her trek. It was going to be another one of those days, she just knew it. She wouldn't understand her homework, her brother would tease her, and she would disappoint her mom. The darkening light reflected her mood perfectly, a series of gray-black strokes. Life was bad, and would only get worse as time went on. Wake up, go to school, be unhappy. Come home, do schoolwork, be unhappy some more. Life was in a downward spiral, and there was no way to stop it.

Above, they circled in upward spirals, readying for their move to their

**And on
they circled,
gathering more
and more
members, in
sweeping large
circles, black
silhouettes
against the
pink-orange sky.**

winter home. The calls became louder, more frequent, and more insistent. They would go the same way as last year, as had their parents before them. More and more got the message, felt the wind, and joined. It was quite nearly time.

She stomped towards the front steps, head down, walking straight into the mailman, who was busy unloading the mail from his cart.

He stepped aside just in time. "Ah, I've got a letter for you, miss." He proffered an envelope, all but covered in stickers.

She looked up, annoyed that he had derailed her morose train of thought. Her expression changed from annoyance, to surprise, to genuine happiness.

"Thank you!" she smiled, taking the envelope. It was from her friend, no doubt, who moved last summer. Someone had remembered her, and taken the time to write her an old-fashioned, handwritten letter. Someone had understood. Someone had cared.

She stood outside a moment longer, admiring the envelope, basking in the lingering rays of sun. She heard a rustle above and looked up. All around, birds lifted from the trees, heading south. The migration! She turned to watch them go, black against the dark purple sky.

She turned toward her brightly lit home, whistling as she turned the key in the lock.

The Dancing Man

By Channa Gelbtuch

In a sea of black Borsalino hats and sharp black suits over white dress shirts stood a man in a beige straw hat, a salmon colored suit, a bright teal shirt and a rainbow-striped tie, tapping his squeaky brown shoes amongst the congregation's murmurs leading up to the *Lecha Dodi* prayer-song. They called him The Dancing Man, and anyone who came to *shul* on Friday night left knowing him, because believe it or not, the least colorful part about him was his outfit. He never stayed after *shul* long enough for anyone to catch his real name and no one could come up with something more creative, so the name stuck.

A high school boy stood there tapping his foot too, impatient. His eyes held no more light in them than his black suit. He mumbled the words in numbing boredom, thinking nothing can be more annoying than this. He thought wrong. The *Lecha Dodi* prayer-song began, and The Dancing Man had appeared, his stubby figure gaining height for a moment as he took his first bounce in the air. He danced like nobody was watching, in a room where everyone was, his awkward skittering almost like a fish twitching on dry land. It was a bizarre, yet entertaining sight. No one could look away.

The high school boy immediately dropped his head, hoping he could blend in to the black long enough for The Dancing Man not to notice his motionlessness. Even *he* recognized that his own attempt at camouflage was desperate, as the high school boy had accepted that his fate was basically sealed. Everyone knew that boys like him were the prime targets of The Dancing Man's shenanigans.

**The Lecha Dodi
prayer-song
began, and The
Dancing Man
had appeared,
his stubby figure
gaining height
for a moment as
he took his first
bounce in the
air.**

The words of the *Lecha Dodi* prayer-song were finished, but The Dancing Man's work had just begun. The congregation's hymns of "*nay nay nay*" grew so loud, it was beginning to give the high school boy a headache. Why was there so much passion in the recitation of words that weren't even words? The Dancing Man looked like a slightly uncoordinated horse, galloping closer and closer to the high school boy, but he couldn't

see, as his head was still bent over, the brim of his hat adding a layer to block his vision.

The high school boy's head jolted forward, as he suddenly felt The Dancing Man's arm flung around his shoulder, his body tugged as if he was a lifeless doll and The Dancing Man the little girl playing with it. He wasn't going to be rude to the man, so he took a weak hop, and then another, until somehow it felt like the whole world was jumping along with him. It soon didn't feel like jumping anymore, it felt like flying, hundreds of grandfathers, fathers, and sons pulled upwards into a euphoric wave of spirituality. He felt his lips begin to mouth the "*nay nay nay*"s and the high school boy understood that the words didn't have to be words. Maybe no one knew what they meant, but everyone surely felt it, including him. The meaning was one so ethereal that mere words simply could not properly convey it, only an outpour of intense emotion through the rhythmic chanting of a tune and a merry dance to the hymn.

Once the "*nay nay nay*"s had completely died down, and the usual hums of prayer had resumed, The Dancing Man removed his arm from the high school boy's shoulder and gave him a robust shake of the hand, his Mets cufflinks glimmering from the light reflecting off of the *shul*'s stained-glass windows. The high school boy's mouth opened to thank The Dancing Man for inviting him to enter to this place in *shul*, where men can fly and nonsensical gibberish suddenly holds more meaning than any word in the dictionary. The Dancing Man told him that it was his pleasure and that he could return whenever he'd like, in any *shul* in the world. Just when the high school boy turned to catch his name, he had disappeared through the *shul*'s exit, and The Dancing Man he remained.





Windows

By Shoshana Schwalb

A Night at the Bolshoi

By Tzophie Ulano

After nursing a glass of Bordeaux for what felt like hours, the clock in the lobby of the Hotel Metropol finally struck seven. *Show-time!* Oleg Alexandrovich stood, fastened his velvet smoking jacket and tucked a five ruble note under his glass. Swiftly exiting the hotel, he crossed the familiar streets of Moscow, his hometown, towards the magnificent Bolshoi Theatre. Though it had been years since he'd been back, every element of his city felt exactly the same as he had left it.

Guests of the Metropol were dining on caviar and blini in the hotel's restaurant, peasants roamed the streets begging for a spare ruble, all while Russia's high society were making their way to the Bolshoi for an annual performance of *Swan Lake*. Yes, everything was exactly the same. Glancing around the beautiful streets of Moscow, Oleg had to admit there was a certain *je ne sais quoi* to the views of home that far surpassed those of his current apartment in Paris overlooking the Seine. Yet, despite the familiarity of it all, it was difficult to ignore the political tension that hung in the air.

There was talk of a proletariat uprising, of overthrowing the Tsar and establishing a new society of the common man, of comrades. Workers and peasants spoke in whispered tones about a future where the proletariat prevailed, where the one percent would be the last percent, and all would be equal under the sun. These thoughts troubled Alexandrovich as he made his way to the theater, where he would join his wealthy comrades and leave the poor comrades behind in the street. He feared that if the dreams of these peasants came true, the Russia he had always known would cease to exist. As a country that boasted a wealth of culture, the birthplace of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, Pushkin and Chekhov, Russia could never be confined by the limits of equality. The rich would live richly and the poor would have to be content with living poorly. That was how things had always been and how they should remain. *After all*, Oleg thought to himself as he walked through the grand entrance of the Bolshoi and hurried to find his seat near the front, *You cannot forbid*

Guests of the
Metropol were
dining on caviar
and blini... peasants
roamed the streets
begging for a spare
ruble...

living beautifully.

At fifteen past seven the lights dimmed, the red velvet curtains lifted, and Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's masterfully crafted theme began to play. Oleg Alexandrovich sat captivated throughout the entire performance. As he watched the show he reflected that this was a true representation of harmony and equality. The synchrony and the complementary notes on different instruments created melodies so sorrowful yet joyous at the same time-- people coming together for the sake of beauty and art. The working class could take their talk of equality and leave it in the fields and mines where it belonged, for here before his very eyes he witnessed unity for the sole purpose of splendor, which was the only unity that mattered as far as he was concerned.

When the curtains were finally drawn and the roses had been thrown on the stage, Oleg returned to his suite at the Metropol to pack his things for his return to Paris the next day. Not knowing the next time he'd be back at Bolshoi, he folded his program and tucked it into his suit jacket so he would always remember that performance. It was a good thing he did, too, for though he did not know it then, there wouldn't be another performance like that for a very long time.

Imagination

By Mindy Bober

Oh, what a miracle it would be,
A frog flying with herbal tea.
Over the roseate sky
Into the strangling woods.
It found a pointy fish up to no good.
Lightning clapped,
Thunder roared.
The world was left uncolored,
Like a checkerboard.
Across the pointy creature
A heating simper was engraved.
To destroy the universe it craved.
Fortunately,
The flying frog arrived,
His herbal tea in it's palms survived.
Pouring it over the creature
Was the savior of the day.
Because he was so clever,
The world was now saved forever.
Oh, what a miracle this would be.
Oh, what a miracle we possess,
The miracle of imagination we have with success.
Without this miracle we would feel dark brown,

Bored

Tired

Lazy

Is how we would meltdown.
These three words would be our complaints.
The world would be covered in black and white paints.
Hope
Progress
Liveliness
We wouldn't have in store,
This world would be a transparent bore.
Oh, what a miracle we possess,
The miracle of imagination we have with success.

Sunset Behind the Mountains

By Nechoma Flohr



Fauvism Face

By Sari Dubin

Priceless

By Chava Milo

I wanted to keep all the extra gems scattered across the table for myself. I just had to have those rainbow, shimmery shapes that Kaya's mommy bought for the party. The gems were supposed to decorate boring wooden picture frames, but imagine what I could create if I took them home. Sparkly royal paper tiaras, earrings for unpierced ears like mine, or a fancy notebook to fill with my own drawings.

My eyes searched the room for adults and other kids. The coast was clear. Like a sneaky ninja, I quickly shoved handfuls into my skirt pockets, hearing the ones I missed clink across the floor. I knew that it wasn't polite to take more than I should at someone else's birthday party, but there were so many. Who would miss two, or three, or twenty-three?

**My eyes
searched the
room for adults
and other kids.
The coast was
clear.**

Suddenly, Kaya started walking over. She must have seen me. I put on my most innocent face, tilting my head and opening my eyes as wide as I could. It always works on Grandma and Grandpa.

"Sophie!" the Birthday Girl shrieked. "Those are mine, for *my* party!"

But those sparkly precious jewels were mine now. They were in *my* pockets. I know Ms. Lynn tells us that sharing is caring, but I care about *me* most.

"So why did you put them on the table for us to use?" I asked, putting my hands on my hips like mommy does sometimes when she really wants me to listen. Kaya started tugging on one of her auburn pigtails. Maybe I scared her. Good.

"My mommy put them on the table, but . . . she bought them for me," Kaya said with a slight shake in her voice. Her eyes watered and looked even bigger than mine now, but I still felt older. . . I felt different now. Maybe it's because I am older, or maybe because my best Barbie doll has a special bright pink sparkly tiara and Kaya didn't have such pretty Barbies.

"Your mommy put the glitters on the table for girls to take, not for you." I snapped.

"They are for picture frames. Not for you, Sophie," Kaya whined.

“Picture frames are for babies,” I said. “I’m a big girl, so I use my gems at home.” I made sure no mommies or daddies were in the room, and then I pinched Kaya’s arm.

Kaya began to scream and cry, “Mommy!”

Kaya was a baby. Only babies cry. I quickly ran to the room with the ladies that did ‘makeup’ on the children. Mommy was in that room talking to Daisy’s mommy. Daisy was nice, because she has really pretty Barbies. Better than Kaya.

I walked up to Mommy and pulled on her skirt. Mommy turned to me and told me to wait. Mommy always told me to wait. I want to go home. After tugging on her skirt many more times Mommy finally was ready to listen.

“What is it sweetie?” Mommy did not seem so happy with me.

“I’m bored. I want to go home, this party is too long, I want to go home and play Barbies.” I came up with the best excuse to leave I could think of. I pretended to feel sick.

Mommy sighed and said, “Alright dear.” She took my hand and got our things together. I turned around before walking out the door and looked at Kaya who was crying to her mommy. I stuck my tongue out. It felt like the right thing to do. After all, she deserved it. Then I pulled Mommy out the door before Kaya’s mommy could tell Mommy what I did. Finally, I was safe.

The party wasn’t fun, but at least I got my gems. I wouldn’t be going to Kaya’s party again, and I wouldn’t be her friend anymore. But that’s okay, because some gems are more valuable than friendships.

Try Again

By Avigail P. Deutsch

it's been a long day,
a long week,
a hard month,
a hard year,
and a thousand criticisms hit all your sore spots,
and one more mistake and one more refusal
is one more too much.
and so you fall in bed not knowing where you lie, really,
with her, with them, with Him,
with yourself.
but then you rise with the sun the next morning,
with three small words,
three little miracles, for you at least:
i'll try again.
and when you do,
it isn't really a miracle-
your strength was there all along.



Imagine
By Rosie Katz

Daddy's Home

By Adi Hacker

Daddy's coming home today! Mommy says that when I get home from school he'll be waiting for me. I still need to go to school though. It's going to be so boring, like always. So far, only mommy and I know that it's really a special day. I put on my favorite jumper and eat the special pancakes mommy made when Jackie starts to cry. It's been a long year. So much has changed. I can count to 101 now, and I can also read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by myself. I can finally climb on the monkey bars. Also, Jackie was born.

Mommy gives me a really big hug before I get on the bus, but it's hard for her to get both arms around me while she's also holding a baby. As I get on the yellow bus, Bob, the bus driver, tells me I look really happy today.

"Yup, daddy's coming home today! He was in the army for one whole year and he's finally coming home! Since he was in a different part of the world, we could Skype too much. When it was night time for him, I was at school, and when he wasn't working, I was sleeping. But it's okay, because today, he's finally coming home for good! I'm still coming to school though. Mommy said the excitement will be bigger if I'm doing something extra boring."

When I get to school, I tell all of my friends the amazing news, but Miss Lily still teaches math and spelling. I don't think she cares very much about how special today is. But addition doesn't matter to me right now. I check the clock all day and count down the minutes until I get to go home. To make the time go faster, I plan what daddy and I will do together. First we'll color, then bake cookies, then make noodle necklaces, and then I'll show him my collection. Whenever

I try to show mommy my stickers, she starts off listening, but then Jackie does something and she stops listening. Jackie also likes to put crayons in his mouth, so I can't really color at my little table anymore. I haven't baked anything with mommy in a while because Jackie needs her so much, and sometimes mommy is just too tired to bake and color. Now I'm worried. What if Jackie makes daddy need him too? What if daddy is already playing with Jackie when I get home?

It's been a long year. So much has changed. I can count to 101 now.. Also, Jackie was born.

When school is over I run to my bus.

“Katie!” A tall man wearing sunglasses calls my name, but I don’t have time to look. I need to get home. Plus, I don’t talk to strangers.

“Wait,” he calls. “Katie, it’s me.”

I turn around to see a face that looks almost like my daddy’s, but it’s covered in a scruffy beard. But I do recognize that necklace...

“Let’s make noodle necklaces,” daddy said. “I can take it with me overseas and think about you everytime I see it.”

The Sunday before he deployed, while mommy rested upstairs, we took out elbow-shaped noodles and beaded them onto clear, thin strings. They smelled like our house on Macaroni Mondays. Daddy even dared me to eat the raw, stripped, pasta, but I didn’t. Daddy made one for me and I made one for him. Since then I’ve worn it every day. Daddy always has the best ideas.

“Daddy!” I shout. Daddy’s finally here. He’s here to see me. Me. Not Jackie, but me.



We Tell the Story

By Dassi Mayerfeld

Still Standing Strong

By Esther Guelfguat

Once beautiful and strong now lays in hateful ashes
Once tall and splendid now engulfed with flames of animosity
Once surrounded by stained glass windows now
 remains stooped and shattered
Once full and lively now utterly desolate
Once full of joy and laughter now screams with silence

What once was, continues despite all odds
With the glory and splendor from before

No flames can make us stumble.

Lined Up

By Ita Schechter



Twenty One

By Avigail P. Deutsch

Twenty one is a big number. And a scary number. Past the twilight years of no-longer-a-minor, you're now an "adult." Well, not you exactly. . .

Your peers are all celebrating the milestone of legal drinking age, but you'll never drink. A part of me wishes I could worry about you driving home too late at night, but I know you will never be found behind the wheel.

I watch you tonight as you greet all your guests. You lean forward then tilt back slowly on your heels, the way you sometimes do when you're excited or anxious, and I think tonight is a little bit of both. The blue tablecloths, light and strinking at once, match your pale, almond eyes, and I'm happy I didn't buy the overpowering green ones you wanted. There are no balloons tonight, as you insisted, since "balloons are for kids." Even so, bright, alert, and no longer a kid, I can see a part of you that wishes we had gotten balloons.

I watch your friends tonight. They all came to celebrate with you. Those that grew up with you pull off their raincoats in the hall, run their fingers through their hair, check their reflections in the entry hall mirror, and make conversation as they move inside. They're excited to see each other and entertain each other with tales of strict math professors and awkward first dates. They look youthful and fresh, like you, but also so . . . sophisticated. And I'm ashamed to acknowledge the little sting I feel as one of them absentmindedly twists her diamond ring around her finger.

So I focus instead on the younger group of high school girls. These are the ones that play endless card games with you over the weekend and bake with you when I have errands to run. They cluster around you and complement your hair, your dress, the food, and your eyes crinkle even more as you smile. But I can't help thinking where they'll be in a few years' time. I try to delude myself that you won't become a fuzzy memory of their Saturday afternoons as they move on. When they start careers and build lives and achieve milestones, I wonder where you'll be. Will the

**There are
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gotten balloons.**

next shift of tender-hearted neighborhood girls step in to play Apples-to-Apples with you as the age gap between you and them increases? Or will they prefer to visit the adorable 6-year-old down the block, rather than the 20-something year old with needs of a child? As much as I want to run away from the thought, I can't ignore that soon you won't look like a teenager anymore, although your mind will never catch up.

But then I watch you accept a gift from a school friend. You hug her, like any gracious host would, and place it on the gift table. When you walk over to the buffet, lasagna is restricted to a little corner of your plate and the rest is filled with salad. I'm proud of you for making that decision since I know how tempted you are to take more. You cut your food into neat, bite-sized pieces, and wipe your mouth with your napkin often. I'm reminded of the hours and years of work just to get you to touch your index and thumb together consciously to form a pincer grasp that most infants develop between 8 and 12 months. It took a decade of practice for you to say a cohesive, four-word sentence, and today you ask one of your guests about her sister and then tell her all about your day.

My heart warms and I blink back tears as I watch you, my baby, so accomplished and developed and mature. I think back to the first time I held you, twenty one years ago, and thought my life would never be the same. I was now the mother of a Down's Syndrome child. As I studied your shining eyes, delicate ears, and searching little tongue, I was overcome by a surge of emotions. I felt guilty mourning the life you'd never have, the life I had been envisioning for the last 9 months, gone just as it began. But at the same time, I hoped my arms would be strong enough to hold your loose limbs. And deep down, I knew that my heart was big enough to love your fragile one.

True, life as I knew it was never the same, but it's been worth every moment just to see you where you are now. I think of all the tears I cried with you and for you, in happiness and in pain, and of all the times I wasn't sure either of us would make it to today. But I think that we've both made it, at least in this moment, and I'm grateful to be at your side. And I'm even happier when I'm off to the side as you stand on your own. From this perspective, I am in awe of your perseverance to push past what seems to have been predetermined, and I admire your determination to develop beyond anyone's expectations. If we're both being perfectly honest, I am sure

there are things we both wish could be different, but now, on your birthday, I feel only appreciation for the gift of an extra copy of chromosome 21.

The irony isn't lost on me as I bring you close and kiss your forehead.

“Happy 21st, my love. I'm so lucky to be your mother.”



Central Park

By Chedvah Lamm

The Color Shifting Photos of Past Winterless Years

By Noa Garfinkel

vanished he had in the photos so common
that littered his house and crept into his mind,
colored they were, but far fewer were fair,
(nonsense images imagining nothing)
they'd been stacked much like bricks inside of
his mind,
they'd been waiting for their
fall.

the film is cut-
the speech is stopped-
frozen primly on the plastic.
colors fail-
words like hail-
“oh,” he thinks, “fantastic.”

rip up his house to find that one photo,
he did every day for
a season-
no reason-
he found it and brought it
to the room in the back.
it was the other- no matter
he climbed down the ladder-
the last hour- a shatter
of spring.

fixer, he mixed it-
shake off the photo & put it to lie,
in yellowing trays & put it to dye,

he did all of this and nothing else more-
“oh,” he thinks, “i fixed it.”

he photographed those empty halls,
put photographs on empty walls,
some were too tepid,
most he regretted,
now all but some are
grey-
and melted in sun's
summer.

the wind came in-
a gelatinous darkness-

whipping through dark rooms
with
strong fumes

and no bits of light.

photos and papers
and fluids and vapors-
all fell with one silencing crash.

but he didn't notice,
just moved with his slowness,

to pin up the
papers

to breathe in the
vapors

(nonsense images through the eyes of the mind)



A Room with a View

By Tamar Cohen

The Park

By Shoshana Escott

I hear
People talking
Animals chattering
The wind and trees murmuring
And the brook burbling
I see
People milling
Animals scampering
Trees swaying
And the brook sparkling
I hear
Mother saying
Come
It's time to
Go
I take her hand
And whisper
Goodbye



First Day of School

By Chanie Malek



In Other Words

By Alicia Russo

When I was a little 🧒, I had a passion for 💃. I would 💃 around the halls of my apartment on tip toe, imagining I was on point on a huge stage. I would picture thousands of smiling 🧑, blinding 🌟, and 🌸 at my 🎤. I believed I was born to be a 🌟.

One day my 🧑 came over to me after class, and in a sarcastic tone even a 7-year-old could detect, told me, “Alicia, you have the grace of a 🐢 on dry 🍷.”

And just like that, I had had enough of 💃. Never again did I picture myself on a stage, and no longer did I think I was a 🌟. That was the last time I 💃 in front of 🧑. Although my 🧑 spoke in euphemism and metaphor, her message to me was clear: I was a graceless, bad dancer and would never improve.

So I gave up. 🙄 back, I wonder, if I had read her all wrong. Perhaps, her intention was not to 🍷 me, but rather to motivate me and 🤝 me closer to my 📖. If only I had understood dual perspective, demonstrated some cognitive empathy, or communicated my feelings in response. If only we studied Interpersonal Communication in first grade, who 🙋 where I'd be now.

Today's 🌐, which is 📺 embracing visual messages over verbal ones, often lends itself toward misinterpretation. 🗣️ language, facial expressions, fashion choices, even emojis require decoding, and sometimes I feel like I am being asked to learn a new language altogether.

Dual perspective, or the ability to keep your views and the views of your listener in your 🧠 at the same time, is necessary in both verbal and nonverbal communication. It's the 🧠 to understanding another's beliefs, thoughts, and feelings, as well as decipher our own. When I gather my 🧠 a minute before class ends so I am not late to my next one, my 🧑 may interpret that as impatience and disrespect, not 🕒 management. On the other 🙋, if I try to 🙄 the interaction from her position, I can adjust my actions to improve, rather than damage, the relationship.

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We've been trained to read a tilted 👤 as attentiveness, a 🤝 on the shoulder as compassion, and 😏 as annoyance, but sometimes, there is another way to 👁️ at what you're looking at. Shuffling 🗑️ might mean the person is bored of the conversation. It also might mean their 🦶 are uncomfortable. Still, we need to put ourselves in those 🦶 more routinely.

👤, 🗑️, and 🗑️ are all modes of communication, and while some of us 🗑️ them more fluently than others, we should 👁️ for the opportunities to connect with each 🗑️.

Of course, 🗑️ is still a valuable form of communication that I don't believe is being replaced by other tools like 👤, 🗑️, 🗑️ or 😏. Still, in anticipating how you, my reader, might feel about my view, I have used this occasion to broadened my perspective. And for that, I 🙏.

Ambition

Tikvah Pollack

If you've climbed the never-ending mountain,
Crossed the never-ending sea,
Lived through the never ending storm,
You have ambition, just like me.





Achievement
By Rivka Lax

Editors' Afterword

By Ahuva Mermelstein and Alicia Russo

Dear Reader,

Thomas Jefferson once said, "Determine never to be idle. No person will have occasion to complain of the want of time who never loses any." For Jefferson, idleness is a choice, and after choosing to read this journal from cover to cover, it's clear that your time here was far from pointless. From one page to the next, the reader is prompted to imagine, question, discover, challenge, feel, think, reflect, and hope. Truly, the reader who has wholeheartedly engaged with these pages "will [never] have occasion" to feel that their time was poorly spent.

The coupled activities of writing and reading let your imagination to flow freely and access all the possibilities of what a truly meaningful moment can be. Our writers took their thoughts and focused them into polished pieces that transport us to new worlds, evoke emotions, and change the mundane into something extraordinary. From classic milestones to original "ah-ha" moments, our contributors helped us find the "Oh!" of delight, disappointment, and discovery available in all of the occasions we choose to recognize. Although the finished product appears so effortless, in reality, the reading experience you just enjoyed was made possible by writers who are skillful at masking the labor of their craft. Developing characters, adjusting a storyline, sacrificing style to enhance clarity, weighing the connotation of every verb and adjective are all strenuous steps that occur numerous times in the writing process. Our contributors lived up to this tremendous task, which requires creativity, flexibility, vulnerably, and humility. They opened themselves up to share their expectations, aspirations, opinions, beliefs, and so much more for your indulgence and benefit.

We hope you take Garrison Keillor at his word, "A book is a gift you can open again and again," and continue to enjoy the precious contents of these pages, whether it be to revisit memories or find a new point of departure.

As Shakespeare once said, "Goodbye"!

Ahuva and Alicia

“Don’t ever save anything for a special occasion. Being alive is a special occasion.”

– Mary Engelbreit

