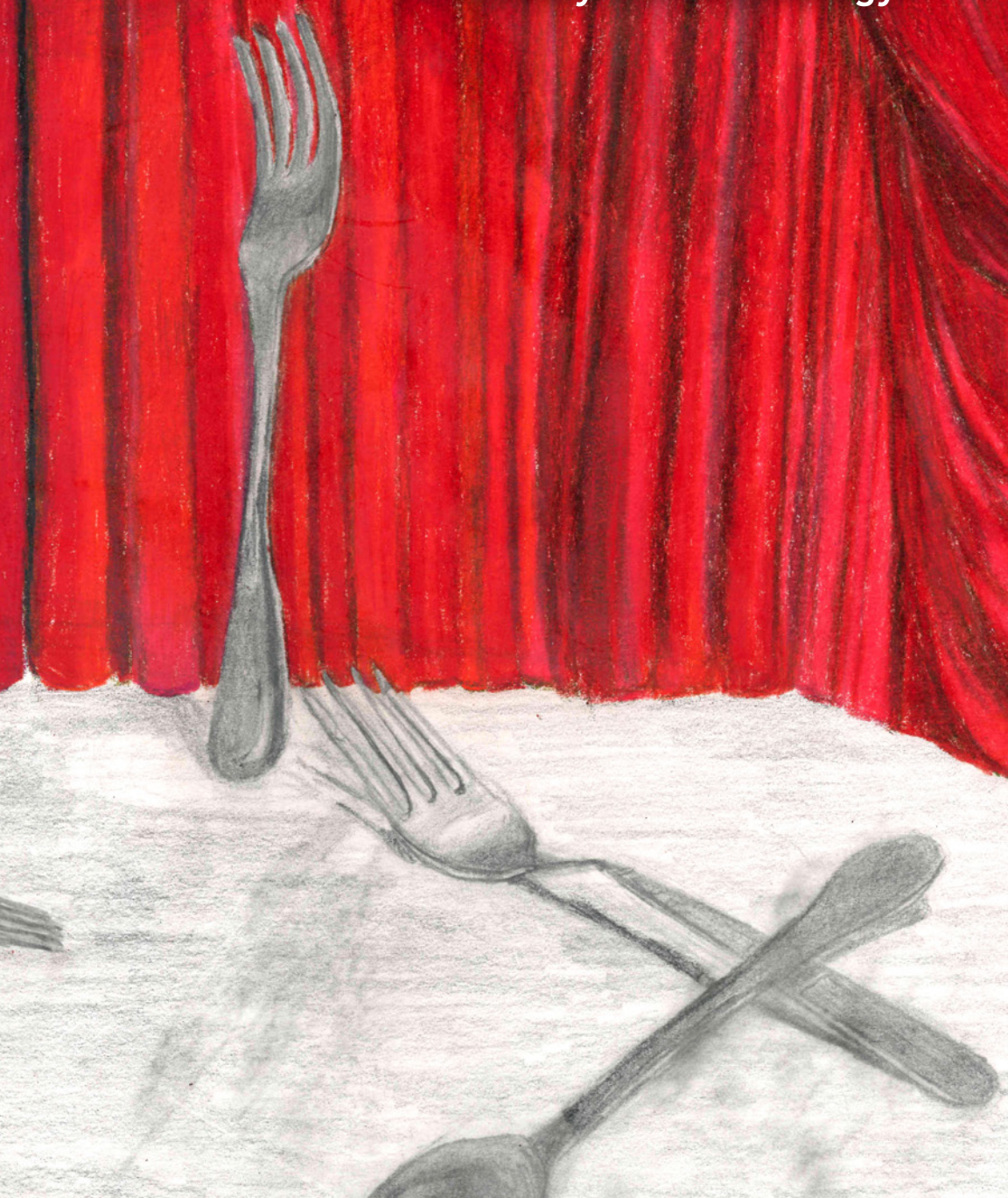


MANHATTAN HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

# 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 literary journal competition by raising the standard for written and artistic expression.*

*Harry and Rose Kaplan Scholarship  
First Place Prose Award*

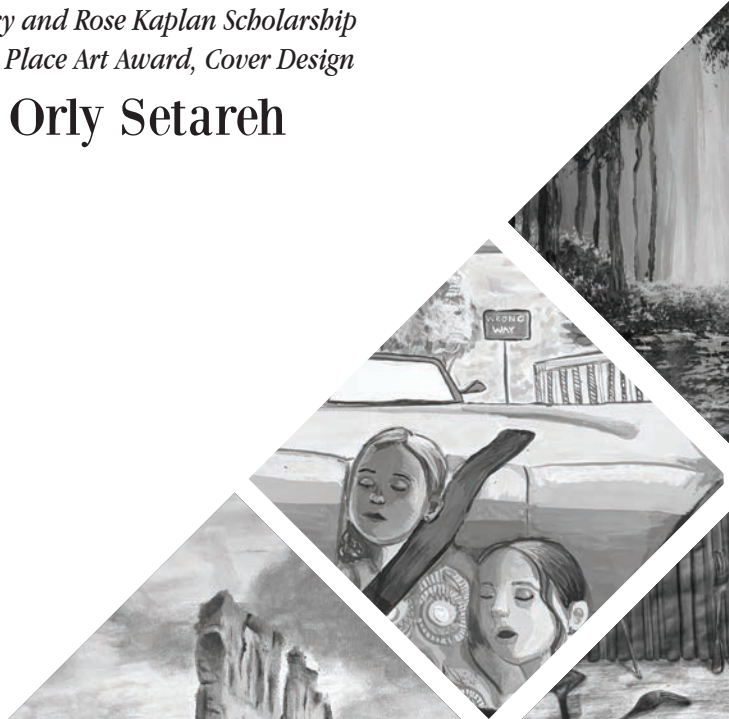
**Dassi Mayerfeld**

*Harry and Rose Kaplan Scholarship  
First Place Poetry Award*

**Miriam Gluck**

*Harry and Rose Kaplan Scholarship  
First Place Art Award, Cover Design*

**Orly Setareh**







MANHATTAN HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS  
**EASTWARD**

A Literary & Art Anthology

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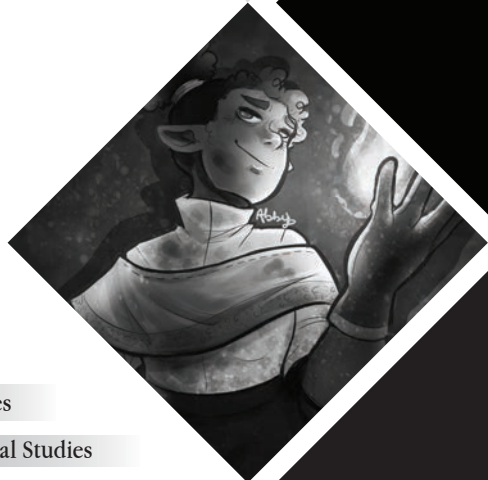
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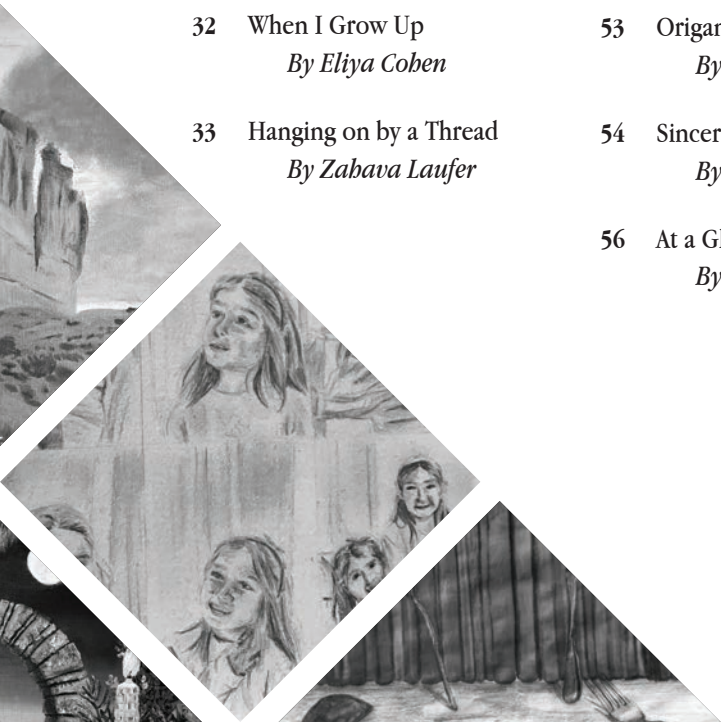


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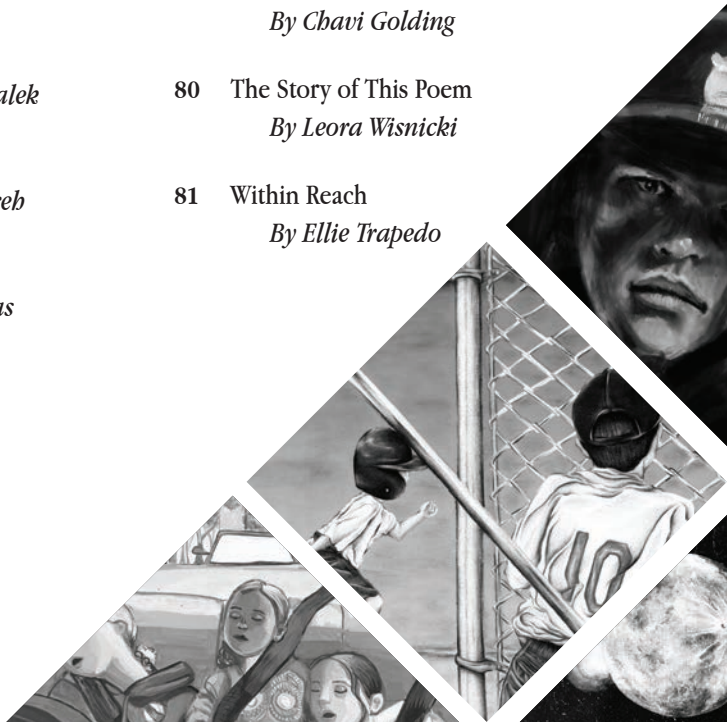


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# Foreword

By Mrs. Estee Friedman-Stefansky, Principal

Welcome to *Eastward*, Manhattan High School's annual literary and art journal. A compilation of original literature and art, this anthology continues to reflect our school's esteem for communication, and our editors once again curated the most creative pieces—the kind that elicit for us fresh feelings and new thoughts even on some of the most routine ideas.

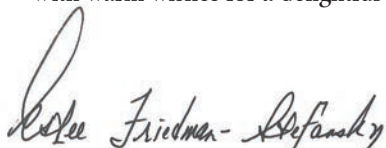
I am particularly in love with this publication's cover entitled "Entrees and Encores." It is inspiring to see a young artist elevate everyday flatware to such theatrical stature. I have never before experienced such a smile in my heart when looking at a fork. The technique and texture Orly Setareh uses manifest skill; the message and mood she creates reflect a most thoughtful appreciation for life's seemingly simple blessings: food, family time, and fun. What power we hold as artists.

Central to our identities as Jews is our obligation to be attentive to and appreciative of the goodness bestowed upon us by the One Above and by others He places in our paths. We sing *Modeh Ani* to babies and script their morning ritual, excited to fill them with a song of fortification. Of all the dreams we have for them, what we want most—is for them to be happy. We teach them to sing before they understand what they are singing about because we want them to grow into adults who will continue to smile and sing about the silly little whimsical things around them. We want our babies to know that when we are grateful, life is good.

The editors, writers and artists featured in this publication are conditioned to see slight shades and imperceptible differences that escape the rushing, the impatient. They are constantly discovering more beauty, both in our world and within humanity, and they inspire us, as well, to stand back and take another look at the proverbial forks and knives we hold in our hands.

*Eastward*, led by our very brilliant and beloved Dr. Trapedo, and energized by the exceptional talent of Ms. Lakritz, Mrs. Kleinfeld, Mrs. Benchimol, Mrs. Szpilzinger and Ms. Klapper, invites us to see the wonders of expression — a majestic gift He granted to each of us.

With warm wishes for a delightful summer,



Estee Friedman-Stefansky

# Editors' Foreword

Dear Reader,

This year's Literary and Art journal is more than just a collection of art and writing. It is a community. For over a year, the pandemic prevented us from sharing space and synchronous experiences with one another. It also pushed us to find new modes of communication and convergence. By contributing to and reading this journal, you are participating in this community, and affirming this commitment. All of the contributors challenged themselves to create. We left our comfort zones to explore different genres of writing, such as memoirs, historical fiction, poetry, nonfiction, personal narratives, science fiction, comedies, and tragedies. We experimented with different mediums of art: digital art, photography, watercolor, acrylics, gouache, pencil, colored pencil, charcoal, and pastel. Within these pages you will find a literary and artistic community of individuals forged out of a commitment to creative expression in a manner that allows growth and expansion for one and all.

Our student body comes from various communities of their own throughout the New York/ New Jersey area, and each morning that we've been able to travel from our home towns to our schoolhouse brought with it the delight of a clean canvas. Unified by our desire to learn and grow, together we merge *Eastward*.

We would like to thank our literary advisor, Dr. Trapedo, for her dedication and support throughout the editorial process and for ensuring that the pieces included reflect our standards of literary and artistic excellence. We would also like to thank our layout advisor, Mrs. Szpilzinger, for her dedication to this endeavor and for equipping the student editors with the skills needed to tackle this project from best-laid-plans to layed-out-proofs. We would also like to extend our gratitude to our devoted teachers, Ms. Lakritz, Ms. Klapper, Ms. Benchimol, Mrs. Kleinfeld, and Mrs. Schwartz who model patience, process, and persistence for us daily. 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 readers, who have made all the effort worthwhile.

Warmly yours,

Dassi, Ayala, Chana, Jenny, Cherri, Adina,  
Miriam, Adina, Hodaya, Chaya, Sara





# Mission Statement

**F**or over twenty five years, the Manhattan High School Literary and Art journal has given students a forum to share their expressive art and writing with an audience that extends beyond the singular teacher-reader/viewer. So often throughout the creative process we wonder, *how do I even begin?* In the words of Neil Gaiman, “This is how you do it: You sit down at the keyboard and you put one word after another until it’s done. It’s that easy, and that hard.” All forms of artistic expression are vulnerable and challenging. The mission of this journal is to provide a hospitable space for students to confront that challenge and become better writers and communicators through the process.



# Editorial Policy

**A**ll students were asked to produce a prose submission in their English Language Arts classes and encouraged to seize the opportunity to develop their creative writing skills by working with student mentors. Through the “Creativity Consultants” program, aspiring student authors scheduled meetings with editors to discuss everything from character development to pacing to style and conventions. Once students submitted their work, editors read every submission and selected pieces that exhibited natural and sophisticated progression, precise and engaging language, and a notable sense of voice and purpose that reflects the values of Manhattan High School and the General Studies educational vision. Editors then meet with each writer, sometimes for general feedback and sometimes for copyediting. After students were given the opportunity to polish their pieces, all submissions were reviewed by the editorial team and final selections were made.

Students also had the opportunity to submit art of all mediums, including collections and personal portfolios. These submissions were optional and were selected by the editorial team.

The Harry and Rose Kaplan Scholarship awardees for prose, poetry, and art are determined through blind selection by a committee of teachers and faculty members.



”

SHORT STORIES ARE TINY WINDOWS  
INTO OTHER WORLDS AND OTHER  
MINDS AND DREAMS. THEY ARE  
JOURNEYS YOU CAN MAKE TO THE  
FAR SIDE OF THE UNIVERSE AND  
STILL BE BACK IN TIME FOR DINNER.

– NEIL GAIMAN



# Who am I?

By Sara Sash

I've noticed over the past few years that I have a fear of forgetting. It causes this unquenchable desire to document everything with words. I keep track of things like the books I read, important memories, poems I come up with while daydreaming, the best compliments I've been given, or new songs I like. I don't like throwing anything out; I keep everything from the sticker I get when I go to the MET to old book reports from third grade. I don't know why I do it, but I can't stop.

It was towards the end of my junior year when my English teacher tasked us with writing a memoir. I was excited, of course, my ego loving nothing more than writing about myself.

Back in ninth grade, I had an English teacher who made a class website. The top of the website said "Who are you?" which was the thematic focus of our English class throughout the year based on our first assigned text, *Alice in Wonderland*. We came back to this concept of trying to understand who we are in many of our lessons. At the end of the year she told us we would get extra credit on our final exam if we wrote a few sentences answering the question.

*Who am I?*

How do I explain myself in a few

short lines in the last five minutes of a final? I don't remember what I scribbled down on that paper in June of ninth grade, but I know that it can't be who I was. And it's definitely not who I am now.

I remember in the middle of eighth grade I began writing about my day in a small calendar, kind of like a diary. At first, it was only the days during which something I deemed important happened —things I

**How do I explain  
myself in a few  
short lines in the  
last five minutes  
of a final?**

didn't want to forget. But, once I started high school I decided that I would write down what happened *every single day*. I was scared that when I would get older, I wouldn't be able to remember every part of high school, and I didn't want that for my future self. So every night I took a few minutes to jot down my day in bullet points—just random things that happened throughout the day, like a great class I had, or a test I did well on. As time went by I started writing more and more in each day's box, my handwriting

becoming so small that when I looked back at it, I was barely even able to read what I wrote. But, even so, I continued.

I sat down at my desk on a beautiful spring Sunday evening to work on my memoir. I decided to start with some brainstorming. I opened a Google Doc to keep track of all my ideas. I started typing the first thing that came to my head, which was Japan. Ever since I was thirteen, I had been falling more and more in love with its culture and language. Japan had become an essential part of my everyday life, and it could be dubbed as “my thing.” *But Japan?* I asked myself.

*Is that who you are?*

I figured that although Japan was something I was passionate about, it was not something that represented me. So I left what I wrote and started thinking of another idea.

New page. I looked around my room for ideas and saw my sketchbook. I could write about art and my love for painting. Maybe I could include why I love watercolors or what I want to do with my art. But, it didn't feel right. My art didn't embody who I was—it

was only a hobby.

At this point I glanced at the clock, consciously aware of the fact that I was going way over the half hour I allotted for this in my schedule. But I didn't want to stop writing and mess up the flow I had created.

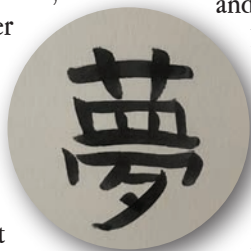
New page. I could write about the fact that I need my life to be organized with a perfect schedule, and my inability to be flexible.

But again, I couldn't think of how I could convey a message with that story.

I continued like this for a while, writing about other important things in my life, like my childhood best friend, and my love for journaling and school.

When I added my seventeenth new page, I sat there looking at the blinking cursor. After sitting for an hour and forty minutes I was left with stories of my life and the things I loved, everything that I thought made me who I was. But, if I chose to write about one of them individually, my memoir would not represent who I was as a whole.

And as I searched for a way for my memoir to encompass all the ideas I came up with, I realized something else—that even if I can recognize who I am today and list it all in a



Google Doc, I'm always changing. One day I can't look at anything except Harry Potter memes, and the next, I spend all my free time doing research about medical school.

So, I wondered, if everything I came up with is only about the me of today, how do I know that what I write in my memoir will be an accurate portrayal of who I am tomorrow? Maybe this is why I'm always documenting every part of life, because I never want to forget any aspect of who I am. Everyday I'm someone new, forced to discover myself all over again, but

I don't want to forget the person I used to be.

That's when I decided that even though it was for extra credit (my two favorite words), I couldn't write the memoir. I wanted so badly to express myself fully with my writing, but, being an ever changing list of passions and stories made it impossible.

The memoir needed a central theme, and my life didn't have that.

And I guess that's who I am.





# The Mirror

By Tzipi Palley

We meet every morning. Always at 6 am, when she gets ready to face the day ahead of her. I can always tell how her day is going to go based on the time I last saw her the night before. Sometimes she gets ready for bed earlier than 11 pm, but on the days when she comes in with dark circles under her eyes around 2 am, I can tell that tomorrow is going to be a tough one.

I like to think we have a strong relationship. She greets me first thing in the morning when she washes her face and brushes her teeth. We see each other again when she is getting dressed and ready to go out and asks me if she looks okay. She even comes to me at night, drowsy and tired, when all she wants to do is jump into bed without the effort of washing her face or brushing her teeth like she did that morning.

Sometimes I even get to meet her friends, when they come over to stay the night. I see them smiling, taking pictures, and talking for hours.

I love seeing her happy.

But recently something has changed. On the bright side, she's started waking up later, around 8 am every day. That's an improvement I think. 6 am is far too early for anyone to be awake. However, I rarely see her friends and I can tell she misses them. There are fewer smiles lately. And for that, I miss them too.

Now when she gets ready to go out for the day, she has a mask over her mouth and nose. Even I have a hard time recognizing her. I don't understand what changed. Why is she suddenly coming to see me less, and staying in her bed more? I remember when it started. First two weeks, two months, a year. I watched it begin. Instead of being out all day, she was always at home, and the first few months, it didn't seem to affect her so much. The undereye bags started to fade, her school work started to ease up, and it seemed like a pleasant break from her usual routine.

With less time spent on school work, she had more time to go on walks and work on her hobbies that she pushed off like painting, sketching, and reading. Everything seemed better. Every morning she would smile at me, as she got ready to start her day.

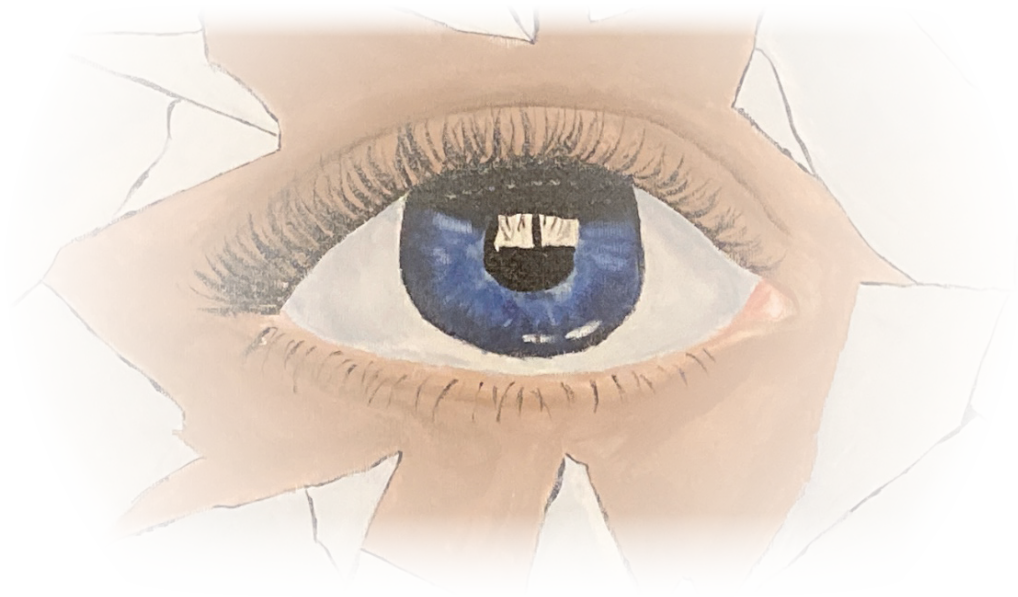
But after a few months passed, things took a turn for the worse.

**Things  
definitely don't  
seem as bad as  
they did before.  
We're not back  
to normal yet,  
and probably  
won't be for  
a long time.**

Being home all the time wasn't the same anymore. I could see it on her face when it wasn't covered by a mask she forgot to take off. Getting out of bed was a burden, and when she looked at me, I no longer saw excitement, or nervousness, for the day ahead. In fact, she barely came to see me at all, and when she did, she wouldn't smile. Her eyes were vacant, as if a door had closed behind them, shutting out the light. It felt to me like every day was blending into the next and I couldn't tell when one ended and another began. Time passed as I just hung there. I felt completely useless and forgotten, simply a reflection that she was tired of staring at.

But day by day, I started to see a bit more of her. Sometimes she'd slip back into her old pattern of going to be late and getting up at 6 am. And then suddenly, things would change and she'd spend two weeks sitting behind her laptop in her bed.

Things definitely don't seem as bad as they did before. We're not back to normal yet, and probably wouldn't be for a long time. School has begun again, I assume. She is still wearing her mask and still not going out or having friends over. But as life goes on, I can't help but wonder if the same laughter will return to those eyes that I stare into every day.



# Last Blood

By Abby Harris

Done and dusted, lurid death  
Infernal beast drew its last breath  
The night grows later as she goes:  
The dragon-slayer's coming home

Upon the pavement road she rides  
The monster's skull sat by her side  
Her left leg limping, armor broke  
A growing wound, her wrappings soaked

A glowing moon, a glinting knife  
The crowing loons sing in the night  
The knight can't hear, she's going quick  
And through her ears her thoughts flow thick

Trot on mud in midnight mist  
A blot of blood on blemished wrist  
She's almost there, within her town  
The knight dismounts and calls aloud

Held aloft, the dragon's head  
Is dripping light, alive yet dead  
And squinting in the brilliant glare  
The warrior shouts her triumph there

Toward the keep they lead the star  
From warm June air to stifling bar  
None asleep despite the time  
She loves her look in lights of lime

Head held high, her tankard filled  
Adrenaline high and alcohol thrill  
Her honeyed voice not smooth like ink  
It's rough-cut stone, her cheeks flush pink

Drunk on praise and pride and pints  
Manic grin on boasting knight  
Sip the honor, spit and gloat  
Toying, cloying in her throat

She hardly thinks, her voice rings out  
The stink of drink is choking now  
Surrounded, thick, by fellows false  
Who dance facades, a wicked waltz

Their voices suave with masked intent  
They love to claim that they're her friend  
The people, parasites, extort  
She's blind and blithe, the truth distorts

But when the high comes crashing down  
Slurs her words and blurs her sound  
Hurting head and sobbing eyes  
No one cares if hero cries  
No one checks if she's okay  
The fun is done, they run away

Across the room the sun is weak  
She learns the truth, her eyelids leak  
And bleak as death, bone-white, pale  
It rips her mind, a violent gale



That unfair though the fact may be  
The maiden knows all that they see  
Is a key levied for their gain  
Their game of vanity, inane  
But I'm to blame, she softly says  
Those conversations obviously led  
Me on, come on, you trusting fool  
All you'll be is just a tool

And with this thought, she stumbles back  
Crawls in cot, she crumbles, cracked  
Wracked, the weight like chain and ball  
No one wants you. None at all

Stone-cold sober in the morn  
She made her mind, her mood forlorn  
Stone emotions, metal skin  
She'll paste on face her mask of tin

And while her fame spreads farther yet  
She won't betray her pain, upset  
Yet cold and hard and sharp as ice  
The gold facade, she pays the price  
And stained on brain's distrust, disdain  
Each reach for friendship is in vain

All along, a silver shell  
The perfect prison, iron cell  
Her feelings trapped and tucked aside  
Way too weighty, rather hide

Her eyes as dry as dusty sand  
Well in health but desert glands  
An apathetic show of strength  
Lesser self yet statue-faced

And keeping all that down's corrosive  
Kills, emotional necrosis  
Shriveled flesh, a blackened void  
The hollowness, the heart destroyed

And so, upon a navy eve  
She dons a cloak, waves and leaves  
She heaves a sigh, afraid, she stands  
Upon the edge with shaking hands

Toward the sky she turns her gaze  
A thousand stars, a clustered haze  
And she thinks, who would miss just one?  
One prick of light? Nobody, none

Who's to say who deserves life?  
Hunters slay and warriors fight  
Days will pass, molasses-slow  
But soften after, stable, go

Just as those the monster ate  
Were mourned, then missed, then  
memories late  
She'll fade, her story left in tomes:  
Dusty, brief, and hardly known

Bests her apprehension of death  
Tests the ledge and sucks her breath  
Rapid, ragged, rabbit pulse  
Frightened muscles all convulse

Takes a step, a crumbling floor  
Stumbles forward. Just two more  
Just one mo—

s t o p

Lured from sleep by instincts strange  
A girl of fifteen years of age  
A barefoot local, nearby farm  
There she stands, cloth bear in arms  
Her simple voice a beacon-glare  
Cutting demons out from air:

Please don't jump, just step aside  
The still knight, dumb, still does oblige  
Girl tugs her arm and turns around  
Far from gorge, on solid ground

Let's talk, she says while sitting down  
Folds her legs, hands, hair, and gown  
She cocks her head and spins her  
thumbs

She asks,  
What are you running from?

Hugging 'til their arms are numb  
Crying til the sun comes up  
Spilling light upon the grass  
Spilling tears upon the lass  
Breaking fears like cracking glass  
Faker face left in the past  
Melting aches she'd gained while low  
Tossing thoughts in wind, they blow  
Across the cliff and off the edge  
They watch as one, far from the ledge

And one bright thought runs through her  
veins:  
Maybe I'll try again.





Artwork Credit: "Set The World Aight!" by Abby Harris

# The Crate

By Cherri Citron

First days are the worst.

On the first day of grade school I clung to my mother's skirt and covered it in tears, only letting go when my teacher offered me a cookie. But no one is going to offer me a cookie now.

On my first day on the job I feel like a little kid again. The closest thing I get to comfort now is someone with a nasty grin telling me I'll be fine as long as I follow the orders I'm given. I try to force out a shaky nod, but I'm scared the movement will make me vomit, and I'm pretty sure it's extra nasty when it happens with the helmet on.

Our target ship greets me with flashing red lights and shrieking sirens. They know we're here. "All Beta team to the bridge, subdue any passengers you find and take the controls," I hear over my earpiece. The bridge lights up on the map of the ship that is displayed on the screen inside my helmet. I grip my gun as the hall doors open. I can do this.

The rest of the Beta team seems unafraid. Young runs on my left. We're both new, but he seems to have all the confidence I'm missing. Our senior officer, Greer, is paces ahead of us. We're reaching the end of the hall when there's shouting in my earpiece.

"We need assistance on the deck!"

Greer mutters something under her breath; she doesn't sound happy.

"Get to the bridge," she shouts at us, "I'll go help them. Check every room on your way and take care of anyone inside."

**Our target  
ship greets me  
with flashing  
red lights and  
shrieking sirens.**

Young and I nod and turn down the left passage. I hear Greer call behind us, "Try not to mess this up!"

The sirens have stopped at this point, and our footsteps echo through the long hallway. Young breaks our silence.

"You check the doors on the right, I'll take the left."

"Are you sure it's a good idea to—"

"Just call if you need help. We'll cover ground quicker this way."

I try to swallow my fear. I'm alone on a hostile ship. The gun that I'm

not prepared to fire is heavy in my shaking hands. I push through my first door, clenching it in front of me, so tight my knuckles go pale. I let out a sigh of relief when I find myself alone in the room. I look around before lowering my gun. It seems to be a cargo hold, the walls are lined with steel crates. I reposition my gun as I exit, and make my way to the next door.

A bad feeling builds in the back of my throat as I enter the next room. It's another empty cargo hold but smaller and dingier. Right as I'm about to turn back, I hear a rustling from one of the large metal crates. I slowly take a step towards the sound, then another. Maybe it's just a mouse, some ships are infested with them, but usually not those as fancy and new as this one. Another step, then another, and the crate is just in front of me, just a crack open. I carefully place one hand on the crate, the other remains on the trigger, and slowly uncover the rest.

The girl inside is calm. She sees my gun and thinks I would not hesitate, so she does not jump out. She squints her eyes when the light hits her face, but when she opens them wide she shows no panic or fear, just anger. She looks around the same age as me, and it reminds me how young we both are.

“If you shoot me, you'll regret it.”

Her voice holds no doubt. I'll admit I'm not usually a quick thinker, but something clicks just then. Though this is a military ship, she wears a gown, not a uniform. We put too much effort into this attack for it to be just another military cargo shipment.

“You're a princess, aren't you?”

I try to make myself sound bigger than I am. I'm the one holding a gun, I should be the one in control. Her face scrunches up a bit.

“And you're a pirate.” she responds in disgust.

I look at her, unblinking still.

“Are you here to kill me?” the princess asks, her voice is softer now.

Before I can answer, I hear the door open. The girl drops back into the crate as I spin around.

“I finished my check. Found three officers and took care of them. What's taking you so long Welch? Do you need help?” Young asks. He

sounds more annoyed than accusatory, but still I try to block the crate with my body.

"I'm fine," I answer, trying to sound calm. "Didn't run into any trouble yet, just checking some cargo. You know, to make sure."

I glance quickly down and the princess is looking at me suspiciously.

"Oh," Young responds, then he grins. "Find anything interesting?" he asks as he begins making his way over to me.

"No." I find myself responding with a steadiness I never possessed before.

I step forward towards Young.

"Come on," I tell him decisively, "we need to get to the bridge."



# Go With The Flow

By Ilana Katzenstein

Pouring rain is a good indication that it's a bad day to go rafting. Then again, there's always the hope that it'll stop raining by the time we arrive. Regardless, there we were, sitting in a hot, squishy, tin can on wheels, driving through a summer downpour. The yellow school bus clinked with chatter as we approached our destination, but this bus ride had an added level of concern.

"Look at the rain, we're absolutely not going rafting today! We're probably just going to have to turn around and go back to camp"

"Maybe we can just go next week."

"No, that definitely won't work. I overheard the head counselors talking, and color war is going to be next week."

"Well then maybe we can just go on—"

"It's for the waiver" my friend whispered to me as she shoved a tiny flip phone in my face.

"Hello?"

"Hi, what's your name?"

I provided the receiver with my name, address, and parents' phone numbers.

Looks like there's no need to rearrange the camp calendar.

\*\*\*

"It's fine, we don't need a staff member on our boat, we know what we're doing."

Paddles in hand, my friends and I climbed into a damp raft. We didn't notice the rain as we made our way down the stream. Eagerly waiting to encounter the rapids, we were like kids sitting on a roller coaster waiting to reach the peak. Our laughter was audible as we used

**It then occurred to me that help doesn't fall from the sky unprompted. But perhaps, it could fall from a bridge.**

the bucket, meant to remove water from our raft, to pour dirty river water over each other's heads.

\*\*\*

"Guys, I think that's the exit."

We started rowing faster, using our paddles as weapons against the water. But the current was too strong, the water was too deep, and our muscles felt like jelly. Soon, we were speeding past the exit, and unfortunately, we didn't have Waze to recalculate our route.

"It's fine, there are more rafts ahead



of us... I'm sure it's okay if we continue."

For a minute, we may've been somewhat concerned about missing the exit, but once we passed it, we stood up on the raft and took turns acting out *Moana*.

"One of the boats flipped over! You have to get stuck in the bushes before you get to the waterfall!"

Our *Moana* concert turned into a symphony of wailing sirens.

"You row forward! I'll row backward!"

"No! We need to turn left!"

"Guys! Paddle faster!"

Shaking, we frantically pulled over to a little dip in the stream just a few feet away from the mini waterfall. Once we were certain that our raft was stuck, we began to calm down, until an eerie silence overcame us as the severity of the situation sunk in. We didn't know where we were. We didn't know how we were going to get out. We had no phones. Who was in the raft that flipped over? Were they my age, or younger? Did they have a staff member in their boat? Were they okay?

We noticed that we were parked just a few feet away from a bridge. A tall park bridge with people on it. It then occurred to me that help doesn't fall from the sky

unprompted. But perhaps, it could fall from a bridge.

Within minutes we were blinded by bright red lights and deafened by screeching sirens. There were people in life-vests swimming against the current, river attendants paddling in kayaks, and giant waterproof firefighters coming from all directions.

Only now, when a rescue team was called in, and we were the ones that needed rescuing, did I begin to shake. I mean, I was sopping wet, freezing, and terrified.

There were ropes tied, bushes cut, and fast paced commands. We attentively followed instructions. I stepped into the freezing cold water and gripped the rope until my purple knuckles turned white. We followed one another single file until we reached the bushes on the opposite side which led out onto a highway. I thanked the firefighters on either side of me as I climbed onto solid ground.

Once we all made it safely onto the road, I realized that the clouds were now clear and the sun joined us with its warm embrace. There was an ambulance waiting for us stocked with clean towels and water bottles. We gave our names to the police officer taking a headcount.

There we were, left on the side of



an abandoned highway. We were safe, and there was no need to worry. Except, where was the rest of the camp?

We prayed. We paced. We sat in circles. We cried.

There was absolutely nothing for us to do. We were sitting there staring at the gravel.

I tried to stifle a laugh.

“Why are you laughing? This isn’t

funny,” my friend tried to tell me as a smile spread across her face.

“I don’t know, I just... this is just so crazy...”

Looking around the circle, everyone began laughing, and another friend added in agreement, “Yeah, I mean, who needs to make the exit anyway?”



# Snowfall

By Baila Deutsch

As I watch the snowflakes flutter by  
from the comfort and warmth of my couch  
I wonder how it would feel  
to be so beautiful  
yet insignificant

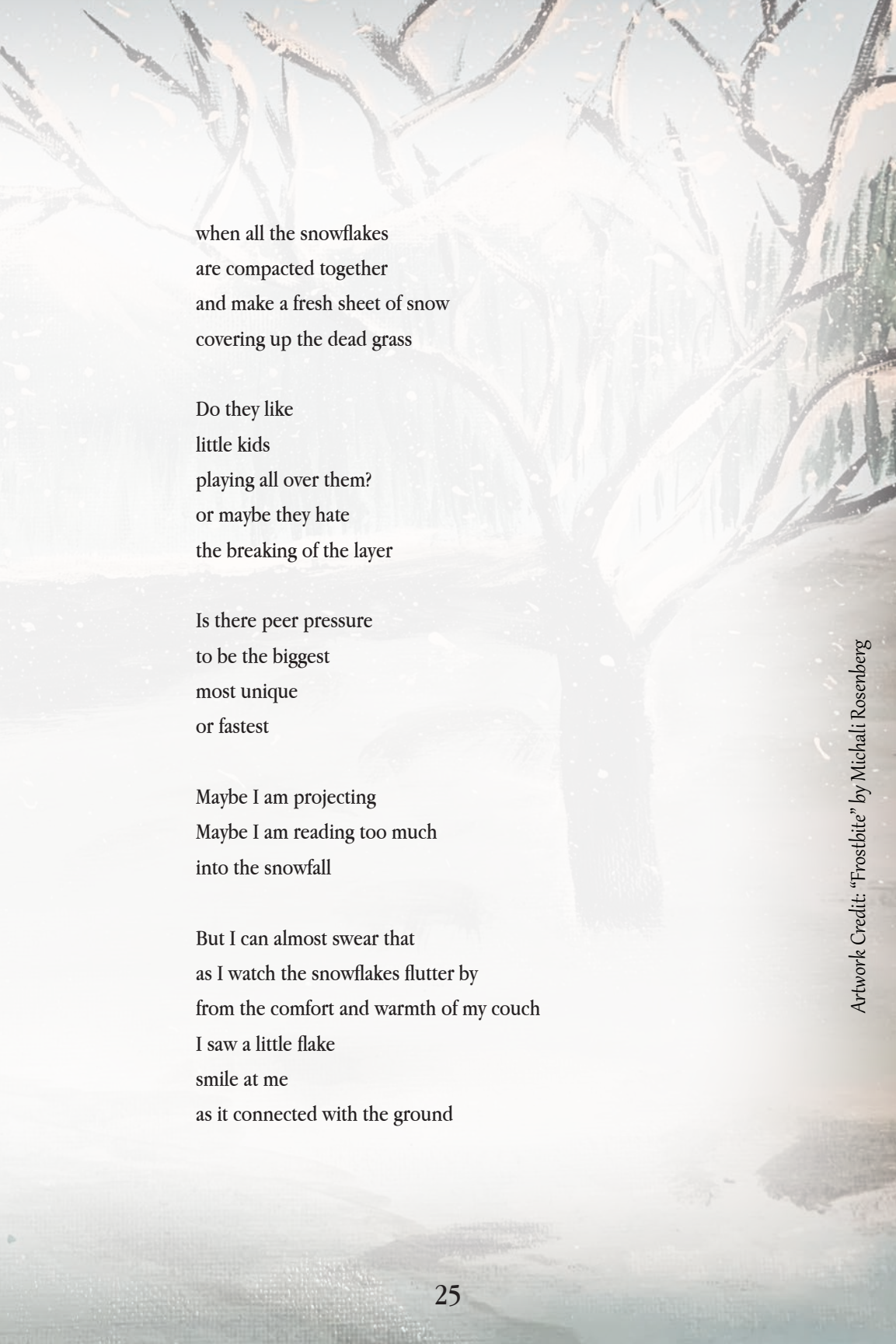
I wonder if it is painful  
to know that  
you are just one in a billion  
or if it is calming  
because anything you do  
will have no effect

I wonder if they  
feel cold  
like we do  
or if that is just their ordinary temperature

What happens to them  
when they melt  
do they just evaporate into nothingness?  
or does their family up in the cloud  
miss them  
and mourn them

perhaps their last moment  
and gift to the world  
is when the sun rises in the morning  
and makes the snow sparkle





when all the snowflakes  
are compacted together  
and make a fresh sheet of snow  
covering up the dead grass

Do they like  
little kids  
playing all over them?  
or maybe they hate  
the breaking of the layer

Is there peer pressure  
to be the biggest  
most unique  
or fastest

Maybe I am projecting  
Maybe I am reading too much  
into the snowfall

But I can almost swear that  
as I watch the snowflakes flutter by  
from the comfort and warmth of my couch  
I saw a little flake  
smile at me  
as it connected with the ground

# Water, It Depends...

By Meira Notkin

Imagine going swimming in your pasta water, skating on a swimming pool, and boiling pasta in an ice rink. Depending on the compaction of the atoms,  $H_2O$  takes the form of ice, snow, or pasta water.

The compactness, though, depends on the temperature. In high temperatures, water molecules move around in a frenzy and break the bonds holding the molecules together. In parallel, low temperatures restrict movement between the water molecules: freezing the water into ice.

Ice is a mystery. It displays distinct liquid-like properties: slippery, impressionable, and even 'wet'. Why is  $H_2O$ , the only solid that you can skate on? Have you ever tried skating on  $C_6H_{12}O_6$  (that's sugar) or swimming in melted Au (gold)? Water is an anomaly. It is the poem and the other molecules are the prose. It breaks all the rules but still flows.

It pours down from the sky  
Quenches hot and dry  
Necessary to survive  
Water holds life

Ships sailing into ice  
Flailing in the sea  
Summers in distress  
Water holds death

The clouds in the sky,  
become the waves in the sea  
The cycle goes and goes  
Water holds

**Water is an  
anomaly. It is the  
poem and the  
other molecules  
are the prose.**

Frozen water holds itself together in different forms. When water freezes in rigid sheets, it forms a solid for cooling drinks or playing hockey. When water freezes in crystal clusters, it forms snow. Snow is powdery, smooth, and adaptable – perfect for packing into a ball to launch at an unsuspecting friend. It may compel the more daring folks to strap two wooden boards to their feet and propel themselves off a mountain, also known as skiing. When you ski, the tips of your skis carve the snow like a painter's artful strokes. Just like one wrong turn slams you into a tree, one wrong stroke makes a tree look like a brown prism. The thrill and

adrenaline of speeding down the mountain must be how superman feels when he flies around the globe. But, if the mountain was 10 degrees warmer, you would be hopelessly flopping around like aquaman in a puddle. The phase depends on the temperature.

The temperature needed to change the state of the water, though, depends on the atmosphere. It's harder to boil water in low altitudes the same way it's harder to learn calculus at home than at school. It all depends on the environment.

In whatever environment you find yourself, your existence depends on water. Water pours down from the sky in storms and sprouts out of the ground in little geysers that are always ready to erupt. It covers two-thirds of the earth, and connects the other one-third. Or separates them, depending on your perspective.

Water is as fluid as your perspective. When we skate on ice, maybe our action melts the ice and maybe our inaction freezes the water. After all, melting point and freezing point are the same, it all depends on perspective.

When you swim, you are gliding through the water undeterred. Like an arrow with no purpose, except to keep moving forward. However, you can also hopelessly drift with no direction, getting desperately pushed around by a current. It all depends on what's stronger, the waves or your spirit. I guess that depends on you.











Artwork Credit: "The Moonlight" by Becky Bral



# Smoke and Fire

By Yocheved Stein

The flames that you feel,  
They hurt and they burn,  
They're building up inside,  
You have nowhere to turn,

The slashes of red,  
Its scars never leave,  
They pound in your head  
They show the pain you've received,

I know you want to lash out,  
And embrace the beast within  
Take a breath and count to ten,  
Don't let them pierce your skin,

Ignore the betrayal, the blood, the gashes,  
Defy nature,  
Reborn from the ashes,

The fumes of smoke are gray and black,  
They blind your eyes,  
Just take a step back,

Remember who you are,  
Your legacy and your power,  
You are a phoenix,  
Nothing makes you cower,

Spread your golden wings,  
Your salvation has begun,  
Turn that fire into power,  
Your home is now the sun,

The phoenix will always remember  
The pain and the sorrow,  
But it is also the shining symbol  
Of the hope of tomorrow.



Artwork Credit: "Pointe" by Sarah Dan

# When I Grow Up

By Eliya Cohen

“When I grow up I’m going to be a teacher, writer, and speech therapist!”

By the time I was seven I had my whole life figured out. What my future jobs would be – jobs as in multiple – how many kids I would have, and where I was going to live. I was going to be a teacher because I knew teachers were allowed to eat Mike and Ikes during class, a writer because my teacher told me I wrote good stories, and a speech therapist since the ones who came for my brothers were really cool.

When I heard that something was cool or challenging I decided I was going to do it. This is why my job preference had switched from teacher, to FBI agent, to lawyer. It was also why I knew what high school I was going to when I was only ten and why I decided to join the girls basketball team in my school, even though I couldn’t play basketball. For a year I practiced and practiced and it paid off; I got in. I considered myself indestructible. Everything I wished for was coming true. I was happy.

Until everything started to change.

Everyone dreads the fateful year they turn eleven. Well, at least I did. Turning eleven meant I had to get two shots and blood drawn from my arm, not my finger. Though I

could see myself running out of the room crying, I was never prepared for what happened that day. Soon after I got the shots I began to feel dizzy. The rest was history. I remember waking up on the floor, a dozen heads surrounding me, the classic movie scene. Nothing prepared me for the panic attack afterward either.

**When I grow up  
I’m going to be a  
teacher, writer, and  
speech therapist!**

At that time I was just deemed “too overwhelmed at the sight of blood,” however after fainting at home and in the camp shower, it became clear that my problem had nothing to do with blood. Many issues followed after. After three years of stabbing pain in my feet, I was diagnosed with Plantar Fasciitis, a leg condition that had me hobbling in agony after standing for a mere hour.

But, the final straw was when I wasn’t elected grade representative in sixth grade. When the teacher collected the ballots each year, I wished and prayed under my breath that the name called would

be mine. The thought of being chosen as a representative and standing on stage was like a fantasy to me. A fantasy that didn't come true. Twice.

Although the physical pain was hard, the realization that not all my dreams would come true hit harder, even a small dream like being chosen as grade representative.

However, life moved on and so did I.

I got into my dream high school.

I didn't grow past 5'2".

I won a New York Times award.

I failed my first test.

By now, after experiencing the threats of fainting anywhere anytime and enjoying the pleasure of winning a competition I never

believed I could possibly achieve, I stopped planning out my life in detail. I still hope to become a lawyer and I will always love writing. Some things never change, but I've become more spontaneous. I get bangs even if they might look like a kindergartners arts and crafts project and I'm no longer afraid to enter challenges I may not win. I don't believe I need to be or do everything. Plans are important but so is this moment. If I'm using up all these moments thinking of tomorrow, what am I going to miss today? And as we all know, "Man plans, but G-d plans better."

Oh, did I forget to mention it? I was finally chosen as grade representative in the eighth grade.



# Last Year's Memories, This Year's Cake

By Eliana Schwartz

*11:55*

I remember the room was cold.  
White lights cast an ominous glow.  
Empty.  
Aside for the dusty counter in the corner,  
    the stiff black chair,  
                    and the large, towering structure in the middle of it all.  
“Don't move.”  
I stood there, still, as if I became the structure and the structure me.  
It came alive,  
*whirling*  
At last, I stepped out of the x-ray machine.

*11:56*

I remember the hurt.  
Far too much to be called embarrassment.  
The class was split into 3 groups.  
I was in none.  
The pain as I entered those cold metal doors daily,  
    no one noticing,  
not even a glance in my direction.  
Yesterday, I was one of them.  
respected, included  
Today, I was a shadow,  
a ghost, invisible.

*11:57*

I remember sneaking a look down the hallway.  
Clear.  
I ran  
passed the den,

through the kitchen,  
until I reached the backyard.  
I climbed the rope.  
My hands burned.  
I stood proudly on my pirate ship (My grandparents' decaying swing set)  
I planted my flag.  
I gazed contently out into the forest,  
into the  
Un-  
conquered,  
Un-  
confined territory  
beyond the locked gate.

*11:58*

I remember—  
“*Bang! Crash!*”  
I froze. Being home alone was never my idea of fun.  
I may have fancied myself to be a hero,  
swooping in like a Tarzan or Robin Hood  
Reality was a harsh truth.  
I cowered in my chair.  
I crept towards my closet, inched down the stairs.  
My heart pounded loud enough to give me away.  
But then  
I had enough of cowering  
I ventured into the kitchen.  
Empty.  
So was the dining room, living room, and playroom.  
I exhaled.

*11:59*

I remember the birds chirped good morning.



I didn't chirp back.  
My eyes drooped from blariness,  
Exhausted.  
The sun hadn't even risen yet.  
Good.  
I was still sleeping, just awake.  
The bus shook violently.  
I bounced ten feet high,  
skimmed the ceiling,  
and plopped back down.  
Ouch.  
I closed my eyes again,  
desperate to salvage the last part of the night on the  
old,  
    Trembling,  
    bus.

*12:00*

Last year a blur,  
Moments now memories—  
This one untouched  
I promise time I'll use it wisely  
And promise myself to make a difference on this planet.  
The one that spins around the sun  
The one so permanent, so similar, so changed.

The clock strikes midnight  
The date is now August 30th.  
I inhale and exhale  
The flames dwindle  
I exhale with more force  
    And blow out the birthday candles

# HISTORY IS A SHIP FOREVER SETTING SAIL



Artwork Credit: "Waves of Time" by Chaya Trapedo

# I Woke Up In Paris

By Chavi Golding

While I begrudgingly shove my worn-out leather carry-on into the overhead compartment, I take a mental note of the passengers already seated around us. I can easily divide the strangers into two types of travelers; for simplicity's sake, let's call them type A and type B. Type A arrived at the airport before check-in desks were open with a pre-packed lunch. Type B showed up at the gate with his shoes still in hand as he congratulated himself for remembering ID. Type A has a pre-arranged taxi driver for the return home, while type B hasn't even booked a return ticket yet. It goes without saying that you and I are type B.

Our spontaneity can seem frightening and foolish to the type A folks in our world. Their nerves would burst if they found themselves following our itinerary in France. We woke up in Paris after purposely taking the wrong flight home. I remember wishing I could say something that wouldn't sound insane with my American accent, but I just said nothing. Anyway, the truth is that we didn't care that our plans were as sturdy as sandcastles. It was on a beach in Portugal, when we didn't build them far enough from the sea, so we let the waves keep coming and crashing over us. You remember that, right? It was after the concierge advised us to take a day touring their prestigious museums. We laughed as we asked her to ensure that the beach provided towels.

The memories will never escape me. You know those situations where you want to burn an image into your mind so that you can always pull it up, like a file, whenever it's needed? We can keep making those memories. In fact, I just signed up for traditional dancing lessons in Morocco tomorrow. Would you like to join me?

**The truth is  
that we didn't  
care that our  
plans were  
as sturdy as  
sandcastles.**

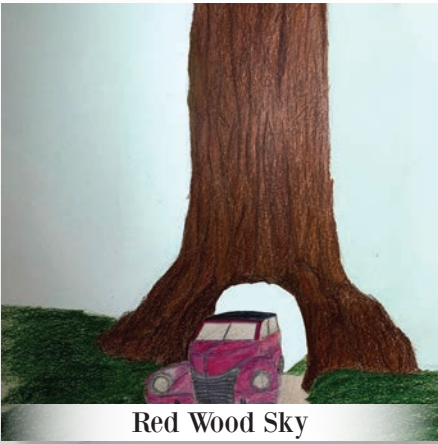
Don't worry about the ticket, I'll use a coupon. We have an impressive winning streak in regards to bargaining—remember Casablanca? We went to the same restaurant every night because they had free appetizers after 8pm. I'd gladly revisit any of our past explorations, but I refuse to go back to Venice with you. Although you thought it was funny, I did not appreciate having my gondola flipped over just as it began to rain and soaking my clothes to the point of no return as I swam out of the Italian "street."

Remember day eight in Dublin? Since we picked out a countless amount of lucky four-leaf clovers, it's ironic that we missed our flight home. This was not our first missed flight, nor would it be our last. We soon ended up in Rome, and landed four days later in Buenos Aires, probably smelling faintly of pasta rigatoni. Just like all of our time spent together, we didn't waste a single night. To some non-dreamers, what might have been wasted time was in our private reality defined as time well spent. After all, we took our time to make it to the middle of nowhere.

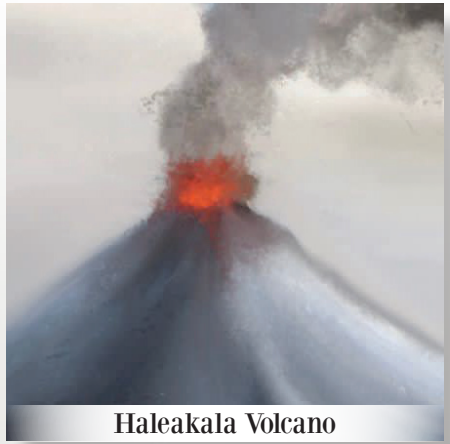
We spent twenty-something days in Brazil, and hopped onto the next red-eye to Iceland. We never got to see their Northern lights, so we promised to go back one day. Back in Europe, between our adventures in Amsterdam and Prague, we made sure to save time for a quick two day break in Belgium to find out what all the fuss was about with their chocolate. I recall once being asked about how we dealt with jetlag, as we had the most legendary snowball fight in NYC's Central Park, a Taco festival in Mexico City, and skied through Switzerland in the short span of eighteen days. Jetlag never seemed to be a problem – what is the point of sleeping if you spend your days dreaming?

At one point, I realized that I'll never be in the same moment again, and no matter how hard I try, I cannot make any moment last forever. Perhaps that isn't a bad thing, because sometimes, moments become better when they turn into memories. Paris happens to be one of those words that has a dual meaning. Yeah, the home to the Eiffel Tower is extraordinary, but Paris can also resemble an irrevocable condition for fantasy that evokes nostalgia or day dreams. Paris gives a sense of fantasy that people don't have in their ordinary life. Above them all, that is the kind of Paris that I would like to find myself waking up in.

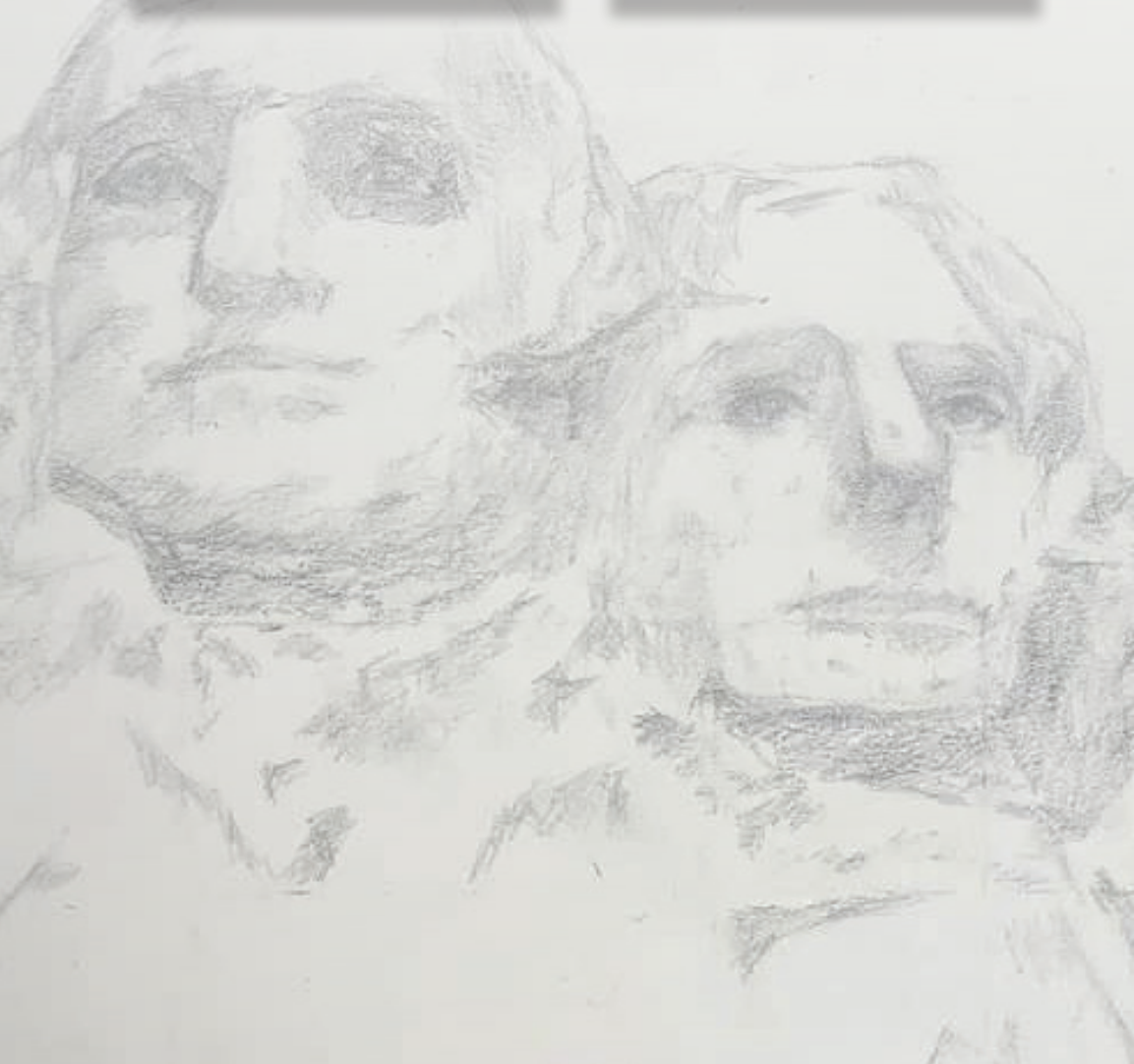




Red Wood Sky

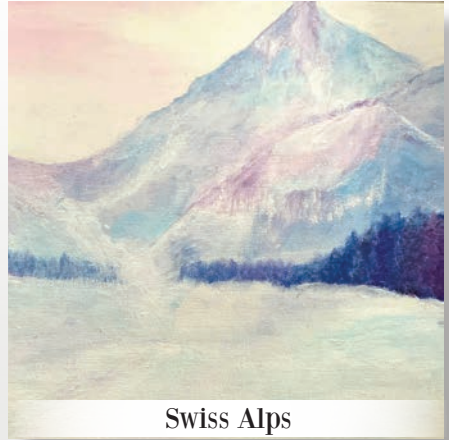


Haleakala Volcano

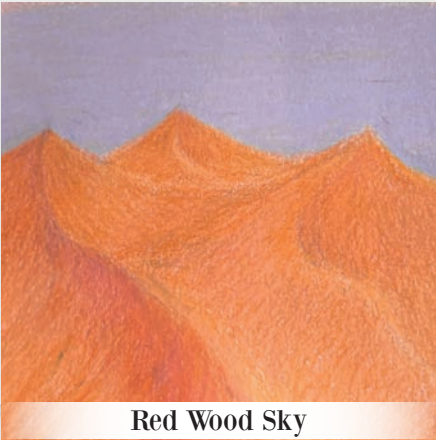




City of Rain



Swiss Alps



Red Wood Sky



Stonehenge



# An Original Cliche

By Nechama Mandel

It's the day before the deadline and I still have no idea what to write. The good news is, MLA format has a really long header, so it looks like I wrote *something*. Nine words down, only 491 to go. I stare again at the blinking cursor that mocks me on the (practically) blank white page. I have 24 hours, and nothing to write...

So you just rolled your eyes. You may have even sighed at the fact that you have to read *another* one of these essays. They may have seemed creative and impressive the first time you read them, but now you've read a hundred essays about writer's block and you never want to see one again. If you know what I'm talking about, stay tuned, this one's for you.

Good, you're still here. That means you've seen those kinds of essays before. So why did you roll your eyes? I have one word for you: cliche. You may have heard this word before, and if you've seen any recent Disney films, you already have a pretty good idea of what it means. It means you've heard it all before; it's boring and overused and you just want to hear something 'original'. But there's something about cliches most people never think of.

Before a cliche was a cliche, it was an original. Actually, it was such a popular original that it became overused, and eventually, it was doomed to forever be known as a cliche. The thing is, if every cliche was once an original, then if we stop using them as cliches they will go back to being original. But then, people will be so impressed with them and begin to use them again, and the cycle will continue because a cliche is only cliche if we make it a cliche and every cliche is just the most beloved of all originals out there.

**Cliches may not be a whole new world, and they're certainly not one in a million, but we could have the time of our lives using them.**

Now, you may have to read that three times to try and wrap your head around it, so let me explain. You may not agree that cliches should be used and you may be right. If people will groan at the fact that they know the ending of your essay after reading the first sentence, that's a problem. But one thing's for sure: we don't roll our eyes at cliches because they're not good, we do it because they're overused, and the only reason they're overused is because they are, in fact, great.

So, maybe cliches are boring and overused, but try to imagine a life where no one was on top of the world, and we weren't one for all and all for one. A time when no one used the lemons life gave them to make lemonade or crossed a bridge when they got to it. As you ponder that sad, sad universe, keep calm and carry on, because it is what it is. While that may be easier said than done, please don't rain on my cliché parade. Cliches may not be a whole new world, and they're certainly not one in a million, but we could have the time of our lives using them, and at the end of the day, isn't that what really matters?

The truth is, the only problem with cliches is the fact that they're just too good. While it may seem cliché when you hear it, cliches give people a sense of comfort and leave a reader with something to think about. Properly using a cliché can be even more effective than making up a new phrase. You already know what effect the cliché will have. True, they're used often, but that means that the reader will know exactly what you're talking about instead of having to figure out a convoluted new metaphor.

Not only that, but cliches appeal to the child inside us. The cliches we hear, read, and see as a child are ingrained within us, and while we shouldn't live life as a cliché, a part of us still believes in them. Everyone has a childhood spirit in them, the one who wished upon a shooting star and truly believed in these cliches. Therefore, using a cliché won't just give people a sense of comfort or ease their understanding, but it will speak to their inner child.

Maybe we shouldn't put cliches in our college essays, thesis paper, or any other school related assignment because they're considered overused and unoriginal. But, we have to use them, at least on occasion, because if we don't, we'll lose our youthful view of the world. We may not want to admit it for fear of sounding childish, but there's comfort in cliches.

So yes, once upon a time in a faraway land there lived a queen—The Queen of Cliches. She was the most powerful and influential queen in the land, because everyone based their “original” kingdoms off of hers. While The Queen and I may not have convinced you to use cliches, I hope you now recognize their importance, sentiment, and depth of originality. Maybe now you'll believe in cliches again and you'll see that when you wish upon a star, dreams do come true, and they lived happily ever after.

The End.







Artwork Credit: "Entrees and Encores" by Orly Setareh

# Fulcrum Points

By Dassi Mayerfeld

“You need to adjust the pressure you’re placing on them. Learn to find a balance, or they won’t bounce back.”

It was my first drum lesson and I was stuck on the basics. The very basics.

*Bangggg.*

It needed to sound sharper.

*Banggg. Banggg.*

I wasn’t getting anywhere.

“Why don’t you work on this over the weekend and we’ll pick up here next Friday?” Russ suggested.

I nodded.

I’d watched my brother play for two years, and from the sidelines drumming appeared simple. How hard could it be to drop a stick? However, as I adjusted my “American grip,” facing my palms down and rotating my elbows to create a forty five degree angle, I realized playing the drums was more like solving a geometric equation than banging two spatulas on my mother’s new pot.

I had correctly observed one thing from the sidelines, though. There isn’t much technique in dropping the sticks. The science is finding the fulcrum point: the exact positioning of a drummer’s grip that provides the sharpest sound

and allows the sticks to bounce back in a constant rhythm. That point is often indicated by an American flag icon resting about two thirds of the way up the thin wooden cylinders I now hold in my hands. I adjust my grip and pressure and produce a sound more like brontide than quarter notes.

Learning to play the drums is not only about metronomically counting to four, but adjusting my

**I realized playing  
the drums was  
more like solving a  
geometric equation  
than banging two  
spatulas on my  
mother’s new pot.**

rhythm for different tracks and maintaining my pacing during a fill. The short sticking patterns of fills that break from the groove of the beat have always been the most challenging. It’s the change that throws me off. Adjusting the pressure to account for change while maintaining the rhythm is something drummers spend a lifetime mastering. This adjustment is something that has begun to define me as both a drummer and

a person.

The worn out tips of my drum sticks bear witness to the hours of practice and the music I created. They absorbed the Latin pattern of Bossa Nova when I decided to learn the background music you hear in office building elevators. They echoed the Afro-Cuban rhythm of Cascara Rumba and applauded my mastery of Samba beats originating from Brazilian percussion.

However, their role as an audience was not solely a pleasurable one. Their faded American flags and splintered wooden tips bore witness to the undue pressure I put on them. My sticks bore large indents from hitting the metal rim of the snare drum when I played cross stick beats. They trembled from the structured chaos of my first buzz rolls.

My drumsticks rested on my music stand, tattered, when Russ wrote “Lesson 100” at the top of my drummer’s notebook. It was the same week I had taken the AP European History exam. It was my first AP exam and the most challenging course a sophomore could take. I had never put so much pressure on myself. For five months before the exam, my fingers counted sixteenth notes as they dropped a beat on my keyboard.

Three hundred and eighteen pages of typed up notes testified to the effort I invested. Regardless of the unpitiful number that would measure my success, or lack thereof, in early July, I prepared to declare “peace without victory.” No matter the outcome, I would be at peace with myself and my score.

It was then that I finally understood; I had found my own fulcrum point. I had finely balanced the pressure and I had bounced back.

I unwrapped the gift my friends bought me in honor of this milestone: two new drumsticks with smooth tips and no American flags to guide me. Engraved in the honey brown wood read, “I drum, therefore I am.”





# Staying Focused

By Adina Hoffman

*(Setting: Bedroom. HANNAH is sitting on the bed with textbooks and a large binder in front of her. MATH is sitting on the bed next to her)*

HANNAH

Okay, Math, I know I ignored you, for like all semester, but now it's the day before your midterm, so I need to do well enough to finish high school.  
*(Sighs)* So tonight, it's just you and me.

MATH

*Finally*, you've come to your senses. So *(glances at the clock)* it's 8 PM, so if we study and we wake up at 6 AM... we only need 4 hours of sleep, right? 7 hours of studying should be enough time for a midterm.

HANNAH

Wait, wait, wait, wait. You're saying ONLY 4 hours of sleep?! That isn't enough!

MATH

Well if we start right away with no, and I mean NO, distractions, maybe we can have 5 hours of sleep. Does that sound better, Hannah?

HANNAH

*(Looking down)* Better than 4 hours I guess. Let's get started right away!

*(CELL PHONE comes into the room and sits on the bed between HANNAH and MATH)*

CELL PHONE

*(Shoving a phone under HANNAH's face, teases in a sing-song way)* Guess who got a text message!

MATH

No, no, go away, we need to study! We are wasting time Hannah! *(Glances and sees that HANNAH is eyeing CELL PHONE)*

CELL PHONE

Hannah, sweetheart, I hate to tell you this....but you have 3,000 unread emails, 4 of which are *actually* important.

HANNAH

I really should deal with those...

MATH

*(Placing a textbook on top of the phone and points aggressively to the page)* No, deal with Jorge's unread emails! What is the ratio from unread to read if he reads 60 of them?

HANNAH

Um... what are ratios again?

MATH

*(Slaps hand to forehead and groans)* We are going to be here all night.

HANNAH

Thanks for the vote of confidence. Guess it may be 4 hours of sleep after all.

*(EXPERIMENTAL SCIENCE walks in)*

EXPERIMENTAL SCIENCE

Look Hannah, Math is just being realistic, you can't really blame her. Based on your math average thus far and the minimal amount of hours put into studying, the data clearly shows that you need to study for at least 9 hours in order to get above an 80 on your math midterm.

HANNAH

Are you kidding me?!

EXPERIMENTAL SCIENCE

*(Sbrugs)* Just stating the facts.

CELL PHONE

*(Shoving EXPERIMENTAL SCIENCE out of the way and slides arm around HANNAH's shoulder)* Speaking of facts, I have 17 articles for you to read which state that all of your ideas about college that you thought were true are actually false.

MATH

*(Losing temper)* Would all of you mind going away so we can focus on this midterm!?! *(to EXPERIMENTAL SCIENCE)* What are you doing here anyway?

EXPERIMENTAL SCIENCE

Hannah has an essay she must write, due at the end of the semester.

HANNAH

Oh, I should really do that. . . *(HANNAH looks at MATH and EXPERIMENTAL SCIENCE, both arms crossed and staring at one another)* Um, this is awkward. *(Pauses, thinking To MATH)* I promise I'll be back to study in an hour.

MATH

No, no, no! You can do the essay tomorrow, focus on math!

*(ENGLISH walks in)*

ENGLISH

*(Teary)* Hannah, I can't believe you forgot about me! You have to study for your English midterm that's tomorrow and is *before* math! Last I checked, the morning does come before the afternoon.

MATH, EXPERIMENTAL SCIENCE, CELL PHONE

Oh, come on, no one studies for English, get out of here!

*(ENGLISH leaves, wiping eyes)*

CELL PHONE

Speaking of things you've neglected, I've got a long list of apps that you have to authorize updates for!

*(SLEEP walks in)*

SLEEP

And I have a long list of sleep! Nice, rejuvenating sleep...

MATH

*(Scared and frustrated)* No, not Sleep! I can't compete with that!

SLEEP

*(Slowly approaches HANNAH and puts a pillow on her lap on top of the textbook)* Just close your eyes, take a nap...

HANNAH

*(Closing the math book and lying down)* It is very late...

SLEEP

So, so late...

MATH

*(Desperately)* But, but, MATH! But STUDYING! But MIDTERMS!

HANNAH

*(Closing her eyes)* So so late...

*(MATH shakes HANNAH awake)*

HANNAH

I'm up, I'm up. *(to SLEEP)* Get out of here Sleep, I need to study!

SLEEP

*(Winks)* I'll be back soon.

*(SLEEP leaves)*

MATH

Okay, back to studying. *(Glancing at the clock)* We should be done around 3:45 AM, we didn't lose that much time—

CELL PHONE

*(Interrupts)* I have a bunch of unread messages for you to read, and most of them are about math!

HANNAH

*(Reaching for the phone)* Oh, I should really read those. . . .

*(SLEEP walks in again)*

SLEEP

Told you I'd come back.

*(HANNAH lies down and closes her eyes)*

MATH

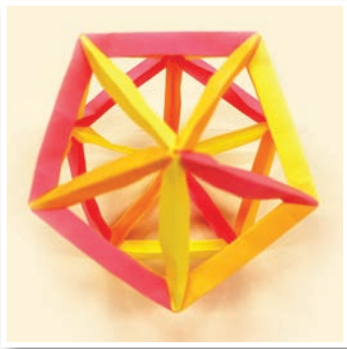
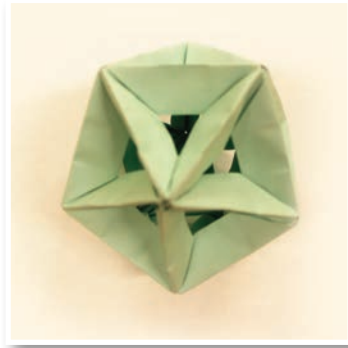
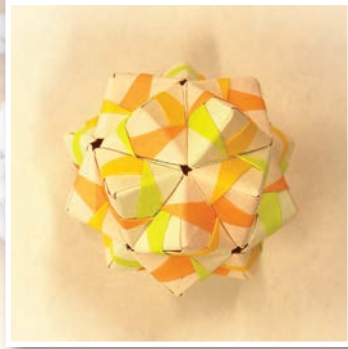
No! It's too soon! The test is in 2 hours! *(Shakes HANNAH by the shoulders)*  
Hannah, listen to me! Hannah! *(Sinks to knees and cries)* NOOO!

*(EXPERIMENTAL SCIENCE pokes head through the door)*

EXPERIMENTAL SCIENCE

I told you the data would support that outcome.

End Scene





# Sincerely, Eva

By Ellie Trapedo

Dear Congresswoman Sherman,

Hi. How are you? I'm fine, I guess. Today was my first day back in school after another two-week quarantine. So far, sixth grade has been harder than I thought it would be, especially since testing positive for Zoom fatigue (new vocabulary word). After missing the bus and having to walk to school in the rain, I fell asleep in my Social Studies class. Instead of tapping my desk, Ms. Zabar yelled at me from across the plexiglass to wake me up. I guess she'd been talking for a while, but the only thing I remember is her saying, "If you really want change, write to your congressman." And so I am.

I'd really appreciate your help with some things.

First off, I begged my mom for these sort of expensive and *really* cool shoes with neon pink laces that totally match my style for my birthday. After wearing them for a day, I found out they're super uncomfortable and I can't even return them because I already wore them. What should I do?

I also think my friend Danielle who sits in front of me in biology class doesn't want to be my friend anymore. She started eating lunch at a different table every day, which is weird because she still waved back when I waved at her at ShopRite yesterday. How can I get her to be my friend again? I've been a bit lonely during the pandemic.

**If you really  
want change,  
write to your  
congressman.**

Also, I got a C- on my history midterm, and when I went to speak to the teacher after class, I'm pretty sure I saw Danielle eavesdropping which was really embarrassing. I also feel like I'll never be ready for high school. I used to be such a good student, but find it really hard to even get a "B" lately. Is it just me or do you think other students are having a hard time too?

Lastly, I dropped my phone while running to catch the bus and only realized a few blocks later. When I went back to get it a car had already driven over it and I had to bring home the parts in a plastic bag. By the time I got home, I was late and my mom was pretty mad because I didn't call to let her know and she was worried. When I finished apologizing and explaining, I asked my mom for a new phone. She said no since the shoes

were so expensive we couldn't afford a new phone right now and I would just have to use her old flip phone, which doesn't even have emojis!

So, Congresswoman Sherman, I was wondering if you could do anything to help. I'm in desperate need of change. Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

Sincerely,

Eva

P.S. If you could give my mom a job that would make her very happy. She used to be a hotel concierge and was furlowed a few months ago.

Dear Eva,

Thank you for taking the time to contact Congresswoman Sherman. Due to the fact that Congressman Sherman receives an abundance of letters, she is unable to read all of them, but appreciates hearing from you and cares about your thoughts. They are important to her and help her better represent you and the 23rd congressional district of New York.

Please stay in touch and continue to share your views with Congresswoman Sherman. You may find additional information on important issues by visiting our [website](#). I also encourage you to visit our [Facebook page](#) or follow us on [Twitter](#) where we continue these conversations.

Sincerely,

On behalf of Congresswoman Kathy Sherman

Representative for New York's 23rd Congressional District







# Puzzle Pieces

By Chaya Hersko

We just need the puzzle pieces to connect and then we'll all be happy.

What is taken for granted  
What is being prayed for  
Is all the same

We want what we don't have  
And don't have what we want

Sometimes we're given extra  
Extra sickness  
Extra sadness  
Extra struggle  
Extra blessing  
Extra beauty  
Extra buoyancy

Sometimes we're given less  
Less problems  
Less possibilities

What's better  
Less problems leaves room for more possibilities  
Less possibilities leaves room for more problems  
I don't know

We all want what we can't have  
We can't see the final picture  
We're a part of the puzzle  
And our connecting piece might just be what we're praying for.



# The Apple Doesn't Fall Far From The Tree

By Chavi Weiner

Katherine wondered how this nightmare would end. She knew her family depended on her contribution of income for their survival, but she found herself wondering from time to time why fate would punish her as such. If she had to live this life, would she have to work for such a person that she did?

While he was admired by many for his intelligence, Katherine felt that her master was a horrid person who never showed any human decency towards anyone. Despite her pleas to be involved with more of his work instead of sweeping the floor, he disregarded her. Glimpses of the charts and graphs upon which he plotted his thoughts and musings of the workings of the universe tempted Katherine so much that she could hardly restrain herself from pouring over the figures as he did.

Even though her master was ungrateful and uppity, Katherine noticed that his colleagues respected him to the point of worship. In her eyes, he did not do anything consequential. Nothing about her life had changed because of his discoveries, other than his treatment of her. To him, she was as useful as his discarded drafts.

While her master assumed she was illiterate, Katherine secretly studied his observations. She found most of his notes to be accurate, though did find errors within his calculations on occasion. Though the simple mathematical sums were easily corrected, some more theoretical questions perplexed Katherine as much as it did her master.

When her master would get especially frustrated with his lack of understanding within his supposed "area of expertise," Katherine would follow him, bolstering up the courage to ask him, yet again, if she could play a greater role in his research than dusting the instruments.

In one instance, Katherine had been discovered reading his notes

**And it was  
as though an  
apple had hit  
her as well – a  
new thought,  
the final piece  
in the puzzle  
to understand  
what her master  
could not.**

and annotating the margins. Katherine recognized that his theory on the forces on an object accounted for one too many factors. When her master discovered her, not only was he embarrassed because Katherine was indeed correct, but he told her that she would be replaced with an obedient male servant. This was the only time he bid her good day, and promptly exited his study.

Katherine stormed after him; she wanted to confront him, not for letting her go, but for not being credited for her correction. Although her rage could have shifted the tectonic plates beneath the earth's crust, the scientist didn't notice her as he blubbered to himself under a tree in his orchard.

"How *dare* you disrespect me after all I have done for your work, all of the mistakes I have corrected, all of the tea parties I have served to men like you who discuss only fallacies about the forces of nature—"

Katherine knew that her yelling was unbecoming of a lady, but she did not care. She was sickened by his appearance, sitting obliviously under that tree. Her rage drove her foot into the trunk. A branch snapped; an apple landed on his freshly powdered wig. She smiled; he certainly deserved it.

Katherine's pleasure grew with the bump rising on her master's head just where the apple had hit. And it was as though an apple had hit her as well – a new thought, the final piece in the puzzle to understand what her master could not. The factor that her master left out had to be the reason that his most recent calculations were incorrect. How could one consider acceleration and tension when one of the most fundamental component forces was being ignored? Could the earth, a large heavenly body within the universe, be irrelevant? Katherine finally knew, finally understood, that it could not.

At her moment of understanding, Katherine could only laugh at the dazed look that was plastered on Sir Isaac Newton's face.



# Dark Places

By Chana Schwartz

I'm falling through cracks that I never knew existed.  
Found them once I strived to look deep into my own heart.  
Now I'm losing control.  
They find me when I wake and follow me to sleep.  
They are holes that I created.  
Oh my vicious monsters, the works of a savage beast.  
I have many regrets, but cannot get away from them.  
As my fear grows so do the fractures.  
They rip and tear holding me down.  
Nearly swallowing me up.  
Suddenly I see a lightswitch in my dark room.  
Reaching out, but it's not in my grasp.  
I break down, nothing of me is left.  
Except my heart.  
I hear it pounding in my ears.  
I look up, and discover I am not alone.  
A hand comes down and helps me up.  
Its comfort assists me as I steady myself, slowly sealing up the cracks.  
I'm whole again and no longer torn.  
I feel alive, like I can finally run free out of my closed space.  
I open up my doors and inhale a breath of reality.

Often I go back to the dark places from which I used to flee.  
Reaching out my hand to others as someone once did for me.



# Plants, Planners, and (Colored) Pens

By Bruria Schwartz

My house is getting boring. It's the fifth time I've been stuck in my house, staring at the blue walls of my room papered with 'I voted' stickers. If it's two weeks per quarantine, besides that one time it was three, I've had eleven weeks to think about all sorts of things. Why does iCloud only give you five gigabytes of free storage? Why do my siblings seem to always be in my room? What is the meaning of life? Just kidding about that last one. One of the quarantines was right after the election, so I didn't do much pondering then, instead just obsessively hitting refresh on the *New York Times* website because the more times I refresh the faster the count in Nevada goes. But here I am, in the middle of quarantine number five with time to think, and an empty, sibling-free (at least from 9 till 4), house to think in.

Well, the house isn't exactly empty. I have the plants. Plants are funny things. They're so easy to kill, but if you keep them alive long enough you hardly see the growth. They change so slowly, it's barely noticeable from day to day, but one day you wake up and there's this giant green thing taking up half your kitchen, dropping leaves in your cereal.

The pandemic is... strange. In February I was barely paying attention to COVID; it was so

far away. By the second week of March we were shut down. The change seems barely noticeable, till one day you wake up with stay at home orders and zoom school. The change is so drastic, so sudden, so overwhelming. Yesterday I was in school. Today I'm in my apartment, fantasizing about what it's like to go outside. Tomorrow someone is going to pick my nose with a long stick and reach into my brain to see if I'm sick. Some of the change is good, some of it is bad, and some of it annoys me to no end.

**Tomorrow someone  
is going to pick my  
nose with a long  
stick and reach  
into my brain to  
see if I'm sick.**

Another one of the various changes is the vaccine. It's almost hopeful. I don't care if it will grow a baby alligator inside me, I want the shot. Now. I'm too scared to hope too much and too realistic to think that soon everything will be normal again— whatever normal is. Over this past year, I've seemed to forget. Was it really this January that I was planning to go to camp this summer? Unmasked? Without hand sanitizer? So much is different now.



It seems like everyone is becoming better people, baking sourdough bread, or learning to knit. Everyone else is changing, becoming better people and I'm barely managing to change my pajamas. Between the zoom school and homework, I just manage to eat lunch, and now I'm supposed to have time to work on inner change and reflection? I have no time to change. So I won't.

Maybe the reason I'm so resentful of the constant inspiration is because change is scary. Why would I want to bother to change when I can stay in my bed, and go to zoom school in pajamas?

I'm happy staying right here in my comfortable world of colored pens, schedules, and alarms on my phone reminding me to do my physics homework and make the challah dough. My world is a carefully created Potemkin village, where even the slightest disturbance sets it into a frenzy that grows and grows until it takes over my life.

Since I'm in quarantine again, I have time to think, rethink, and

overthink. I don't think change is the only issue here, it's the suddenness. When I can anticipate a change, I can add it into my color-coded schedule, in blue pen, right between 'renew passport' and 'call grandparents'. It's an effective strategy that prevents me from pulling out my hair when the moment arrives. But if – POOF! – change just shows up uninvited at my doorstep, I bolt the door in an effort to postpone its arrival for as long as possible. But, even if I bolt the door with the combination lock, master lock, and padlock it will eventually burst open and I'll be just as flustered when the change comes.

So is change the *real* issue here, or is my main problem unwelcome guests that show up, and force me to conform to their whims? Maybe I have a hard time coping with the fact that I can't control my surroundings, and more often my surroundings control me? Maybe I can ponder this next time I'm quarantined.





# Amid the Pandemic

By Eliana Glazer

As I walked through the empty streets,  
Almost no one was there,  
Around me, I saw signs  
“Closed due to pandemic”  
And “See you next year”.  
The streets were quiet,  
Too quiet for Manhattan.  
There was a scary long line outside of Trader Joe’s.  
The people were looking solemn,  
Waiting six feet apart or more,  
until it was their turn  
The rats had multiplied since before the virus.  
I heard them skittering across the street.  
The pigeons had taken over the sidewalk.  
All I saw of the few people there  
were their sad, sad eyes  
Over their masks.  
There was a sea of masks,  
In all different designs and colors—  
Blue, green, floral, pink, purple—  
They were all different, but only had one purpose  
—To stop the spread of Covid-19.  
When I finally got to Times Square  
It was empty.  
It had never been that empty before,  
It hasn’t even been half full  
Ever since then,  
Ever since Covid.  
Everything feels so different now  
And I want it to go back to normal  
But I don’t think it will.



Artwork Credit: "Overtaken" by Chanie Malek

# I Love You?

By Orly Setareh

“I love you.” Although these 3 words have been written in so many platforms and remind people of declarations of love, this phrase is used all the time by my classmates. “I love you” is what someone told me after I sent out a meme, and I flinched without meaning to. I’m only used to those words when my mother is trying to comfort me or when I say good-bye to my grandparents. Even when I may slip up and say it, I feel embarrassed, and in my head I know that those words are not for the person who picked up my notes or did me a favor, but for a person I truly love.

When I was younger I rarely heard the words “I love you” and this was not a bad thing. These words were reserved for moments late at night when I came to my parents room after a nightmare, and when I crawled right in between my parents, my mom would whisper “I love you” and I would know right then and there that she did. “I love you” should not be said as a passive statement when someone leaves to Target, but should be expressed with full emotion. The fact that actors in movies can bring crowds to tears by delivering these three simple words shows how they can change everything.

Thousands of ballads are composed just based off of this phrase. One of my favorite songs explains how the singer didn’t mean to say “I love you” because when you truly love someone, when you say those three simple words, you can hear it in their voice.

A person’s voice gets soft and low and says “*I love you*”. A small declaration, a whisper, a secret between you and them and even if you were to try and frost over the fact that you just said “I love you”, it wouldn’t matter because the person who just heard it knows. They know with those three words that you are worrying about them everyday and when you’re alone or frightened and you have no one to hold, they know you wish they were there and they know when you are apart even though you may never say it you love them too.

**A small  
declaration,  
a whisper, a  
secret between  
you and them...**

My grandmother only spoke Thai and all I remember when I was

younger was sitting right next to her on the black leather sofa in front of the TV and thinking she smelled, but when she looked at me I knew she loved me. Even though we didn't share the same religion or language she still loved me. The greatest grief is when you're unable to say those words, when you are unable to express this endless feeling to a person who, although you didn't know at the time, you loved and are only able to cry over the regret that you never told them the words "I love you". Never being able to give them the feeling of knowing that they loved you and you loved them back.

I love you shouldn't be at the liberty of everyone's tongue. I love you shouldn't be delivered in voices that could've said any other words. These three words may not be precious to my classmates but are precious to me. These three simple words, those three syllables, those eight letters, they mean everything to me. "I love you". Do you imagine someone saying that to you after you give them a spoon?





# Fruit Ices and EpiPens: The Lesson of Helping Others

By Michal Englander

I tied down the left side of the balloon arch, gave an updated tracklist to the DJ, and left another voicemail for the pizza delivery. I glanced over at Rachel, the 10-year-old birthday girl, whom I'd met barely two days earlier. She sat on a decorated chair armed with a fruit ice pop in one hand and a soda in the other. It's not every day that you have the opportunity to plan a birthday party for an underprivileged girl.

Just thirty minutes into the party, I noticed my best friend, Sarah, out of the corner of my eye. Sarah and I have always been two peas in a pod; growing up we did everything together. We took ballet, built a treehouse, and pierced each other's ears—turns out you're supposed to have that professionally done. In recent years another thing we had in common was our allergies—I, with my allergies to nuts, seeds, and dairy, and she to coconut.

Sarah's face was covered in ruby red splotches, blurring her features. The words 'allergic reaction,' flashed through my mind like the Geico billboards in Times Square. I knew this was panic worthy when she began gasping for air. There

must have been traces of coconut in the ices. I notified the camp mother who immediately called an EMT. We tried to remain calm, but Sarah's coughing was starting to sound like a thunderstorm and the EMTs were still thirty minutes away. As someone who lived through the same experience, I knew she didn't have thirty minutes before her air passages would close.

**Knowing how to do something and actually putting that knowledge into practice are worlds apart.**

With trembling hands, Sarah removed the EpiPen from her bag and handed it to the camp mother. I think I knew what the camp mother was going to do (or not do) before she did. The beads of sweat forming on her forehead and the quiver in her right hand told me she was unwilling to take Sarah's life into her own hands.

I weighed my options. I could implement my EpiPen training from my personal experiences and give

Sarah the 16 mm EpiPen, but the different ways this could go wrong were running through my head. What if I forgot how to use it? What if I did it wrong? What if it didn't work? On the other hand, I could play it safe and look for someone else willing to assume this responsibility. The thing is, I realized that if I chose the second option, I would be mitigating my risk, but drastically increasing Sarah's risk.

Raising my hand and readying myself to inject the needle into Sarah's thigh felt all too familiar. It was only four years ago when I was the one covered in hives. Dr. Green, the Emergency Room doctor, informed my parents and me that we needed to inject the EpiPen, and I should be the one to do it.

I've carried an EpiPen around since the age of three. Throughout preschool it was in my watermelon backpack, for the next five years in a fanny pack, and, most recently, it's in the outer pocket of my backpack. One of my earliest memories is of my mother teaching me how to use an EpiPen—so well that to this day I can almost administer one in my sleep. However, knowing how to do something and actually putting that knowledge into practice are

worlds apart. Dr. Green had sensed my anxiety and tried to calm me by explaining that if a person has to inject an EpiPen, the hospital is the safest place to do it. He trusted me and I had to trust myself.

Standing next to Sarah, I had a similar feeling of anxiety. I compared the two situations; this was a small, cramped office in an Israeli dormitory, not a sterile hospital staffed with medical personnel. This time, I'd be injecting the EpiPen into someone other than myself. Nevertheless, I knew I had to find the courage to administer the EpiPen. I needed to live up to the words of Nelson Mandela, "Courage [is] not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it."

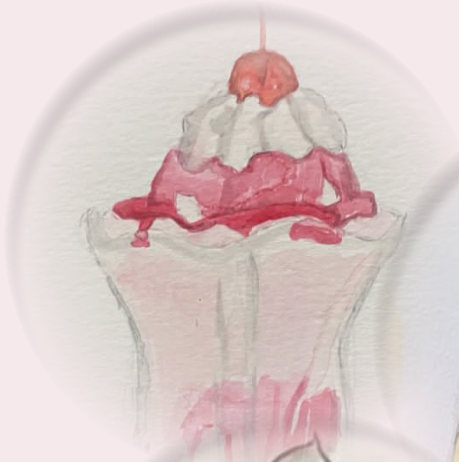
I opened the EpiPen's glossy cover and weighed the tube in my hand. At that moment, the world slowed and the worried faces in the room faded away. I took a deep breath, placed the needle over Sarah's skin, jabbed the tube into her thigh, and counted to ten. I looked at Sarah. She let out a breath I hadn't realized she was holding. When I heard the *click*, I too let out a breath. It was the most reassuring sound I'd ever heard.



# **Dessert Reception Menu**

*By Sara Sash*





Portfolio Credit: "Dessert Reception Menu" by Sara Sash



Photography Credit: "Stopcicles" by Hindy Hamburger



# She Will Return

By Fayga Tziporah Pinczower

Fragile droplets tap against the windowpane,  
fighting to fixate a position  
in vain.

another bead coasts the mud  
hollow, vulnerable, and weak  
in the crisp, frigid air  
Joining the fallen.

They shudder at her arrival  
The fellow fallen whisper to each other  
And scurry away, creating a ripple effect

I wonder if rain is defeated or surrenders.

If defeated, I commend her resilient fight  
but I think she surrendered – after so many defeats  
who would have the will to fight?

How does she fall from the pinnacles of heaven to the sludge of earth?  
Perhaps she was thrust,  
Rebuffed by all.

I wonder how rain perceives her reception on land.

Does she wince as the bright-blue-eyed girl  
frolicking in the meadow among yellow dancing daisies  
pouts at the first sign of her arrival?

Does she feel guilty after compelling the nanny to retrieve the chubby,  
overalled boy from the playground?

Perhaps she sympathizes with the mother and wants to confide in her,  
“I know all too well what it is to give – unappreciated. To provide life and  
nourishment all the while resented as a nuisance”.

Surely the mother of 16 year old Caleb would agree and respond to the  
rain,

“yet we return, you and I, compelled –

*you* by mother *nature*

and *I* by the nature of *mothers* –

and we provide again”.

Consoled, the rain would nourish the daisies for the girl to gather,  
strengthen the trees for the little boy to climb,  
and vitalize the football field for Caleb’s game.

She would then retreat towards the sky and allow the sun to bask in the  
glory of its warm welcome on earth,

but the rain peeks out from within the clouds,

and for those who look closely,

they can see her

colorful smile.

Perhaps she hadn’t surrendered after all.



Artwork Credit: "Keef" by Leah Harris



# Success From The Sidelines

By Sima Leah Mandelbaum

With the shrill blast of my whistle, everyone stopped what they were doing and watched as I walked over. From fifty feet away I saw Sara possessively gripping the ball, Tamar defensively crossing her arms over her chest, and Davena holding back tears.

As I got closer, I caught bits of their argument.

“She’s the worst player on our team!”

“Switch her out or we’ll lose!”

As a summer camp sports coach, my whistle usually announced time outs for injuries, out of bounds plays, or the end of a game. But now I knew I was approaching a harder call to make— hurt feelings.

After an intense 45 minutes of dodgeball, Davena was the last player left on her team facing four opponents, who were already beginning to celebrate a victory. Camp rules allowed a teammate to sub at any point, and Davena’s teammates were pressuring her to give up her position to a stronger player. While I was shocked by their aggressive treatment, mean remarks, and how willing they were to bring their teammate to tears, I understood their desire to succeed.

As I watched a tear fall down Davena’s cheek, I was taken back

to being a 13 year-old camper in an extremely competitive bunk. During our first basketball game, I missed every shot. I was frustrated because I wanted to be accepted and appreciated by my teammates, but also, because I wanted us to win. My counselor must have heard my exasperated sigh, so she passed me the ball and encouragingly said, “Go for it.” To everyone’s surprise, including my own, it swished. My bunkmates continued passing me the ball and I made three more

**As a summer camp sports coach, my whistle usually announced time outs ...But, now I knew I was approaching a harder call to make— hurt feelings.**

shots that game. While I wasn’t the MVP that summer, I felt the unique joy and confidence that comes with achieving a goal.

As a coach, I was responsible for ensuring the game was fair, and as a mentor, it was my job to model inclusivity and accountability. I told the girls that Davena earned her spot and deserves to play that

last round. I also reminded them that being part of a team means everyone's actions influence the outcome, and if Davena was the last player in the game, it was the result of their collaborative efforts.

Nobody was surprised when Davena got out. After all, it was one against four.

Over the loudspeaker we heard the announcement, "Fourth Activity is now over. Run, run, run to the dining room for lunch."

As I walked away from the field, I caught bits of their conversation.

"Let's play again."

"Who wants to be captain?"

Although I personally would have been happier to overhear apologies, I was proud that they decided to play another game.

As I headed to the dining room I looked back one more time and saw that they let Davena tip the ball to see which team goes first.



# The Story of This Poem

By Leora Wisnicki

Stress levels are high.

I *need* this.

Done.

I tore the page of my almost-could-have-been-essay.

It was not enough,

I had *nothing* to say.

I tore the page over and over,

Into pieces that were the size of my patience levels.

My hands were still going.

Like those wind-up toys that do a backflip?

If you do it right.

Do it right,

Ughh

I *need* to do this essay right.

The pieces of my almost-could-have-been-essay

Floated into my lap into an almost-perfect-pile.

It looked right.

Do it right,

Ughh

I *need* to do this essay right.

I swirled my finger around my almost-perfect-pile,

And pinched two fingers together,

To capture a few pieces of paper from my almost-could-have-been-essay,  
And threw them up in the air.

Now I *definitely* had nothing to say.

They landed in an awkward black out poem stance,  
My almost-perfect-pile now scattered on the floor.  
And I turned my head to read the words that floated together

Keep on going, you still have more.





# Abilities and Area Codes

By Chaya Trapedo

When I started volunteering at Friendship Circle four years ago, I didn't realize there would be so much running. What I thought would be learning how to help special needs kids for a few hours every Sunday turned into chasing an energetic eight-year-old around an empty school building. Daniel preferred action to arts-and-crafts; painting and puppet-making just didn't appeal to a legally-blind child who never stopped moving. But he never let low vision, or the risk of running into walls, get in the way of a good race. When he got tired, Daniel plopped down in the hallway and dropped his essentials. He always carried a scientific calculator, a dry erase board, a dome magnifying glass, and the most recent edition of the *Rand McNally* large scale Road Atlas.

Daniel and I talked for three hours every Sunday, and somehow, he managed to speak almost exclusively in questions. *Chaya, is that you? Do I have to make slime? Can we take the secret staircase to the gym? Can you hold my cane while we race to the end of the hallway? Can I ask Siri a question? What's the 10-day forecast for Barrow, Alaska?*

The 11 x 15-inch laminate Atlas that he lugged around was his most treasured possession. I wasn't

allowed to touch it. "Can you tell me two area codes?" he'd prompt, and I'd select two random three-digit numbers. "942 isn't an area code," he responded without a second thought, and of course he was right. When I managed to pick two real codes, he would slide his magnifying glass over the pages to follow routes between those counties along interstate highways. Nearly pressing his nose to his dry erase board, he'd calculate that area code 812 is almost 840 miles from area code 407 and based on the posted speed limits, the trip would take 12 hours by car. Then he'd

**But he never let  
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way of a good race.**

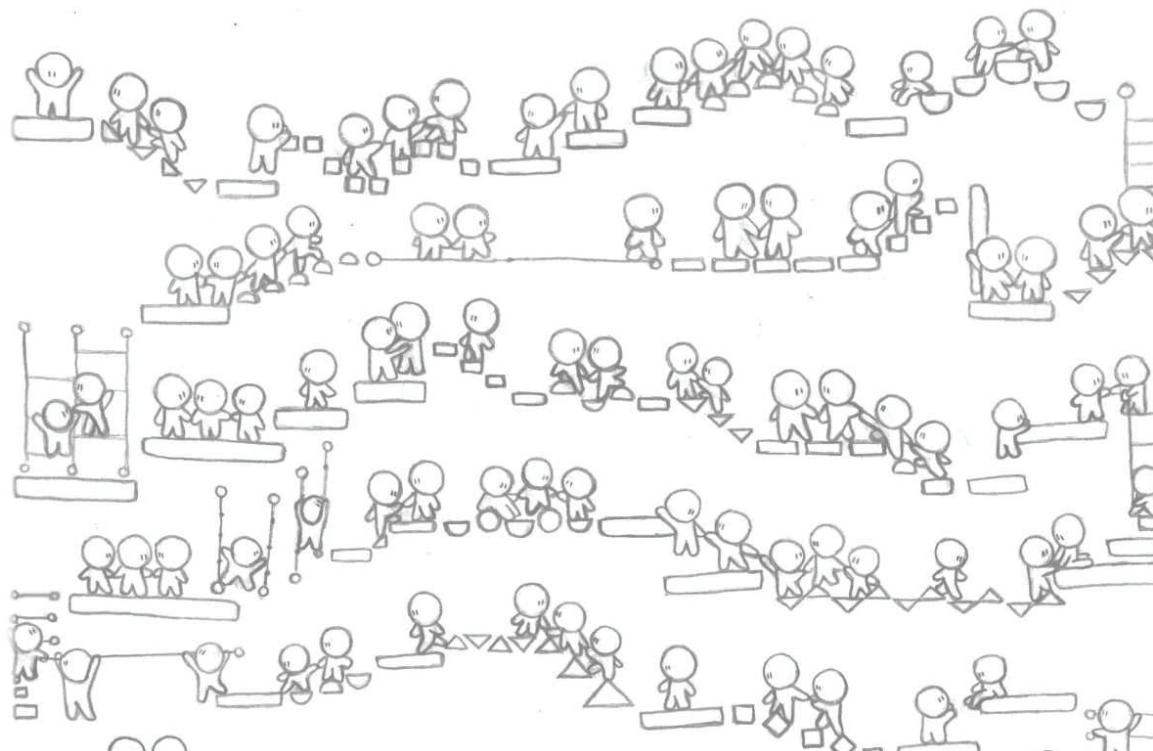
ask, "Can we find out how long it would take for me to run from Evansville, Indiana to Orlando, Florida?" I timed him as he zipped down a 50-foot corridor using my stopwatch app. Taking his record time of 13 seconds as his average speed, Daniel punched all sorts of conversions and estimations into his calculator, with the digits so close to his face that I wondered if he was actually doing the math

in his head and just tapping the buttons for fun.

After four years and countless races and equations, Daniel moved to Brooklyn to attend a school better suited for his needs and doesn't come to Friendship Circle anymore. I recently called him to say I miss seeing him. Instead of asking me questions, he explained that at 24 miles away, it would take 52 minutes to drive, and 6 hours and 46 minutes to walk from area code 718 to 201.

I don't see Daniel anymore. And he never saw the look on my face when he let someone else use the bounciest ball, even though they took it without asking. I told him

I was proud, but he never saw the tears I fought back when he struggled to calm down after a tantrum. He never witnessed the pride that swelled somewhere deep inside me when he apologized to someone he hit even though they started it. Despite— or perhaps because of— his challenges, Daniel taught me to see the dynamic wonder of living even though he literally couldn't. He showed me that obstacles don't have to slow us down, questions can be more valuable than answers, and people of all abilities and area codes give life direction.





# **Animal Studies**

*By Ayala Cweiber*





*Behind the Bit*



*Soft as a Lion*



*Bath Time*



*Roar*



# Bloodstained

By Tova Schwartz

I recoiled from the vibrations of my CBFR (Cerebral Blood Flow Reader), which indicated that all my mental waste from yesterday had dissipated. Supposedly, I should wake up with a refreshed mind. Except, I feel more anxious than invigorated.

Now that my blood has fully matured for 16 years, I am finally eligible for my job in the Nation of Reamica. Though I'm not exactly sure what us Receivers do, I've heard that the building we work in is glamorous and sleek, with the type of tiled floors that echo our footsteps when we walk down the corridors.

Unlike the B+s who need to wear baggy pants and reflective T-shirts to work in the construction sites, or the A-s, who are forced to wear stiff suits and tight skirts to work in corporate Reamica, us Receivers get to dress however we want for work.

My excitement about the lack of dress code faded, though, when I saw the floral dress my giver laid out for me. The dress isn't my style, but I know better than to argue. Giver has mentioned— more than once— that she doesn't really care about my preferences. "That's not my job as an O- Giver," she always says.

I board the Receiver Transporter, already packed with my fellow Receivers. Silence suffocates the air we're all breathing. My eyes dart left and right as I watch others pretend to read or try to sleep. Some, like me, enjoy analyzing the outfit choices of the other Receivers, even though we know that they didn't pick out their clothes.

**Silence  
suffocates the  
air we're all  
breathing.**

As we're escorted off the bus, my hands relax when I notice that the entrance to the grand building is just as I pictured it. The fifteen feet tall, heavy doors are wide open as thousands of Receivers flood through the entrance. I hadn't noticed before, but each receiver wore an identifying necklace with E2, E3, E4, or E5, printed across. Insecure, I pull out my hair tie and let my long wavy brown hair loose to hide the fact that I am missing something that seems important.

I trace my finger along the white walls as I walk down the echoing hallway, just as I imagined myself doing for the past few days. Suddenly, I short-stop. We have reached a circular room, with a glass dome ceiling that I had never heard about before. The glass dome displays pictures of the war that created Reamica. Along the walls, there were five double door entrances labeled E1, E2, E3, E4, and E5.

The daily siren sounds at 9 AM, and breaks the sound of thousands of footsteps tapping along the tiled floors. Everyone instinctively places their right hand on the left side of their chest. My heartbeat normalized; this, I've known how to do since I could speak.

One million monotonous voices recited, "I pledge allegiance to the state of Reamica, for the founders that transformed a world filled with prejudice and conflict between race, gender, and religion into a world of unity and productivity. A fifteen year war may have created our country, but peace between groupings maintains serenity. Blood flowing through us all, connecting us all, in truth, integrity, and dignity."

The last syllable barely ended before the footsteps resumed, and AB+s went through the double doors that matched their identifying necklaces. I seemed to be the only AB+ without a necklace.

An AB- researcher noticed that I didn't have an identifying tag around my neck, so he approached me and asked, "First day?"

"Yes, AB-," I responded.

He motioned for me to follow him into door E1. I bite my lip, like I always do when I'm nervous. "E" must stand for examination. I hope I do well.

But I wasn't given a test booklet or scoring guidelines. Instead, there was a white reclining chair and some machines.

He pointed to the chair. I sat down.

He pointed to my arm. I extended it.

He took out a needle. I pulled my arm back.

And then he slapped me, and said "be obedient. This is your job."

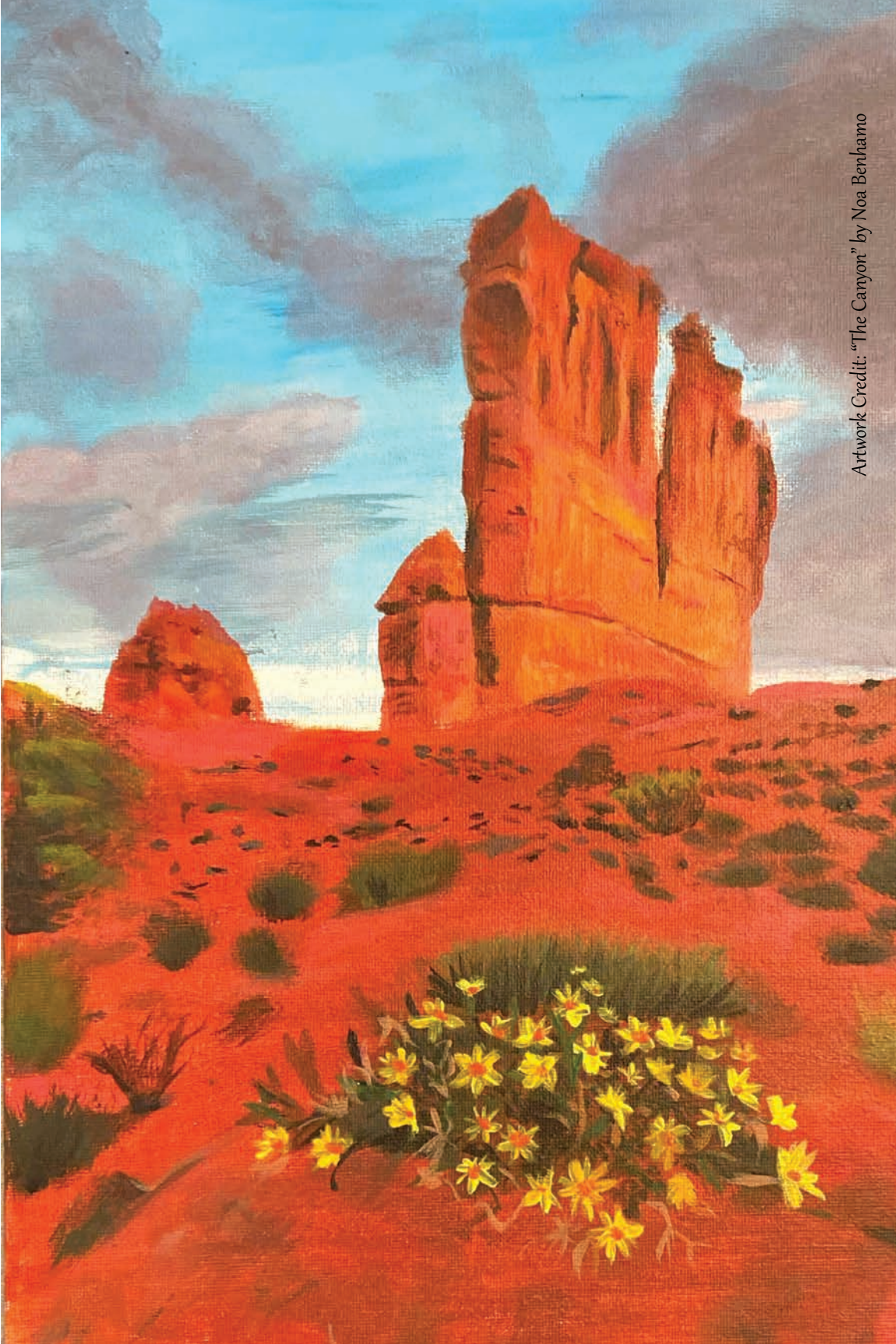
He then whispered to another AB-, who had peeked in, that he "was going to isolate the variable blood types to check for cerebral blood flow

differences between different groupings”

The little blood I had in my face drained away. I was an experiment. An object. A nothing.

I realized then that I don't care about nice dresses or stately tiled floors. And, I certainly don't care about isolating blood types. It's me who is isolated along with the rest of the Receivers. We don't matter, but we should.

And if they can't see that, then breaking the silence will make them hear it.



Artwork Credit: "The Canyon" by Noa Benhamo



# Nobody Ever Said That

By Malka Ostreicher

I'm walking alone.

I didn't want to wait for someone to drive me.

You'd think I'd listen to music,

Maybe even make some of my own  
with my feet and voice.

But I'm actually overhearing a conversation,  
even though nobody is around.

I hear the first voice say something

*Hey, I didn't know she thinks I'm nice*

Then her friend replies so excitedly,

As if I'm not right here.

*Wow, how does she remember that detail about me?*

I'm practically floating on pure self-esteem.

I nearly reach my destination

When I look back at the empty road once more

Really stare

I laugh at myself because nobody ever said that.



Artwork Credit: "Silence" by Dassi Mayerfeld

# Perspective

By Nili Kushner

I was the youngest and only daughter in a family of five, until I wasn't. In 24 hours, I went from being the princess of the family, to an older, middle child, in a family of seven. On January 10, 2018, a set of twins, Naomi and Jojo, came into this world one month premature, and desperately needing a home. Suddenly, my previously tidy and tranquil home became a paradigm of mayhem. I don't think I am resentful in the least, in fact, I truly love our little Naomi and Jojo whom we welcomed into our home at only seven days old and still foster until today. But it was strange and a bit off-putting to see my forty-year-old parents cradling newborn twins who look nothing like our family. After all, I was the youngest and had been for my entire life.

These little newcomers forced me to embrace a different role. A role in which I began helping around the house a lot more and giving my parents, who both work full time, a much-needed break by entertaining and playing with our now two and a half-year-old toddlers who view me as their older sister. My new responsibilities now dwarfed those I managed as the simple high school student in what seemed like a previous lifetime. I admit, being helpful around the house is not my forte, whether that be after a long

day of school or a long day of doing nothing.

The first couple of months were both difficult and frustrating. Since he was born a full month premature, Jojo had many health problems. One night, after a couple of days in the hospital, Jojo was having trouble breathing. Throughout the night, my parents and I rotated holding him. At around 3 am, as I held Jojo,

**I was so busy  
focusing on feeling  
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beyond myself at  
the bigger picture.**

listening to his pained wheezing and feeling his body shudder every time he took a breath, I grasped for the first time the gravity of the whole situation. I was so busy focusing on feeling burdened and inconvenienced by these babies that I never looked beyond myself at the bigger picture. I am ashamed

to say that I often felt angry with them; two human souls not even a year old. What was I angry at? Was I angry with Jojo and Naomi for not having parents in their lives or their own home? As I felt Jojo shaking in my arms, I realized that he and his sister came into this world with nothing; they had no support system, no loving family, and were saddled with a bevy of medical issues that put them at an even greater disadvantage. It was at that moment that these two babies gave me something invaluable: perspective. I realized that certain fundamental aspects of my life, safety and support, can be taken away or could never have been provided at all. I now have an immense appreciation for the life I had taken for granted and feel that it is my privilege and duty to do everything in my power to ensure

that Jojo and Naomi have these gifts as well. In the months that followed, I began to view Jojo and Naomi's introduction into my life not as a burden, but as a gift.

As a senior in high school with two brothers who are off to college and graduate school, I can appreciate Naomi and Jojo's presence so much more. What would have been quiet, boring evenings are now just the opposite. Every night as I cuddle Naomi in her crib, feeling her soft black curls brush against my face, I tell her that I love her and I think about how lucky I am. "I wuv you, Nini," Naomi whispers through the pacifier in her mouth, stirring a pot of emotion in me, and although not every single emotion is recognizable, I always identify appreciation as the chief of them.





# The Name Store

By Adi Hacker

“Mommy, can I get a new name for my birthday?”

“Asher, you just got a new name.”

“You expect me to have the same name my entire life?!”

\*\*\*

I was almost seven years old when I picked my new name. My parents were tucking me into bed when they told me the exciting news. “Benedict, Daddy and I think that since you’re getting older, you can change your name for your birthday!”

I beamed.

My name is from the Latin name “Benedictus,” which means blessed. At first, I didn’t want to change my name because Mom and Dad always told me that my name was special. But Mom and Dad said I should pick a name that shows how I feel about myself, not how they feel about me.

“Make a wish Benedict!” Everyone at my birthday party was crowding around me as I blew out the seven candles on my Superman cake.

I announced that I’m changing my name to Asher and everyone watched as I filled out the official looking change of name form. I carefully copied the letters from the name book I bought online:

Asher: A name with Hebrew origin, which signifies luck.

It was perfect. First grade is a big deal; I was becoming a “big boy” and I needed luck, so that’s what I chose for my new name: Asher. My Mommy helped me put the form into the mailbox. Soon it would be official. Hi, I’m Asher Miller. Not Benedict. Asher.

In school the next day, I stopped my teacher when she said Benedict, just as she was about to move onto Clarisse. “Actually, yesterday I turned seven and now I’m Asher,” I said proudly. “I picked the name by *myself*.” She nodded and crossed out Benedict on the list.

Everyone oohed and aahed. Even though someone else was switching their name almost every month, it was still exciting every time.

“You’re so lucky,” was the loudest comment. Ms. Felicity shushed

**You expect me  
to have the  
same name my  
entire life?!**

them. From the corner of my eye I saw Kaylie almost crying; she was the only one in the class whose parents still didn't let her change her name.

\*\*\*

It was the day before my tenth birthday, and I wanted to change my name again. Everyone knew it was so much cooler to come to school with a new name than new sneakers or a new ball. But Mom said I couldn't pick a new name because I became Asher "recently". First, I didn't think three years ago is recent, and second, I didn't want to be "lucky" anymore. I wanted my name to show that I'm strong and smart and cool. That's not what Asher means, so it couldn't be my name anymore. When my teacher would call attendance the next day, everyone would be expecting a new name but I would only be able to say what Mommy told me to say. "I love the name Asher and I don't want to change it."

I felt even worse when I heard my friends talking by the playground.

"My mom told me if I get higher than a ninety five on my spelling test, I can buy another name," Olexcsa bragged. "She even told me that I can get a double name if I get a hundred."

"My dad said that if our team wins the next football game I can choose a new name," Maximus said. "But I don't want to. My name is already the coolest."

I kind of wanted to go to Mom and ask her again, but I knew she wouldn't let me. No means no. So much for being "lucky".

# Permanent

By Alyssa Rosner

I'm terrified of permanent things

Words

Actions

People

Time

To the tiny things like sending an email,

To a speech that will go on TV,

To art in permanent ink and paint,

To the grade that only I will ever see,

To the person I thought I was,

To be person I am soon to be,

Moments I can't change,

And days that I will waste,

Of memories I will regret,

And everything I shouldn't do in haste,

Trying things I'd never thought to do,

Doing nothing unique at all,

Meeting new people,

Or meeting none at all,

Wrong opinions that will never change,

And an off key note in a song,

Of all the potential that I have,

And how I could always wait too long,

A bunch of tiny insignificant things,  
Most people would ignore,  
Have me down and wondering,  
What I do this for,

But the answers not so simple,  
And it won't ever be,  
But for now,  
I  
Try  
And  
Think  
It's okay to be me



# The Liar

By Chaya Friedman

Every word that came out of her mouth was a lie. With the leisurely ease of experience, she formed tales of daring adventures in foreign countries, famous relatives, and life-shattering experiences. Everything we had, she had four years ago, everything we'd done, she'd done twice. That book we wanted? She'd already grown tired of it. One only had to mention the brand new sweater they had received, and she would reveal that although it had only just come out, her aunt knew the owner of the brand and had gotten it for her, for free, as a gift, along with the rest of the spring collection. (Oh, and she didn't really like it anyway.)

We couldn't stand it, the smug smirk as she wove her stories, rich with the lavish details of a fabricated life, the awe of her entranced audience, and the effortless with which she never failed to steal the attention. She snatched it away from those who truly deserved it and draped it around herself like the queen she made herself to be. Without her lies, she had nothing to distinguish herself from the rest of us, nothing to wave in front of our faces as a constant reminder of her superiority.

I decided I couldn't stand it any longer when she outshone us for the final time. It happened as I tried to recount the extravagant wedding I had attended the night before. While describing the intricate flower arrangements on every table, she interrupted me.

"That reminds me of this party I went to last year! You would not believe how stunning everything..." She trailed on and on as I seethed. Agitation coursing hot through my chest, I began to formulate a plan.

It all fell into place on Thursday, when she was assigned as my biology partner. Usually, I would shudder at the thought of enduring her endless storytelling for 40 minutes, but that day luck seemed to be on my side. By the time the bell rang, we hadn't even made a dent in our packet, thanks to her ceaseless chatting. As we put our materials away, I casually interrupted the animated description of her room redecoration and this *stunning* new chair she'd just bought.

"Um, we didn't get that far in the packet—"

"Oh, that's my fault," she giggled as she hoisted her bag on her back.

**Without her lies, she had nothing [...] to wave in front of our faces as a constant reminder of her superiority.**



“When’s this due?”

“Monday,” I replied, “but I want to get it done today because I have a lot going on this weekend.”

“Oh, me too—” she started, but before she could begin listing her incredible weekend plans, I swiftly interjected.

“So I was thinking you could come over to my house today and we could finish working on it together?”

“Perfect!”

“Wait actually,” I said, pretending to concentrate, “I’m pretty sure my mother’s working late tonight, so I can’t have friends over. Maybe your house instead?” Was I imagining the split second of hesitation as she heard my words? I waited for the excuses and coverups, the weak attempts to save her palace of lies from collapsing. To my surprise, the exact opposite occurred; She agreed.

“Sure! I have to study for the math test first, but you can come over at 6?”

I nodded as we finalized our plans and headed our separate ways.

The rest of the day passed by in a blur. How could I focus? Tonight was the night that I would finally uncover her lies and expose her for who she was: an ordinary girl, no better than the rest of us.

By the time 6:00 arrived, I was standing outside of a large house, elegant and beautiful. Its white exterior sparkled in the early evening’s last remnants of sunlight, and the cool breeze of autumn carried the fragrant scent of the manicured garden surrounding it. Tentatively, I walked up the granite steps to her gleaming white front door, where I rang the bell.

As she opened the door and guided me through the house’s spacious interior, chatting all the way, I could only nod mutely, shocked at my surroundings. Everything, and I mean *everything*, was exactly the way she had described it, from the pale blue chairs in her living room to the shining wooden floors. She led me into her room, which looked like something out of an interior design magazine, and invited me to sit down as she ran to get her bio packet.

In a daze, I stumbled into a fluffy pink chair, the one she just got because she redecorated her room, the expensive one that took weeks to come, the one that perfectly matched her description of it.

The truth was piercing. She wasn’t the liar. I was.

# Underneath the Willow Tree

By Shana Feder

The weeping willow tree fell around us in curtains, a shady haven with sunlight slanting through. It was Tammy's favorite tree and her choice spot for our summer games.

*Our* meaning Tammy, Esther, Immanuel, Benny, and I. A small troop of siblings and Esther, Tammy's childhood friend and our neighbor. Tammy led the game as always.

Tree branches brushed against our faces because of a soft breeze, and every now and then someone would reach up and grab at them. Dandelions, the kind that you blow once they grow old and white to make a wish, littered the backyard like snow. Esther's ponytail swayed quietly. Birds chirped around us. Tammy loved the sound, calling it magical, but I found it annoying.

\*\*\*

I like words. When I was younger, Benny and I used to read the Garfield Dictionary, at first for the jokes, and then for the words. Each time I found a new word I liked, I would announce it to whoever was present. The list was long: serene, mellifluous, omnipresent, sonder, instigator, rendezvous. The more I read, the longer the list became.

"Romanticize is my new favorite word. I romanticize a lot," I told Dana, my oldest sister, and the best listener, as I sat on her bed facing her. She had books on psychology and philosophy spread all over her small, muted yellow room so she genuinely enjoyed hearing about how I viewed myself and the world.

"Do you?" she questioned. "Tammy is a romantic. She can romanticize anything, even cleaning the kitchen or going to the dentist. But you? You're a pretty logical person, like Miriam." Miriam was the fourth-eldest. She's the one who signs me up for camp and makes our lunches.

Confused, I protested, bringing in examples of how I would make situations and people into grander stories and characters, and how every day after school I'd head straight for the red swing in my backyard, not even stopping to put my bag down, just to think about my day.

Eventually, Dana conceded, possibly just to appease me. Her impression of me was probably because I never really expressed my emotions or thoughts.

\*\*\*

"As you all know, I'm turning eighteen soon," Tammy an-

nounced one afternoon. She was thirteen and almost graduating middle school, but for our game today, she was setting the scene. We all played the same types of roles in every game. Benny and I were the younger friends/kids/siblings. Immanuel was the villain when Esther wasn't there; Esther was usually the antagonist, and Tammy the main character because she was the oldest present. For this afternoon's entertainment, Tammy played the part of a seventeen year old girl in an orphanage, about to be kicked out because she was turning eighteen, old enough to fend for herself. Miriam used to be the one to play the distressed heroine, but she was already in tenth grade and had stopped playing with us a while ago.

\*\*\*

As a kid, I rarely showed emotion. My father would jokingly say I was the only sane one in the family. I can probably count on my hands the number of times I cried. There was the time Immanuel bonked me on the head with a (plastic) blue baseball bat 'by mistake.' My dad made up for it by buying me ice cream and letting me watch a Disney movie. But other than that, I can't remember. There are loads of times I should've cried, but didn't though.

When I was six years old, I went on a sleepover to my friend Shana's house. Her younger brother, Joshua was always bothering us. I remember he once over my pink, flowery bed sheets with a red sharpie. A couple of days later Esther broke my bed by jumping on it, so I got a new bed and linen.

Once, Joshua pushed me a bit too hard and I fell down the brown, carpeted stairs directly across from the family's dining room table. I fell in a heap at the bottom and felt a searing pain in the arm I had landed on. His mother jumped up from the table, apologized profusely, and forced him to apologize. Then, taking a look at my face, she immediately furrowed her eyebrows.

"Didn't you hurt yourself? Are you okay? Why aren't you crying?"

I shrugged, said I was fine although I was in massive pain, and went back to my friend.

\*\*\*

"Those are the rules. I'm too old to stay. I have to leave."

Tammy looked around at us, grave faced. It was our turn to act surprised at her announcement, which we were because we never knew what the game would turn

out to be. We'd always make it up as we went, but it had to make sense. Around me, I knew the others had their fake sad faces on, but I couldn't see them. I was staring intently at Tammy. My eyebrows furrowed instinctively and my mouth dried quickly. I picked my hand up, which had been ripping the grass, and touched my chest. It felt hollow. My chin quivered and I didn't know why. Suddenly, all my focus was directed to my falling shoulders and rapidly blinking eyes, and I could no longer see or hear those around me. I began to cry.

All heads turned to me as I sobbed, shocked.

"I don't want you to leave.

I don't want you to ever leave," I said repeating to myself, over and over. The words were hard to say. I didn't even know why they were necessary to say, but it felt important. More so than when I was in pain, or got into arguments with siblings or friends. I wasn't even sure whether I was shouting, whispering, or even speaking out loud at all.

"It's not real," Tammy said, a little shocked and a bit confused. "Why are you crying? We can stop the game if you want."

The others murmured their assent, but I shook my head quickly. Stopping the game was the last thing I wanted to do.





Artwork Credit: "Shopping with the Girls" by Anuva Jacobson



# To Catch a Thief

By Yael Herskovitz

"I heard through the grapevine that you can pickpocket, Mr. Nick," a voice whispers from somewhere behind me. *It's showtime Nicky.* I turn around to confirm, and a shiver of excitement goes through my body like electricity when I realize that I'm only a few feet away from the infamous Nomay. I'm about to take a step forward when a shiny black handgun stops me dead in my tracks. "You're a smart man Nick, so I'm not gonna have to use this, right?" I nod. "It's such a shame though, she really is a beauty."

"Who'd you swipe it from?" I ask. Nomay's head shoots up, but his look of shock slowly turns into a grin.

"I knew I'd like you Nick! I found this gem on old Timmy when that piece of trash was taking a nap."

"Ahhh, he should've known better then to shut his eyes in this neighborhood with you around."

"That's right, now follow me if you want to keep all your limbs intact." Nomay gestures with his stolen gun, and I shuffle forward until he's in back of me and the barrel of the weapon is rammed between my shoulder blades.

"Is this really necessary? I'm no—"

"Move it. You see that black sedan? Get in."

Once I'm in the car I look around and realize how good of a thief Nomay really is.

"How long have you been doing this, man, you're really successful!"

"Since I could walk," Nomay replies as he turns on the engine. "My old man taught me everything I know, may he rest in peace."

We're driving to some unknown destination and another handgun catches my eye, this one in a leather bound case engraved with the initials N.F. I start to pocket the weapon, thinking that it might come in handy later, when Nomay's voice interrupts me. "Put that back," he barks. Startled, I drop the gun and look up, realizing that Nomay's cold eyes

**Startled, I  
drop the gun  
and look up,  
realizing that  
Nomay's cold  
eyes have been  
watching me  
through the rear  
view mirror.**

have been watching me through the rear view mirror. “You may be a good criminal, but I’m better.” I nod at him, and once he focuses his gaze back on the road, I pick up the gun again.

“So what are we doing tonight?” I ask.

“We, my friend, are going to rob the local Speedway.” I nod yet again.

“I don’t really do confrontational crimes, just steal the occasional wallet or watch off of some business man who’s too rich to care.” I try to explain.

“You do whatever it is I tell you to do, and if you’re any good, I might even keep you,” Nomay replies with a grin. “My last assistant is doing jail time, so you better not mess up.”

The car stops in front of a deserted gas station. Nomay rolls down the window and pulls out a box of cigarettes, offers me one, and after I decline, he lights one up and takes a long draw before looking back at me in the rearview mirror. “Here’s the plan Nick.” *Here we go.* “You see that bench over there,” he asks, gesturing to the right.

“Yes sir.”

“Good, good. Now, if anyone feels like a little late night trip to their local Speedway, you make sure to change their mind.” Having said that, Nomay kills the engine and exits the Sedan. I follow him out and make myself comfortable on the damp wooden bench that is now my new office space. “Don’t do anything stupid,” my new boss yells over his shoulder as he heads into work with a ski mask and a black duffel bag.

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Aside from Nomay’s Sedan (that was most definitely acquired unethically), all I can see from my position on the bench is an occasional car passing by; it’s practically a ghost town this late at night. Sighing, I pull out my phone and make some calls. Ten agonizing minutes pass before the door to the robbed Speedway finally bangs open to release Nomay and all his stolen goods in the duffel. *Here comes the difficult part.* Nomay tosses the keys to me. I let them fall to the ground. In fact, I don’t even get up from my soggy bench. “Nick!” Nomay is yelling at me, desperately trying to yank open the car door. “What do you think you’re doing?! The cashier already called the cops!” Spit is flying out of his mouth by now and he’s

turning a nice shade of red.

Nomay throws the duffel bag on to the floor in disgust and bends down to retrieve the keys himself. “Not so fast, Nomay.” Nomay looks up amused, but his grin quickly vanishes when he realizes that I’ve got his nice monogrammed leather handgun trained on his forehead.

“You hear that?” I ask him as lights and sirens bring the silent night to life. “That’s the sound of you going to prison, my friend.” I smirk at the horrified expression Nomay’s wearing while still crouched on the ground.

“Wha—”

I reach under the collar of my shirt and pull out a chain holding a shiny, worn out, gold badge that grew warm resting on my chest the whole night. I flash my badge at Nomay.

“Like you said before, *you may be a good criminal, but I’m better.*”



Artwork Credit: "Watchful Eye" by Simi Spitzer

# Fish Bowl Fiasco

By Mali Epstein

I was twelve years old when I got my first pet. My friend Ariella knocked on my door one day in early June with a birthday present for me. The bowl was decorated with pictures of us and filled with those pretty marble things they put in the bottom of fishbowls. Then for the star of the show: a little red fish swimming around in circles.

Staring into the bowl I said, "He's going to be dead by the end of the week."

"Actually," said Ariella, "It's a betta fish. They live for a few years."

"My mom will never let me keep it."

"My mom spoke to your mom yesterday. She said it's okay!" she replied with a triumphant grin. "Here, take it."

So I did. I named him Little Guy. I knew betta fish don't live forever, but I was determined to make sure this one did. Little Guy was treated like royalty.

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It was the night of my cousin's engagement party. Fraidy was my oldest first cousin and the first to get engaged, so it was exciting for the whole family. My older brothers Ezra and Akiva were running around looking for their shoes and my father was checking the traffic on Google Maps. I have a classic case of middle child syndrome. Not quite old enough to be an "older kid," but too old to be a

"younger kid." I just hang around in the eye of the hurricane.

The babysitter, an older lady from the neighborhood named Annette, would be arriving any minute. Annette always told me jokes that weren't funny, but I laughed anyway because I didn't want to make her feel bad. She also made me go to bed at the exact time my mother told her. I hated that.

"Mommy, why can't I come?" I asked for the hundred and fourteenth time.

"We're going to be out too late. You're just not old enough."

"But I'm not a baby!" I argued.

We went back and forth like that until Annette's beige car pulled up to the house. It was no use. Ten minutes later I was watching from the living room window as my older brothers and parents pulled out of the driveway without me.

\*\*\*

My family was in Florida for winter break, visiting my grandfather. We went to a park to eat lunch. Peanut butter and jelly on bagels, like usual. Next to the picnic tables was a big carousel playing that annoying slow music, with horses going up and down. Tamar, the baby of the family, wanted to go on so my dad went to buy tokens for her and Yosef, the next oldest. I followed him, partially because I love putting the money into the machine, but also because I had a



question.

“Can I go too?” I asked.

My dad laughed.

“Come on, aren’t you a little too old for this type of thing?”

There it was again. I felt like Goldilocks— too cold or too hot. Always too young or too old. Where was my “just right?”

\*\*\*

Little Guy came with responsibilities: he needed to be fed once a day (exactly seven pellets), have his bowl cleaned once a week (I usually left that to my dad), and entertained (PSA: fish are not the best animal to teach tricks to. Very unresponsive.) I stayed on top of my duties. For the most part, he was well cared for.

I followed my dad into the bathroom once while he was cleaning the bowl.

“Mali, it’s about time you learned how to do this yourself. I’ve been doing it since you got him.”

Needing to prove my capability, I faced my fears. It went horribly wrong, of course. In order to put in new water, I had to first move Little Guy out of the bowl and into a cup. As soon as I reached in to scoop him out of the water, there was a sudden movement. A blur of red shot through the air.

Little Guy had jumped out of the bowl.

Hands shaking and eyes filled with tears, I picked him up with my bare hands and dropped him back into the water. I thought that was the

end of him, but seconds later, he was back to swimming around in his endless circles.

I thought my dad would be upset at me for being so careless, but when I looked up, he was smiling.

“I’m really impressed. You didn’t panic or scream. You just picked him up and kept going. Good job!”

I was shaken up. It wasn’t necessarily *my* fault that he had jumped out of the bowl, but it *was* because of me that he was still alive. Also, my dad was proud of me. I smiled to myself as I continued cleaning out the bowl.

\*\*\*

I walked through the door after school, not knowing what lay a few feet ahead of me. As I approached the counter in my kitchen where Little Guy’s bowl had sat for almost two years, I noticed that something was wrong. He wasn’t making his usual circular laps around the bowl. Instead, my little red fish was floating at the top of the water. I knew what it meant.

We all knew it was coming. My parents had been telling me for weeks that he was “slowing down.” I just wasn’t ready to accept it. But there was no avoiding it now.

I’ll admit it, I cried a little. It felt silly— I was sad, but I knew he was just a fish. It was hard to part with something that had been in my life for so long.

Little Guy was dead.

But I had taken care of him.

# And You Didn't Notice

By Ayala Cweiber

You stepped on that flower  
Did you notice  
It may seem insignificant to you  
But  
That flower  
Grew  
Out of concrete  
That flower  
Fought its way  
To the light  
And you  
You stepped on that flower  
Crushing its soft yellow petals  
  
But you kept walking



Artwork Credit: "Rock Metal" by Miryam Weiss

# Ten Seconds on an Airplane

By Leah Solomon

10 seconds. It is just a few seconds before I will be launched into the air in a 90,000-pound vessel made of aluminum. I wrap my lunch in aluminum. I drink Coke Zero out of aluminum. And now, I'm going to be flying in a bulk of aluminum wrapped together and called an airplane. You can't fly in aluminum!

9 seconds. Okay, deep breaths. After all, it is just an airplane. People fly in airplanes all the time. "Chill out," I tell myself. I try to relax, but every time I try, my anxiety kicks in and I work myself up into a nervous wreck. My brain goes haywire and I start to wonder again why I'm on an airplane when an ocean liner would have been a perfectly good option.

8 seconds. I can do this. I'm on a flight with 149 other people and no one else is having trouble maintaining their inner calm. So why me? It's not my fault that planes scare me to death. Or, that earlier, the thought of being 36,000 feet in the air made me want to regurgitate my lunch. Why I even bothered with lunch is beyond me.

7 seconds. Just then, I'm conveniently reminded of all the facts I've ever read about planes. 534 people died in plane crashes in 2018. All of them died in one of 86 "accidents." They call it an accident, as if it's just a little mistake. But it's not little. It's big, very big, and it's consuming my thoughts until I can think of nothing else but "accidents."

6 seconds. I try to focus on other things, other people. The lady on my right is on the phone, talking endlessly about an email from her boss. A few rows in front of me is a large family with maybe four or five children. I feel bad for them, but mostly for myself, because they can't possibly be feeling what I'm feeling.

5 seconds. What am I feeling? Nausea, anxiety, worry, fear. Remind me again why I'm flying, when I know it messes with my mental, physical,

**I drink Coke  
Zero out of  
aluminum...  
You can't fly  
in aluminum!**

psychological, and spiritual well-being.

4 seconds. The stewardess walks down the aisle and asks if I'm buckled. I'm not. So I buckle, but while I buckle, I think that if the plane were to crash, or explode, or combust, the seatbelt wouldn't save me.

3 seconds. I consider writing something up for my family, just in case, last words they can remember me by. I realize I'm being ridiculous. But for the sake of my sanity, I do it anyway.

2 seconds. I can't take it anymore, looking around with wide-eyed panic and seeing that no one else is worried. I close my eyes. I take a deep breath. If this is going to be my last breath, at least let it be a good one.

1 second. The pilot announces that we are going to take off. I say my last prayer. It goes something like this:

*PLEASE DON'T LET ME DIE.*

And then...

I'm flying.





# Even in a Million Years

By Yehudis Mandel

I sit aside  
Only to dream of being a star  
Who knows if I'll ever be good enough  
Strong enough to rise above  
Fearless  
Inspiring

I can never be a star  
I would shine too bright  
The light would hurt delicate eyes

So I sit and I watch them  
They look so perfect  
In everything they do  
I want to be good enough  
But dusty shelves are what I'm used to

Sit aside they say  
Stay silent  
Nobody wants to know

But one day  
They will want to know  
And I won't stand still  
I will do what I've always wanted to  
But instead of just walking by  
I will think about everyone watching me  
Wishing they could be in my place  
And I'll remember my little self  
Dreaming of being a star  
And I will tell them to dream on  
And reach higher  
Because *your* happiness  
Is just a matter of desire





# All in a Day's View

By Zahava Laufer

Sometimes we joke that the E 29th street girls should have their own bus, as they take up most of the route. It seems convenient to go straight down E 29th street but, when we approach, all I wish for is a sharp turn to take me away. For some reason they chose E 29th street, a strip of residential blocks, to build a church and a school which each require an individual speed bump. Bump. Bump. Bump. Down E 29th street we go. These bumps make it impossible for me to drink my morning tea on the bus without spilling and getting a burn, so I set my alarm for 15 minutes earlier than it should be to allot for tea time.

The white and yellow tiled tunnel swallows us in Brooklyn and spits us out in Manhattan. Exiting the tunnel feels like we've arrived at border control. Maybe it's because it looks like a checkpoint or maybe it's because the Freedom Tower casts large shadows above. Either way, all it is is a passageway to the next tunnel whose name I do not know. What I do know, though, is that it cuts off my service and connection to the outside world. Getting stuck in traffic within walls is a nightmare. The light at the end of this tunnel is the FDR drive, a two lane highway located in between the bustling city and

the Hudson River. It is calm and beautiful in the morning, reflecting the early light off of its choppy waves. The piers are flooded with runners. I'm jealous that they have time for a morning run, but not jealous enough to give up my warm and cozy spot on the bus. There's a beautiful spot on the FDR drive: Between the two bridges. Yes, that is it's real name. It is a stretch of road located between the Brooklyn Bridge and the Manhattan bridge and the perfect spot to catch the end of sunrise.

**The white and  
yellow tiled  
tunnel swallows  
us in Brooklyn  
and spits us out  
in Manhattan.**

My bus driver careens off the FDR drive and onto 42nd street, the same exit world leaders and ambassadors take. Although I am not a politician heading to face the United Nations, going off to school sometimes feels just as daunting. As soon as we drive off the ramp we have front row seats to the raising of the flags that take place each morning outside the United

Nations. This only-in-New York experience is the coolest part of my mornings. It definitely makes up for the fact that we exit the fast pace highway and move into slow traffic just a few exits too early. Some days we're surrounded by animal rights and political protesters, and some days, the calmness around such a controversial building amazes me.

School itself is a blur and the day ends when I once again cross the threshold of the miniature yellow school bus. The morning exhaustion lingers in my seat, the second to last on the right hand side, and when I sit down, it overtakes me. Head resting on the window pane, I sleep until Ocean Parkway. The moment we arrive on Ocean Parkway though, I always wake up. Ocean Parkway is the grandest block in all of Brooklyn. It starts at the top, continuing off the highway, and ends at the bottom, about a half hour later, at the beach. Almost every block down Ocean Parkway has a speed camera, and that is the only fathomable reason why my bus driver decides to take us down the service road. The service road is very helpful for dropping people off and picking people up. Not for the navigation of

a school bus. Waiting for the elderly man with his tortoiseshell cane to shuffle out of the taxi and into the apartment complex holds us up for about five to seven minutes. That doesn't seem like a big deal, but imagine waiting five minutes on every block, especially considering there is an alternative option ten feet to the left.

I try to take in the scene as we roll down the service road of Ocean Parkway. The bald old men play chess at the tables, the homeless man lies on the bench, and the runners run in place as they wait for their light on the corner. I try not to envy the runners who seem to be going faster than the bus. As I watch them out the window, I wish I could catch their tendrils of speed and fly all the way home.





# But I Love You

By Malka Hirsch

“Everyone gather around. Follow me.”

Mindy’s low, raspy voice trembled with fear. As the oldest of five kids in my family, Mindy was always left in charge when my parents were keeping up with their busy social lives. As soon as they’d left, Mindy would lead us all to my parents bathroom. We’d lock the door and hide for at least ten minutes. Eventually, when it seemed like things were okay, we’d emerge, but the second we heard an abnormal sound in the house, Mindy would rally up all the kids and instruct us to follow her silently, tip towing to my parents’ room.

Once in my parents’ corner bathroom, Mindy would lead us behind “the wall” where we’d hide from unwanted and frightening guests that may lay just on the other side. While behind the wall, Mindy grabbed her legs and rocked back and forth chanting, “We’re gonna die, but I love you.”

This was a recurring pattern over the years that none of us questioned. As kids, we all thought Mindy was being completely logical and taking good care of us. After all, she was the oldest. You might think that all that time spent hiding together behind “the wall” would have made us hypersensitive to

any frightening scenario. On the contrary, at times when my friends or peers got nervous over certain situations, I tended to be the one to calm the group down. Perhaps I developed this emotional coping mechanism over the years when we were constantly preparing for the worst with Mindy in charge.

\*

When the Hirsch kids weren’t hiding in the bathroom, we were quaraling, especially when waiting in line for our favorite rollercoaster at Six-Flags. Throughout the entire two hour wait, we would argue

**Even with each  
pointer finger  
planted in her ears  
and her eyes tightly  
shut, she managed  
to recite those  
familiar words.**

over who would get to sit next to Mindy. I remember once gaining the honor of sitting near her on the thrilling water ride.

We reached the top of the steep hill and the usual tingling fear crept up on me as the impending drop grew



closer. I turned to Mindy, elated to have my big sister there to comfort me. Even with each pointer finger planted in her ears and her eyes tightly closed, she still managed to recite those familiar words.

“We’re gonna die, but I love you.”

\*

As I grew older, the age gap between Mindy and I seemed to shrink. We learned to laugh at ourselves as we looked back at those “traumatic” times, but that was only until the next crisis would arise.

It was a rainy day and we were driving on an abandoned street during a family vacation abroad. With Mindy alongside me as the backseat driver, I knew trouble was on the rise as soon as my father started joking that the neighborhood were were in looked like the one he saw on the news recently. We all knew

he was referencing the site of an antisemitic attack.

I glanced at Mindy half expecting to see her on the verge of tears. I say “half-expecting,” because I also half expected her to have finally gotten over her illogical fears, being that she was now a mother who lived in her own house with her family in a foreign country. I saw her lips opening, but this time I answered before she could say anything.

“We’re not gonna die, but I still love you,” I said chuckling under my breath.

It was at that moment I realized something I guess I had known all along. Authority and strength do not always co-exist, and the experiences that I had been afraid would make me weaker were the ones that fortified me the most.







Artwork Credit: "Long Haul" by Leah Harris

# Along The Lines

By Rebecca Gold

“Stand clear the closing doors please.” I can still hear the robotic voice announce over my favorite playlist. I cross the bumpy yellow path to get on the subway that just pulled into the station. As fast as the train arrived, I feel pushed back by the sudden acceleration of the car. The platform disappears within an instant and the view from the windows is nothing but black. The car isn’t dark though; from the yellow poles that people grip in the middle of the car to the shiny blue seats to the clothes of others on parallel commutes, colors burst around me.

My eyes move all over the car to take everything in. There’s a teenager with a gold necklace propping his feet on the seat beside him, and although this is invasive, the woman is too focused while painting her nails to mind. A mother diffuses a brewing temper tantrum by giving her son her phone. The man sitting next to her taps his shiny black shoes rapidly; he seems to be late to something important. The chaos keeps me engaged for the few short minutes that I stand on the train. I jog up the stairs and forget the commuters with whom I shared the ride. I’ll probably never see them again, and besides, I’ll observe new people with new stories when I take the train home.

As a stereotypical “city girl”, I knew that at some point I’d have to take the subway alone. When the internship 34 blocks from my apartment seemed a bit too far to walk to daily during a humid New York summer, I knew the time had come. Though I’d taken the subway with my dad for as long as I can remember, my palms started to sweat (not just from the heat) at the thought of taking the E alone.

**I jog up the stairs  
and forget the  
commuters with  
whom I shared  
the ride. I’ll  
probably never  
see them again.**

Like all new things, my first solo ride was both unfamiliar and overwhelming, but as time went on, the process became almost instinctive. Navigating independently in the labyrinth of subway lines under the city may seem daunting, but if you pay attention, the station navigates for you. Get off at Grand Central Station and want to get to Times Square? “Shuttle to Times Square” is plastered on the wall facing the train exit. Instead of anxiously

checking Google Maps directions for every turn, you confidently know the "Waze" to go.

Of course, you will still make mistakes. Just as soon as I thought I conquered the tracks, I found myself almost in Queens on the Lower East Side. "The next stop is Roosevelt Island" was the announcement that startled me; I rushed towards the doors to the "train to Coney Island" before it pulled out, leaving me stranded. I never thought I would be so relieved by reading the words "Delancey Street" on a route board.

What may look like green, yellow, orange and red circles surrounding random letters and numbers are the numerous lines that I've learned to navigate, not in just a destination-oriented way, but also in the attitude and demeanor I portray to fellow passengers. The subway stations host some commuters temporarily, like those Midtown travelers who get the most frustrated by the lack of cell

phone connectivity underground, and others' residence more permanently, like those who sit with cardboard signs pleading for sustenance. Although the diversity leads to an interesting scene to observe while commuting, it lends itself to the possibility of unsafe situations. All of your senses have to be engaged to travel safely and efficiently.

But the engagement and awareness of the stations makes it so captivating. From the sound of the brakes screeching to halt to the somewhat tasteful graffiti within some stations and almost anonymous artwork in others, the interconnected lines of transport under Manhattan exist not just for convenience, but as a completely unique expression of New York City culture. While it might be more comfortable to just hail a taxi, my MetroCard reminds me of a more captivating way to commute.





# Livelihood

By Tova Schwartz

It smells like that scent  
of the outdoor breeze and mist.  
Except it isn't artificial – it's real.

It can clear your head for you,  
taking on your burdens,  
even though it has so much to carry already.

It is free.  
Besides costing nothing to have,  
it can flow all around without constraints.

It fuels me,  
reviving my lungs,  
filling me with the strength to move on.

Yet fresh air, like everything in life  
is never fully appreciated  
until it's gone.



# A New Chapter

By Rivka Notkin

We had just moved to a new town, and I was ready to receive my right of passage. I watched cartoon Arthur and his gang sing in rhyme and dance about library cards, and I was excited to finally join the club. The morning of the big day, I practiced writing my name, the only prerequisite. The car ride was filled with excitement. I practically flew from my booster, down the steps, and into the library. Being a big girl, I mustered up the courage to ask the librarian for help; she invited me behind her desk and into a whole new world.

During my elementary school years, the little blue card served as my identity. It lived in a well-loved Vera Bradley wallet, the extension of my grandmother's purse. It came with me as I graduated from the children's wing to the youth room, and from there to the young adult fiction lining the halls. I even made it as far as the New York Times Bestseller shelf. But, after I hit high school, the excitement of finding a new book dwindled. I no longer felt the need to make time for weekly visits to the library, in search of a good weekend read. Books became less of a pastime and friends took their place. The books I did need

were checked out on the library's website and picked up by my father on his way home from work.

I was at camp when my mother called, telling me that my card was about to expire. The librarian would need to see me in person to replace it. I shrugged off the errand, knowing that I would probably never visit the library again. But, when my English teacher assigned a photo essay, I chose to photograph the library, killing two birds with one stone. I entered the Teaneck Public Library through the lens of my phone camera and noticed things I never saw before.





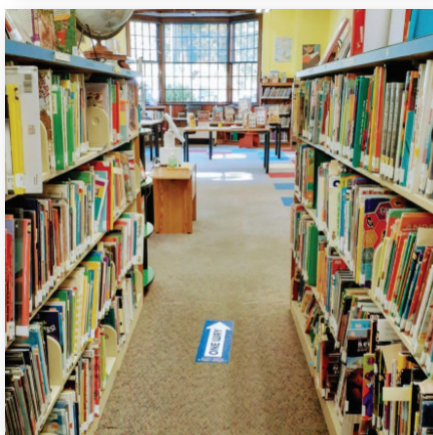
The library was half asleep, most parts cordoned because of safety guidelines. I first went to the children's wing and was greeted by a welcome back sign, complete with a giant red heart. I knew this was a response to the COVID-19 closures, but I felt like it was aimed at me.



I moved from the stacks of encyclopedias to the back, stopping on the colorful carpets where I spent Sunday afternoons with my twin sister, befriending Elephant and Piggie, flipping through *Highlights*, and solving wooden puzzles.



I was overcome with nostalgia when I noticed my favorite spot was still there, a tiny corner of the carpet with an 'R' for Rainbow. I saw myself sitting at a preschooler size wooden table, filling out 'I Can Read' forms with my mom. I felt the urge to touch the sealed off books, pick the most appealing, and curl up on the plastic couch. I wanted to reconnect with Stuart Little, Amelia Bedelia, and Madeline, only to realize the characters I grew up with had not changed at all – I the only one getting older.



Moving on from the youth wing, I stepped into the main room. The skylight was focusing the sun on a



far corner, illuminating a crisp American flag. This is the section that provides books for those who want to learn English or about America. Taking in the picture, I imagined a hard-working immigrant father, wanting to secure his citizenship, browsing a shelf for a book about the US government. To me, the brightly lit flag, along with the vibrantly colored books welcome the immigrant to our library, and the US, pinpointing the hope, nationalism, and liberty we hope to provide him.



Adjacent to this section was a tribute to our town's rich history. On display was a cross-section of the Great Red Oak, a tree older than the town itself. The display featured a map of the town's original plans, pictures of main streets before stores opened, along with a town meeting poster, dated 1895.



I read about the one-room schoolhouse, and how the library grew with the community, undergoing many expansions. After looking closer at the walls, I noticed clearly where the original building merged with the additions and saw how the outer bricks of the original building made up the walls of the



newer wings.

I stopped by the front desk, producing my license and expired library card. The volunteer informed me that I was now eligible for an adult card, which enabled me total access to the library's selections. She passed my new card under the plexiglass, along with a sharpie to sign my name. The back of the

card was clean white, instead of the original dark blue. As I scrawled my name on the card, I felt the same surge of excitement as I did almost fourteen years earlier. I tucked my new card into my phone case, made my way out of the library with a camera full of pictures and a mind full of memories.



# Golden Mornings?

By Batsheva Benitzchak

After a whole night of rain  
The ground is muddy,  
But the sky is clear.  
So nothing seems wrong.

After a whole night of rain  
Puddles are all over,  
But flowers bloomed.  
So nothing seems wrong.

After a whole night of rain  
A tree fell down,  
But the birds are chirping.  
So nothing seems wrong.

After a whole night of rain  
The hanging clothes are soaked,  
But the grass smells fresh.  
So nothing seems wrong.

After a whole night of rain  
The slides are slippery,  
But there's a rainbow in the sky.  
So nothing seems wrong.



After a whole night of rain  
I feel capable of anything,  
Since the bad is over.  
Nothing seems wrong.

Or

Is

It?

(Inspired by Barry Spacks' Experimental Method for Producing Poetry)

# Journey Through Creativity

By Hindy Hamburger

Creativity is like a VIP party where only a select few are allowed in. The party is exclusive, and one of the most coveted invitations around, but only those who journey there can join it.

As you make your way you will pass a large looming wall. Most people get stopped here, at this huge block, which seemingly sucks out all your ideas. Every thought seems too hard, or too boring, until there are no thoughts left to criticize. As you lose your sense of self you stand there staring dully upward. It towers almost as high as the eye can see, and seems as though there is no way beyond.

If by some miracle you do scale that wall, you then have a long trek through an empty desert of nothingness. As you traverse the barren landscape the sand whips your face as the sun beats down upon you. The occasional tumble weed is the only excitement at this point. The lack of anything and everything is enough to drive you mad, as the emptiness of the desert projects into the emptiness of your imagination.

As you leave the desert you find yourself in a large canyon. It reaches up into the sky like a long hallway disappearing into the distance. Walking through, you can hear the echoes of your own heartbeat bouncing back. In search for answers you may yell through the canyon, but only your own inability to think echoes from beyond. Wrong answers are all you receive in return, and nothing helps the feeling of absence that lingers around you.

You come upon a stream, running between bushes, trees, and flowers. A soft cold breeze and the shade from the canopy above gives some needed relief. Finally ideas begin to flow. The colors of the flowers vibrant and the water from the stream spraying upon your face. As you sit amongst the flowers and misty air, you feel your thoughts pulling together something reasonable, and you wait for the magic. But just as fast as it comes the stream dries up, taking the flowers and greenery with it, leading you back into that sweltering desert of nothing. The sun yet again beating down on you, your only hope

**In search for  
answers you may  
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from beyond.**



being the memory of that beautiful stream which now seems so far away.

Do not fret, for the party is around the corner, and if you make it there it is the most colorful and lively event you will ever attend. The thought that millions of great writers and thinkers have attended in the past is inspiring. You'll feel as though your mind is exploding with new ideas and notions never before known to humankind.

A forewarning for those who choose to stay for too long: be cautious. As fun as this party is, and as much as you may enjoy it, don't forget the journey. Not only that stream, but even the wall, desert, and canyon. Those troubles are what get you to the end, and what will ultimately get you back. Because soon you will leave, and have to start all anew. So when you're standing by that wall for the second, third, or fourth time, remember you've gotten here once before, and it's simply part of the process.





# Lovely, Gloomy Nights

By Miriam Gluck

There's a certain kind of in-between weather  
where it's soggy and wet outside like  
cereal left uneaten, in a shallow pool of milk,  
with a slight chill that creeps through my sweater and numbs my  
fingertips.

This certain kind of weather makes my teeth chatter, and breath a  
puffy white cloud,

as if I'm smoking pure coldness.

The grey sky heaves a sigh through my damp, blowy strands of hair  
and when I lift my eyes, all the greyness around me stands so still,  
so dense

packing me into that moment of gloom, like wet sand in a bucket.

I rip through the streets and trudge, wet and alone.

The day ends too soon, bitterness chasing the sun, sending everyone  
hurrying

away.

Leaving me, with a lovely, gloomy night

that I wait for, to

be enveloped in dry air and dim lights

Because,

fires are lit and tea bags are soaked.

And I'm wrapped tightly in a blanket with my wool coated toes

resting beside the fire's edge,

gripping a steaming mug.

I watch the muck and sog drip slowly from the grey lid of the world.

In this certain kind of in-between weather, I embrace the ugly side of  
nature and caress her.

Praying I won't have to be faced by the blinding morning rays, in too  
few hours

because right now in this moment, I am finally at peace,  
all my worries lost outside during nights like these.  
My lovely, gloomy nights.



# Check(mate)

By Sarah Dan

“Check.”

My father had been declaring this triumphantly during his previous five moves. He slowly advanced his pieces on the glossy black and white chessboard, positioned to attack my king with his next move. To be honest, my defenses were pretty pathetic; his bishops and pawns cornered my measly rook, creating the perfect diversion to smoothly slide his white knight just squares away from victory.

I swept the hair out of my face and considered my options, which were pitifully low and unhelpful. My father leaned back in his chair and folded his arms across his stomach with a smile. He knew he was about to win. Seven of my key black pieces had already been strategically knocked out of the game, and my king wasn't far behind.

Despite my obvious disadvantage, my father's choice of wording still gave me a chance. If the game was truly over, he would have confirmed it by saying “checkmate”. If I could just change my strategy, there was still a small chance to alter the game in my favor.

I focused on my remaining pieces scattered across the board; five pawns, a bishop, a rook, the queen, and my king. Two of my soldiers were threatened by a white rook,

and my king was under attack by a white knight.

Not a lot to work with here.

As I examined the board for a weakness in my father's set up, I realized how much chess taught me about finding a solution to seemingly unsolvable problems in general. Chess is a game that relies on a series of choices made throughout the game to simultaneously attack the other player and protect yourself. You have to be aware of every potential threat and every potential opening, a method I had clearly decided to ignore this game. In so

**The moment you  
think this way,  
you might as well  
tip your king and  
surrender the game.**

many instances you'll be surprised by a sharp tactic or an unexpected trap. Sometimes when encountering these traps, the only thought that comes to mind is “*there's no way out of this.*” The moment you think this way, you might as well tip your king and surrender the game. A cleverer person (such as myself), will clear their head and think “*let me consider my options,*” because there is always a fork in the road,

and there are still squares to move to, you just have to choose the right one.

As always, the ideal move for me would be to threaten my father's current position while securing my own. I scanned the board once, twice, thrice,

crossing out each black and white square in my mental game board.

On the fourth scan it was as if a spotlight had illuminated itself on the beautiful sequence of pieces in combat that played itself out in my mind. I slid my black bishop towards the white horse posed in front of my king, and knocked it off the board, taking its place. The new entrance of my bishop jeopardized my father's white rook. He leaned forward with a look of surprise on his face; with a simple move the game was back on. With whirlwind

of a procession, my plan fell into place, my pieces lining up flawlessly.

White Bishop to E5,  
black pawn to D4,  
white rook to C7,  
black rook to A6,  
white queen to A3.

At last, I had my opening as my father moved his intricate white queen down the column of squares, finally exposing his king. I lifted my delicate queen off the surface of her square and placed her directly in front of the white king. My smile was identical to what my father's was a few moments ago, as I used the tip of my finger to tip over his now trapped king.

Check.

Mate.



**COLOPHON:** The 2021 issue of *Eastward*, Manhattan High School's annual literary and art journal, was created using Adobe InDesign CC (2021). Hand-produced student art was photographed and integrated in the issue using Photoshop CC. The fonts used were Adobe Garamond, BodoniXT and Gabriola. Specialty spreads used Broadway and Brush Script. Variances in font, size, and style indicate titles for literary pieces, art, photography, as well as the names of authors and artists. The main title of the journal is set in Compass TRF Stencil. The 148-page journal was printed by Penn Copy Center Corp. on 12pt Gloss Cover. 24lb Text was used for the pages. 380 copies of *Eastward* were printed and distributed to faculty, staff, students, and parents in honor of this year's 28th Annual Virtual Scholarship Event.



# Editors' Afterword

Dear Readers,

Throughout his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*, Nelson Mandela talks about impossibility. Seemingly insurmountable educational, legal, financial, cultural, organizational, and health and safety obstacles stood in the way of equality for all South Africans. And yet, he changed the world. "It always seems impossible until it's done," Mandela said.

While Mandela's mission far outscopes our humble project, we have drawn much inspiration from his mindset and fervent belief that words carry weight. They can build and rebuild our reality.

Year after year, even though it always seems impossible, the student editors who undertake this project find themselves marveling at the end result. These pages represent countless hours of crafting engaging fiction, insightful memoirs, enchanting poetry, and exquisite art. And each year your submissions become even more exceptional. Your hearts and souls are evident on every page of this journal.

When accomplishment is tangible, it feels more real. Crossing the finish line is exhilarating, but holding the trophy actualizes your victory. For all of the writers and artists who contributed to our journal—especially during a year that was more asynchronous and virtual than "real"—consider this paperback masterpiece your gold medal. And for all the readers, if the thoughts and feelings of these writers have broadened your perspective, shifted your stance, and illuminated your thinking, you too have accomplished something.

The question is: what will you do now?

"It is in your hands to make our world a better one for all." — Nelson Mandela

Your editors,

Dassi, Ayala, Chana, Jenny, Cherri, Adina,  
Miriam, Adina, Hodaya, Chaya, Sara

”

TELL ME, WHAT IS IT YOU PLAN  
TO DO WITH YOUR ONE WILD  
AND PRECIOUS LIFE?

– MARY OLIVER





