



MANHATTAN HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

EASTWARD

A Literary & Art Anthology

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*

Bruria Schwartz

*Harry and Rose Kaplan Scholarship
Prose Honorable Mention*

Ilana Katzenstein

*Harry and Rose Kaplan Scholarship
First Place Poetry Award*

Rochel Fogel

*Harry and Rose Kaplan Scholarship
First Place Art Award*

Simi Spitzer

*Harry and Rose Kaplan Scholarship
Art Honorable Mention*

Tziporah Braun

*Harry and Rose Kaplan Scholarship
First Place Photography Award*

Hannah Seterah

EASTWARD

An Anthology of Literature and Art

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Foreword

By Mrs. Estee Friedman-Stefansky, Principal

Situated on East 70th Street, our schoolhouse is nestled just blocks from Central Park, Sotheby's, and Lincoln Center — right in the nexus of some of the world's most storied landmarks and iconic culture. Seems like an oxymoron; we are a proud Bais Yaakov in such a secular location. In fact, though, our school's location is a terrific blessing; sharing multicultural experiences with our students helps us energize our studies and nuance their worldview. But reinforcing for our students how Torah Jews live within this greater world has been the greatest blessing of all.

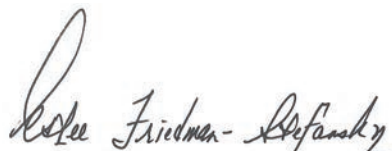
The Gemara states that one must pray in a house that has windows and one must also face Eastward. Rabbi Bezalel Naor recently shared with me a beautiful insight by Rav Kook on this Gemara in his commentary on 'Eyn Ya'akov entitled 'Eyn Ayah (Berakhot, chap. 5, par. 124; b. Berakhot 34b).

Rav Kook explains, shared Rabbi Naor, that one's prayer must include an awareness of the outside world and one's civic responsibility for establishing a just society which is the ideal of Jerusalem. Our mission here at MHS is charged by this unique prayer. We want for our girls to turn inward and draw from their Torah truths as they turn outward and face the secular outside. It's a textured stance but one that conditions sophistication and achievement which sparks the Light unto the Nations.

Eastward is our school's annual literary and art journal and it expresses this prayer. So many variegated perspectives, brave vulnerabilities, and creative visions come forth in this school wide project that reflects both our standards for quality culture and our standards for the pristineness which is so sacred to all of us. The writers and artists featured have been inspired by art and culture. But take a look at their contributions and see how they have synthesized the outside with their inside. I join our school community in saluting Dr. Shaina Trapedo who leads this project with her exceptional pedagogy and generous spirit, and continues to elevate our literacy and creativity. Thank you to our exceptional teachers: Mrs. Raquel

Benchimol, Mrs. Rivkah Nehorai, Ms. Serene Klapper, Ms. Miryam Lakritz, and Mrs. Dena Szpilzinger for contributing to the efficacy of this project.

Rav Kook's message to pray in a windowed house reminds us as well that while The One Above has His place Above, He dwells down here on Earth. How blessed we are as a school to access that Godliness even in the Upper Eastside of Manhattan, a place synonymous with so much cultural diversity. It is our heartfelt prayer that our young girls continue to face Eastward as they set their compasses for all of their life's direction.



Rebeca Friedman-Defanaky

Editors' Foreword

Dear Reader,

Manhattan High School's annual Literary and Art Journal is one of our school's most breathtaking and beloved ventures. Over the past two decades, the journal has taken various forms and pursued a range of thematic expeditions. Each publication was launched by a call for submissions in response to a carefully chosen topic or motif designed to solicit new and nuanced stories, art, poetry, photography, and other modes of creative expression. Just in the last five years, we've been treated to compelling anthologies exploring *(Ob!)ccasions*, *Glass*, *Masks*, *Away*, and *Wings*.

This year, however, we departed from this course and took up Robert Frost's challenge to tread "the road less traveled by." Like you, we know the bitter-sweet experience of having to write in response to a theme. We know what it's like to weigh the value of pursuing an idea, instinct, or image when all seem "just as fair" and there is no way of knowing what lies at the end at your embarkment. Fortunately, just like traveling, writing affords that a draft (or destination) can be "kept for another day." This year, when we launched our journal, we did not provide a thematic map. Instead, we turned to you, our peers, and asked you to simply wander and share your travelogues with us.

When the submissions began coming in, we realized the art, photography, design, poetry, prose, and personal memoirs were at once an initiation and a convergence, and that the journal you now hold in your hand indeed needed a fitting title. It is our pleasure to present to you *Eastward: The Manhattan High School for Girls Literary and Art Anthology*, as we believe this moniker signifies two aspects of our unique school. Firstly, although we hail from all over the tri-state area, we have come to know the Upper Eastside as our home. Our daily commutes and learning experiences, inside and outside the classroom, are impacted by our city surroundings. Secondly, what brings us to Manhattan High School for Girls is not just the outstanding secular studies, but the rich religious education we receive that grounds us in our Jewish heritage which directs east toward Jerusalem. We believe traveling these "two roads" has "made all the difference."

We would like to thank Dr. Shaina Trapedo for her dedication and assistance in creating this publication, in ensuring that the works within reflect our standards of literary and artistic excellence. Thanks are also due to our devoted teachers, Ms. Lakritz, Mrs. Nehorai, Mrs. Benchimol, and Ms. Klapper, who model patience, process, and persistence for us daily, as well as to our layout advisor, Mrs. Dena Spilzinger, for her precision and expertise. As always, we owe gratitude to Mrs. Friedman-Stefansky for providing her students with endless opportunities for creative expression. Sincere gratitude is also felt to all our peers who submitted their pieces and worked tirelessly to polish and present them to you, our reader, who has made all the effort worthwhile.

.

Warmly yours,

Ayala, Jenny, Naomi, Dassi and Leora

*“There’s always room for a story that can
transport people to another place.”*

-J.K. Rowling

Tell the Wolves I'm Not Home

By Yael Mehlman

"It was a dark and stormy night," I said in a spooky voice, "just like the night you were born."

"No it wasn't, David!" Nathan interrupts, arms crossed and with a concentrated stomp of the foot. He takes me way too seriously. He hangs on to every word I say like it's sticky molasses; his soft brown eyes, entranced by my exaggerated expressions, widen like an anime character.

"I'm just kidding, calm down..." I chuckle and ruffle his droopy black hair.

"As I was saying, the temperature was below 32 degrees and the clouds were gray and angry, pouring rage all over the city. Old women were slipping on the bumpy cobblestone streets, and the most frightening of all to the mothers: kids were getting muddy footprints all over their carpets!" I add a dramatic gasp and put my hand over my mouth in horror, and Nathan giggles, warming up a bit.

Nathan's usually asleep by 8:00 the latest, but that's when our parents are around, and he gives them a hard enough time. It's easy to get "10 more minutes" when your lip pouts and quivers, your voice raises a few octaves, you quickly forget how to pronounce the letter "R", and you "pwomise" to be a "good boy" and "go to bed after". Promises, reasonably so, don't have to mean much when you're under 4 feet. Being the experienced boy he is, Nathan knows he doesn't have to bother with any of that tonight. Our parents won't be home for hours. Tonight, I carry the daunting burden of putting him to bed alone. I'm failing, quite miserably, and he knows it.

"You know what, Nathan? Why don't I go fetch you a glass of milk? You stay tucked in and I'll be right back." I read online that warm milk makes kids drowsy. I figure it's worth a shot.

It's a long walk from Nathan's room to the kitchen; a few hallways and a staircase. I take my time and stroll, too lazy to get out of breath. The

I was once
that young,
and I wish I
could be that
young again.

bedroom-floor hallways are lined with pictures of Nathan and me, portraits and together. Walking the hallway is like walking through a time machine. The pictures are organized by date, and I watch myself get older and older with each footfall. A completely different face is looking back at me when I reach the end of the hallway. With every step I take, I feel my years stretch before me, like watching my life in fast forward. There's a picture of my toddler self in a bubble bath, a photo of myself holding Nathan for the first time. My smile is so big in that picture that my cheeks hurt just looking at it. There's Nathan with a similar expression in Disney World from about 2 years ago, but I remember refusing to smile, furious about spending so many hours at the kiddy section. The last picture on the route, from this past summer, is me and Nathan on the beach, squinting in the glorious, glaring sun, bronze and content as ever.

I hear the wooden floor creak and it snaps me right out of my train of thought.

I whip around, spot Nathan trying to scurry past, and, exasperated, give him a nice and dirty look.

"Nathan, I told you to stay in bed. Why did you follow me?" I hiss, quasi-yelling, but trying to stay cool. He's annoying, but he's 7, and I'm sure I was a lot more difficult when I was his age. Nathan says he got thirsty and I was taking too long, so he wanted to get the milk for himself. I don't really care to question him further, so I just roll my eyes and let his small hand slip into mine. Silently, we shuffle down the stairs and into the kitchen. I let go of his hand now and rummage through the fridge for any kind of milk. I pour him a glass of full-fat milk, the kind they give to babies. He asks if I can continue the story I was telling him before we took a trip to the kitchen.

"Ah, yes. The rainy night! The cats were meowing, the dogs were barking, and the wo-"

"Come on, David, get to the story already," Nathan whines.

Again, he is annoying. He is far too young to understand the beauty of contextualization.

"I was just getting to it, you have to be patient! Now, the wolves. The wolves were out that night too—"

"No! There are no wolves in New York City. I'm going to telling Mom

you're making up lies!"

I'm about to say something that will really make him cry, but I look over at Nathan, his dangling racecar-pajama-clad legs, which are too short for the kitchen stool, his small feet, skin so pure and warm and soft as fur, his freshly tossed around hair blocking his big eyes... and all I want to do is hug him. I was once that young, and I wish I could be that young again.

I exhale. "You know what, you're right, Nathan. There are no wolves in New York City. Nothing to be afraid of."

He smiles smugly and shakes his head, glowing with the pride of correcting his older brother. And I smile, knowing he'll be safe from the wolves for a little longer.

Breakthrough

By Hindy Hamburger





An impressionistic painting of a rural landscape. The sky is filled with large, textured brushstrokes of white and pale yellow, suggesting a bright, sunny day. Below the sky, a line of dark green trees stretches across the middle ground. In the foreground, a vibrant green field is depicted with visible brushwork. In the lower right corner, a figure wearing a yellow hat and a dark dress is seen from behind, walking towards the right. In the lower left corner, there are patches of red and orange flowers, possibly poppies, growing in the field.

The Lady and Her Field

By Miriam Abittan

High Hopes

By Chedva Levine

Harry sighed as he watched Ethel tossing fitfully on her worn mattress, mumbling incoherently. He sat down on the floor next to her bed, head in hands, wishing he could help her. It became a nightly ritual in these troublesome times for him to check on his wife in the same manner as he had always done for their children, John who was five, Anna who was three, and Charlie who would've been 18 months by now.

Since Charlie's passing, Ethel had become increasingly childlike in her helplessness. It concerned Harry to no end. He could hardly conjure an image in his mind of his wife as she had been, keeping their lives cheerful even as she pinched pennies more often than her children's cheeks. Ethel had dealt gracefully with the financial difficulties they faced in the aftermath of the 1929 stock market crash. Now, more than three years and one unspeakable loss later, her inner strength was no longer there.

Harry rose from the chair, rubbing his eyes and running his fingers through his hair. He wasn't certain it was safe to leave Anna and John, but he desperately needed a breath of fresh air. He walked slowly across the room they sublet, avoiding the creaky spots. After closing the front door cautiously, he paused once more to listen for crying voices before stepping away.

As the midnight wind whistled in his ears, Harry hummed Louis Armstrong's "West End Blues" to himself, a remnant of an era long gone. The crisp winter air gave him new hope, and he wondered to himself how he could persuade Ethel to leave her bed. Still, the irony wasn't lost on him: losing his job just in time to tend to his family as both father and mother.

"Hey, Frank!" Harry called as he noticed his old friend approaching him on the sidewalk.

"How are things by you?" Harry asked, though Frank's stubble and fresh grey hair served as an answer.

Frank forced a smile.

"We're making do, as we ought to. My wife's been working at a fac-

Since Charlie's passing, Ethel had become increasingly childlike in her helplessness.

tory nearby. Our children are occupied in school. Even Billie returned to high school, now that he lost his job at the car manufacturing plant. Who can afford a car these days?"

He raised his eyes heavenward, rubbing his hands for warmth as he spoke.

"But then again, who can afford anything? But all's good, I'd say. How are things for you?"

Harry desperately wanted to maintain his composure and not reveal the extent of his troubles. He bit his inner lip searching frantically for a benign subject, but the late hour coupled with the desire to confide in someone brought his story tumbling out.

"Oh, Frank. It's so hard. I don't mean to complain, it's just, well, I don't even know what to do anymore. Ever since we lost the baby, Ethel hasn't been herself. I feel like she died too, when our little Charlie passed. I can barely push myself past the guilt of not caring properly for the whole lot of them. Somehow I keep going along, collecting food, wiping their noses, but I don't know how this will end."

Frank lowered his eyes and nodded empathetically. In 1932, everyone had a new level of understanding when it came to feeling utterly helpless.

They sat down on a nearby bench.

"I have an idea for you," Frank offered. Harry's eyebrows raised in question.

Frank lowered his voice as he shared rumors about an upcoming federal employment program. Frank inferred that with Harry's experience in the construction of the famous Chrysler Building, Harry had a nice shot at receiving a job from the PWA, a federal employment program in the construction realm. Over an hour later the two friends parted ways. This time, there was an optimistic note to Harry's humming and a slight bounce in his feet.

When he reentered the apartment, Harry went directly to kiss his children. The thought-provoking conversation had spurred a new wave of love for his children as he began to ponder the possibility of spending hours away from them. He crept towards John and Anna's corner of the

room and stopped short in his tracks.

There, lying beside John, was Ethel. Harry hadn't seen her leave her bed in months. "Ethel," he whispered. "What are you doing here?"

She offered him a reluctant smile.

"I'm— I'm not sure. I just felt like I, I missed the children... It's just been so long."

Harry nodded as if he understood. He would do anything to keep Ethel talking. He sat down cross-legged on the floor.

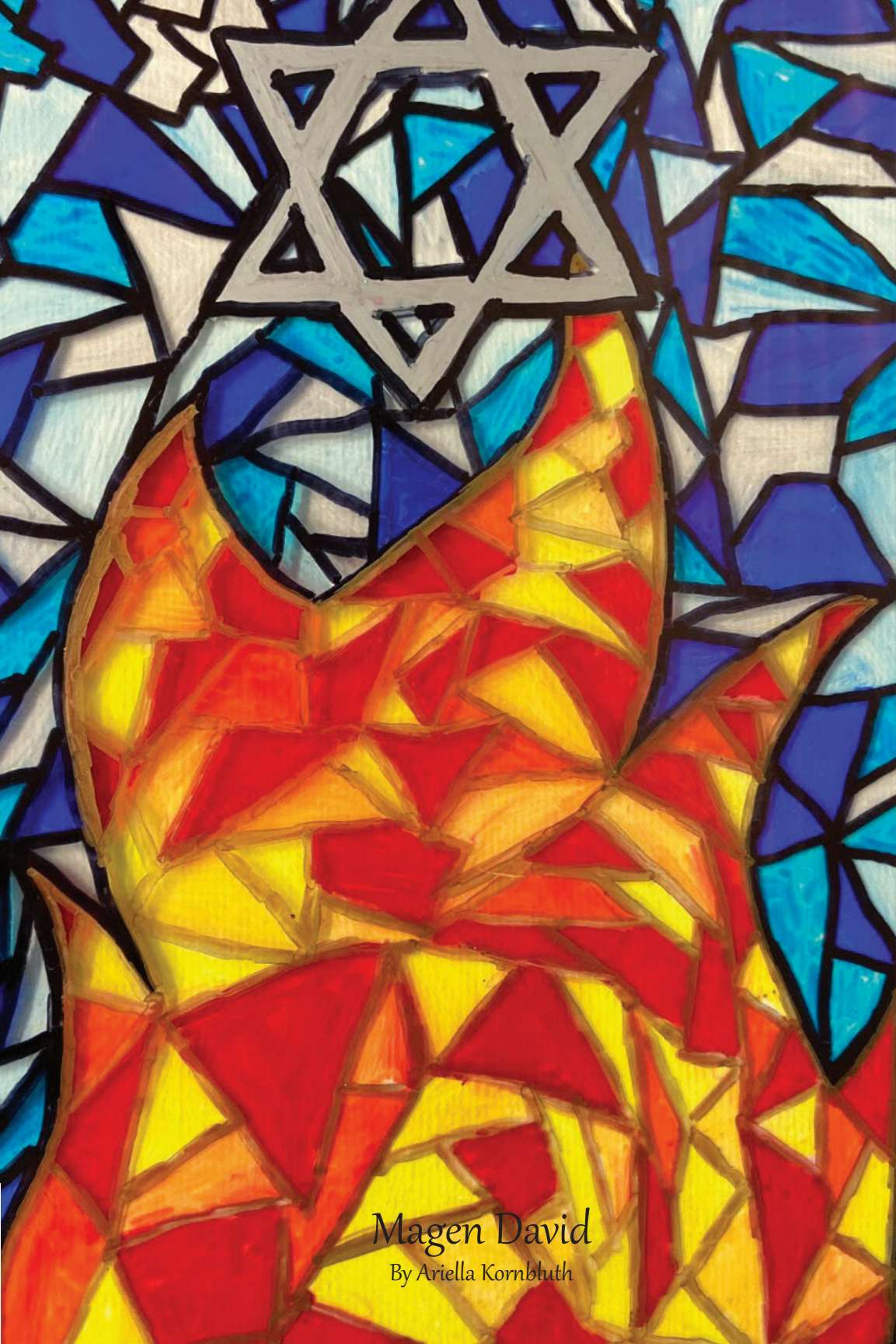
"We've missed you too, Ethel. More than you'll ever know," he responded earnestly.

As he grinned back at her, Harry knew he would have to take the job. He had a wife and children who depended on him. Yes, it would be a hard choice to no longer tend to them as he had, but it was the responsible one. As the father of the family, the responsibility lay on his shoulders.

She Listens

By Tamar Spoerri





Magen David

By Ariella Kornbluth



Adjusting

By Rikki Genack

My mother comes in
She turns on the light
I don't want to see it
For it is too bright
I pull on my covers
I fight and I fight
I try to fall asleep
With all of my might
Why is it morning
I dream of the night
I know I should wake up
I know it is right
A full day ahead
About to take flight
Filled with adventures,
Excitement, delight
I will keep climbing
To reach a new height
All I have to do
Is adjust to the light

Always

By Shani Brody

First Blood

By Abby Harris

Fabled night in sable darkness
Tenebrous unstable starkness
Able knight with armor metal
Swordplay fatal, steely mettle
Steep hills lead to caves forbidden
Steeped in shadow,
dark and hidden
Owls' cries ring sharp
and lonesome
Lone knight takes a
road less chosen

Reaches cave's mouth,
tethers steed
Proceeds inside, prepared to bleed
Head bowed, blade out,
eyes glow savage
Knight avenging those
who vanished
Vanquish that which rav-
aged, razed,
Leave the beast dead in its cave

She saunters in impetuously,
Knowing not how recklessly
Eyes adjust to dust and gloom
Blood runs cold from
fear of doom:
Looming tall, serrated claws
A dragon, filling wall to wall
A milky-white and pearly creature
Silky smile, glittering features

Small, weak human
pales and staggers
Eyes like moons and
teeth like daggers

Gaze hypnotic, scales all glistening
Beast spews fire, burn-
ing, blistering
She tightly grips her
sword and swears
As sulfury smoke swirls
through the air
Eyes stream, sting-
ing, sight obscured
The sturdy knight holds
on to her sword

The sweat that dewes
her forehead drips
And scents of fear and
brimstone mix
All is thick with smoke and tension
Maiden shakes with apprehension
She advances, her legs jelly
The knight lances the beast's belly

Monster blazes, eyes twin suns
Dazed, the maid ig-
nores burnt lungs
Ducks her head to dodge the flame
But can't escape the dragon's aim
She holds her shield, but
feels heat searing,
Fire makes her eyes start tearing

And as the smoke-filled
fight proceeds
She feels her strength
and might recede
Wounded badly, losing blood,
Dented armor caked with mud,
The tired knight fights

hard and well
But scales resist her sharp metal
And every blow she tries to serve
Deters, not the beast, but her
Winking, blinking stars glare bright
And blackness stands before her sight
The weakened knight
begins to sway
And as she feels her legs give way
She wonders why she even came
For mere glory, honor, fame?
And, quick as light, she
knows right then
That she had come here
for her friends
Who fell into the dragon's claws
And ended in the monster's jaws

Her former fears all but dissolve,
Replaced by duty, strong resolve
For if here she meets her end,
She knows she'll perish for her friends
She gets up and stands defiant
Now not frightened of the tyrant

Stabs and jabs with new agility
Focused thrusts and tough stability
Swiping, sweating, gasping, blocking
Striking, dodging, spiking, lodging
Her blade in the gut of the dragon
Roars and flames, but
starts to slacken
Once-great creature
falls, she slashes

Glowing gore pours from its gashes
Bloodied knight wipes off the guts
Suppressing cries from
burns and cuts
She hacks the dragon's
head off, sighs
And lifts the scaly skull up high

Her sizzling saber, stained
with crimson,
In the darkness, glows and glistens
Outshone by the dragon's beacon
Eyes, whose light won't
soon be weakened
Out the cave she limps
and stumbles
Looking down, quiet, humbled
Mounts her steed and
grabs its mane
The other hand still on her blade

The inky blackness, vast and lonely
Reveals a young knight riding, only
Illuminated by the blood
on her brand
The head in her bag and
the gore on her hands

And though she'll scrub
with lye and water
Her sword cannot deny
her slaughter
And the blood on her hands
that haunts her brain
The blood of the first
creature she's slain
The blood that courses

through her veins,
That bubbles subtly with shame
The blood that's hot
as dragon's flame
The blood in her body
won't ever be the same.

Fearless

By Dassi Mayerfeld



A New Vision

By Shira Zelefsky

“What do you mean ‘you see your bones on the wall?’” called Wilhelm Roentgen’s wife, Bertha, from up the stairs.

“I don’t know” replied Wilhelm, “I just stuck my hand in front of the invisible rays and immediately, the bones in my hand appeared on the wall!” Wilhelm had been working very long hours in the lab recently so he chalked it up to lack of sleep, however, in the back of his mind, he feared that this meant he had gone mad. After all, most people don’t mysteriously find parts of their skeleton on the wall, no matter how tired they are.

His mind raced with images of Mad Scientists, furiously dumping beakers of bubbling solutions into hissing vats of ooze. The very images that used to keep him up as a child now seemed too close to home. He imagined all the positions he’d received as both professor and chairman of Physics at prestigious universities, all the recognition he’d received, all the effort he put in to get to this point in his career, all slipping away from him like grains of sand slipping between his fingers while he struggled to grasp it. He couldn’t bear to see the name he had worked so hard to build up for himself end up forgotten due to an ending of sanity.

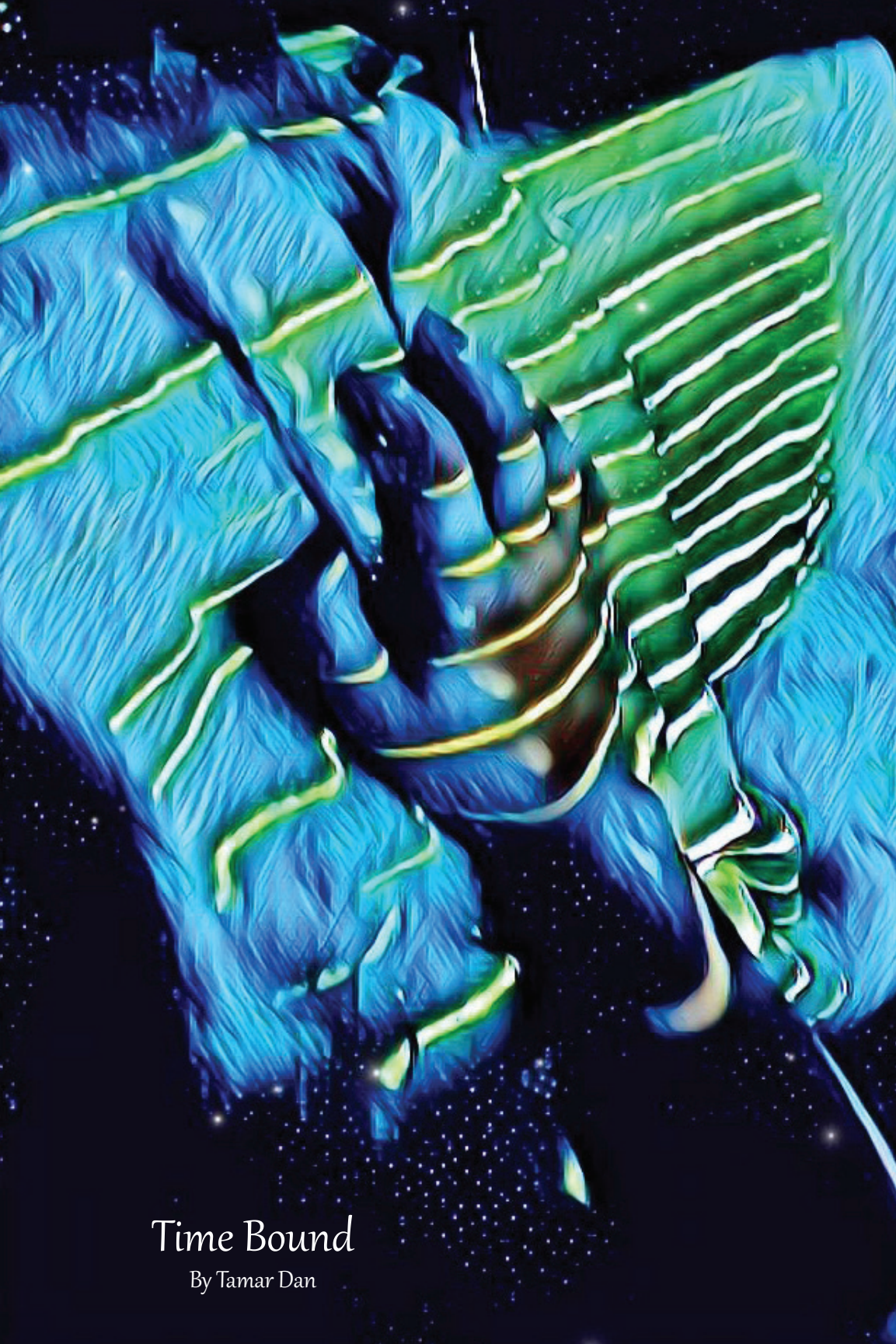
Determined to overcome these fears, he called his wife down to see if she could verify his sanity. He instructed his wife to hold her hand up to the invisible rays as he had previously, while he waited with bated breath to see if she, too, would see her bones. As she held her hands up, she nearly fainted. She wailed that she saw her bones, thinking this could only be a terrible omen of death. She cried to her husband until, eventually, the anxiety overtook her and she passed out on the couch. Wilhelm, however, was relieved. His wife’s distress had, strangely enough, brought him much comfort. This proved that his sanity was sound, and thus, all of his previous efforts in the lab and all of his academic accomplishments will not be forgotten. He sighed a quick breath of relief but this calmness did not last for long. He quickly realized that if he wasn’t hallucinating the image of his bones on the wall, he had to figure out how those invisible rays were able to seamlessly shine through his skin and muscle and in a ghostlike way, only cast a shadow from his bones. Once again, he had some research to do.

**What do you
mean ‘you see
your bones on
the wall?’**

* * *

Six years later, Wilhelm found himself in the Royal Swedish Academy of Music for the Nobel Prize awards ceremony to receive the first-ever Nobel Prize in physics. He felt that he must have been dreaming up this whole ceremony because, after all, how could he possibly have made it this far. He watched in awe as speeches were made about each of the Nobel Prize laureates and thought that he couldn't possibly be of the same caliber as all these prestigious men. It only began to feel real as the director of the Swedish national archives, the same man who had just previously introduced Roentgen, started to lead Roentgen up the stage. Feeling so small on the big stage, Roentgen approached the crown prince of Sweden, who handed him his diploma and medal. Roentgen won this prize for what he called Roentgen rays, although today they are known as X-Rays. His research has led to revolutionary changes in the fields of medicine, physics, and chemistry.

While there was a time where Roentgen worried that his reputation would be completely lost to history, he never could've guessed that nearly eighty years after he had died, he would forever be memorialized by the 111th element on the periodic table, roentgenium.



Time Bound

By Tamar Dan

Photographic Memory

By Rachelle Gelbtuch

Would you ever go on a vacation to Europe and leave your cell phone at home? For most people, the answer is a resounding “no.” However, last summer, a few days before a heritage trip to Spain with eleven of my peers and two teachers, this question was hotly debated.

Choosing to leave our phones behind when going to a foreign country could be both rewarding and risky. Taking our phones proposed many distractions. This included social media and picture taking, which would prevent us from living in the moment of the unbelievable trip we were experiencing. Ms. Gottlieb, one of the teachers on the trip, thought it would be advantageous to prevent these potential distractions and strongly advocated that we should not bring our phones. But what if I got lost and separated from the group? There would be no Whatsapp or Google Translate to come to my rescue. Both factors were reasonable, but ultimately we decided to limit the unnecessary distractions and leave our phones at home. Ironically, that didn't happen in the end. Our parents insisted we “play it safe”, and take our phones along so we could be in constant contact while we were overseas.

About halfway through our trip, I was standing in a hotel lobby in

Toledo, Spain, when the decision became irrelevant. Slip. Drop. Crack. I picked up my phone, turned it over, and saw my friend's face as shocked as mine. Just one clumsy slip and my phone wasn't only cracked, it didn't function at all. Standing there with my phone in pieces, I could only think about all of my lost pictures (and no, my phone wasn't set to backup to iCloud while I was roaming). Coming from America, Europe is

**We don't take
pictures of something
unless we recognize
its beauty at first.**

noticeably a different, exciting, and extravagant place to visit. We, therefore, all expected to take numerous pictures wherever we went. Landscapes, portraits, with filters or without, we all just wanted the photos to confirm and reflect on the incredible trip we'd had. Now, unfortunately, those photos were nonexistent. Gone were the cobblestone streets of Toledo. Gone were the colorful tiles of Antoni

Gaudi's architecture. Gone were our cheeks smiling against each other.

Being a photography lover in a country I've never yet seen made the event pretty tragic at first. My initial thought was to that I had just lost almost all of my memories from this trip, but surprisingly, I proved myself wrong. The moments from the past six days of the trip still flooded my memory. Of course it would've been exciting to reflect on the trip from the pictures I took, but what I realized was that having those pictures, in my possession or not, did not take myself away from living in the moment. In fact, those images I had captured were now cemented in my memory and remain within me.

In the New York Times article "Taking Photos Won't Take You Out of the Moment, Study Suggests" by Steph Yin, a group of researchers showed that those who were capturing photos were more engaged

in the experience than those who were not. This is because analyzing an image allows the brain to remember the visuals of a moment. In fact, the reason you are taking the photo in the first place is because you observed your surroundings and claimed it was worthy to be photographed.

If I would've known that I'd drop and break my phone on my trip, I probably would have insisted on leaving it home with my parents. But, through this experience, I gained clarity on the importance of being in the moment while recognizing the relationship between technology and its user. The next time I travel I'll certainly choose to take my phone, but will be sure to use it as a tool to focus, rather than as a distraction. We don't take pictures of something unless we recognize its beauty at first. After all, being in the moment is a decision that we need to make every moment of our lives.



Smile for the Camera
By Hannah Setareh

Breaking the Fourth Wall

By Ahuva Mermelstein

Everyone saw the cast list go up before I did.

Initially, I didn't even want to try out, but my friend didn't want to try out alone so I went with her to provide emotional support as her scene partner. After seeing my name at the top of the cast list, no amount of rapid blinking could prevent the involuntary tears that formed. Shock. Fear. Mild excitement. I didn't know how to feel. I had never acted before while the other two lead roles were being played by students who had previously starred in school productions.

The director reassured me I was what she was looking for. Personally, I didn't see it. How was I, a white, Orthodox Jewish girl from Rockland County supposed to convincingly portray a Taiwanese teen? Ironically, I was coached on how to manipulate my voice to sound more like a compassionate, frustrated, and authentic adolescent as each scene required, but I never felt comfortable in the role.

The show was an adaptation of *The Bamboo Cradle*, an autobiographical account of an American Fulbright professor

who, during his stay in Taiwan, found a newborn girl abandoned in a train station. Having been childless for seven years, Professor Schwartzbaum and his wife Barbara managed to adopt the unclaimed baby, Hsin Mei, and in the process of raising her, confront questions about what their Jewish identities mean to them. Hsin Mei,

No amount of rapid blinking could prevent the involuntary tears that formed. Shock. Fear. Mild excitement. I didn't know how to feel.

who adopts the biblical name Deborah, receives an Orthodox Jewish education, but struggles to feel accepted by the people she identifies with spiritually, but not racially. This story was an especially compelling choice for our intended audience. The school and the majority of the audience who would

be attending this production were raised within the folds of the Orthodox Jewish community. The dramatic unfolding of Deborah's experience of seeing the beauty in Judaism and selecting this lifestyle on her own was sure to be a crowd pleaser. The problem, as I saw it, was the demographic makeup of the performers. Nearly the entire student population is white American Jewish girls, which presented an obvious challenge in authentically representing Asian culture. Playing a Taiwanese girl without an ethnocentric attitude felt like a lot to deal with.

The scenes showing Deborah interacting with her siblings and at her Bat Mitzvah when she elects to live as a Jew came naturally to me. I understood the sense of belonging she felt and the challenges that come with staying true to one's beliefs. However, toward the end of the play, the action focuses on Deborah getting bullied by her middle school classmates who refuse to accept her. She keeps these encounters to herself, perhaps because she thinks she can handle it on her own and perhaps because involving parents will make it

worse. While I could sympathize by pitying someone afflicted, I never felt I'd be able to authentically represent her life since I had never personally been subjected to racism and prejudice.

A few weeks before the show, Deborah herself, now a mother and grandmother, paid a visit to our school and spoke about her life experiences. She generously offered to meet with me after the event and after our conversation she reassured me I would do a wonderful job bringing her life to life on the stage. I hoped to live up to that gracious expectation.

Throughout rehearsals, I also felt myself relying on what I had learned in my Mandarin Chinese class over the past three years. My teacher, Ms. Van Boxtel, was born and raised in Taiwan and repeatedly emphasized the importance of acknowledging the differences between China and Taiwan, an independent republic of China. The more pride Ms. Van Boxtel expressed toward her heritage, the more responsible I felt to represent Deborah with sensitivity.

On opening night, the

makeup artist added layers of lipstick, blush, and eyeshadow to make sure I didn't look washed out by the lights. When she began to apply eyeliner as a finishing touch in her attempt to make me "look Asian," I refused. I've become more attuned to this because of English actor Colin Firth, who in 2014 in the film *Magic in the Moonlight*, played a British magician with an Asian stage name and he donned "makeup, a bald cap, and a fake mustache" to sport "yellowface... [which isn't included] for any larger message or purpose, other than the sake of just being there." While the goal of our show was to share a singular story and to portray a woman's experiences accurately, the ends would not justify intolerant, facetious, and insensitive means.

When the curtain lifted, I could see Deborah sitting in the front row. I felt my pulse quicken under the pressure and my mouth go dry, blinded by the bright white spot and I realized that I wasn't just representing myself but I was representing her and her real story and struggle. I felt the importance to recite my lines in a manner that wouldn't offend

or horribly misrepresent her in any way. Every word I spoke and motion I made was being deemed appropriate or not on both an individual and cultural basis.

At one particularly climactic moment in the show, Deborah comes home and confesses to her parents that she's being bullied which she hid from them for months. I raised my voice, breathed in short rapid breaths, and let tears well in my eyes as I said "The worst part— everyone just stared. No one did anything to stop them or help me... No one wants me. I don't belong anywhere."

From one scene to the next, every time I was on the stage and I could feel the tears, the gasps, the sighs of the audience. I could feel the power of theatre working upon them. Tears, laughter, shock, doing everything it needed to do— Leading people closer together, changing paradigms, getting them to question their beliefs, and bringing into common understanding of someone else's experience. As human beings we belong to more than one identity at a time and constantly play multiple roles and parts. I realized this as I recited Deb-

orah's last line in the play when she expresses gratitude for being a "daughter, sister, wife, mother, grandmother, teacher, and a proud Jew." When the curtain fell, my apprehensiveness fell with it. And my relief

was drowned by deafening applause. When the show was over and I went into the audience to meet my family and friends yet the hug that meant the most was Deborah's.



Are You Fearful of Tomorrow

By Leah Harris

*Are you fearful of tomorrow?
Of the day that lies ahead?
Of the choices you will make—
Of the chance to be misled?*

Because,

“Tomorrow can’t come
Unless I close my eyes”

*Are you regretful of yesterday?
Well—what did you expect
With— “I’ll-get-to-it-tomorrow”
A pile of neglect*

Because,

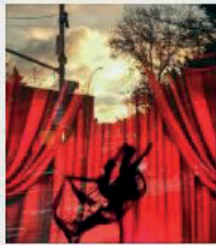
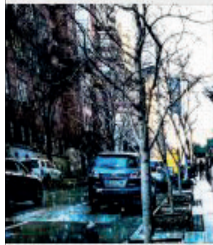
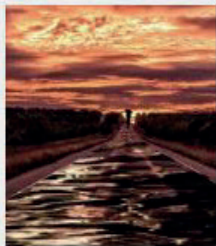
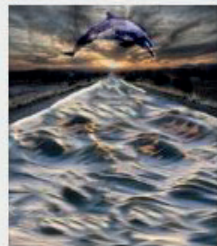
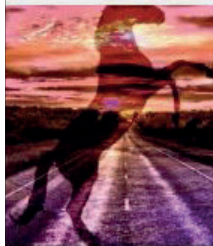
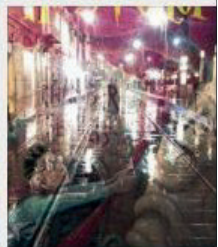
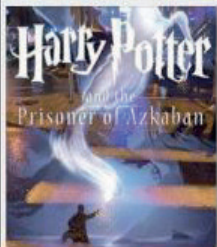
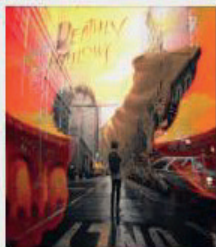
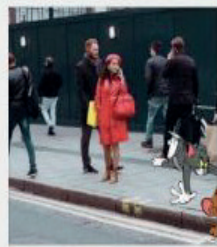
“Tomorrow can’t come
If I don’t close my eyes”

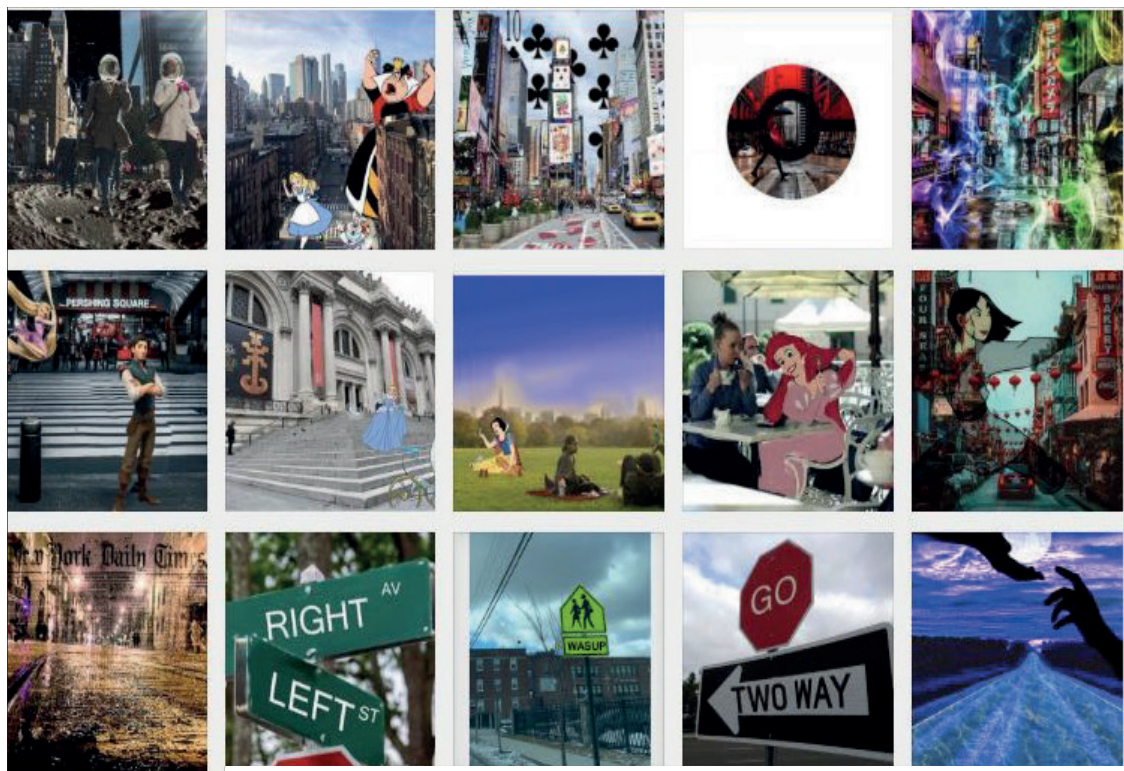
*You are fearful of the present
you wasted today
accuse, excuse, exhausted
Look the other way*

I didn’t even blink,

But
tomorrow came—

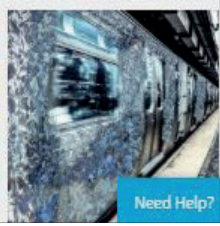
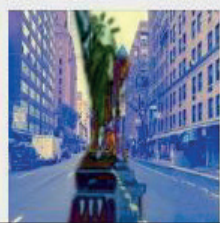
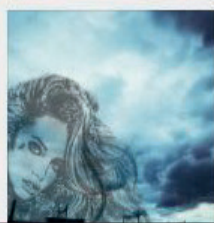
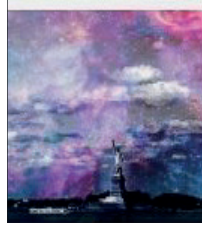
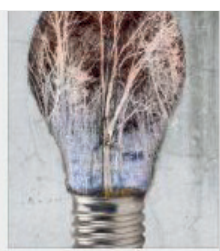
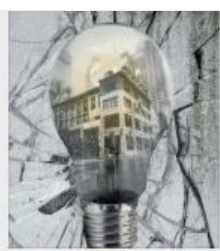
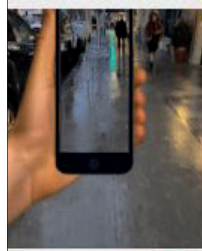
Anyway.



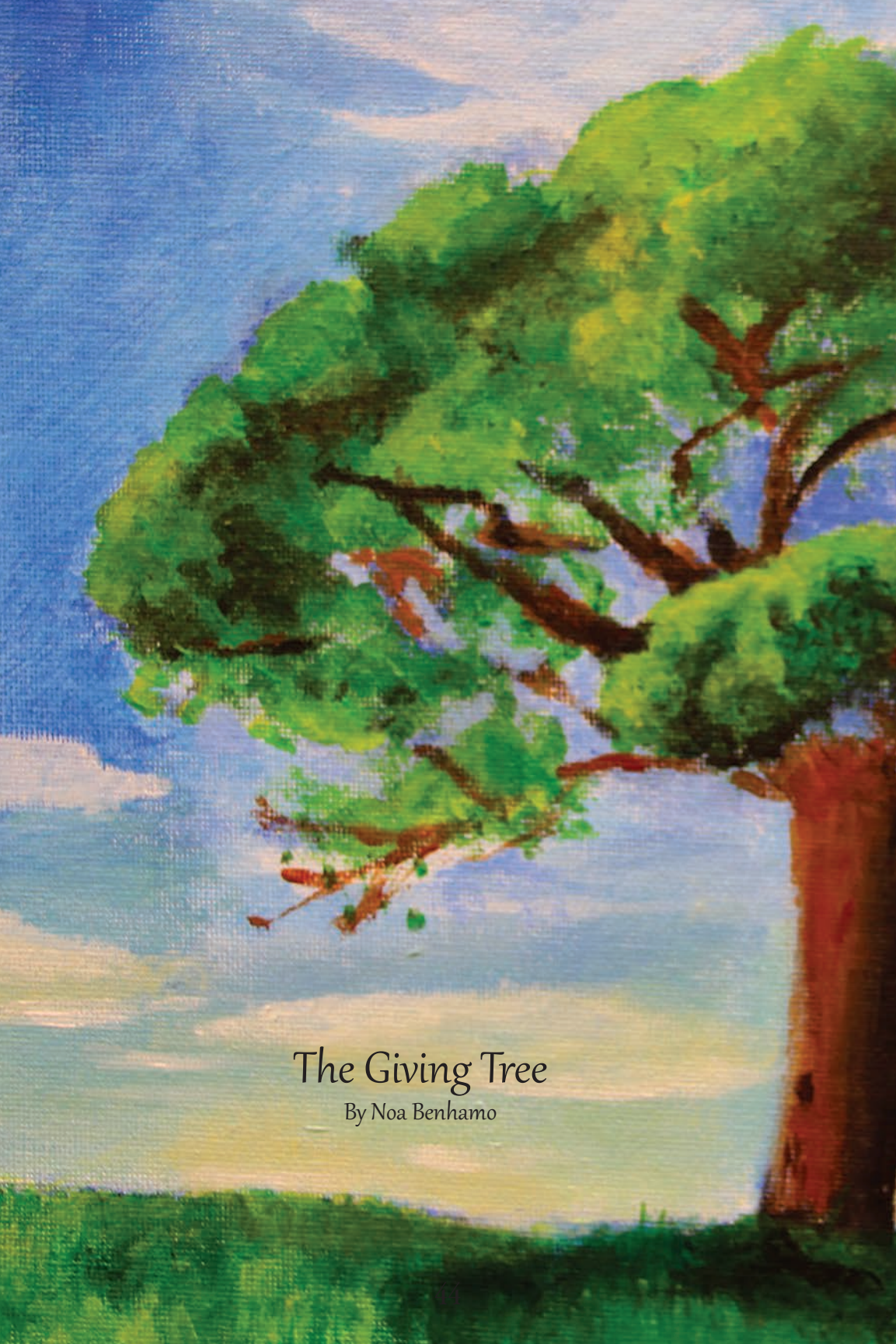


100 Days of Street Photography

By Sarah Dan



Need Help?



The Giving Tree

By Noa Benhamo



In Between

By Jenny Rapp

You know that age

When you're too small to pump yourself on the swing
But too big to lie on your stomach, running and swinging, back and forth

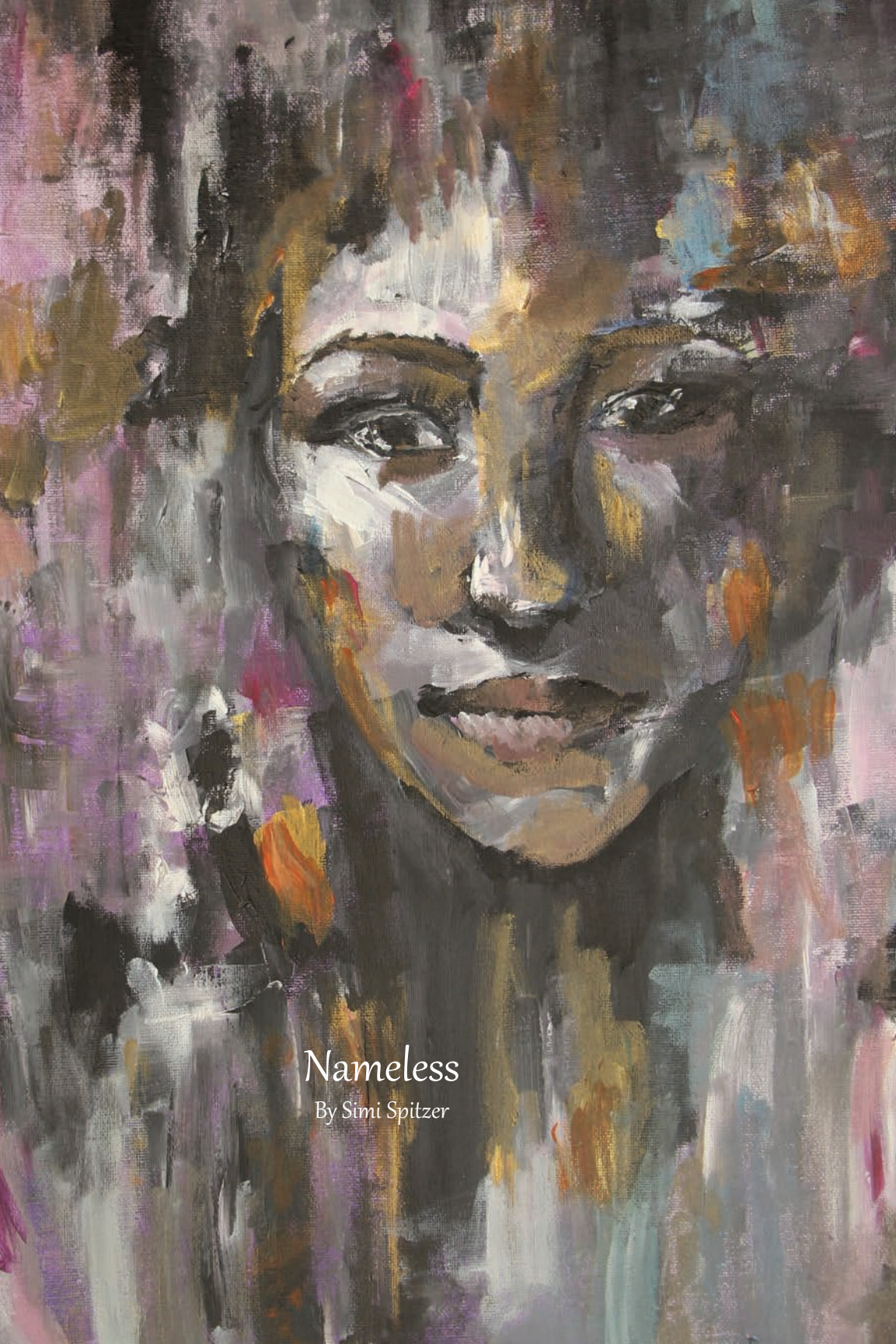
When you're too proud to be tucked in
But still afraid of the moving shadows

Tall enough to turn on the faucet
But too short to reach the towel rack

Hurt enough to cry in public
But self-aware enough to feel shame

Old enough to vote
But young enough to worry you don't matter

We may forever be that half shoe size
In a store with only wholes



Nameless

By Simi Spitzer

Leveling Up

By Tamar Spoerri

I'm terrified that my decisions have been pointless. That I've remained the same person, unchanged by all the people I've met and all the places I've gone. Even stronger than my fear of stasis is my fear of regression.

I want to grow. That's the point of life, of being created human and not an angel; I was born imperfect but I can improve by stretching my small, insignificant self to fill the yawning expanse of my potential. If I shrink, though, it feels like there's no point in living, like "being" becomes a synonym for "dying," like I'm deluding myself into thinking the supposedly constructive steps I take haven't done me any good. It's terrifying to think that my actions are pointless.

This thought is valid, as all thoughts are, but is it true? In some ways, yes. I used to love to dance. Now, I lack that grace that I thought I had when I was ten years old, when I would pirouette between the shelves of our small school library and jeté to reach my favorite book. I used to love doing backflips in the swimming pool. Now I'm too embarrassed by how I look in my swimsuit. I can't run as fast, either. In small ways, I am worse.

And larger than that, I think, is

my sense that Current Me has a harder time with life than Past Me, and that Current Me knows a lot less than Past Me. These thoughts both make sense. I have a harder time now because my challenges are objectively bigger! My challenges grow with me, just like Level 5 of a game is more difficult than Level 1. You'll break more of a sweat when you level up because the game is adapting to your increasing skill level. The *game* is getting harder, so in a way, it's getting worse.

**Now, I lack that
grace that I thought
I had when I was
ten years old when
I would pirouette
between the shelves
of our small
school... In small
ways, I am worse.**

But I am not getting worse.

It's unfair of me to judge Current Me for being better equipped at dealing with Past Me's challenges. Sure, I'll have an easier time today at completing the homework I had

in fourth grade than the homework I had in eleventh. So what? The old stuff looks easy because I'm looking at it from the vantage point of someone who has mastered the old stuff. Whatever stage of life I'm at, my challenges will feel impossible. There's no need to falsely color my past experiences with rosy nostalgia.

It's also unfair of me to judge Current Me for knowing less. Think about what US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld articulated to post 9/11 America: "There are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known *unknowns*; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know." Current Me has more known *knowns* than Past Me. But that also brings along more known *unknowns*; since Current Me knows more about a given area, she is more aware of how

vast the field is and how much more there is to learn. Since Past Me had fewer known *unknowns*, she was more confident in her own knowledge, yet more naive.

I have a fear of the unknown. I am scared that there are so many things I don't understand. However, that accumulation of known *unknowns* reflects my expanded worldview. It's a source of fear, but also a source of pride.

Thinking my past self is better than my current self makes me feel powerless to grow. I can stop this feeling by thinking about the fact that it is within my power to regress and become more like Past Me, if I want to. But I don't want to. I decide that this growing mush of choices and experience and influences are the ones I want to retain and make a part of me. I *am* secure with who I've decided to be.





Storm

By Miriam Gluck

“Blocks”

By Chana Povarsky and Musia Kirschenbaum

I have a case of writer’s block. It has been sitting right there on the blank paper on my desk since this morning with only a week to my publisher’s deadline. It’s about twelve by fifteen inches, or maybe fifteen by seventeen. I’m not exactly sure- there’s a reason I’m a writer and not a mathematician. I try to push it away, but after hours of pouring in all of my blood, sweat, and tears, the block hasn’t moved an inch. I give up and turn to Google. The top two hits for getting rid of writer’s block are either to spend some time with friends, or take a short walk and get some fresh air. Being that I was a painfully shy bookworm throughout middle and high school, and now spend most of my time holed up in my office writing, I’m kind of lacking in the friend department at the moment. So I decide to try to take a nice relaxing walk.

But my walk ends up being anything but meditative; as I turn the corner of my street, the block pops up out of nowhere. I begin to walk faster, take sharper turns, and run around in circles in an effort to try and lose it. However, the only thing I succeed in doing is scare my fellow citizens, and excite the block, which starts to chase me down the street. My ‘peaceful’ walk ends in me pounding the pavement until I get back home, where the block-who apparently is able to run faster than I do-is sitting right where it was before.

I decide that it’s time to take more drastic measures. I powerwalk to the hardware store, legs still throbbing from the aforementioned run, and buy myself a blowtorch. I get home and dash to my room, only to find the block sitting on my antique writing desk, as confidently as if it owned it. Exhaling slowly, I hold down on the blowtorch lighter, close my eyes, and brace myself for the smoke and ash that would surely erupt from the block. After a

**I hold down on
the blowtorch
lighter, close
my eyes, and
brace myself for
the smoke and
ash that would
surely erupt
from the block.**

couple of seconds, I open my eyes to find a perfectly intact and unharmed block. My wall, however, was another story- I shifted my gaze and found myself face to face with my very angry next-door neighbor, Mrs. Johnson.

After the last whispers of the wailing fire truck sirens leave my home,

and my headache from Mrs. Johnson's yelling begins to subside, I return to my desk. With a steely gaze in my eyes, and fire burning in my heart, I finally feel ready to face the block for the last time. It has already wreaked havoc on my body and has rudely interrupted the peace of my home. I am not going to just sit idly, and let it wreck my career too.

As I pace, contemplating my plan to destroy the block, I begin to think that if torching it wasn't the right solution, maybe I should try to kill it with kindness. Though I grimace at the thought of showing anything less than hatred to it, I bake the block a batch or two of chocolate chip cookies and bring it to the box with a cup of warm milk. I compliment its new haircut and apologize for trying to set it on fire. Then, certain that I've done enough, I sit down to write. As I move my pen toward the paper, the block, seemingly dissatisfied with my peace offerings, promptly places itself right in front of my pen.

That was the last straw. After everything I had done, after all the time and effort I put into its destruction, the block still manages to live on-immortal and determined to ruin not only my career, but my life as well. I pick up my pen with fervor, and as my paper was currently unavailable, I begin to scribble my story on the block. I write my tale all over its surface, and when I run out of space there, I move to the sides. Once the entire block is covered with the messy scrawl of a frustrated writer, I find myself wishing for the first time that the block was just a little bit bigger.

Suddenly, my desk began to quiver. The block started to climb down my desk and walk itself right out the door, leaving behind a trail of letters. It left as quietly as it came, possibly even running off to torture someone else. The letters that the little block dropped began to pick themselves off the floor and settle on my paper. And I, victorious at last, begin to spin a wonderful tale of defeat, pain, and victory.



Sunset Behind the Shadows

by Zahava Laufer

Contrasting Memories

By Rivka Notkin

I hate fireworks,

I love fireworks,

I saw them last summer,

My first time in the US

Something about their power intrigues me,

The burst of gunpowder Like tame lightning

Reminded me of the noises back home,

We were at the beach

And hiding beneath my desk. I sat on the roof of our car

My friends told me to imagine their beauty And watched the flowers of rubies and diamonds

But I couldn't get past

The smell of smoke

And the falling shards of light

On Failing

By Ayala Cweiber

It's barely been 24 hours since I've turned 16, and I'm already standing in line at the DMV. Most of my friends already have their permits and have started Driver's Ed courses, and I don't want to wait another second before I can join them. But of course, I do have to wait. The line here has already taken practically forever, and it doesn't look like it's getting any faster. I'm trying to stop fidgeting with my passport and other personal documents that I've had to bring, and instead curl my fingers into the sleeves of my sweater. I glance around and shift my feet on the linoleum flooring, wishing I could check my phone, but the sign clearly says no cellphones, and the security woman standing in the corner looks ready to enforce that. Instead, I stare out the window at the passing cars.

Slowly the line passes, each person in front of me moving into the testing room, until the man standing at the entryway motions me forward and directs me to computer #10.

I sit down on the chair and put my passport on the orange wood desk next to computer #10. The computer screen is blank except for black letters in a generic font which say "Touch screen to start."

I don't think I studied enough. Every fact I was supposed to memorize, every question I was supposed to understand. Yeah. It's all gone. I remind myself that it's just my permit test, and I can retake it if I fail. I let out a breath and tentatively tap the screen. And... nothing happens. I tap it again, harder this time. I guess I tapped too lightly before, because now the screen changes, showing me the instructions. Then comes the first question.

**Are you sure
you want to
continue to the
next question?
After pressing
"yes," you
cannot return...**

"When is the proper time to signal that you are making a right turn at an intersection?"

I read it twice, three times, and look at the options.

- A. at least 50 feet before the turn
- B. as soon as you see cars behind you
- C. at least 100 feet before the turn
- D. as soon as you get to the intersection

I squint at the screen and my finger hovers over C, but I unexpectedly feel a tap on my shoulder and nearly jump out of my chair.

“Ma’am, you need to put this under your chair,” one of the women proctoring the testing room tells me curtly, pointing at my passport. “Anyone found using reference materials or cellphones in the testing room will be eliminated.”

I apologize profusely and swipe my passport off the desk. The lady rolls her eyes and walks away to the front of the room.

Okay, back to question number 1. How long is a foot anyway? I glance down at my sneakers, trying to imagine 100 of them in the street. I think the answer is probably C. 50 of my sneakers... seems too little. I click on it, firmly, and wait for the next question to show. Instead, there is a box that appears on the screen with bolded words “Confirmation: Are you sure you want to continue to the next question? After pressing Yes, you cannot return to this question.”

Well, now I’m not.

I instinctively press no, thinking this is probably a warning that I’ve gotten the answer wrong. Maybe the answer is A. I think I’ve already spent seven minutes thinking this question through. I glance around the room. There’s no clock, and even if there was, I don’t remember what time I started the test. Is there a time limit? Even if there isn’t, I’m probably holding up the line of people who I stood with a few minutes ago, waiting to take their test. And if I were actually driving, there’s no way I could think it through this long. I’d be signaling that I’m turning once I’ve already turned, not 50 or 100 of my sneakers ahead of the intersection.

Think, I tell myself. You know this question. A or C?

A man, probably in his 40's, sits down at the computer station across from me, and he's reading every question aloud. Think.

The lady who's taking everyone's pictures yells "Next!" Think.

A passing train outside the window catches my eye. Think.

I give up and press C again. When the confirmation sign comes up again, I don't even read it as I press Yes. The next question comes up.

As you near an intersection, the traffic light changes from green to yellow. Your best action would be to...

I press B, without a doubt.

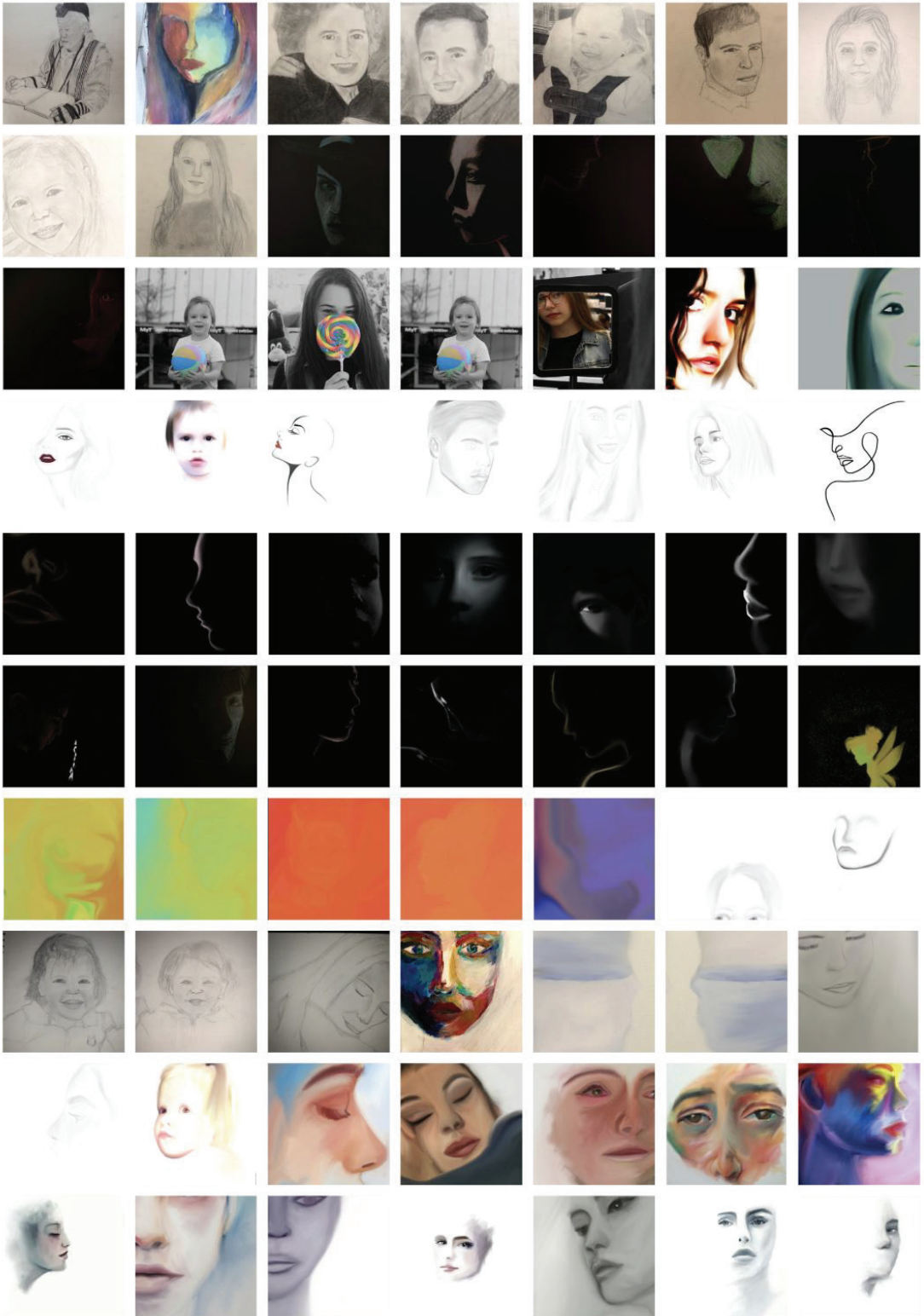
I speed through the questions and then I'm given my results. I didn't even realize that I was on the last question. I close my eyes for a moment and let out a breath before checking them...and I passed! The report says that I got one question wrong, but it doesn't show which one it is, so I guess I'll never know.

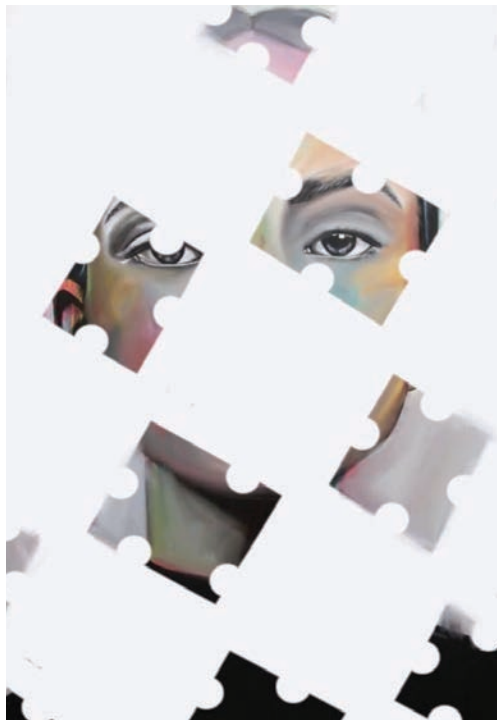
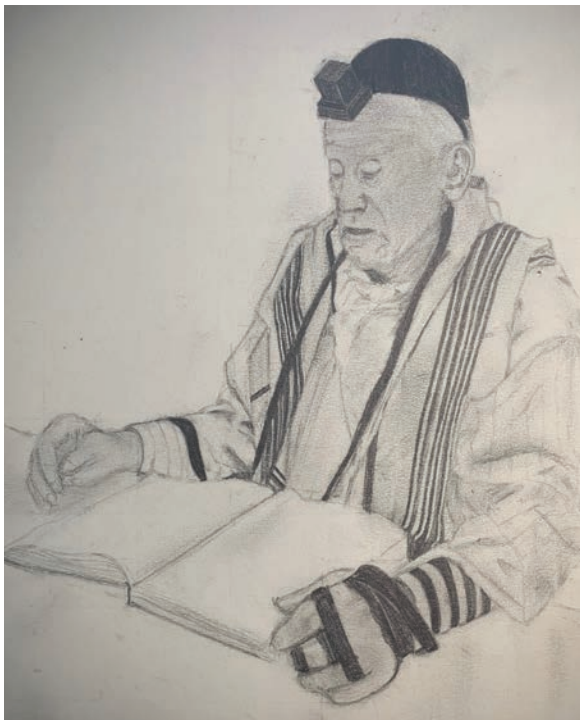
Though maybe I don't have to know which one I got wrong. Because I passed, and what's getting one question wrong compared to succeeding overall?

- Strained through culture, arts, literature, film, TV, music, etc.
- Middle class, has to work to pay for it, but it's a way to show status
- Professional spaces like museums, galleries, libraries, etc.
- This created neutral spaces, cultural, leisure
- More time and previous leisure
- Flaners, someone who is enjoying more

Strategies

By Tziporah Pinczower





100 Days
of Portraits
By Leora Wisnicki

Witness

By Mali Wolfson

I am a witness.

I am a witness to emotions I had never felt and
to a pain I can't ever imagine.

I am a witness to tears held back to stay alive.

To acts performed
in the dark and in the light.

I am a witness to millions who did not survive,
and to the countless number who were never born.

I am a witness to the mother who was ripped from her children,
and to children who grew up with no mother.

I am a witness to my ancestors who were
stripped of everything but their soul,
and to their innumerable ashes scattered in the wind.

I am a witness to the thousands who spent their
last hours digging their own graves,
and to those who died before they had a chance to fight for life.

Amid confusion, heartbreak, and fright,

I stand as witness to the miracle that we are still standing.

57032
♥

The Chain

By Shoshi Farhi



Tripping Up Stairs and Over Words

By Bruria Schwartz

When I'm mad, I type in ALL CAPS. For emphasis, I might use italics. I might not even use words at all, sometimes just a `_(\`)/` will suffice. With facial expressions, texting, hand gestures, and illustrations, no one can hear the truest portrayal of my emotions. No one can hear my lisp either, for better or worse.

As humans, we crave the ability to communicate with each other. Some studies suggest that we even need it as much as we need food and shelter. We get annoyed when someone interrupts our rant about our awful day and excited when someone picks up our hint of sarcasm and laughs at our jokes.

When I was younger, I had trouble communicating. I didn't even speak until I was already three-years-old. This triggered Early Intervention Services from the Department of Education. A speech therapist would come to my house, sit across from me on the rug, and say things like, "This is a cow. A cow says moo. Can you say moo?" I would shake my head and not say moo. I knew that was a cow, thank-you-very-much. I knew what sounds cows make, and I didn't want to replicate it. The therapist tried with Fisher-Price sheep and sticker bribes. He wasn't very successful. I was always able to talk, I just didn't want to! Once I finally started talking, I had trouble with "r", "l", "w," and a plethora of other sounds. "W" was a surprisingly annoying one.

At some point I stopped being eligible for Early Intervention Services. I started going to the therapists instead of them coming to me. When I was in preschool, two days a week my father picked me up from the after-school program at four o'clock and walked with me to speech therapy. The walk to and from speech therapy had the added benefit of being uphill both ways. I would count the stairs going from Overlook to Fort Washington, getting a differ-

**I knew it was
a cow, thank-
you-very-much,
and I knew
what sounds
cows make.**

ent number every time. For thirty minutes I would try to say “wrench,” “wreck,” “write,” or “wrapping” (those darn w-r combinations!). I would go home with mini bubbles or smelly stickers if I was able to say the words the “new way.” Regardless of how I performed, every day I received speech homework written in my notebook in impeccable handwriting. I never did the speech homework. Ms. Stern claimed she could tell when I didn’t do it, but I didn’t believe her.

For six years, I went twice a week to 360 Cabrini, with my notebook, always counting the stairs, always getting a different number. When I started elementary school, I would even leave school early to make my 4:30 appointment with Ms. Stern. Twice a week, I walked up those stairs with my notebook, and once a week I went to the bakery on the walk back. Sometimes I would take a cab home in the winter. It was always \$7.

“MarcoRubioIsLeadingTrump...”

“Bruria! Breathe. Try again, and wherever you see a comma, pause.”

“Marco Rubio is leading TrumpInBattlegroundState.”

“Good, try again. Battleground. State. Iowa. Those are separate words.”

Sixth-grade speech therapy was different. Gone were the cows, the stickers, and the bubbles. In were the articles about the rise of Trump, the end of Reaganesque Conservatism, and pundits with absolute certainty that Marco Rubio would win (spoiler alert: he didn’t). Gone were the days of “wrenches” and “wrappers.” In were the reminders that commas are stop signs and the world isn’t a contest for most words spoken per minute. Ms. Stern was constantly reminding me that I spoke too quickly, and no one would be able to understand what I had to say. I thought I spoke too slowly. I never seemed able to finish expressing a thought before a second one popped into my brain. The repetition frustrated me, and I didn’t understand why people couldn’t seem to just keep up with what I had to say. The frustration mounted, and I began to see speech therapy as a waste of time that I wanted to spend doing other things, and within a few months I left 360 Cabrini without looking back.

* * *

“Bruria, have you ever thought about speech therapy? It’s hard to understand you sometimes.”

My 9th-grade teacher slips this question into our conversation about my life, my siblings, and whether I get bored during class sometimes. Have I ever thought about speech therapy? When I left 360 Cabrini, I left out of frustration, anger, and annoyance, determined to never think about speech therapy again. Frankly, I didn’t see my lisp as such a big deal or issue that needed to be corrected. Why was the burden on me if other people weren’t able to understand my intelligent contributions? I thought everyone was overreacting and wished they would stop mentioning my lisp long enough to actually hear what I had to say. But here I was, being presented with an ugly reminder that people were not able to look, or listen, past the lisp.

* * *

Throughout my life, I’ve spoken too infrequently or too much. Too quickly or not quick enough. I had a lisp, then I thought I didn’t, then I decided if I ignored it, it would go away. Yet as I’ve gone through more speech sessions than I can count between five therapists and a half-dozen DOE evaluations, the way I view communication has changed. When I left 360 Cabrini, I decided it didn’t matter if people could understand me or not— I was not going to stop saying what I was thinking anyway. While I will never stop making myself heard, I’ve begun to realize that speaking is only one aspect of communication. Getting people to listen takes work in any medium.



Stretching
By Nechama Mandel



Prayers

By Sari Frankel

Pushing Through

By Hannah Setareh

The sun.
It slowly rises
And rises
Orange and yellow fiery beams peeking through the oak trees.
But its progress,
No one sees.
It inches its way
across our blue sky, overall traveling miles and miles,
With no one acknowledging.
Yet,
somehow, everyday,
It does the same routine.
Over
And over,
Again.



No More Mrs. Nice Gal

By Becky Bral

“Ahhhhh!”

I glance at my curls in the mirror. Curls? No... more like a thornbush. I grab the spray bottle from my dresser and start spritzing and scrunching away. I'm definitely going to miss my bus.

What's. Going. On. Is there a fire? I don't wake you up by pouring water all over you! Welcome to my disturbing morning routine.

I'm just not in the mood. I know it's picture day, and I know you'll try to tame me down with all the hair products you can find, but I like being frizzy. I need to relax sometimes, let myself hang loose, unwind from that tight scrunchiel slept in.

It's hopeless. Whatever I do, I'm stuck with this disaster. And it's not just about how I look. It's really not vanity. It's about time and equality! I never get to wake up in the morning with flawless, silky straight hair, golden streaks highlighting throughout. They don't have to budget twenty to thirty minutes of their morning to hair management. They can just pull on one of those “I woke up like this” t-shirts without irony as all their strands flow together in one direction. Perfect harmony. And what do I wake up with? A bird's nest.

Excuse me? You're the hopeless one. You always ruin the moment. Just when I get comfy, spreading my arms wide, opening myself up to the day, you wrap me into a bun on the top of your head. How would you like being squashed into child's pose for hours on end? I'm not some summer camp friendship bracelet to be braided and forgotten about.

After every steamy, relaxing shower, you smother me with hair gel. Have you even checked the label on that goop? I'm okay with Shea butter and coconut oil, but what on earth are polysorbate 60, polyquaternium-11, and ethylhexylglycerin? Did you know that “flammability is increased when wearing leave-in products of this type?” And don't get me started on the strong aroma.

Whoosh.

Oh no. The deadly blow dryer. I'm flying like a kite, trying to cling to my roots

**Whatever I do,
I'm stuck with
this disaster.
And it's not just
about how I
look. It's really
not vanity. It's
about time
and equality!**

for dear life. You take my temperature up to 140 degrees and there's nothing I can do to defend myself.

Or is there?

That's it. I've had it. No more Ms. Nice Gal. You can complain all you want, but I'm not budging from my poofy position. I won't back down. I'll rise up. Humidity – do your worst!

I give up. This curly hair will always be brittle and unbridled, no matter how much product I apply. I'll just tie my frizzy mane into a knot, cover the baby strands with an oversized headband, and pray the camera won't catch the awkward curl sticking out from behind my ear.

Snap. Get ready. It's almost your turn. You smooth me out with your fingers one last time as you position yourself on the seat, flash a smile, and freeze. Just as the photographer says "Say cheese!" I let myself expand in all directions. Poof!

Three weeks later.

"Oh, Becky. Look at your pictures. They're gorgeous."

"Thanks, Mom."



Lost at Sea
By Tamar Cohen



Virtual Reality

By Zehava Sanders

Your friend messages you one day, which by itself isn't need for concern, but when paired with the fact that she hasn't contacted you for over a week it seems strange. It only says to "meet in the park as soon as possible." You don't have anything urgent going on. It's vacation, so you answer back saying you'll be there in a few minutes. The park is walking distance from your apartment and it's a nice day to be outside. Besides, you want to hear her explanation for what's been going on.

You find your friend standing by the entrance of the park, hair messy from pulling her fingers through it, which you know she only does when she's very nervous. She smiles at you, gives a quick greeting, which you return, and you walk together to the spot both of you like. It's a remote, shaded bench under the trees near a small pond.

"Hey, what's going on?" you ask, concerned for your friend and curious about her disappearance, as well as slightly annoyed.

"Did you ever wonder if you were real?" she asks, bouncing her foot. You look at her. She looks completely serious.

"Of course I'm real. Wait... are you having some sort of existential crisis?" You can't really believe that she asked such a weird question. She hates philosophical questions, preferring logic. You can't blame her; it would be nice to only have questions with concrete answers.

She sighs, blowing her hair off her face.

"You know the project I've been interning at in my free time? The VR firm?"

"Yeah, but I don't understand what that has to do with anything we've mentioned so far."

You do remember the internship. She asked you if you wanted to apply as well, but you aren't very interested in creating virtual reality experiences, so you declined. Your fingers pull through your hair, a habit you picked up after spending so much time with your friend, but you do it when you're getting annoyed.

"Did you ever wonder if you're real?" she asks, bouncing her foot. You look at her. She looks completely serious.

“Well, you know how they’re trying to make it as realistic as possible?” you nod, and she continues. “The project’s basically finished and I was asked to go in and test out some features.”

“Alright. Doesn’t sound like anything you haven’t done before.”

“It’s a bit different. I was testing individual parts before, but now I tested an area that was completely done. It was so realistic!” she shudders despite the pleasant weather, and clasps her hands together so tightly she leaves marks.

“A-and,” your friend stutters a bit, obviously upset, “I couldn’t tell it was fake, not at all.” Her voice trails off, quiet at the last part, her breathing fast and shallow.

You quickly give her a hug and pat her back as she leans against you.

“Hey, you’re going to be fine,” you try to reassure her.

“But if it’s possible to make such a real program, how do we know we aren’t already simulated? What if we’re fake? Just programs meant to simulate reality?” she hiccups at the end, then leans against your shoulder.

“So what if we are? It’s not possible to change it if we are. To be clear, I don’t think we are. But, even if we were, would it really change anything?”

Your friend makes a noncommittal noise, but she’s stopped crying.

“Whether or not we’re ‘real,’” you continue, “however you define that, and whether or not we are ourselves or just substitutes for proper people in someone else’s narrative, we are here, and we are going to live our lives and do the best we can. Honestly, I think you’re overtired. Don’t worry about ridiculous things. Let’s just do what we can, alright?”

“Alright.”

You smile at her, and she grins back. You know you’re going to revisit this, but for now, you enjoy the sun, content without yet having all the answers.

Growing Pains

By Adina Feldman

In its toxicity, impossible to breath
In its blindingness, impossible to see
In its stillness, impossible to hear
How to tell you you'll survive this

Wipe away the tears and you can see again
Not the end, but the beginning
Constructive in its destructiveness
How to convince you you'll survive this

The darkness is illuminating
The bitterest of pills, palette cleansing
The unbearable silence whispers words of courage
This is not the end of your story but the backstory of your epic
You will survive this.



Onward
By Mindy Weiss



The Beauty We Never Saw

By Miryam Weiss



Navigation

By Dassi Mayerfeld

People say that they sometimes find themselves feeling lost in the world. Stepping out of my school into Manhattan's maze of buildings and throngs of people on their daily commute, that's exactly how I feel. To those on the street, I may appear to be an experienced commuter, but in reality, my focused gaze and quick pace cover up my nerves.

For my 16th birthday, I didn't ask for a car; I asked for a Metro-Card. Today, one swipe will give me access to independence, to the world. But even before I get to the subway station I'm confused. I notice that the street numbers are going up instead of down. Cheeks burning, I turn around and begin to power walk in the other direction. No wonder my travel time on Google Maps has been increasing for the past ten minutes.

When I finally get to the subway station, I run down the stairs. I instantly recognize the smell of the station and the floor vibrates beneath me. My train is almost here. It takes me three tries before I swipe my MetroCard correctly. Had that not worked, I would have tried swiping it vertically. True, I have ridden the subway before, but never alone. It's a good thing my parents aren't here watching me.

As the train approaches the station, I bolt for it, completely disregarding the announcement to let the other passengers off first. I nearly crash into someone as I take an empty seat. I glance up at the sound of someone clearing their throat and make eye contact with a woman holding a sleeping child. The look in her eyes dares me to disappear.

"Would you like to sit?" I hesitate, already picking up my backpack. She nods impatiently as if that was her goal all along. I scramble up and step aside. The woman exhales as she sits down, and looks into her

son's face, brushing back his hair. Her son. He has a name, a first word, and a favorite toy. Perhaps he is sleeping because he's sick, or because he is just so tired of seeing the stern look in his mother's eyes when he cries in public. His mother. She looks exhausted. She probably has a job, and a family and maybe even another child. Another life.

**Today, one
swipe will give
me access to
independence,
to the world.**

As the train stops abruptly, an older man preparing to exit stumbles into a teenage boy standing next to him. I wonder where he is headed. Who's waiting for him there? Will he have a bruise from his fall? Will they even notice?

All of the people surrounding me have their own stories. They all probably have a favorite movie, or an inside joke with their friends, and maybe, it's their birthday today too. Each one with their own hopes, their own fears, and their own weaknesses. But, everyone, even the older man, seems to be experienced train riders.

Everyone, that is, but me.

I wonder if anyone is watching me. Do they notice my discomfort? I compulsively check the digital sign at the top of the train car that displays the stops to make sure I didn't miss mine. Even though the answer to that question isn't going to change each time I look, I still check again, just to be sure.

"Next stop— Times Square," announces the conductor, his voice turned scratchy by the subway intercom. I pick up my backpack, and unlike everyone else, I stand in preparation for my exit.

When we come to a complete stop, the others getting off rise and join me as we push our way onto the platform. I turn the corner, and am abruptly stopped by a young woman clutching her toddler protectively. Another mother and son, but they look more tired, more worn, and more anxious.

"Ma'am?" she says. I have never been addressed this way. Now I feel old.

I glance in her direction and notice the scars marking her face, each one telling their own story.

Her stories.

This time, I don't try to guess the details.

"Yes?" I mumble nervously.

Her story tumbles out and I listen, overcome and overwhelmed by the depth of her life, one that looks so little like mine.

I'm only a teenager. I can't give her shelter. I can't erase her history

or change the future for her or her child.

But I hope I can help.

I pull out a creased ten-dollar bill and place it in her hand. "Good luck," I whisper as I walk away, losing myself in the throng of people heading towards the exit.

Just one more person lost in the crowd.



Sky Lines

By Tziporah Braun



Wishes

By Pearlie Goldstein



Swan Song

By Naomi Landy

This is my swan song
That I sing to you
As the stall alarm blares through the air

As the turbulence shakes
The little swan quakes
I see you clutch onto your chair

The tears in your eyes
The plane struggles to fly
The silence is eerily calm

But the swan's melody
Whispers through the seats
Floating around till it's gone.

After The Beep

By Ilana Katzenstein

Hello, we are not available now. Please leave your name and phone number after the beep. We will return your call.

Instinctively, I speak after the beep.

“Hi Grandma. It’s me. I miss you a lot. We all do. Dad is doing okay. I know that you would want to know. He’s back at work these days and he seems to be managing alright. It did take him some time to get back into routine though.

“Last Sunday was the first time I had ever seen my father cry. Actually, there have been a lot of new ‘firsts’ lately. Two weeks ago I got my license, and then Mom let me drive Joey and Gabby to school. Then, this past week I took the SAT. And I also won an award for my artwork in a school competition. Still, while these experiences were all new and exciting, there are some new experiences I could definitely live without.

“It’s hard to think about what this even means. Joey and Gabby don’t really understand what’s been happening lately, but they were near tears last night when we had to tell them that you weren’t going to be able to make it to Thanksgiving dinner this year. Really, it’s not just Thanksgiving, but Saturday lunches and Thursday night pizza too. You probably never thought it was a big deal, but it was. That’s pretty much the extent of their understanding, I imagine. No Grandma means no pizza.

“I’m sure that you would wonder how Grandpa is doing, but honestly, I don’t even know. It’s hard to believe that he went power walking on the beach almost every day this summer. Now, he moves as if something is weighing him down. When I talk to him, he says he’s alright, gives me a soft kiss on my head, and sadly leaves the room with his head toward the ground.

**I haven’t shed
a single tear
since Mom sat
me down to tell
me the news. I
think I might
be broken.**

“And as for me, that’s a whole other story. I haven’t shed a single tear since Mom sat me down to tell me the news. I think I might be broken. Or maybe just in denial. So much has been happening these days. I guess it’s

just a little too much to handle.

“Right now, all I know is that when I call you, you don’t answer, but I know that you’re always listening.

“Talk to you soon. Love you. Bye.”



A detailed painting of a coastal scene. The sky is filled with large, billowing white clouds against a deep blue background. A single white seagull is captured in flight, wings spread wide, in the upper center of the frame. Below the sky is a vast expanse of dark blue ocean. In the middle ground, a wave with white foam breaks onto a sandy beach. The water near the shore is a vibrant green, with white foam swirling in the surf. In the foreground, a seagull stands on the golden sand, facing left. The bottom right corner features dark green, spiky foliage. The overall style is that of a textured painting, possibly on canvas or paper.

Up and Away

By Becky Bral

Space Trash:

A Result of the Infinity

When an Essay has No Prompt

By Rochel Fogel

The darkness is so heavy
that it creates nothing
All around me is darkness
and I'm becoming claustrophobic from the infinity.

I've counted two thousand light rays
They shine from afar
and generate a sense of hope
but they are far away.

Besides for the moon
the darkness is a mystery
and I wonder what it holds.

I imagine penguins
eating doughnuts
by the beach
on a planet floating beside me.
They drink hot cocoa and
read the newspaper.

I smell someone's mother
cooking cookies.

I wonder if the penguins
are cold on the beach.
It is hard to tan in this darkness.

My feet tap to an unknown tune
but my mind is in the library

The greatness of the darkness
is the freedom of possibility.

The Ponies swiftly run
away from me
Their tails sway as they gallop
across the vastness
and I hope they return.

Two dolphins swim next to me
diving in and out
splashing water on
some butterflies.

They flutter away
but quickly return
to the surface of the water.

They are excited by the
depth of the sea
and sparkle of the surface.

The Dolphins spread an energy of anticipation.
Leaving us to wonder when
will they come out
to dive back in.

There is so much to wonder
when you are in a space this large.

The great size suffocates me
from the inside
letting all my ideas float beside me.
But it's dark
so I can't see them.

There is no time up here
no clock
no hours

At some point
Voldemort ran under
a lightning strike
to mow the lawn
and Barack Obama is now
chilling with the penguins

The timer on the oven
beeps a few times
but no one takes the cookies out.

I wake up to a loud noise
like a plane
but so much more loud.

I instinctively shield my eyes

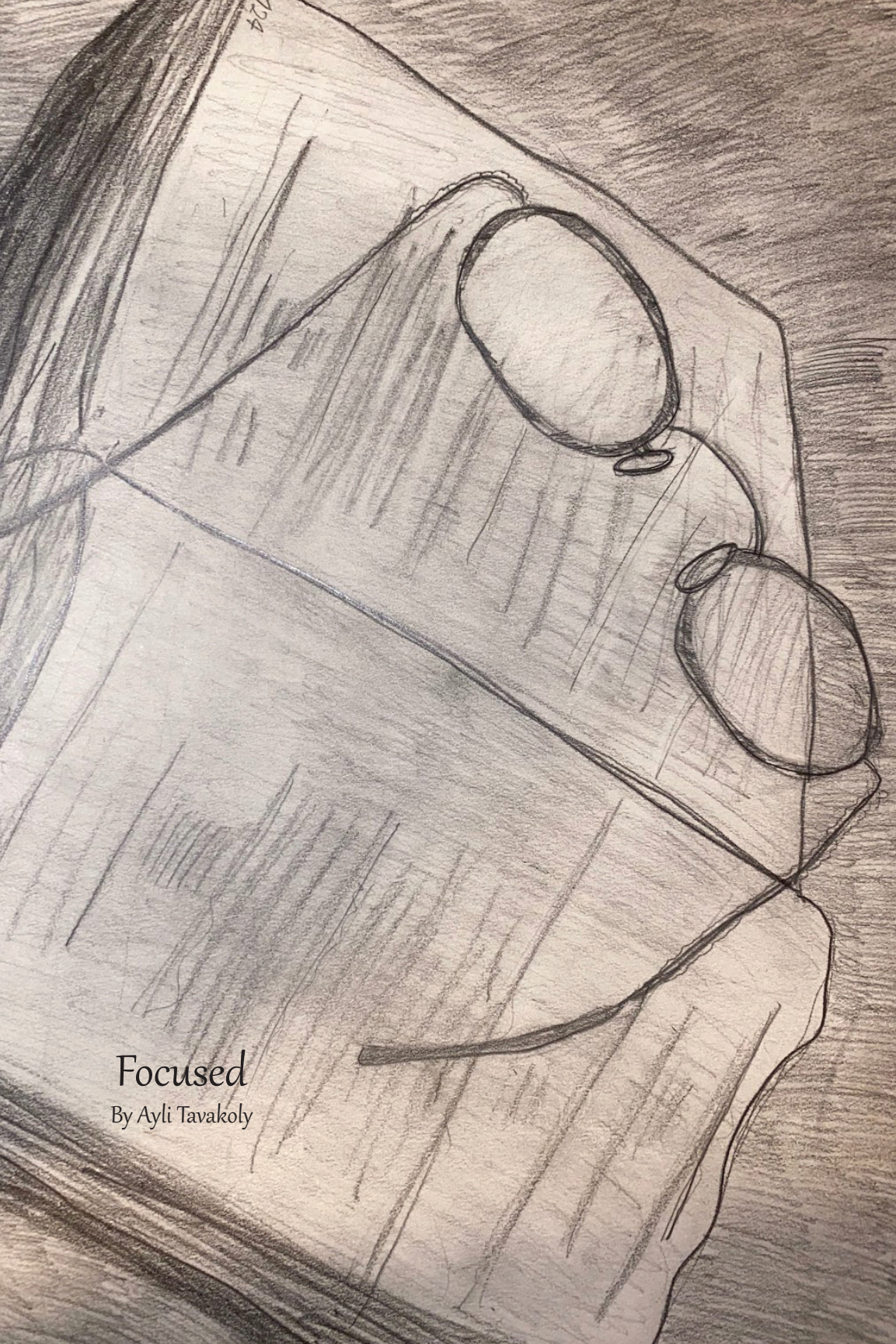
as a blaring light shines
in my darkness
the black is brightened
and I see silver metal.

I scream for help
but my voice is muffled
by the loud noise
in the dead silence.

I watch as the metal be-
comes smaller
and touches the moon.

The loud metal took
with it the penguins
excited dolphins
dancing ponies
caring butterflies
and the smell of burnt cookies.

I'm left alone
in an abundance of possibilities
a piece of plastic
floating in space
because I do not have any ideas.



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Focused

By Ayli Tavakoly

A Correspondence

By Cherri Citron

Dear Ms. Stanton

February 25, ----

I am writing this letter with the sincerest apologies. I cannot even begin to explain my embarrassment for leaving the festivities so abruptly. It's just that I was so overcome by emotion that I did not find it appropriate to be seen as such. I hope this does not affect your opinion of me or change our relationship in the slightest. Besides the sudden ending, this evening was quite delightful. I enjoyed the pheasant, and your sister's piano recital was indeed beautiful. I wish to see you again soon, and hopefully the next time will end on a better note.

Best of wishes,

X

Dear Ms. Stanton

July 19, ----

You cannot imagine how delighted I was when I received your letter! Oh, I am simply so excited about your visit. It's such a shame it has been so long since our last meeting. I understand that you have been quite busy, but I don't imagine it takes too long to draw up a letter at least, especially since you've always been such a brief writer. But I am not one to judge, I cannot truthfully claim that I have been the most friendly lately either. Anyway, you will have such a great time in ----town! Dearest Madeline is anticipating your arrival impatiently. She cannot wait to show you her gardens. Mr. Lewis looks forward to finally meeting you. He says you sound lovely. And I predict that the two of us will have a wonderful time!

Yours truly,

X

Dear Ms. Stanton,

July 26, ----

This series of events is quite disappointing but completely understandable. I cannot hold what you have no control over against you. Your mother will be in our prayers. I am sincerely sorry you will be missing the festivities. ----town has never been full of such excitement! Though it will not be nearly as joyful without you beside me. While our hopes for this summer may be dashed, I do not believe we are without hope. I have be-

gun to make arrangements to come to ----ville this coming autumn. While it may not be as beautiful as ----town, I'm sure we could still manage to have a wonderful time.

Best regards,

X

Dear Ms. Stanton,

July 29, ----

I simply do not understand why you are not even willing to try. This could work if you put in even the slightest bit of effort, but apparently, even that is too much work for you. What else could I expect from someone as spoiled and indulgent as yourself? I would like to say that you are not acting like the woman I have known, but that would be dishonest. Sometimes I wonder how I ever enjoyed your company. I think we will manage to have a pleasant time even without you.

X

Dear Ms. Stanton,

August 20, ----

I do regret my words in my last letter. I spoke quite brashly and without a thought or care for your feelings. Or rather I wrote with the intention to hurt you as you had wounded me, and that was wrong of me. I really would like to repair the rift that has insidiously grown between us, but I cannot do so alone. Sometimes, a part of me wonders if you care for anything at all. And I know that is cruel, and I know I should not be putting this on paper, but you cannot pretend I am without reason to believe so. All I am asking is to be proven wrong.

With a heavy heart,

X

Dear Ms. Stanton,

October 1, ----

I see.

X



Cherry On Top

By Esti Samel



Starry Night

By Rachel Farhi

The background is a textured, painterly illustration of a night sky. The upper portion is filled with various shades of blue and teal, interspersed with numerous small, golden-yellow stars. The lower portion shows a dark, silhouetted coastline with jagged, rocky formations. The overall style is reminiscent of a watercolor or oil painting, with visible brushstrokes and a rich, atmospheric quality.

A Different Shadow

By Ayala Cweiber

I've written about the sun
But I think
I'd rather write about the moon

I think I've realized now
Standing in the utter silence of the night
With only my thoughts
That maybe
Though the Earth revolves around the sun
It is the moon which shows us true strength
Returning every time
Changing
Because maybe it's okay to grow and to fade
And maybe the moon returns
Just to reflect the light of the sun
But I think
The moon casts a different shadow

Job Application

By Adina Hoffman

BERG, wearing a business suit, is sitting in his office, in his chair behind his desk, working on the computer. There are two chairs facing his desk. A knock is heard on the door.

BERG

Come in!

WOMAN enters the room.

WOMAN

Sir, there is a Mr. Meese here to see you.

BERG

Send him in.

MEESE, wearing a suit and carrying a briefcase, enters the room shyly. BERG walks to MEESE and holds out his hand.

BERG

(shaking hands with MEESE)
Good morning, Mr. Meese, please, *(gestures to the desk)* take a seat.

MEESE sits in the chair behind the desk BERG was just sitting in.

MEESE

(awkwardly) Are-are you going to sit down?

BERG

Yes, I would like to.

Beat

MEESE

(Springs up from chair, scattering papers) Oh, sorry, sorry, sorry. I'm so sorry. *(Bends down and starts to pick up the strewn papers, muttering)* So foolish!

BERG

It's okay, Mr. Meese, we all make mistakes. *(Bends down and picks up the last of the strewn papers)* Please, have a seat.

MEESE sits down across the desk from BERG. .

Beat.

BERG

(Leaning back in the chair, pressing fingertips together)
Meese, I've looked at your resume. I was very intrigued. I see that your most recent job was as a baker?

MEESE

Yes, that's true.

BERG

What made you leave that position?

MEESE

I got fired.

BERG
Fired? Why?

MEESE
Rumors went around
that I was abusive.

BERG
That's a very serious accusa-
tion. Were they true?

MEESE
Welllllllll, yes.

Beat

BERG
*(trying to be nonchalant,
presses finger on inter-
com)* Can I get secur-

MEESE
(interrupting) I beat the eggs
and whipped the cream.

Beat

BERG
*(slowly takes finger off of in-
tercom)* All bakers do that.

MEESE
Yes, I know.

BERG
(confused) You know what,
let's move on. Before that

you were a bank teller, yes?

MEESE
Correct. *(wistfully)* Oh, that
was one of my favorite jobs.

BERG
So why did you leave?

MEESE
I got fired.

BERG
Again? What did you do?

MEESE
An old woman came up to me and
asked me to check her balance.

BERG
Okay...

MEESE
So I pushed her over.

Pause

BERG
You're kidding.

MEESE
No.

BERG
(Shakes his head) Moving
on. Before that you were a
waiter... I'm going to assume

it was an in-between job?

MEESE

Nope.

BERG

You wanted to be a waiter?

MEESE

Yes, of course.

BERG

Why?

MEESE

Being a waiter was *the* life! I got to exercise, talk, eat... But I was fired after I threw a soda can to another waiter and it hit a customer.

BERG

Why would you- you know what, I'm not going to ask. Just- was the customer okay?

MEESE

Sure he was, it was a soft drink.

BERG places his head in his hands

MEESE

(quickly) But those were all part time jobs. I'm really a lawyer, or was, anyway.

BERG

So why are you no lon-

ger practicing law?

MEESE

Fired.

BERG

(sighs) Why?

MEESE

Apparently I was very disruptive.

BERG

How did you manage that?

MEESE

Well, I kept on asking for a hamburger and fries, but it never came!

BERG

Why would you do that in court?

MEESE

The judge kept saying "Order, order!" so I ordered!

(BERG stares at MEESE in disbelief and once again places head in hands)

BERG

(leaning forward, placing hands on desk) Forgive me for being harsh, but it seems to me that you are not responsible enough to hold down a job.

MEESE

Sure I'm responsible. Whenever anything went wrong, they always said I was responsible.

Pause

BERG

Look. You seem like a nice enough person, so I'm going to do you a favor. I can't offer you a job, but I can offer you advice. "Happy is the man who can make a living by his hobby." George Bernard Shaw. What is it you are really passionate about?

MEESE

Comedy. I've always wanted to be a stand-up comedian.

BERG

That sounds like it would be a good fit for you. Have you tried it?

MEESE

Yes.

BERG

And how did that go?

MEESE

You tell me.

After Hours

By Sara Sash





Passing the Torch

By Chaya Trapedo

Simon and I laid on our backs looking up at the sky. We were under the shade of the oak tree near the back of the empty plot of land that became our new spot. We came here most afternoons after our mothers would say the same thing: “Enough already. Stop reading comics and go outside to play.”

“I’m so bored, Jack. What should we do?” Simon asked, wiping sweat from his eyes.

“I dunno.”

“Really?” Simon was surprised. “You always have good ideas for things to do when we’re bored.” He wasn’t wrong. It was my idea to build igloos during the blizzard last December and to open the hydrant last week.

“How ‘bout we become outlaws?”

This grabbed Simon’s attention. “Whaddya mean, outlaws?”

“We’re criminals now. We can’t live in town because the police are looking for us. We’ll need to go build a hut and hunt our own food in the woods. Let’s go!”

Simon followed me toward the trees off the back of the lot and further into the forest of South Orange, New Jersey. After spending what felt like hours building a lean-to by resting long branches and limbs against the trunk of a wide pine, we stood back to admire our handiwork. We scattered dry leaves and twigs over it for camouflage and then crawled in.

“Now let’s keep warm for the night,” I told Simon.

“But it isn’t even noon yet.” I gave Simon a look that let him know he was messing up the game, and he kept quiet as I struck a match from the book I had taken from my father’s desk drawer. The small flame consumed the pile of twigs and then leaves, so we ran to get more fuel to keep it going. Once the fire was steady, I told Simon about the next step in becoming outlaws.

**It’s too big
already. We
gotta get outta
here before we
get caught!**

“We gotta find food. Let’s go hunt.”

We wandered deeper into the woods, not sure exactly what we were looking for, until the smell of smoke caught our attention.

Suddenly, it felt much hotter than any August afternoon should. Crimson and gold flares could be seen through the trees. The fire was spreading, leaping onto the branches, consuming trees, and creeping toward us.

“We gotta put it out!” Simon yelled. His face was turning paler by the second.

“No,” I said. “It’s too big already. We gotta get outta here before we get caught!”

“I can already hear sirens,” Simon panicked. “If we come bolting from the woods, they’ll know it was us.”

“Follow me!”

Simon stared at me, nodded, and we ran.

I led him to the river bed and we waded in up to our knees. I reached down and scooped up a handful of the muck and playfully threw it at Simon’s chest.

“Come on, get dirty. We need them to think we were nowhere near that fire.”

It only took a couple of minutes until we were caked in mud.

We tracked sludge and debris right through the front door and into the kitchen before my mother could stop us.

“Jacob, where were you?” She saw Simon and frowned. When the two of us were together, it usually meant trouble. “There was a fire, and I know you play in that forest...” I expected her to be mad, not to hug me, but she did before yelling: “I’m glad you’re alright, but look what you did! You’re covered in filth and trekking mud all over my house! I wanted you to play outside, not bring it home! What were you thinking?”

Simon and I exhaled. My mother, father, and the fire chief never figured out who set that fire.

* * *

“So you see, Noah,” Jack said. “When I was your age, kids didn’t spend all their time on devices. We played outside and used our imaginations. Right? Can you hear me? Noah?”

“Yes, okay Grandpa,” Noah replied without meeting his grandfather’s gaze. His eyes remained fixed on the screen as a new band of creepers emerged from the woods. They were getting closer and threatening the village he’d built with his team. But it seemed Noah was paying attention after all. To fight the creepers, he would set the woods on fire.

1g "night"

By Michali Rosenberg



Ode to the Lesser Lights

By Cherri Citron

There are twilight mornings,
When the sun takes a break.
It is hard to be the center,
To have everything re-
volve around you.
To have everything de-
manded of you.
Give us warmth, give us
life, give us light.
On these mornings, the sun
cannot be bothered to rise.
There are those without the luxury
To choose not to do
what is expected,
They walk the streets, de-
serted and dark.
It is these winter dawns
when the moon,
She rules,
For a few moments more.

Lonesome traveler,
Look to the sky and see
Your reflection.
For you are not the only
one who walks alone.
The moon may have helpers,

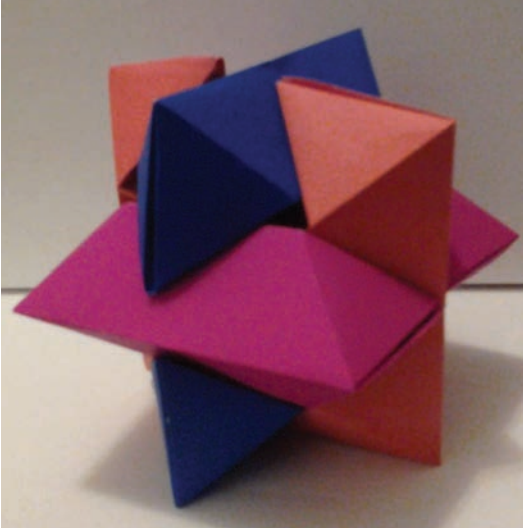
But they are hindered
by the city lights.
Take the quiet comfort and realize,
Realize,
You are not alone

I must admire the courage,
The audacity,
To claim the spotlight as your own.
To be unwelcome,
Yet to carve your way in.
On these mornings,
There are many grum-
bling commuters,
who miss the blind-
ing light of the sun.
They long for the day,
Because they fear the things that
hide in the dark of the night.
If the moon could talk,
She'd whisper them soft comforts,
Convince them they are be-
ing watched over,
Show them they have
nothing to fear,
And she'd never disappoint.

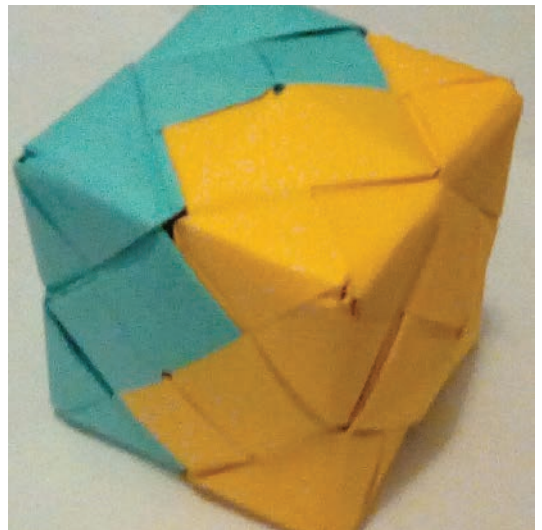
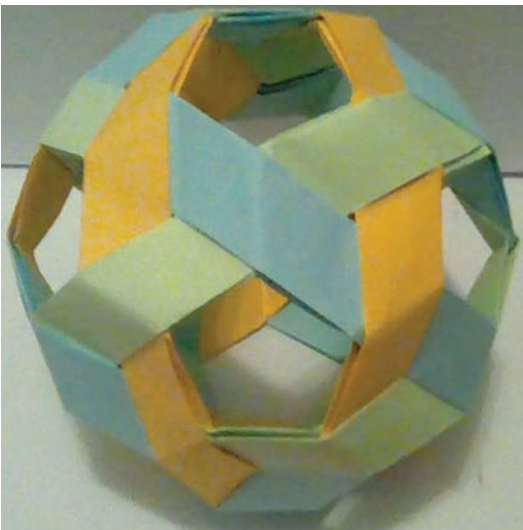


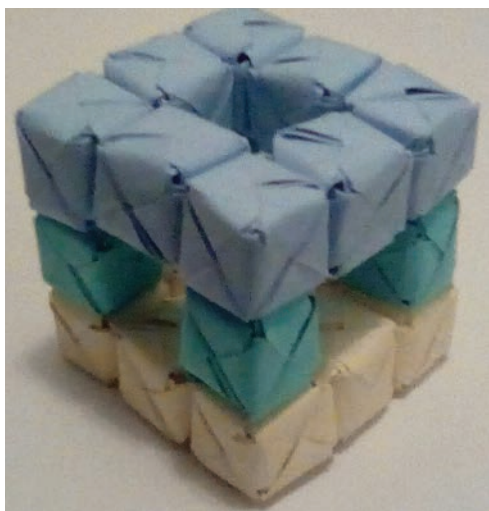
Hidden Wonders

By Shoshana Escott



100 Days of Origami
By Zehava Sanders





I created origami every day for 100 days to explore the concept of unity out of disparate parts, as many pieces of paper come together to form a discrete whole.

Every Day

By Ahuva Horowitz

The lonesome odor of sour breath mingled with the stench of something unidentifiable and sickly. The temperature froze noses, backs, and clammy hands while it stifled abdomens and set flame to necks. The rushing of the train adopted a hollow, chilling hum and its noise suffocated thoughts. Covering alone in the backmost seat of the train, the pathetic figure stared blankly out the misted window at the grey-blue gloom that streaked by with a glowing orb disrupting every half a minute or so. The white light from the interspersed bulbs caressed her features: sallow cheeks, brittle hair, a pair of glassy eyes. She looked perpetually ill.

The ride was long and quiet and dark, and the lull of it was almost soothing...

“Mom.”

The whispering voice woke her. She squinted through the dark to see an small boy leaning over an older woman. The gentle tone of a child to his mother, like a warm, comforting spring breeze made her chest ache.

At long last, the snaking tube’s hoarse lullaby softened as the train emerged into the overcast day, dazzling in contrast to the tunnel. Towering buildings breached the thick white cloud blanket, and some ventured further into the heavens and beyond. Multicolored neon lights glistened from the aircrafts that swooped and hovered. Machines, tracks, highways wound through the system like a great circuit board. Flashes of color broke the steely tone and there was pulsing movement everywhere. It began to rain.

She was grateful for the change of scenery; it distracted her. All too soon though did the train slow to a halt. The passengers rose from their seats with the hushed unfolding of material, the rush of sighs, and the jejune enslavement of routine that they’d practiced for years. She, however, was fairly new to the scene. She stalled, unready to go into that place again. She was last to unlock her creaking limbs and step into queue, her heart beginning to thump.

**Then her
eyebrows
furrowed
further with
worry, and
when she spoke
again, her voice
was as broken
as her heart.**

She recalled the terrible black tower before she put a toe outside. It was the same: enormous, a huge circular entrance. Inside, too, was unchanged: cathedral-esque, luminescent ceiling, hundreds of hallways diverging from the circular room. Several porcelain counters were stationed at even intervals with uniformed employees standing behind each, wearing prim expressions.

A few tedious minutes passed, and then the person ahead of her spoke.

“Appropriate weather for this.”

The throaty voice, half announcement and half inquiry, came from a middle-aged woman with squinty blue eyes, tanned skin and a plum turban that wrapped from around her head onto her neck and continued down her body as a singular fitted jumpsuit.

“Yes, I-I guess it is...”

“I’ve been coming for seven years. Every time, the weather seems to get bad just for a day. How long have you been coming?” asked the woman with sorrowful expectancy.

“Um... three years. This... this is my third... time,” she mumbled, nearly inaudible as she crinkled her faded sweater more furiously.

“It gets easier, trust me. It’s very hard now, but it gets easier every time.”

She didn’t believe her at all, but she nodded all the same, not seeming to be able to return her conciliatory smile. The space between them throbbed with discomfort as the conversation tapered to nothing, and the lady in purple cleared her throat and turned away once more.

Everything was numb until she realized there were only two people before her. Her chest felt like it was being noisily pumped with a steady flow of ice water. She barely heard the lanky Asian man as he directed her to lane seventy-six. She stumbled sluggishly over to the hallway.

She knew he would look so much worse...

But she was at the entrance. A few others were walking down the corridor, their shadows stretching and contracting as they passed the cyan sconces on the narrow walls.

And she followed.

The dark room had rows of glowing pillars reaching up and out of sight. At the base of each was a shiny black dome. A brunette woman in white approached her and asked for her name, which she waited for patiently as the shocked skeleton of a human couldn't answer immediately. When she'd spoken, the lady promptly led her to the first row of pillars and on to the fifth dome in line. She sunk a gloved finger into a concealed button on it, and blinding white light poured through a split that began to appear in its center.

Her heart, which had been pounding incessantly, seemed to stop at once.

When the burn of the glow faded...

"Mommy?"

She released a hysterical, heart-wrenching sound.

In the center of the lit inside of the semi-sphere was a small child - or what was left of him - that looked much like a teal-ish, shriveled alien with his frighteningly prominent bones, slimy film and milky, round eyes. His mouth was a lipless slit, his nose was a nostril-less lump, his glistening, spotted skin was stretched over his shape until it cusped on transparency. He was bald and his ears protruded. His delicate body was connected to wires and needles of all sorts that winked and pulsed. The single word he labored to emit sounded broken and frighteningly metallic.

Her breaths issued with whispery screams.

"It's okay... I'm f... fine."

His words were gravelly. He tried, ferociously trembling, to straighten, straining against his blinking bonds.

"Oh— *ob*..." was all she could offer.

"Look, mommy... they take very... good c... care of me."

He smiled with his line of a mouth as wide as he could, which seemed to be one thing that didn't tax him. His teeth were missing; all that remained were black-blue, slippery gums.

"You - you didn't look like this - last time..." she choked.

The steady worsening of his condition was inevitable, but she didn't expect such a drastic change. She was disgusted with herself for feeling ill at the sight of him, yet...

He was miraculously, inexplicably, still himself. His sweet, cheerful self. Despite his... *predicament*.

This was the one time a year she was allowed to see him, and just thirty minutes of being exposed took a tremendous toll increasingly as the symptoms progressed.

The very least she could offer her dying little boy, her golden-hearted saint of a child who couldn't less deserve this fate, was to try to make him happy.

"H-hey, kiddo," she said, giving a broken, watery smile and kneeling to him. "We miss you back at home, me and Jojo."

"I... miss you... too," he said, a trickle of ache leaking into the grin. "I miss... Jojo... her bark... and her... pretty... fur..."

It was strange how such few, simple words could melt her heart in an instant. She scooted closer.

"You know, she got darker. Remember how you said she looked like red sunset? Now she looks like... here."

She hastily fumbled through the pocket of her old jeans and conjured a crinkled rectangular photo of a magnificent crimson collie splayed on a shag rug with sunlight streaming through parts of her fur, giving those areas a gold gleam. He looked at it with those milky eyes and his smile glowed brighter than his enclosure. She gave a soft appreciative chuckle, her eyes full of adoration. Then her eyebrows furrowed further with worry, and when she spoke again, her voice was as broken as her heart.

"You're so miserable... I wish I could do something for you, anything..."

He offered his mother a small smile, but didn't deny it. He just shook his head slightly.

"I've realized... that I'm not... the only one... h-hurting. I'm just one... little piece... of the world... sitting here and I c... can't... even... be helped, so... why... should I... feel sad?"

His hushed words stole the air from her lungs. He was ten. The sheer mass of his statement swelled in her like a great tidal wave rearing up to splash violently onto the shore, and that's what it did. Her parted lips quivered.

"No... mommy... please," he implored earnestly, straining his wires further, "Don't cry... I'm not... s-sad..."

"But - but... *I am!*" she moaned, and began to weep. He waited for her breathless sobs to ebb away.

"I'm sorry, I - I can't. I miss you so much..."

"Me... too... Every... day."

She wept harder. She took his wet hand and clung to it dearly, trying to cram a million unspeakable words into it, and he intertwined his fingers with hers. When at last she recovered, he was crying too.

And then he closed his eyes.



Collecting Memories

By Ahuva Jacobson

Arise

By Chavi Golding



The Canopy Over My Head

By Tova Schwartz

The sky has darkened and half the world is sleeping,
But in my warm blankets I keep twisting and turning-
“What have I done? What have I said?”
Until my eyes gaze at the canopy over my head.

My pitch dark room becomes a place of action.
The tent over my head features many attractions.
My eyes dart from lions to acrobat tricks.
But too soon I'm drenched, cold, and seasick.

The sail over my head flutters and twists.
My eyes sting from the cold salty mist.
Then, out of nowhere, my square sail rips,
And I'm just a dressmaker begging for tips.

The fabric over my head shimmers and shines.
The upper class women take this as a sign.
They say “cut it this way” and “fix this tear.”
Then, suddenly, a tiara is pinned to my hair.

The canopy over my head means the day's end.
And I think about the letters and laws I must send.
my mind can't fall asleep as I let my eyes droop —

I wake up at six and down the stairs I swoop.

But when I look in the mirror at the girl I see,
I am who I am and who I am is me.
If I could be that pirate or princess I would,
But practically speaking, it's not like I could.



Dream Sequence

By Ahuva Horowitz



Consequence

By Tamar Dan

Just one small touch,
And I'll be satisfied.
To grasp the flickering light
Emitted.

I've been warned against it.
Mother's supposed wise words.
To stay away from the flames
On these eight nights.

But just one tiny touch,
a curious mind's command.
Standing on tiptoes,
I reach...

Retract right away.

Suddenly lifted,
A cooling hand covers the burn,
A soothing sound reaches the ears,
And calms the spirit down.
Mother comes in view
With that gentle smile.
She points.
I follow her gaze.

Looking over the window sill,
Down at the houses and rooftops,
I smile.
I see lights;
Many lights.
Like a thousand small fireflies
Beckoning to be touched.



First Breath

By Rivka Hakimi



Prescient
By Leah Harris

A Day in Proper Color

By Malka Ostreicher

Her day is made up of colors. Bright yellows, groggy grays, and soft purples. When her mood changes, the colors shift up and down the spectrum. Some colors fade in while others fade out, yet somehow they never seem to feel right.

Her alarm, bright red, blasts through her ears, waking her whole body. She opens her eyes to see the charcoal sky as it appears every morning at six o'clock. She jumps out of bed and grabs her toothbrush in an effort to trade the filmy beige of stale teeth for the minty sparkle of ivory. She tries to cover her gray feelings with a navy sweater that projects professionalism. In a perfect world, the morning would start with pure white feelings reflective of a clean slate. She runs down the block to catch the canary hued bus that doesn't feel yellow at all.

A pastel purple washes over her on her ride to school as she drifts back to sleep and a warm music of mauve and periwinkle plays softly in her ears. Underneath the mulberry motif, a very thin layer of ruby fear spreads as her mind wanders to today's history test. Using the bus ride as study time would be wise, but the sky-blue blissful laziness wins, and she drifts back to sleep.

As teachers come and go, piles of colorful documents fill her brain. There is an aqua lesson on hydrophilic atoms, a khaki study of the War of 1812, and a ruby red class about the Tower of London. There is a temporary feeling of pink love for the newly acquired knowledge. As the day progresses, however, the once descript, vibrant shades become a brown glob of fuzzy information.

**As the day
progresses,
however, the
once descript,
vibrant shades
become a brown
glob of fuzzy
information.**

The color of lunchtime is constantly fluctuating, fading from deep purples to light, rosy pinks. While the delicious smell of food always provides her with a burst of fuchsia that mirrors her excitement for her well-deserved break, the lime green attitude of her classmates often sours her mood. Instead of enjoying the delicious golden fries that are placed in front of them, they feel preemptively blue over the intense workout that

will inevitably follow. She wishes she could infuse her surroundings with her own orange optimism leaving everyone with a peachy feeling, but sadly she has no control.

A few hours and numerous colors later, she is home feeling wasted and weary. Homework in cedar and cinnamon is scattered around her bed as she lies there reflecting on the day's palette. Accomplishments take on hues of amethyst. Beams of pride carry scarlet undertones and subtle turquoise streaks. Shortcomings are blue and chartreuse, which lie, more plainly, in the middle of the color spectrum. She hopes that with time, luck, and a slight change in perspective, she'll soon be able to move into the metallics, consisting of gold, silver, bronze, and brass. Even sadness hardly reflects off of those gradients. She turns off her light and watches behind her closed eyes as all the colors of her day slowly fade to black.

Dancing Amidst Colors

By Michal Englander



Something Sweet

By Reggie Klein



Dear Mr. and Mrs. Rogers

By Anna Gross

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Rogers,

I hope this letter finds you well. It has been several years since my last letter; I wanted to share some exciting news with you. I was recently promoted to be the store manager at Trader Joe's in Manning, South Carolina, a personal accomplishment that I am so proud of. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your patience as I would not be here today without your ongoing support.

You gave me my first job right after I graduated high school. School was challenging for me. Teachers would often exclude and ridicule me to the point where I felt that I would never amount to anything. You can imagine how surprised I was when you opened your home to me. From the day you hired me, I was made a part of the family. Even though there was some occasional miscommunication, I appreciate that you took the time to train me and help me improve.

I still remember my first day on the job almost twenty years ago. It still feels like yesterday. You left me alone in the house with some tasks and you left to run some errands. I love the organization with which you run your household and I enjoyed having a list of things to do. The first task was to draw the curtains in the living room, and while I could not understand why you would be concerned with my artistic abilities, I nevertheless sat down with colored pencils and a notepad and I drew your curtains to the best of my abilities. The next job was to change the towels in the powder room. Again, I was thoroughly confused. Why should I change them? They were so beautiful and looked almost brand new! However, I am a rule-follower and I did not feel comfortable taking matters into my own hands. This was your house and I was to adhere to your preferences, so I took out a pair of scissors and cut up those towels so that they were changed.

Next, I moved on to my kitchen responsibilities. I was asked to dress the chicken, probably the strangest thing I've ever been asked to do. Dressing children? No problem! Dressing dolls? Sure! Dressing chickens? Why? But again, your wish was my command. I looked all around the house for something suitable that

the chicken could wear. In the basement, on a dusty and forgotten shelf, I found a box of old doll clothes and, taking the liberty of assuming the chicken was a girl, I chose the nicest dress, found a matching pair of shoes, and brought them upstairs. I smoothed them out and then carefully dressed the chicken and placed it back on the tray.

Looking back at the person I was all those years ago, I can only imagine how confused you were, and likely how frustrated, when you returned home hoping to see these jobs completed only to find that I left a bigger mess than the one you had hoped I would clean.

When your family relocated to Charleston and no longer required my services, I began working in the food industry as a waitress at JK's House of Ribs, your favorite date night spot. I continued from there as a cashier to an office manager with a veterinarian's office. I gradually worked my way up to take on higher levels of responsibility. Now that I know what it is like to manage others and am in the position to mostly give tasks, rather than receive, I often think about how frustrating it is when communication goes wrong and things don't go as planned.

I think about how annoyed you must have been, and how you must have wanted to fire me on the spot, like I have wanted to do with some of my own employees. But you didn't! You were kind, patient, and understanding, and you recognized how nervous I must have felt. I think you put yourself in my shoes and saw that I was eager to please and that I was not lazy- only confused and in need of guidance. I have so much gratitude that you did not give up on me and that you of-

What you and I both did not know at the time was that I was learning-different. I have spent the last few years learning about myself ... and what it means to be neuroatypical.

ferred me the opportunity to learn and, in doing so, I became a part of your wonderful family.

What you and I both did not know at the time was that I was learning-different. I have spent the last few years learning about myself in conversation with the help of specialists who have studied what it means to be neuroatypical and from friends that I've made along the way. I have since understood what it means to be neurotypical, how common it is and challenging it could be when it goes unsupported.

Throughout the years I have received assistance and training from understanding and patient mentors such as yourself. Whenever I was introduced to something new that I had never done before, I was taught to use context clues to get an idea of what was expected of me but what I really needed was someone to explain things clearly and to show me. It only took one time and then I knew how to do it from then on and never forgot it, but I needed more than anything else was for someone to believe in me and to see my potential. You both did that for me! And even though this learning-difference created many challenges for me throughout my life, I believe that through working with you, I achieved my potential and found an area in which I could shine and help others in my personal and business life. For that, I am eternally grateful to you.

So thank you for believing in me and for being my first real and greatest teacher! You have created for me a life full of positive relationships and meaning.

All my love,

Amelia Bedelia

P.S. Please feel free to stop by the Trader Joe's located at 4516 Forest Dr, Columbia, SC 29206 anytime as I would be pleased to share my employee discount with you.

Voyages

By Tami Eberstark



“Not all those who wander are lost.”

–J.R.R. Tolkien

Editors' Afterword

Dear Reader,

To comfort Jacob after his father Issac's death, G-d promises him that his children will "spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south" (Genesis 28:14). For centuries, the prose and poetry of the Bible have propelled different peoples from all around the world in various directions. As Jews, the Torah serves as an ever-lasting guide that moves us forward without distancing us from our past.

Our writers were encouraged to take their inclinations in any direction they wished. They pursued several genres of literature, from comedy to creative non-fiction, and have succeeded in creating stirring compositions. They have opened up portals to new worlds, explored new ideas, and evoked new feelings, within themselves and all of us. In charting these untrodden courses and sharing their discoveries, their work might serve as a sort of intellectual, artistic, and emotional compass. And while, from the reader's perspective, the paths here all appear smooth and easy, tremendous effort and devotion were invested by the contributors and editors to help this publication find its footing.

Stories have the power to move us, and as essential and burden-free baggage, we hope you carry ours forward with you.

Happy travels and happy returns,
Ayala, Jenny, Naomi, Dassi and Leora

