

MANHATTAN HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

# EASTWARD

A Literary & Art Anthology



Tzipi Palley, '22

# 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*

**Kayla Felman**

*Harry and Rose Kaplan Scholarship  
Second Place Prose Award*

**Chana Guelfguat**

*Harry and Rose Kaplan Scholarship  
First Place Poetry Award*

**Bayla Hamburger**

*Harry and Rose Kaplan Scholarship  
Art Award First Place*

**Ahuva Horowitz**

*Harry and Rose Kaplan Scholarship  
Art Award Honorable Mention*

**Zahava Schwartz**



MANHATTAN HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS  
**EASTWARD**

A Literary & Art Anthology

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# Foreword

By Mrs. Estee Friedman-Stefansky, Principal

Dear Readers,

The goldfish on this journal's cover transports us back to the carnivals of our youth when winning a goldfish put a terrific smile in our hearts.

With intense focus, you grip the bag all the way home and whisper a silent prayer for this fishie to live a longer life than the ones you brought home all the years before. And though the goldfish swims happily in its small round vase on the window sill near the cake plate, by the end of the week, it is upside down --- flat and heavy. Your big brothers want to flush it down the toilet, but you are too devastated to discuss the plans.

Our journal's front cover designer, Tzipi Palley, succeeded in creating that vivid scene for each of us. With intense attention to the details of the color, texture, and dimension, Tzipi succeeded in making us experience a plethora of memories from a time far from us now. For me, her art conjured marshmallow fluff and cotton candy and fabulous music and silly stuffed animals I wanted to win and hot dogs in buns and long warm summer days.

Our back cover designer, Rikki Klein, brilliantly illustrated a familiar Central Park scene. Close to our school and close to our hearts, Central Park provided that peaceful oasis from our frenzied school day. Always vibrant and abuzz, the street artist depicted captures the elderly woman in her old fur coat with her little dog and that new bunch of flowers she just purchased with a realness that only the most patient artist could produce. For me, her art conjured the skyscraper trees and enormous boulders and neverending stream of tourists, some sauntering as they lick ice cream pops they just bought from the stand, others walking briskly as they drape their blazers over their shoulder with one hand and roll up their corporate button-up shirt sleeves with their other hand.

Such is the power of art.

*Eastward 2022*, is our school's anthology of writing and art. Released annually, it showcases our students' creative expression, and our commitment to accessing their unique voices. Our students contribute to demonstrate a desire to bring us into their worlds, and their generosity of spirit enriches the learning experience for all of us here at MHS.

Kudos to our award-winning writers and artists: Kayla Felman, Chana Guelfaut, Bayla Hamburger, Ahuva Horowitz and Zahava Schwartz.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Estee Friedman-Stefansky". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

# Editors' Foreword

Dear Reader,

Storytelling allows us to develop our thoughts and get to know ourselves and others more wholeheartedly. Whether poetry or prose, fiction or memoir, writing enables us to share parts of ourselves that can't be expressed in any other form. At Manhattan High School for Girls, every student offers a literary submission as a part of their English and Language Arts coursework. Though not every story or personal essay can be published here, each and every piece produced enriches the collective creativity and authenticity of our school environment. These efforts are integral not just for education, but for life. This year, as in past years, we chose not to restrict submissions to a certain theme. Although this can sometimes leave the playing field wide open and feel like a challenge when beginning the writing process, it ultimately led to the most varied and vibrant reflections. The selections in these pages, carefully and collaboratively chosen by the student editors and faculty advisors, are meant to represent our student body as a whole and the wishes, wonderings, and wisdom that illuminate our personal and communal journeys. The Harry and Rose Kaplan Scholarship awards for excellent prose, poetry, and art are determined by a blind selection committee composed of faculty members and teachers. This year, it is remarkable that these pieces all seem to tap into two core values of Manhattan High School for Girls: empathy and gratitude. We hope you enjoy this collection that attempts to capture the things that sustains us and our society.

We'd like to thank everyone who made this journal possible. Firstly, thank you to the talented writers, artists, and poets who lent us their work, time, and energy. Truly, this journal wouldn't exist without you. Thank you to Dr. Shaina Trapedo, our faculty advisor, for all your late nights and early mornings to guide us through this process. Thank you to Mrs. Dena Szpilzinger, our layout advisor, for ensuring this journal looks exactly as we envisioned it. Thank you to Ms. Lakritz, Mrs. Benchimol, Mrs. Socolof, Ms. Klapper and Mrs. Schwartz for helping us unlock our full creative potential. As always, we owe immense gratitude to our Principal, Mrs. Friedman-Stefnansky for providing her students with endless opportunities for creative expression. Lastly, we would like to thank you, the reader, for spending your time reading our beloved journal.

With appreciation from your editors,

Bruria, Cherri, Batsheva, Leah, Shana, and Yael

# Mission Statement

For over twenty five years, the Manhattan High School Literary and Art Anthology 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 to even begin. In answer, we offer 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 space for students to confront that challenge and become better writers and communicators through the process.

# Editorial Policy

All 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 met 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 were also invited to submit art of all mediums, including collections and personal portfolios, to be considered for inclusion. 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.





**“After nourishment, shelter  
and companionship, stories  
are the thing we need most  
in the world.”**

**– Philip Pullman**

# Waiting

By Yehudis Halton

If you look through the third window on the fourth floor of the light blue building with the peeling paint, you can see an old lady. She stands by her window quite a lot, looking down attentively at the people below who are going on with their days. She watches a woman on the corner sell pink and white roses. She watches a hurried businessman hop into a yellow taxi. She watches a middle aged couple smile at each other while they shout for their children, Oliver and Eva, to wait for them at the corner. She watches all of this from behind heavy lavender curtains that were hung up by her son, Peter. The smell of pancakes wafts into the room and the old lady turns away from the window to check on them. She and Peter made pancakes every Saturday morning, when he was around. But he wasn't anymore. And so, the old lady sits by her window and watches. And waits. He left in his twenties. He is turning forty-three today.

The old lady blows out a melting yellow candle. She moves back to the window to watch and tend to her pink peonies. They had been her husband's favorite. She had held them in her bouquet at their wedding. If cared for properly, peonies can last up to a hundred years. She wished their marriage had, but she wasn't that lucky. Sickness took his life and her happiness. Now all that she has left is Peter.

She sits and she waits.

The summer sun shines on her face. Summer turns to fall and the brown and orange leaves begin to shed their branches, leaving them barren like her peonies. The snow comes and leaves the third window on the fourth floor in a thin layer of frost, until spring arrives to repeat the cycle.

The old lady collapses. The neighbors hear. An ambulance is called.

"A heart illness," they said.

"Critical condition," they said.

"Hospital. Immediately," they said.

"But . . . Peter," she says.

It can all be seen through her beloved heavy curtains. But soon the curtains close. An ambulance drives away with the old lady in it.

Years pass. An important-looking, middle-aged businessman crosses the street. He heads towards the light blue brick building with peeling paint. He

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last up to a  
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She wished their  
marriage had,  
but she wasn't  
that lucky.**

climbs the stairs to the third apartment on the fourth floor. He knocks.

“Hello. My name is Peter,” he says. “I’m looking for an old lady, my mother.”

But his mother was not there.

# Letter to Freshman Me

By Rina Szpilzinger

Dear Freshie Me,

It's the night before the first day of school. 2 a.m. to be precise. I know you're still awake. I'm writing to you as a senior, to pass on what I wish I had known before I started based on what I know now.

First of all, you know the outfits you spent hours picking out at night, and the multiple FaceTime calls with friends to make sure it all looks right? Well, I hate to be the one to tell you this, but no one is looking at your sweater. Then again, maybe it's best this comes from me after all. You don't know this yet, but by the time you've finished your 12th grade Modern Literature coursework, you'll know all about the Id, Ego and Superego. Even though you still think "Freud" is an autocorrect mistake for "feud," human beings hardly have the capacity to consider anything outside of themselves at all. There is one thing that you do need to put on several times a day; after the school's production of Annie in twelfth grade, you'll never be able to rid your brain of the lyric "you're never fully dressed without a smile." Earworm or not, it's true.

Not only is the best bathroom stall the second to last one on the third floor, but it's also great for those in between class DMCs (deep meaningful conversations, you'll learn that one quickly) and quick last-minute study sessions. You're welcome. Also, when you're running late to the next class, skip the hallways and take the elevator. Your attendance record will thank me later!

Everyone told you high school will be hard and they didn't lie, so here's a little crash course on how to make it slightly easier. Quizlet and flashcards will be your lifesaver. Believe me, you'll need to make a ton, especially when memorizing those AP Bio terms. So here's a pro tip: cut them into quarters!

Don't even bother buying a planner. It will go on winter break faster than you do! Google Keep will be a discovery that lasts you an organized lifetime. And I know I shouldn't really be encouraging this, but you'll learn

**Put on some  
tunes and dance  
it out. Bake  
something with  
chocolate as the  
key ingredient.**

after one lesson of geometry that the coffee addiction is real! Rina + Sleep Deprivation – Caffeine X Hunger = Infinite Frustration. So be sure to sleep (even and especially during your bus rides) and pack lots of snacks!

Numerous speakers and lectures are coming your way, and it's nearly impossible to remember everything they say. Still, try. Be the girl who shows up to invited speakers with pen and paper in hand. I can guarantee that it will come in handy. And this strategy isn't only applicable to lectures and speeches, but for your "out of class" learning as well. Journal. Throughout. High School. You're not going to want to forget any of it. I've learned two really important things in life: I forgot the first one, but the second one is to write everything down. Okay, so that isn't a "Rina original," it's a meme, but you get the point. Also, try not to get too distracted by memes.

There will be some ups and downs over the next four years. There are going to be a whole lot of tears in your future, some bad but also many good. For the good ones, soak them. For the bad and sad, know it will get better, even if it takes time. Put on some tunes and dance it out. Bake something with chocolate as the key ingredient. You've got this!

All of this is important, but the most crucial piece of advice I can give you is to try to enjoy every second. Four years seems like a life sentence at this point, but it goes by in the blink of an eye. Build friendships. Make memories. Expand and explore. It's going to be great! Good luck on your first day, and let me know how it goes.

Rooting for you always,  
Your Future Senior Self

# Fly

By Teri Ehrenpreis



# True Colors

By Lily Notkin

The Greeks didn't have a word for blue; the color didn't exist in any of their renowned writings. Every morning, they woke up to the blissful sky and they looked out at the ports of the vast seas, saw the waves stretch across the horizon and never described the color with a word.

Maybe a single word is not enough to describe some things. There is a reason people say that a picture is worth a thousand words. No matter how descriptive you are, you can't encapsulate some situations into words. It just would not do justice to our complex, human feelings.

When I was five, I was "scared" of thunderstorms. But even when I asked my mom if I could cuddle with her, using that single word could not encapsulate all I felt when the thunder crackled and the pangs of rain dropped loudly onto the roof. It was more than fear— it was the feeling of being unprotected against the giant strength of nature. It was the awareness that I lacked control. And despite the four walls surrounding me, I believed the rain could come rushing in at any second.

The feeling of getting into bed after a long day is more than "comfort." The world is winding

down as you are, and the day is completed. Everything that you did is done. Everything that you studied is now studied. You are finished — but only for that day. But there is relief, and sometimes, excitement, in knowing that next morning you have the opportunity to do it all again. You can work harder and finish what you couldn't the day before.

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have a word for  
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writings.**

The title of a "best friend" isn't established between two people who pick up coffee for each other on alternating Mondays. It's the feeling that no matter what's going on in your separate lives, you have a shoulder to cry on, a person you can send memes to at 2 a.m. in the middle of midterms week, a found sister (or biological one) whose impact on our life is lasting and forever.

Think about catching someone's eye for more than a few seconds while walking up the communal



stairs to 1st period. Can you call it an unintentional but undeniable shared moment of vulnerability, understanding, and hopefully, acceptance? What's the word for something that's gone with a blink of an eye as you continue the trek up the four flights of stairs to your classroom?

Or that feeling you get when you've been home from sleepaway camp for a month and the vividness of the experience slowly and fondly fades away? What about when you say something you can never take back. It's more than "regret." It is the realization that it now lives in their thoughts and feelings, ready to be retrieved at any given moment.

What about when you are learning proofs in geometry, the sides and angles all compiled together to make a mess of numbers and letters and proofs, and suddenly, you find an opening and you just get it? That moment is more than "understanding." It's overcoming a mental roadblock as the gears in your brain turn and turn. When everything cancels out and clicks into place, and you know

that you'll be able to solve a similar problem the next time you come across one.

I snapped a picture of myself skiing with snow in my eyebrows and my hair an utter mess, and quickly pressed send with the caption, "SO MUCH FUN!!!!" But does "fun" accurately include the feeling of anxiously waiting for a friend's reply? What creates "fun"? My actions or the reaction of others? Maybe it's just something I don't have a word for.

Maybe the Greeks saw blue, but they couldn't capture the rushing waves pounding against the shore into one four-letter word. Maybe they couldn't contain its beauty in language. Maybe they could not bring themselves to label the feeling of minuteness when you stare at the sky and realize how big the world truly is, and how small this fact makes you. Maybe they could, but they just refused to. Maybe it was due to their fear of eternally giving something so great a label that it didn't deserve. But we will never know.



The Edge

By Lily Perla

# Family Invasion

By Mindy Bober

August 24, 2005, was the day that not one, but two aliens invaded my fortified castle.

Before the intrusion, I was a little redhead with big brown eyes who enjoyed the constant snuggles and attention I received from everyone. I laughed at every new made-up song my parents sang to me, I enjoyed the overload of presents I received from my grandparents, and I loved it when my cousins chased me around my house, admiring my cuteness. To put it simply, being the center of attention made me feel like a princess.

But this fairytale was quite short as it only lasted one year, five months, five days, one hour, and thirty-nine minutes to be exact. More to the point, this fairytale only lasted until my twin siblings were born. Contrary to feeling overjoyed along with everyone else, I was a confused little redhead with big brown eyes who refused to speak, hug, or even look at my mother who had left me behind as she scurried to the hospital to abandon me for two tiny aliens.

As soon as my parents noticed this apparent hatred for these aliens, they were tasked with the difficult mission of somehow getting me to believe that “double

the aliens would be double the fun.” But even with all of the bribes and pep talks, I refused to express any love towards them.

I was a teary-eyed little redhead with big brown eyes when I greeted the aliens for the very first time and so was the case every time the aliens approached my territory because after all, I wasn't ready to share my castle with bizarre creatures. I mean, let's be real, who would want to live with tiny, whiny, and rather slimy aliens?

**I was a confused  
little redhead with  
big brown eyes who  
refused to speak,  
hug, or even look  
at my mother.**

The first few days, weeks, or maybe months, I attempted to fantasize that the aliens didn't exist but, as much as I tried, this was nearly impossible considering that they needed constant snuggles and attention. Eventually, even I, the scared little redhead with big brown eyes, began to take care of the needy aliens by running with my chubby legs to bring them bottles and hush their cries with my

gibberish songs.

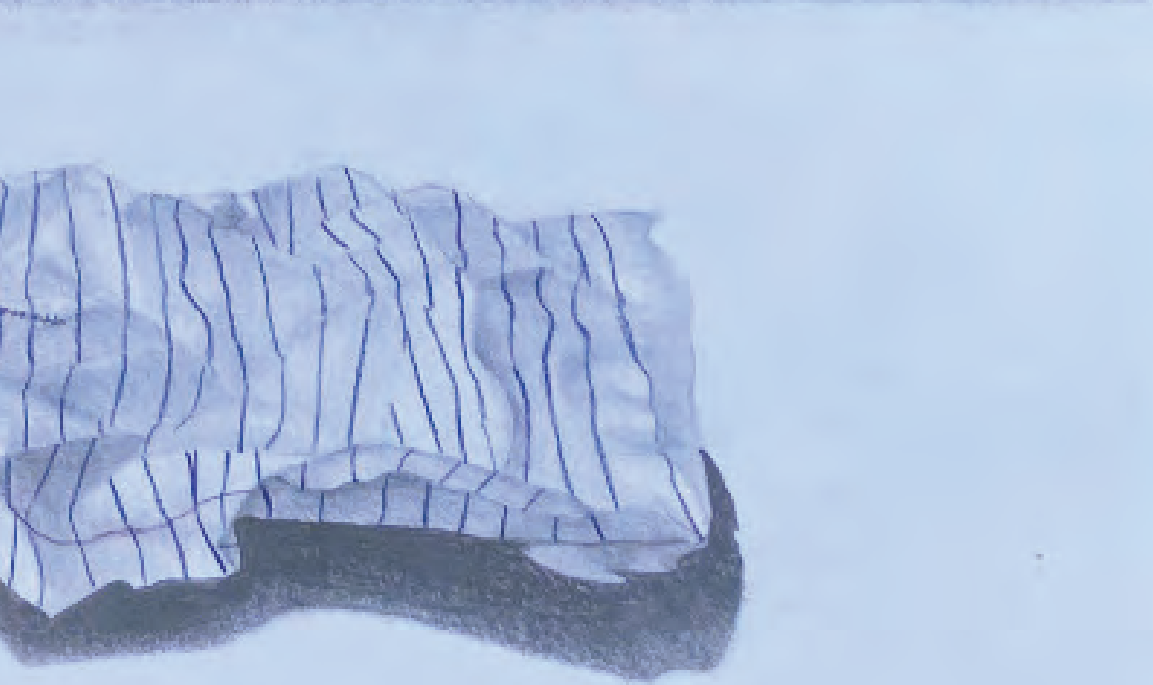
Throwing out diapers, cleaning toys, and the like may not seem too noteworthy but for a near two-year-old it was surely equivalent to pulling three all-nighters in a row or writing a 100-page essay in response to what the greatest invention of all time is. But despite the hard work, it all paid off when my mother's arms were finally freed. As I leaped onto my mother's lap, her warm and loving hands extended towards me to wrap my tired body.

After those hugs, I knew that everything was worth it, but above all, I knew that my siblings were worth it. My twin siblings have transformed me from a spoiled little redhead with big brown eyes to an affectionate not-so-little redhead through teaching me that sharing a castle with aliens isn't so bad after all. I'm glad to call these aliens mine.









# *Up Up and Away*

By Noa Benhamo

# Reflecting

By Sara Pinczower

Mother said it was time to grow up.  
She said I must get rid of her.  
Aania, the one from the window.  
I run upstairs to make sure she is still there,  
And she is,  
As she always is.  
Staring right at me.  
“Don’t worry,” she says. “I didn’t leave.”  
I smile,  
So does she.

She’s been here for as long as I can remember.  
Since mother took me upstairs to stare out the window,  
and told me the greatest discovery is  
within myself.

So I visit the girl in the window.  
Every day after school,  
Sometimes even before.  
We look alike.

Bouncy locks tied in pink ribbon  
Scratchy knit stockings Grandma makes me wear,  
A plaid jumper,  
And fingers that are much too long and thin,

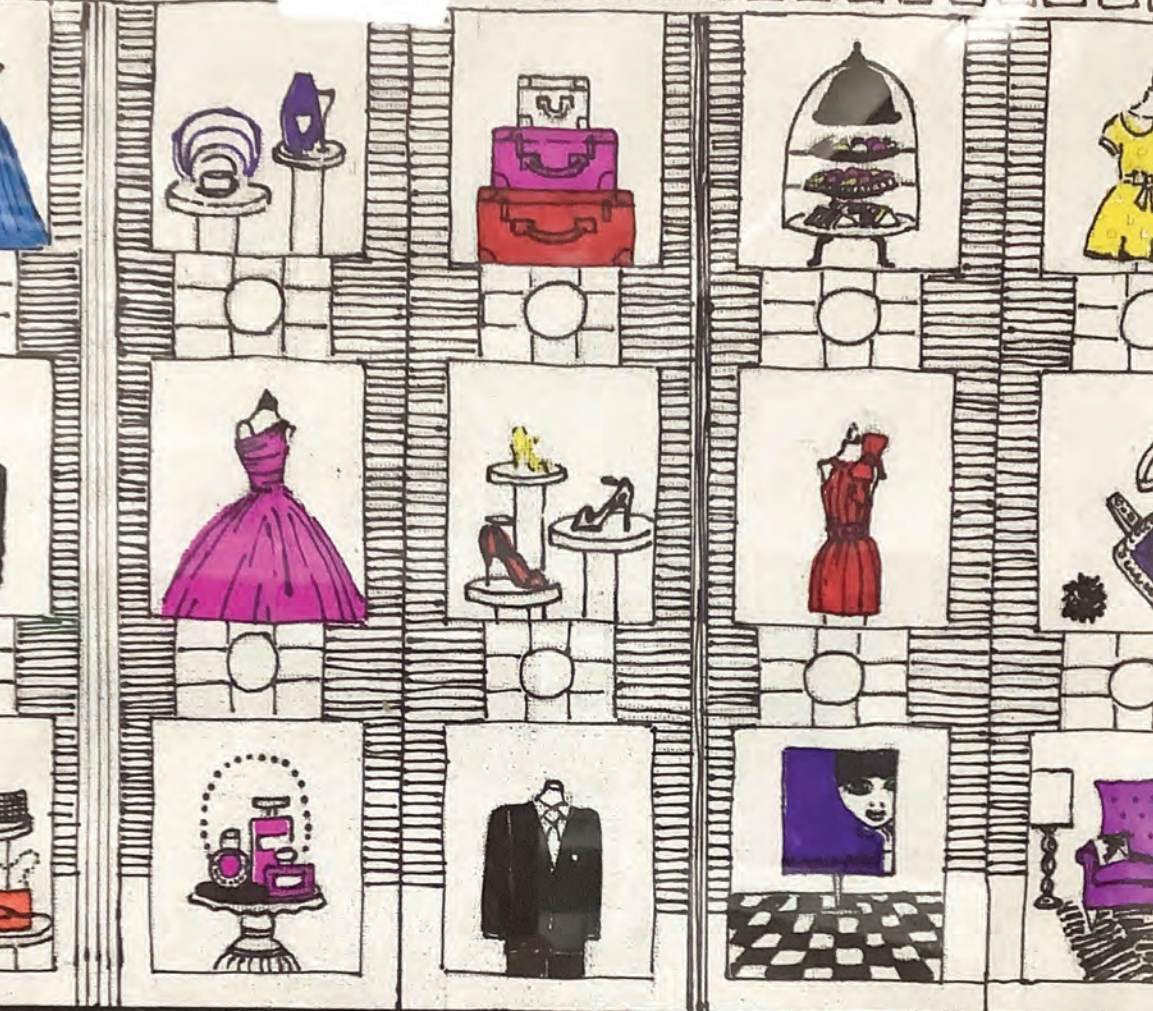
When I cried about the friendship bracelet that Ruth gave to Emily,  
Aania smiled gently, and assured me that it will get better.  
When I got a bad grade in math,

Aania said I'll get better.  
When I graduated 5th grade,  
Aania beamed at me and told me she always knew I could do it.  
Sometimes I sleep by the window,  
And the little girl waits with me.  
Through the night,  
Always there,  
Right past the window.  
Telling me,  
Everything is amazing.

But I have been gone a long time.

Now I have my own young girl with bouncy curls,  
In a plaid jumper.  
And a tiny boy,  
With chocolate eyes,  
And tiny fingers.  
I slowly climb the stairs,  
And take hesitant steps towards the window.  
And stare out to greet  
A woman with expressive brown eyes,  
Soft brown waves,  
Long slender hands.  
I smile.  
She smiles back.  
And tells me everything is amazing.





# BLOOMINGDALES



Bloomingdales

By Naomi Genkin

# You Don't Know My Name

By Shaina Bober

Hi, my name is Shaina - at least *you* think it is. Because when you asked, that's what I told you. But I lied.

My name's actually Shaindy. I don't know why my parents named me Shaindy but never called me that. Honestly, I don't think I'll ever get a clear answer on why. They constantly tell me: "Шайна и Шейнди одно и то же имя!" ("Shaina and Shaindy are the same name!"), but I know that's not true. There's obviously no "D" or "Y" in Shaina.

\* \* \*

It's weird to think that people don't actually know my name. In fact, I didn't even know my name was Shaindy until I was nearly six years old.

It was day one of first grade. The window air conditioning unit made a weird *arrrrrrr* noise that I didn't recognize. It let out air that smelled like old books, a smell which I wasn't used to. Little did I know that that same scent would linger in my nose everyday for the next eight years of my life.

Each student was assigned to an old wooden desk with metal legs that were less stable than an average teenager. It had a paper label bordered by rainbow stars with your name neatly printed right onto

it. I struggled to find mine. Miriam, Atara, Esther... but no Shaina. After everyone found their desks, there was only one left. And I, the only 3-foot-tall child left standing in my navy pleated skirt and freshly cut bob. Match made in heaven, no? I would have sat down by that empty desk, but it clearly was not mine. It belonged to a S-H-A-I-N-D-Y, and her letters still smelled like the black Sharpie marker that they were written with earlier that morning. My eyes turned away from those atrocious letters, specifically the "D" and the "Y." It felt like those letters were ready to jump out and attack me. The teacher pulled her lilac cardigan tightly around herself. I wasn't sure if she was expressing concern for me or if she was just really cold. She probably thought that I didn't know how to spell my name, but I did. "Shaindy, why don't you take a seat?" I didn't even know she was talking to me. I didn't respond. I am not Shaindy.

**I feel like an  
avocado that was  
accidentally tagged  
with a tomato label.**

\* \* \*

I find it offensive when people call me Shaindy. I don't know why. It is technically my name, but maybe it's because that's not who I am. It doesn't feel like me. I feel like an avocado that was accidentally tagged with a tomato label. Yes, it says Shaindy on my birth certificate. But I'm only going to be Shaindy once that avocado's a tomato.

I also hate it when people spell my name wrong. People think I'm Shayna, Sheina, Shaena and sometimes the baristas at Starbucks think my name is Shaniqua. But no. It's just Shaina. No "E," no "Y," and definitely no "Q."

\* \* \*

The first day that a Starbucks barista got my name correctly was probably one of the best days of my life. April 19, 2021. I came early to school that morning and decided to walk over to the Starbucks on the corner of East 66th Street and 3rd Avenue. I had just ordered my usual, a grande vanilla sweet cream cold brew, when the barista asked for a name for the order.

"Shaina," I said, without hesitation.

When they called my name, I went to pick up the drink that I had ordered. I glanced at the label, already wet from the condensation resting on the cup. S-H-A-I-N-A. I was floored. Obviously, I quickly opened the camera on my phone and took a couple pictures from various angles to send to my friends. I still have a picture of the label saved to "Favorites" on my photos app.

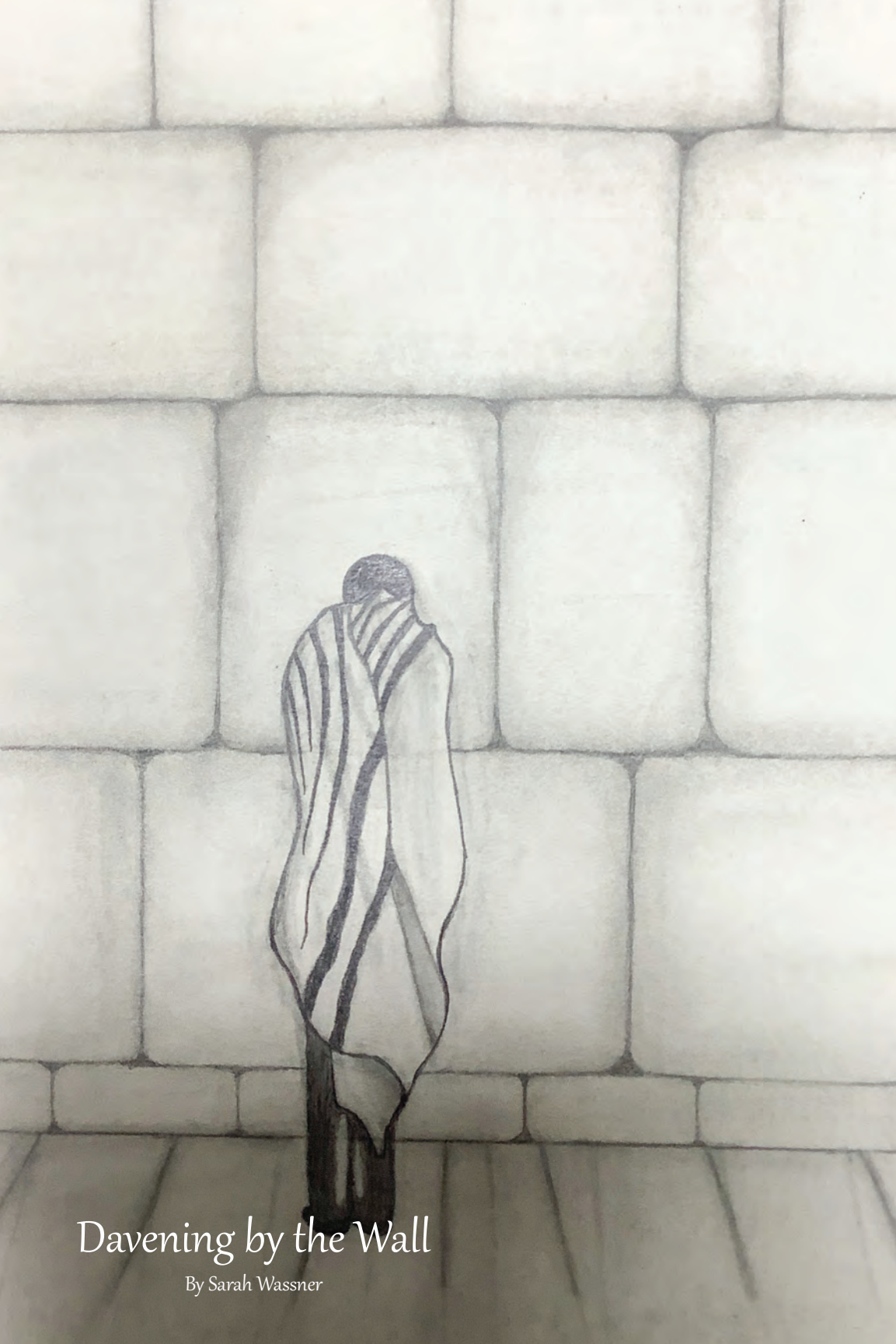
\* \* \*

When I tell someone my name, I feel like I'm telling them that I'm from Staten Island, I have a twin brother, I straighten my hair a lot because it makes me feel pretty, I like taking naps and drinking coffee, I eat sushi at least three times a week, and I have an obsession with avocados. My name connects me to my identity. So no, maybe I don't lie when I say my name isn't Shaindy.

\* \* \*

Hi, my name is Shaina. It was, and it will always be, Shaina.





# Davening by the Wall

By Sarah Wassner

# Next Time

By Teri Ehrenpreis

I push open the heavy oak door and quietly slip through the gap, inhaling deeply as I enter the main lobby. The smell of musty books and the light streaming in through the stately windows make me feel right at home. Aside from the faint noise of the bustling Manhattan traffic and the occasional muted beep of the librarian's scanner, the building is completely silent. Not a silence of pain or discomfort, but a silence of calmness. I carefully tip-toe up the stairs as if making noise would ruin the blanket of tranquility that envelops all of the library's visitors.

While I have absolutely no idea what I want when I go in, I always leave with a hefty pile of good reads, sometimes dystopian novels of teens fighting for their lives, and other times realistic fiction of kids overcoming physical differences. By carefully selecting books that cater to my interests (yes, I do judge them by their covers), I gather a nice-sized pile and carefully carry them down the steps, making sure not to drop them. Loud bangs and flying pages aren't conducive to the coveted quiet library atmosphere. I gently place my books on the librarian's desk as I pull out my slightly rubbed-out library card. The librarian scans each spine with a faint beep. She laughs at my bag that's

bursting at the seams.

"It's a clown bag!" she chuckles.

While I appreciate her sense of humor, the library isn't really known to be a place for social interaction and stand-up comedy. I nod politely. "Yeah, I guess so."

"Your books are due in three weeks, March 27," she says, handing me my receipt.

**By carefully selecting books that cater to my interests (yes, I do judge them by their covers), I gather a nice-sized pile.**

"Thanks," I nod at her. "Have a good weekend."

"You too. Enjoy."

I jog over to my sister who had been patiently waiting for me in the car. I thank her for the ride.

"It's no big deal," she says.

I start to read even though I know it will make me nauseous. I'm three pages in when I decide that

next time, I'll definitely check out the second book in this series.


But as it turns out, it was a big deal. How could I have known that "next time" would mean several months later in a completely differ-

ent world than the one I knew. Who would have thought that hundreds of libraries, thousands of books, millions of pages, and billions of words were "non-essential"?









# The Sky is the Limit

By Rina Lifshitz



# Glow

By Sarah Kirschenbaum

This is the story of Henry, a young boy who glowed like a million fireflies, and me, just one amongst them. It all started one clear night as I wandered through the sky with my fellow fireflies with no particular destination in mind. I saw a young boy chasing after his even younger sister, who was waddling through the grass, giggling as he tackled her to the ground. Looking up at the trees above, they saw a swarm of fireflies blending with the shine of the stars. The children ran after us, arms outstretched and ready to catch us. Along with the rhythm of the children's feet, I heard wings flapping away. Although I'd typically be frightened, the warm smile on the boy's face invited me to come just a little closer. I've always been on the more cautious side, so I rarely left my comfort zone, let alone approached humans, whom I've learned are quite dangerous creatures. For a moment I hovered over the boy's head as he stood breathlessly, alongside his sister, who was jumping up and down, waving her arms in the air. The boy, who I believed was named "Hen-weeeee" based on the excited squeals of his sister, looked up to see me circling his head swiftly. Before I had a chance to bolt he reached his hands in the air and grabbed me.

"Stephanie!" I heard shouted through the muffled cage of Henry's hand, "I caught one, I caught one!"

He leaped into the air, his hands shaking me from side to side, making me hit his palms. I became hysterical, uncertain of what was occurring. What happened next was a blur, for I could barely see through the cracks of his fingers, and I was hearing everything like I was underwater. The next thing I knew, Henry's grip loosened, I was lowered into a glass jar, and placed onto a surface flat. I glanced around anxiously to find myself on the cluttered nightstand of a small and rather messy bedroom. I was put at ease when I looked around to see star stickers pasted all around the room, and that's when I realized this would be my home.

And home it was. Over the next week or so, I became a regular addition to Henry's life. Every morning Henry would leave in a big yellow school bus, so I learned to busy myself with activities like counting the stars around the

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comfortable in it.**

room and racing from one wall of the jar to the other. I adored my tiny jar; it had glass walls, with a metal cover that had holes poked through it with a pencil, giving me air to breathe. I've always admired the beauty and wonders of the world around me, but for as long as I can remember I've been too intimidated to feel truly comfortable in it. In my jar, I was able to witness the world through the sturdy, transparent walls that kept safe within the barriers of my new abode.

Eventually, after what often seemed like an entire lifetime, Henry would come back, push his way through mountains of clothing, climb over his unmade bed, and then at last, grab me off the nightstand. From his return from school until he went to bed, Henry and I did everything together. At family dinners I'd watch him tell his family about his adventures of the day as they laughed at Stephanie spitting broccoli across the table. Some nights he would use my light to hide under the covers reading. Honestly, the best part of our routine was when he'd hold my jar tight as he was curled up into bed, until the last moment when his mom would kiss his forehead and tuck him into bed, and he'd gently put me back on my spot on the nightstand. I was the happiest I'd ever been, for I found myself the most unlikely best friend, and even though we couldn't speak with one another, I felt as though he understood me. I was living the dream.

Then one night, the jar tipped off the nightstand, and rolled away into the deep, dark depths under his bed.

The next day, when Henry woke up, he reached his hand out for my jar, but found himself grasping at the empty space where I belonged. I lit up frantically trying to get his attention. Come on Henry, I'm right here, I'm right here! He panicked, calling his entire family into the room to search with him, but it was hopeless, no one could find me. I felt invisible, as though I was stranded on an island isolated in the middle of an ocean, unable to get anyone to notice me, for the jar I once considered my haven now became my prison. That night, after Henry turned off the light in his bedroom, I lit up one more time, but all I saw was my own reflection in the glass, my expression lonely. My only company were the dust bunnies and abandoned teddy bears, and even those I could not touch from inside the confines of my jar. After what I believe was a few days, but felt infinitely longer, I consumed the grass and water that was left inside my dreadful jar. I was no longer able to light up to get Henry or one of his family members' attention.

The next day I watched helplessly as Stephanie waddled around the room, utterly oblivious to the fact that I was hidden in plain sight. Despite the fact that I had not been able to light up since I ran out of food supply, I

willed myself to create even the faintest glow. I mustered up every fiber of energy I had left in me, and to my surprise, I kindled what I believe to be the most radiant light to ever come out of such a slight being like a firefly. I watched Stephanie's eyes widen in shock as the blazing light overcame the room. Yes Stephanie, it's me, it's me! I thought desperately. As if she could hear what I was thinking, she dropped to her knees and reached her chubby hands out to clasp my jar.

Stephanie jumped with excitement, shaking my jar, reminding me of the night Henry and I met; the one difference was she lost her balance, toppling onto the floor. My jar shattered against the wood with a piercing thud, shards of glass scattering across the room. I was free, glad to be exposed to the world I used to dread. It turns out the jar didn't guarantee the protection I thought it would. Henry's parents ran into the room to find Stephanie sprawled across the floor wailing, fragments of glass laying all around her. I didn't notice any of this initially, though, since I was preoccupied, sailing rapidly around the room, waiting to see Henry. Just when I was about to fall into despair, Henry came sprinting into the room to see what the commotion was about. It was then that a worn out, barely glowing light caught his eyes, and he reached out his palms; I immediately flew into them. At that moment, all I wanted was for Henry to place me in a new jar on his nightstand, because I knew that it would be Henry and me until the end, for he brought light to my life in a way infinite fireflies could never dream of. I just hope the nightstand will be a little neater the second time around.



# In the Streets

By Serach Soloveitchik



# The Small Things Matter

By Daniella Shifteh

The table was covered with multiple canvases for the teenage girls to paint. Two girls stood side by side, clutching their paint brushes, ready to create a magnificent scene.

“Mine is going to look so . . .” Sarah started saying.

Total darkness hit her. All she saw – if you could call it seeing – was absolute nothingness. Her brain still worked; she could still think, smell, touch. But her vision was out of reach. She could only imagine what her dining room looked like, how the paint had accidentally spilled across the table, how the water cups stood beside their boards, how silly they looked in their smocks.

“— cool!” she finally continued. “I’m going to paint a sunset.”

They both returned to pouring paints and mixing colors, unaware of what had occurred.

\* \* \*

In her classroom, Sarah decided to hand in her test early, so she could take a break from staring at the clock counting the minutes down to lunch. On her way to the cafeteria, walking up the stairs, it happened again.

Complete blackness enveloped her. Her classmates faded and the steps disappeared; only the cold metal banister and the echoing footsteps led her to her next step. Despite this, she remembered where she was positioned because she knew what the stairway looked from memory. She had to – and was able to – know where the door was and where everyone was standing all while she could not see what was right in front of her.

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But as quickly as the light vanished, it appeared. Life resumed with restored shapes and colors. She connected the laughter of her friends to their smiles, the warmth of the bright sun shining in the window. The world, and every detail, was visible again.

\* \* \*

After closing the front door, she hung her coat on the last empty hook and lined up her shoes nicely, a rule that her brothers blatantly ignored. Her mother looked up from her cookbook as she entered the kitchen.

“Hey, how was your day, honey? How was that math test? Can you get the plates and set the table?”

“It was—”

Again, the light within her eyes vanished. The red of her mother’s scarf, the azure glint in her eyes were simply not there anymore. But at least she had the ability to hear the sizzle and smell her favorite sesame chicken. She could still hear mother’s almost scripted after-school ramble, but what was the point of sharing the details of her day and the fantastic time she had painting at her friends house if she couldn’t see her mother’s immediate smile in response? Until she opened her eyes, it would remain that way. It would just be void.

It’s called blinking, and everyone does it, twenty times per minute during every minute of the day. We blink all the time and hardly notice the four-hundredth of a millisecond of darkness we experience. Why? Because these moments are so infinitesimal compared to the countless other seconds we spend seeing.

Imagine if we not only were thankful in the morning when we opened our eyes from the long sleep we had, but also 12 times every minute. That would add up to 17,280 times a day that we should appreciate seeing the glare in our friends’ eyes as we compete to see who’s the better painter. Or the big smile your mother gives you every time she sees you come home and you tell her about your day. Seeing is a gift, a gift we need to be more aware and appreciative of.

# Long Night Ahead

By Zeldy Itkin



# Applications

By Adina Hoffman

*(Setting: Interior of a classroom. Students are milling around, KAYLA is sitting at her desk, writing. EMILY walks through the classroom door.)*

EMILY

*(Waves)* Hey, Kayla, what's going on?

KAYLA

Hi! Not much, just finishing up some last-minute homework. I think I finally figured out how to phrase this one part of a question for my college application.

EMILY

Uch, lucky. My questions are super hard to answer - they make no sense!

KAYLA

They can't be that bad. I mean, yeah, a lot of them are super annoying but they are just trying to get to know you, see if you are a right fit for the school. Do you remember any of them?

EMILY

I think I wrote them down to show to the college advisor . . . . *(Rummages through backpack and pulls out a sheet of paper)* Here. *(Hands the paper to KAYLA)*

KAYLA

*(Reading the paper)* Okay, let's do some role play. I'll read the questions and you answer them as if they weren't college application questions, just as if it if you were talking to me.

EMILY

For real? Thanks!

KAYLA

No problem! So, Emily, what is a talent someone might not know about you?

EMILY

Umm... maybe making balloon animals?

KAYLA

Hold up – you know how to make balloon animals?



EMILY

Yeah, it's kinda a secret hobby of mine. But... is that what they even want? Maybe I should just say I can do gymnastics... (*Groans*) I don't know, let's just go to the next question.

KAYLA

Okay then. What type of fish would you be?

EMILY

A clownfish maybe? They are just so pretty!

KAYLA

It's a good start, but you've gotta give me more.

EMILY

Maybe that they have that relationship with sea anemones? Like they work together?

KAYLA

You definitely have enough context to answer the question now, even if I don't totally understand why a school needs to know what fish you would be. I mean, can you imagine asking a six-year-old what he wanted to be when he grew up and he said a fish instead of something like a firefighter or police officer?

EMILY

I told you these questions made no sense! But I do think this is helping, please keep going!

KAYLA

Alright! Next: What is your normal makeup look?

EMILY

Ooh, I actually know this one! I like over exaggerating lips and eyes with some light foundation to even it out.

KAYLA

I think your answer makes sense. Truthfully, I don't really understand why they would ask you that. I see what you mean about the questions being a bit weird, but let's just keep going! What's your take on compact cars?

EMILY

Oh, they are awesome! It's so cool how you can fit in smaller parking spots but can still hold a lot of stuff.

KAYLA

*Compact* cars hold a lot of stuff?

EMILY

Yeah! I read this article about it, actually—

KAYLA

Don't worry, I believe you (*Laughs*) Moving on. What's your favorite food and why?

EMILY

Pies! They are so underrated but so delicious, with their crusts and fillings and throwing ability and yuminess and oh, I I just love them! Can we get pie after school?

KAYLA

(*Laughing*) Slow down! Sure, we'll get pie. But... (*Shaking head*) it just doesn't make sense! The other ones, I kinda get, it's trying to understand how you think, your personality, but these last few... They are just asking what your favorite or least favorite thing is but not about you!

EMILY

I told you these questions were super strange, but this method is really helping, can we finish the list?

KAYLA

(*Looking at the paper*) That's it. We're done.

EMILY

It is? (*Jumping up and bugging KAYLA*) Thank you so much for your help! I hope I get in!

KAYLA

Wait, Emily, what college is this even for?

EMILY

I didn't tell you?

KAYLA

No, I was just going with it. But there's a legitamite institution that has to know about all of this?

EMILY

Well, of course, I'm applying to clown college!



# Breaking Free

By Mari Rothman





# Excerpt from “High Schooler: A Documentation on the Inner Workings of a Teenager”

By Zippora Harris

The daily activities of a teenage girl are extremely diverse, including sitting on a bus to school, sitting in class, sitting on a bus from school, sitting on a bed, sitting at a desk, and sitting at a table. This range of anti-exercise-driven pastimes results in what Dr. Irene Sunnifa, M.D, P.h.D, E.d.D, N.P, B.A described as “Boredomitis”. Boredomitis is a common neurological disorder which has the potential to affect 99.986% of the population at any given moment, but teenagers are likely to be 37 times more susceptible to contracting it (Andorra *et al.*, *ibid.*, *loren ipsum* 243). Side effects may include, but are not limited to, mindlessly scrolling through pictures, opening and closing the fridge door multiple times without finding anything to eat, and an increase in spamming others with nonsensical comments.

If you or someone you know is considering obtaining a teenage girl, we suggest you read the attached safety manual. For your convenience, we’ve included some commonplace scenarios involving these adolescents and our suggested reactions.

- Do not be alarmed if you find your teenager responding with extensive use of terms such as “whatever,” “um,” and “like” an overwhelming amount of times in their remarks. This is perfectly normal, and hopefully your teenager will develop a more substantial vocabulary within the next few years. Until then, you must bite your tongue and reduce your grammatical corrections to a maximum of five per conversation. (If you do try to rectify this apparent gap in her lexical knowledge, beware of a definite vehement defense of her linguistics.)
- While some teenagers live a socially reclusive lifestyle, many exhibit herd-like behavior and tend to surround themselves with an entourage of other adolescents. This practice is considered by authoritative adolescent neurologists to be crucial to their species’ survival. For

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A painting depicting a woman and a young child in a field of flowers. The woman, on the right, is seen from behind, wearing a long, light blue dress and a wide-brimmed straw hat with a pink flower. She is holding a basket filled with yellow flowers. The child, on the left, is wearing a light blue dress and is also holding a basket. The field is filled with various flowers, including purple, blue, and red ones. In the background, there is a green field, a small blue house, and a blue sky with white clouds.

# Picking Flowers

By Zahava Schwartz

practical reasons, your teenager will not be able to constantly encircle herself with others of her species. As a consequence, her herd-like need may manifest itself in different forms, such as extended phone-call conversations well into the night and the constant need to text.

- The average adolescent possesses an immense amount of creativity and inventiveness. This distinctive trait tends to channel into an innate ability to add flair to the general mundaneness of life. For instance, based solely on the descriptions provided by your teenager, you may come to the conclusion that her friend group is comprised of soulless murderers who routinely kill one another for the most inconsequential reasons. Therefore, when conversing with your teenager it is imperative to remember that she will not in fact “die” of too much studying, “freeze” because of an open window, or have several mental breakdowns throughout the course of the day. (In a similar vein, before conversing with a teenager, one should switch the definition of “literally” and “figuratively,” and then remove “figuratively” from their mental dictionary to avoid major confusion.)

We would again like to stress that teenagers are *not* for everyone, especially the weak of heart and mind. However, we do acknowledge that those who do manage to successfully undergo the task of raising one gains many lifelong skills and benefits, such as an increase in self-esteem, better patience, and a greater understanding of high school math. It is also important to note that your adolescent will not remain in this state forever, but will transition into an adult. For a deeper understanding of this concept, see “Why did I bother learning Calculus when I can’t even file taxes?: A page turning chronicle on adulthood (Q and A with expert adult Mr. E. X. Austed included).”





# The Nile River

By Renee Reichmann



# Just Count to Ten

By Rasi Hecht

I cried and cried and cried. Honestly, it came to a point where I didn't truly know what I was crying about anymore. But did that make me stop? No way. Maybe in an "ideal world" I may have taken a shower, snapped out of it, and pushed on. Then I would get some rest, instead of proceeding to cry myself to sleep.

In article from *The New York Times* entitled "Biological Role of Emotional Tears Emerges Through Recent Studies," Jane E. Brody explains why people feel better after crying. When someone is under intense stress, their body creates stress chemicals in response. So they cry, these chemicals that are connected to our bad feelings are purged from their systems, which actually makes them feel physically better afterwards. This is probably why I had no desire to stop crying; I wanted to hold onto that soothing feeling of the chemical release.

The initial reaction to crying, especially when in public, is to try to find a way to stop it as soon as possible. We often see crying as a sign of weakness, that we just aren't strong enough to handle our problems. To combat this idea, Leo Newhouse, a contributor to the Harvard Health Blog, discusses the emotional and mental health benefits of crying. He describes it as an

"evacuant" that flushes and purifies us, relieving our emotional and psychological pain. He goes further to say that crying is actually a safety value, because it's the opposite of what psychologists call "repressive coping," or shoving negative emotions aside. These behaviors are a cause of many mental health conditions like stress, anxiety, and depression.

**But if a cut is too deep or was never healed properly, it needs more than just a superficial fix.**

We live in a "keep calm and move on" culture. Just breathe and count to 10. But what people don't realize, and what needs to be known, is that these strategies are merely bandaids. Bandaids, of course, can be helpful. But if a cut is too deep or was never healed properly, it needs more than just a superficial fix. Crying is a way of purging our infections and acknowledging our problems, instead of letting them

bottle up inside until we explode. We need to cut ourselves some slack, and cry it out.

So, I did. Honestly, I didn't know what I cried about. But it felt

good. And yes, I didn't get anything "productive" done; I just cried myself to sleep. But you know what? In my mind, that is pretty ideal.

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# Liberty

By Emma Cohen

# Unfortunate Occurrences

By Esther Stein

Everything was dead.  
The people were barely managing  
but Mother Nature was not at all.  
No breeze, “unliving” trees, zero spirit in the air.  
And no one seemed to care.  
Incredulous, but all knew this was expected.  
Time and time again we were wary about a discomfort such as  
this.  
Although honestly it wasn't that important so it was sitting at  
the bottom of The List.  
Where it was green,  
It is now brown.  
Where people were smiling  
Sadly they now frown.  
It shouldn't take much to see one happy face.  
But the way of the wind  
Dictates the way of the human race.  
Where birds would chirp and sing and cry out their souls,  
There isn't one sound except for the occasional groan.  
Trees used to be full with leaves in all the right places.  
Now they are scattered  
much like our contemptuous faces.  
The sun used to shine  
The earth used to glow  
We used to be satisfied  
Now we don't really know.  
All that can be done is hope and pray  
And maybe tomorrow will be a better day.



# Hertzelia

By Rena Kutner



# Ready or Not

By Basya Saperstein

Hiding under the bed, I waited tensely, trying not to make a sound. Curled up with the dust bunnies and forgotten shoes, I shook with fear. What if she found me? I pressed my ear to the gap between the hardwood floor and the frilly bedskirt and listened for footsteps.

She walked down the hallway slowly, the floor creaking beneath her feet. I looked through the gap, not daring to let my shallow, uneven breaths blow my cover. My fingers were glued to the gaps between the wooden slats, and my heart was pounding in my throat. There weren't many places to hide, but I refused to give up. Her feet shuffled passed my room, and my breathing began to level out. My erratic heartbeat slowed to a nervous dance, as I strained to hear where she went next. On the other side of the house, I heard her quietly searching, and then crashing loudly to startle me. No doubt she was playing mind games, like a cat before it pounces on its prey. I resolved to stay hidden. This was a battle of wills that I was determined to win.

While I rallied my inner troops, she doubled back to my door. As she shook the doorknob, the hinges rattling in protest, I felt my stomach fill with boiling tar. Deliberate steps approached my hiding spot, and I tried to shrink into the floor as fear pricked me with a million tiny needles. Her blurry shadow revealed her proximity before her wry chuckle. I drew in a sharp breath and waited. She looked around for me, in closets, behind boxes stacked precariously with my toys. My thread of hope began to fray and it took everything I had not to burst forth and break the tension.

When I opened my eyes, there she was, staring right back at me.

She found me. I lost.

But something strange happened. Her eyes weren't locked on mine in triumphant spite. No, they were peering right through me, as though I didn't exist.

"I wonder where he could be..." she said, with mock exasperation, as she withdrew to search another room in the house.

Two can play at this game. My mind races to come up with my next hiding spot, and I know that when I need her, my mom will always be there for me, whether I'm ready or not.

**I pressed my  
ear to the gap  
between the  
hardwood  
floor and the  
frilly bedskirt  
and listened  
for footsteps.**

# Bobby Diaries

By Yael Herskovitz

## *June 2009: Bobby's Kitchen*

Flour scatters over the marble counter as I drop an overflowing two cups into the baking bowl. Bobby smiles down at me and wraps her steady arms around mine, guiding the mixing spatula.

I peek up at Bobby, "Can I pour the sugar in too?"

"Of course!" Bobby smiles and hands me the sugar bag and a spoon.

Later, of course, she replaces my sloppy concoction with her own warm blueberry pie.

\*\*\*

## *March 2018: Bobby's Kitchen*

A whiff of burnt apricot tart drifts through my house. My grandmother is hunched over the oven knob, squinting at the flame. I dash in as tendrils of smoke puff out of the pot.

Not again.

My grandmother straightens up and stiffly says, "I was doing fine."

Fine at burning the house down.

I swallowed, "I came to learn your recipe." The next two hours were spent hearing every possible detail how baking techniques before ovens were better for moist cakes. And that's why I couldn't

explain to my teacher why I never finished my homework.

\*\*\*

## *July 2011: Tennis Court Upstate*

"Now grip the racket with your right hand and face me," Bobby calls from the end of the tennis court and shades her eyes from the blaring sun. My eyebrows furrow as I wipe the sweat from my forehead.

**And that's why I  
couldn't explain  
to my teacher why  
I never finished  
my homework.**

I swing at the zooming ball, and just hit it in the white line. Bobby hits it back straight down the middle. I don't even try to get that one.

\*\*\*

## *October 2020: Bobby's House*

"Bobby's back!"

I bounce on my feet and run to see Bobby. A nervous chill runs up my spine as I realize she's been in the hospital for months.

This isn't my Bobby. The sterile hospital smell fills the room as I greet a stranger. The person in



front of me has sad eyes, the wrinkles from smiles I remember are now deep frown lines. I bite my lip, and begin to make her bed.

\* \* \*

*February 2008: Kitchen*

“Bobby, I want my chocolate!”

“Eat your vegetables first.”

I scarf down my steamed peas and carrots, my face so close to the plate that my glasses begin to fog. I race to brush my teeth and jump into bed, gazing up at my Bobby’s soft, smiley, wrinkled face.

“Bobby! Bobby! Tell us the blueberry picking story again!”

“Again?”

“Yes! Please! Pretty pretty please?”

I gaze up with admiration as she retells the tale, not missing a detail.

She sits on the right corner of my bed, leaning forward, not to disturb my peaceful slumber. She pats my arm and gives me a wet good-night kiss on the cheek.

\* \* \*

*November 2020: Bobby’s Bedroom*

“I have no appetite.”

I sigh, “Yes Bobby, but you need to eat your vegetables.”

Bobby gently leans into the plate, but she is too shaky to eat. I feed her for days until she can do it alone. She has to be in bed during the day, and gets very bored. Bobby gazes up at me as I sit on the right corner of her bed, and lean forward, not to disturb her frequent slumber. I pat her arm and give her a good night kiss on the cheek, longing for the smell of her perfect blueberry pie.

# Alone

By Eliana Glazer



# In Pursuit of Happiness, Plagiarism, and Cardboard Boxes

By Aviva Notkin

I can spend hours scrolling through my favorite places. Zara, Bloomingdales, H&M, Amazon. Sorting through their digital racks, lured by the style and fast fashion, I am guaranteed new pieces to my physical shelves in exchange for the simple task of typing in my mother's sixteen-digit password. No mingling with hoi polloi, changing out of my pajamas or ironing my hair is necessary.

The aisles, clutter-free, allow me to fill my bottomless cart with puff sleeve cardigans and too-high heels, all well within my price range. With the click of a button they appear at my doorstep, 96 hours later (free shipping for orders over \$49.58), or even the very next day (for an additional \$7.99), wrapped nicely in their cardboard homes and sealed with clear packing tape.

And, boy, do the boxes come. Package after package of brown and off-white paper and plastic, covered in logos and little black return addresses.

The items usually match their description, but the model's smile never matches mine by the second

wear.

So the boxes are constantly delivered. But what I want never seems to arrive.

\* \* \*

As a self-appointed historian, with my list of high school AP credentials, I tend to think I know more than I do, passing off others' ideas as my own, to the awe of my younger sisters, who have not yet taken those same courses.

**He improved upon  
the idea. Switched  
it around. Fixed  
it. Didn't he?**

My older sisters, the prodigy twins, are quick to call me out on it, but is putting an original spin on an old idea really plagiarism?

Any student can teach you to use a thesaurus to change words,

(don't judge, you've done it). If the world-renowned [www.grammarly.com](http://www.grammarly.com) doesn't condemn it, why should we?

In fact, it is a historic American tradition. Take our third President, Thomas Jefferson, who coined the phrase, "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Upon a not-so-close inspection, you'll realize that it's an almost exact copy of John Locke's, the 17th-century philosopher, idea of man's right to "Life, Liberty and Private Property."

But we give Tom all the credit because he wrote it so much better. Instead of straight "plagiarism" he switched "private property" to "the pursuit of happiness." He improved upon the idea. Switched it around. Fixed it.

Didn't he?

\*\*\*

Last September, I did something absolutely absurd.

In my house, stuffed to the brim with 5 teenage girls, gaining permission to order clothes is the most valuable commodity awarded mainly to the oldest child. This honor became mine when my older sisters moved into their college dorms last summer.

Finally, my chance to test this growing Jefferson/Locke hypoth-

esis. Along with my order of blue vest and a striped V-neck sweater, I added a white floral tie dress – the same one my freshman sister and I loved when she noticed it the week before.

When the cardboard finally arrived (5 to 7 business days after clicking "Complete Order"), it was super chic - to my sister. But not to me.

As she buttoned up the dress, her smile matched the model hired to wear it. And, to my surprise, so did mine. But while hers started to fade after each wear, mine got brighter. Brighter than the computer's blue light and brighter than the Zara model's over-bleached teeth.

\*\*\*

As Americans we don't have a right to "be happy," we have a right to "pursue happiness. There's a difference.

We dedicate our best years to slaving away at textbooks, attempting to gain admissions, and applying to better jobs so when we're old and wise we can afford to enjoy ourselves. So they say.

But if all you care about are things you own, you'll always want more. Until finally, after you work so hard to buy the best happiness, it may be too late.

Damaged in shipping.

Sold out.

So here's my couponing secret:  
The Declaration of Independence  
was blatant plagiarism.

Jefferson didn't change any  
ideas, he just hinted to us how not  
to achieve them. "The pursuit of

happiness" and only caring about  
"private property" are synonyms.  
Happiness can't be private prop-  
erty. In order to have it, you must  
share it. If all you care about is what  
you own, you'll always want more.  
That's what happiness will forever  
remain: a pursuit.



# Humble Leaf

By Hindy Hamburger

The leaf that holds that flower  
Goes unnoticed behind the beauty  
That buds every season  
And he holds it so gently  
For as long as it needs  
Without a thank you  
Or anyone complementing  
His beauty  
And eventually he grows ill  
Finally to be noticed  
For his beautiful colors of red, orange and yellow  
But just as quick as his compliments came  
He dissolves

# What Lies Ahead

By Zeldy Itkin

The trunks, the door, the faded brick, it begged me to enter. I froze. People were swarming around me like flies. Pushing and jostling they edged slowly through the crowded platform eager to approach the door's cold smooth surface. The door tantalized me to cross its threshold, but I couldn't pass through it. Entering that door would leave behind the past twelve years of my life, my hometown, my family.

I had spent the past twelve and a half weeks aboard a steamship with a name I couldn't pronounce. As I examined the door that was to hold my future, a tug at my sleeve cut through my reverie.

“Caitlin, mehetünk már?” (“Caitlin, can we go already?”)

I smile sheepishly and affectionately look down at my little brother's angelic face, his little eyes twitching with excitement. Like an eager puppy, he had spent our entire journey running from one “attraction” to the next. The whole thing was a big adventure for him. He wisely avoided spending his time in our lowest class cramped cabin, which stank of sewage, and passed time playing with the many other kids his age. I spent the majority of our “adventure” on my flimsy bed sick to my stomach.

I felt terrible for my brother, a boy of seven. Who knows if he will remember our homeland Hungary, our family, and our little farm in the countryside where I used to lay on the soft green grass in the crisp morning air watching the sunrise? Where the birds chirped and the cows mooed to the sound and feeling of simple peace? Here, from what I see of this foreign land, that won't be the case. Yes, we were poor in Hungary, but at least it was home.

I reinforce my grip on my lumpy bundle of my scarce belongings and shift my weight from side to side, tightening my hold on my brother's hand. That door was still there. I sigh. Still procrastinating, I think back to that fateful day when everything changed, and my life was turned upside down.

I was sprawled out on my stomach near the chicken pen taking a quick

**I had spent  
the past twelve  
and a half  
weeks aboard a  
steamship with a  
name I couldn't  
pronounce.**

break from my endless chores to catch my breath. As I filled my bucket with chicken feed, I saw my older sister hurrying towards me. Inches away from my face she stopped to catch her breath. Panting, she gasped, “Caitlin... gyere... most... apa... te... menj... Amerika.” (“Caitlin... come... now... father... you... go... America.”)

I stood up so fast that the bucket of chicken feed spilled, scattering its contents across the dirt. The chickens immediately started squawking, but I ignored them. I understood enough of what my sister said to know that I was to go to America. Cutting in front of her I ran into our little cottage. After a confirmation from my mother, preparations for my trip were called to action. Numb with shock, I was recruited into packing, cleaning, and cooking giving me no time to process the news. Aside from what I had spilled, I didn't feed the chickens that day. After a flurry of hugs, teary goodbyes, and instructions, my brother was placed under my care, and a week later, we were on that big steamship, saying goodbye to my beloved country.

It was a great opportunity, my parents, friends, and family insisted. In America, you won't have to slave day and night to survive. In America, they said, you can have a future, we will join you later when there is more money.

I wistfully smile at the thought of my family thousands of kilometers away. As my brother tries to drag me towards that door, I know it is time. I square my shoulders, taking a deep breath. I pick up my lumpy bundle and trunk, and cross the threshold of toward smooth wooden door, passing the worn walls into a corridor of Ellis Island that holds my future. The trunks, the door, the faded brick.

I entered.

# The Thanksgiving Curse

By Rebecca Bromberg

Something always goes wrong at my house.

I'm not exactly sure what it is, but I can assure you that there's some sort of witch or ghost here. Every year, I get excited about Thanksgiving, only to remember that it's never successful. On the first Thanksgiving I can remember, a pipe broke. As soon as we sat down, we heard something burst and found ourselves in three inches of water. Our kitchen was completely flooded. This was the start of the curse of Bones. I decided that I needed to make sure that the holiday would be perfect the following year.

The next year, I couldn't sleep the night before, too worried that the day would be ruined again. I helped my mom make the most delicious turkey: roasted until its skin was golden-brown, full of flavor, and oozing with juice. The meal was about to begin with 20 guests. I had one job. My mom had asked me to put gloves on and help her carry the turkey to the table. I saw the excitement in the eyes of all the guests at the table waiting to taste this beautiful bird of thanks. As I lifted the twenty-pound turkey, I felt my fingers tremble. Oh no! The tray slipped out from my fingertips and the entire steaming, hot turkey fell to the ground. SPLAT! My heart dropped, face paled, and eyes began to tear. I failed at the *one* job that I had for this celebration.

But was it me... or was it Bones?

The curse continued the following year when I added cayenne pepper to the mashed potatoes instead of paprika. I saw two identical containers both filled with a red substance. Instead of calling my mom, I asked my sister which to use, and she pointed to the right. (But when have I ever listened to her!? She tricked me for sure!) I took the jar on the left and added exactly one half of a cup of it into my large bowl of fluffy mashed potatoes. At the meal, I started to notice everyone's eyes opening wide, tearing up as they asked for water. Why was everyone at the table so thirsty and teary? I suddenly realized that something must have gone wrong with my mashed potatoes.

My mother pulled me over and asked, "What did you do to the potatoes?"

**I failed at the  
one job that  
I had for this  
celebration. But  
was it me... or  
was it Bones?**



“Nothing. I put in the paprika just like you told me to,” I nervously replied.

Mom then realized that I might have used cayenne pepper instead.

Another win for the Bones the Ghost.

The next year I requested that Bones not involve himself in our Thanksgiving. This Thanksgiving holiday had to be perfect. All of my cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents were flying in and I couldn't have been happier – until my mom came into my room and told me that everyone's flights were delayed because it was supposed to snow. Great, I thought to myself. Two hours later, everyone's flights got canceled due to a humongous six foot blizzard. I got so upset that I started to cry.

I never knew ghosts could control the weather!

The year after, Thanksgiving was just uneventful and boring. The food wasn't as appetizing compared to other years, and everyone was falling asleep at the table. I had told my mom that it was boring, but at least nothing terrible happened.

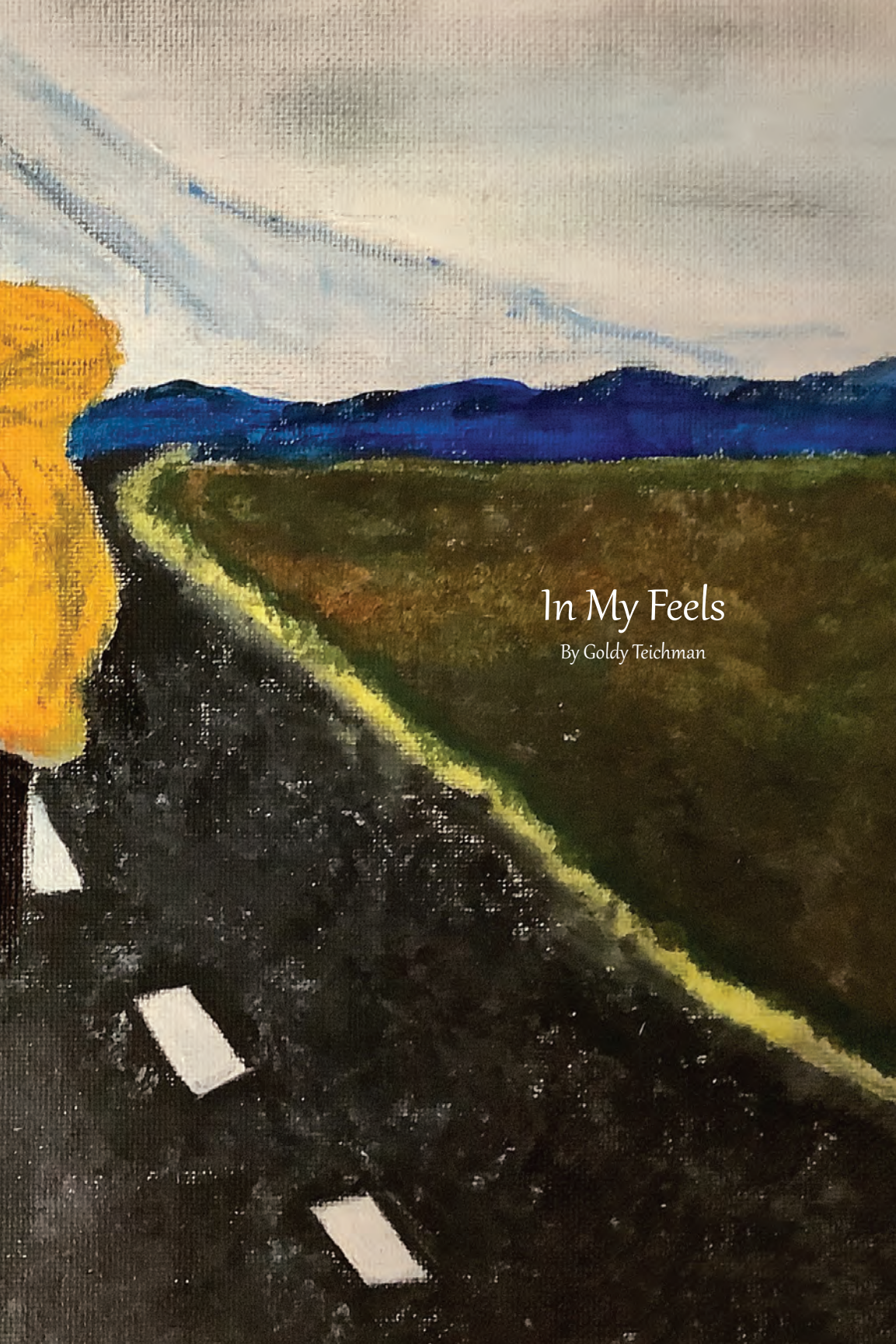
Maybe Bones took a vacation?

I knew it wouldn't last; the bad luck returned. I suggested to my parents that we go away for the holiday the next year so that Bones would not be able to curse us again. We booked a trip to Arizona a year in advance. We left three hours ahead of schedule to ensure we wouldn't miss the flight. Somehow, when we got to the airport we forgot one of the bags at home so we quickly drove back and got it. It was now an hour before the flight. With an hour left, we ran as fast as we could to the gate asking others if we could skip the line. But we finally returned to the gate just in time to watch our plane pull out onto the tarmac. Not again! How could this have been possible? We had to return home and have Thanksgiving with the worst take-out food. Maybe the curse didn't only take place at home...

I decided I would not worry about Bones and his pranks anymore. Maybe the reason he was doing this to me was because he wasn't a part of our celebration. So this year I decided to invite him. Nothing eventful has happened since.







# *In My Feels*

By Goldy Teichman

# Broadening Our Bubbles

By Fayga Tziporah Pinczower

Nineteenth-century playwright and critic, George Bernard Shaw, prophetically remarked, “The single biggest problem with communication is the illusion that it has taken place.” Shaw’s observation has proven true time and time again, becoming increasingly prevalent in our society today. With the advent of the internet and subsequent far-reaching, accessible online platforms came fabulous potential for diverse discussion, novel remedies, and tolerance. A global think tank. Yet increasing division indicates the opposite has occurred. Polarization has escalated so alarmingly that the Pew Research Center reports that, “today 92% of Republicans are to the right of the median Democrat, and 94% of Democrats are to the left of the median Republican” (*Political Polarization in the American Public.* *Pew Research Center*). What went wrong? Shouldn’t broad exposure to opposing views minimize our discomfort towards them? Yes, but as Shaw observed nearly a century earlier, this mass communication is merely an illusion.

Companies like Facebook continue to prioritize monetary gain above societal betterment by algorithmically generating filter bubbles. Through tracking your activity, identifying your likes, dislikes, and political leanings, a customized re-

affirming stream of content is crafted to keep you clicking. Simply “liking” a post by Ben Shapiro blocks left-leaning content from appearing on your screen. “Following” Nikole Hanna-Jones prevents exposure to right-wing views.

**Popping filter bubbles liberates minds, enables diverse discussion, novel remedies, and tolerance.**

Humans have always selected preferences, be it their favorite news anchor or movie, but at least we were given the ability to view the alternatives and decide accordingly. These algorithms deprive us of that choice, essentially terminating free will. We may have altered our views and narrowed the gap, but we are denied intellectual freedom. More than a third of Americans receive their news from these social media algorithms, creating a dangerously myopic perspective.

Absence of challenge is absence of progress. Where would Steve Jobs be without his confrontational team? What would the Wright

brothers have missed without each others' critical feedback? Imprisoning ourselves into one mode of thought halts potentially brilliant discoveries.

Apply this filter to the supermarket or social gathering. Now, only products you've previously purchased appear on the shelves, and you'll never see the girl across the aisle because an algorithm deemed you incompatible. It's only natural to desire validation, it ranks number three on Maslow's hierarchy of needs. but we must recognize the cost. How many close friends would this algorithm deprive us of? How much progress have we forfeited in the name of affirmation?

Many suggest working the courts as a means of effecting

change, but I believe the change is dependent on us. It starts with each one of you. Broaden your horizons by meeting new people with new ideas. Sort your social media feed by most recent instead of most popular, and vary your news source. We may not agree with everything we see or read, but it's important to be exposed. Once we begin communicating with each other, our varying talents, interests, and passions will fuse and fuel great progress.

Popping filter bubbles liberates minds, enables diverse discussion, novel remedies, and tolerance. It's time we regain control of our minds and reap the benefits of a communicating society.

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# Swing

By Shaina Bober

# Remind Me Not To

By Ronit Rechtshaffen

Empty stores are everywhere  
What does the future hold?  
Then I remind myself  
That was 2 years ago  
I do not need to  
Reminisce on my  
Past  
But think  
What does the future hold?  
What will happen?  
Will it be  
Exactly what I was told it would?  
I live staring behind  
Scared to look forward.  
I'm closing my eyes  
On the highest drop  
Of a roller coast.  
They say that I should  
Be grateful.  
Because I'm lucky.  
That's what I was told.  
But tell me?  
Where is my four-leaf clover?  
I remember the times  
I was scared in the past  
But now I put my best foot forward.

# Yerushalayim in Purple

By Tamar Eberstark



# The Last Door

By Alyssa Rosner

They said I should “confront my fears.” I considered this idea quite thoroughly. I sat down with a pen and paper, just as they said I should. They said I was going to work through my fears by writing them down, and step by step, I would find solutions for each of them. So I sat. With my pen. Supposedly confronting my fears. One hour, then two. Tapping my pen. How was I meant to confront something I couldn’t see? Something that can’t respond to me, something that can’t acknowledge what I’m saying? My pen will not tell my fears to go away, it will simply tell me what my fears are. I needed a new approach.

I knocked on Fear’s door.

First, I gently tapped on the door, worried Fear would answer so abruptly that I would take off running. Then I tapped just a bit harder, worried Fear would not answer at all. Maybe Fear was busy? But what would my Fear be busy with besides bothering me? Was he preparing for his next chance to push my potential down? Was he drinking a cup of coffee while plotting ways to demolish Hope? I wouldn’t be surprised if Fear was busy annoying Sadness, until Sadness started to become Upset.

“Fear? Are you there?” I called out, Frustrated through the door. I was never able to control Fear in the past, and he obviously cared no more for me than he ever did. I decided to get Comfortable at Fear’s door and leaned against it. Twiddled my thumbs a few times. Boredom came along for a stroll. After waiting for far too long, I stood up again and checked my watch.

I had never before complained that Fear wasn’t showing up, but here I was. I was waiting for Fear, and the one time I actually wanted to see him, he refused to appear. How could Fear do this to me? I was finally ready to confront Fear, and he had the nerve to ignore me. Anger started to boil in my veins. I’ve found that Anger and Frustration are best friends, so

**How was I meant to  
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whenever Frustration decides to say hello, Anger tends to drop in as well. Anger is telling me to break the door. Smash it down, and then stroll right into Fear's home. But when I tried to do as Anger recommended but the door did not break. Anger left without another word.

I realized with Horror that I had just tried to invade Fear's privacy. I had tried to destroy something that wasn't mine to destroy. That did not sound like something I would do, even to my greatest enemy. My Anger and Frustration had led me to do terrible things. I tried to tune out Horror and Anger yelling at each other. Horror and Anger are normally so close, it was Confusing to see them like this. So Confusing. I tried to call out to Calm, but Confusing pushed calm down. I was drowning in this Confusion, in this Pain of not understanding. Then I remembered, when all else fails Resilience is always there to support me. Resilience reached Calm, and my Confusion walked away.

I knew I had the Resilience to reach Fear. I gave the door another shove. When the door did not move, my Resilience abandoned me.

Inhale. Exhale. I breathe. Focus on my breath. Focus is always so coordinated, she will be able to help me. When Resilience is sick, Focus will stay to support me. So I stared at the door, and stared some more. Perhaps I could force the door to move by sheer willpower. Perhaps I could make Fear listen to me with Focus by my side. I stood there, relaxed. My eyes were attentive to that wooden door. I was Confident that Focus would succeed. All emotions faded away as I zeroed in on Focus, the door only a foot away from me as I stared at it. Yet, it became apparent the door would not comply and Fear would not come. My Focus has left, and in her place, Exhaustion settled down. I worried I'd start to forget the reason I even came to this door.

I start to realize that this door will not open, and Fear will not come to greet me. I'm simply out of ideas at this point. Perhaps I am incapable of confronting Fear. Perhaps not me nor all my emotions can triumph Fear. At this very moment, I realized all I could do was Hope.

I Hope that Fear will answer.

Then I gave the door one last push, the door opened, and I realized there was no Fear left to confront at the other side.





# Bonding Time

By Reggie Klein

# Not A Glitter-Wearing-Tutu-Flaring Kind of Person

By Chaya Trapedo

To counter the effects of contagion and conflict over the past year and a half, I planned a risk-free summer break. My ultimate staycation involved teaching web design to middle-schoolers in my basement, interning with an IT company, and adding a few more watercolor paintings to the collection I started during the pandemic. In short, I was determined to not leave my house.

And then I received a text.

“Hi Chaya, my name is Hadara. I’m reaching out from Camp Sunshine for special needs children. I saw that you’ve applied as a counselor and I’m wondering if you’re still interested. If you could let me know, that would be great.”

I was bewildered. I’d been a Sunday volunteer for Friendship Circle for the past six years, so when the director encouraged me to apply to work at their summer camp, I did. But after having to answer “no” to questions such as *Have you attended camp before? Do you have any friends going with you to camp? Are you CPR certified?* I closed the Google Form without hitting submit.

You can imagine my shock when

the camp reached out anyway. Shadowing a visually impaired nine-year-old once a week with trained professionals on hand was one thing. Being fully responsible for a teen with Down’s Syndrome who not only needs help but convincing to eat, shower, sleep, and socialize 24/7 for three weeks would be an entirely different challenge.

**Although to onlookers (there were always quite a few) I was speaking to her, the deep breaths and affirmations were for both of us.**

After outlining all of the responsibilities, the camp director encouraged me to spread word of the positions to my friends, stressing she would hate to have to turn away campers (and parents) who had been anticipating the integrated camp experience all year. As much as I wanted to say, “Sorry, you’ve got the wrong Chaya Trapedo,” I re-

plied, “Can I think about it and get back to you?”

And thought I did – about all the ways this could go horribly wrong. The prospect of living away from home for the first time didn’t scare me as much as the big question mark looming over the future interactions with my prospective camper. What if she got homesick? Or she didn’t like me? Or listen to me? What if she lost her temper and threw food all over the dining room or hit someone? She might not be embarrassed, but sure I would be. Or worse, what if I couldn’t give her the summer experience she deserved? I’m not exactly a glitter-wearing-tutu-flaring-table-top-cheering kind of person.

I also realized, counterintuitively yet productively, that I wasn’t unique. *Every* counselor stepping into this role would be assuming the same risks. Any potential failure would reflect the difficulty of the circumstances rather than my character, and knowing that helped me neutralize my fears.

I wish I could tell you about our three blissful and tear-free weeks in the Catskills. Many tears were shed, including my own. My camper, Chaya’le, who shared both my name, age, and love for board games, was “extremely stubborn,” as the camp

director warned me when I arrived for the second session. On my first night, while the rest of our bunk attended a concert, I spent two hours pleading with Chaya’le to shower after learning that she had refused to change her underwear for several days. Later, I struggled to restrain a hacking, writhing, and screaming Chaya’le on my lap to allow the camp nurse to safely administer a strep test. When we both tested positive, it took me 15 minutes to get Chaya’le to swallow the same antibiotic dosage I downed in 5 seconds.

Every time I encountered a challenge, whether it was Chaya’le’s refusal to be in the camp photo or go on a trip, I squeezed her hand and found her eyes. I reassured her, “Chaya’le, you can do this. You’ve done hard things before and you can do them again.” Although to onlookers (there were always quite a few) I was speaking to her, the deep breaths and affirmations were for both of us.

Our last trip to an amusement park began with Chaya’le complaining of a stomach ache. I knew she would follow her usual thought pattern of *I shouldn’t have come on this trip or gotten out of bed or gone to camp at all...* In response, I steeled myself for the long day ahead and resolved to forget about

encouraging her to try rides or games. When we arrived, I scanned the park for a shady bench, but when Chaya'le saw the arcade, her eyes lit up. She squeezed my hand and said, "Even though my tummy hurts, I can do hard things." She proceeded to beat me at basketball, win a stuffed panda from a claw machine, and drag me on a 200-foot high zipline despite my fear of heights.

After camp ended, I returned to my comfort zone and interned,

and taught coding to kids. But middle-schoolers possess a special blend of creativity and indecisiveness, and trying to get them to channel that energy into a completed HTML site can go wonderfully right or nowhere. While we were baffled by bugs in their code at times, we worked together to resolve them. Even the "safest" options involve navigating some risk, but that's also how we learn to do hard things.



# A New Perspective

By Rina Rosenberg





# Peeling Wallpaper

By Chaya Friedman

“Hello?”

Her voice was gruffer, roughened by the passage of time, and muffled from poor reception, but otherwise the same. He’d been on his way to work, but stopped and leaned against the nearest building, stunned.

“Hello,” he finally replied. “How are you?”

His sister sighed. “I’m fine. You?”

“Fine.”

She sighed again and then there was a heavy silence he wanted very much to break.

He cleared his throat.

“It’s been a while—”

She laughed humorlessly.

“That’s an understatement. But I had to speak to you... about the house.”

The house.

Shocked by her call, he had almost forgotten. But now, renewed anger flowed through him. She had inherited their childhood home, had rented it out to strangers, had refused to sell it to him. With the house, everything would’ve been different. He could’ve built a life like the one he had growing up, with a wife and—

“Hello? You there?”

“What about the house?”

“I’m selling it. And I know how much you wanted it, so if you’re still interested...”

His mouth dropped open. He couldn’t speak, could barely think. Elation fizzed inside of him and for the first time in years, he felt real hope.

“Hello?” she repeated, as he regained his composure.

**The inside of the house felt eerily empty. Every indication that it had once been lived in, from his mother’s dated wallpaper to childhood photos, had been painted over...**

“Yes, hello,” he said rapidly, almost afraid she’d change her mind. “I’m still interested in the house. Definitely interested. I’m ready to make things official as soon as possible. Today, even.”

She sighed yet again.

“When can you fly out here? I’m sure you want to see the house again before buying it.”

“I don’t need to. I’m certain.”

“I’d really feel more comfortable doing this in person.”

He checked his watch and began walking again, heading in the opposite direction of his office.

“I’m already packing. See you tonight.”

He had always remembered his childhood in a dreamy haze of comfort, laughter, and joy. He remembered hearing the rain thudding against his roof and feeling an inward sensation of intense warmth. He remembered sprinting gleefully with his sister through the long, matted grass that filled in their lawn until their sides ached and their legs collapsed and they couldn’t talk through their heavy breathing. He remembered the rush of joy upon hearing his father’s key in the lock, and the chicken soup his mother made when they were sick, and the wooden desk where he did his homework. He ached to return to that time, to be a child again. He dreamed of his childhood home, of the bedroom with blue walls and action figures lined up in a row, of his loving mother and father. He needed that house. He knew that if he had it, everything would change.

The house’s exterior had remained similar over the years with its ridged roof and blue shuttered windows. But it was in a state of disrepair. The rickety fence surrounding the property seemed on the verge of collapse and the garden was overrun with weeds. He had expected some sort of revelation upon seeing the house, or at least an intense pang of nostalgia, but all he felt was nagging annoyance towards his sister for her failure to maintain it properly.

“It looks terrible,” he said to his sister, who had met him outside. She laughed.

“Still want it?”

“Yes.”

She rolled her eyes.

The inside of the house felt eerily empty. Every indication that it had once been lived in, from his mother’s dated wallpaper to childhood photos, had been painted over, hastily removed, or erased. He wandered about slowly, trying to match the sparse rooms to his memories.

“What do you think?” his sister asked, appearing from around a corner as he approached his childhood bedroom.

“It’s different...”

“Well, it’s been a while.”

“Yeah, and whose fault is that?” he asked, anger rising in his throat. “Why didn’t you let me have the house? Why couldn’t you have just given it to me?” He was shouting now, years of indignance creeping into his voice. She narrowed her eyes and looked at him strangely.

“I thought I was doing you a favor.”

“A favor?”

“I couldn’t wait to get out of here. I thought you were crazy for wanting to live here, for wanting to raise your future children here. I wanted you to escape too. I didn’t want you repeating our own childhood—”

“What do you mean?” he cried. “Our childhood was the best time of our lives! If I ever had kids, I would’ve wanted them to grow up exactly like us!”

She laughed incredulously, shaking her head.

“I don’t understand how you can be so delusio—”

He pushed past her, unwilling to let her finish. It didn’t matter what she said. He remembered their upbringing as clear as day.

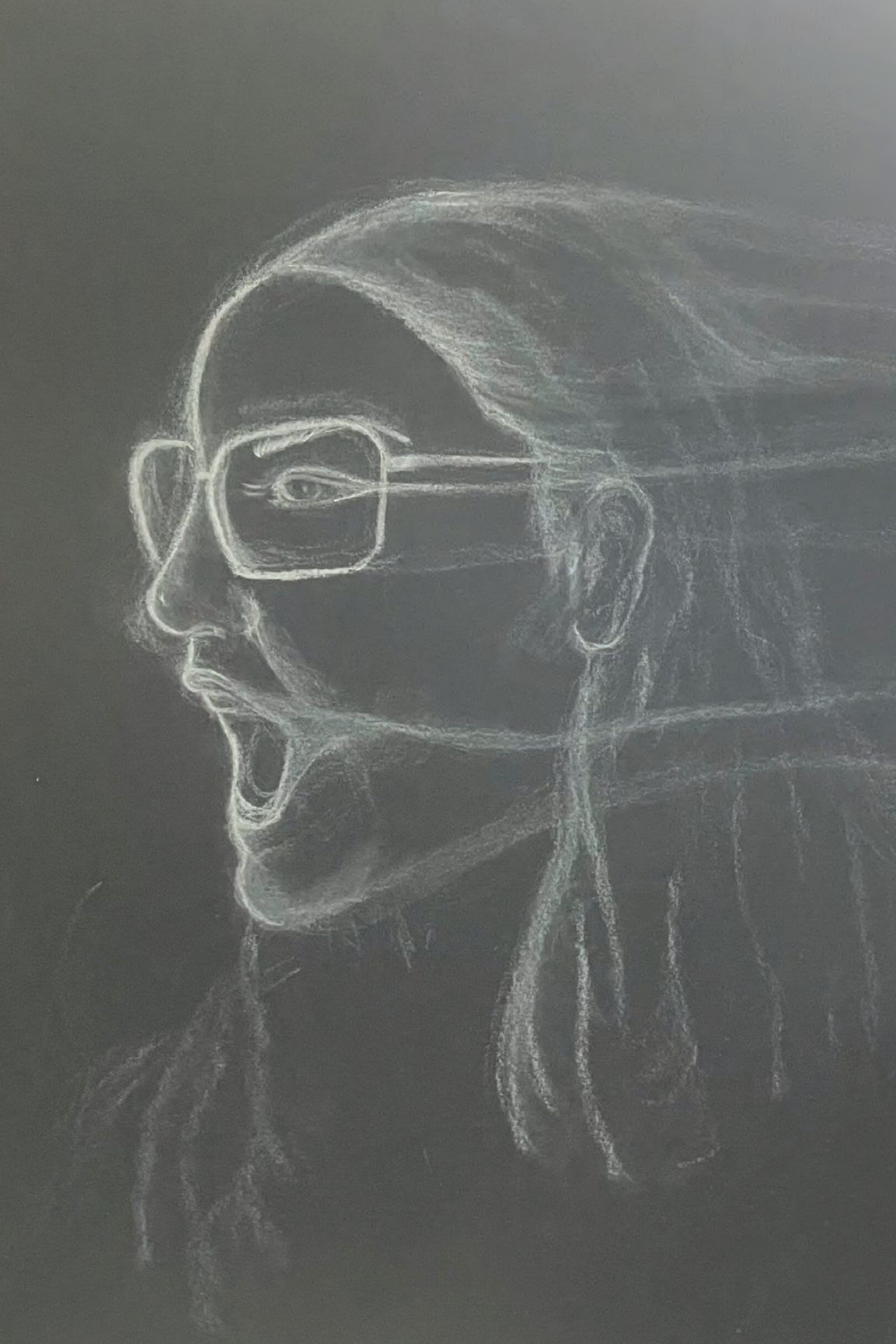
He entered his bedroom, slamming the door behind him. Looking around he saw the bed frame pushed against the wall, the bare bookshelves and peeling wallpaper, and willed himself to remember something consequential, something happy, anything to prove his sister wrong. As he was absentmindedly tracing designs in the dust on his desk, it came back to him. The flickering lights became flashes of shattered glass and the heaters’ dull buzzing muffled the screams and quieted sobs.

He was a kid again, alone and terrified.

He fell back, dazed, onto the cold floor, shutting his eyes tightly. *No,*

*this couldn't be right. His childhood was the happiest time of his life.* Suddenly the walls were closing in on him, trapping him. He needed to get out. Staggering to his feet, he ran. Down the creaking stairs, past the threadbare couch and dusty table, over lingering bits of broken picture frames, he ran away from those empty rooms, from the deceitful debris of memory and into the blinding winter light.







# Silence

By Rachel Farhi

# The Things We All Have?

By Bayla Hamburger

We know what that's like.

She didn't.

She never saw the smiling face of her mother

The marvelous sun as it takes away the light that shines on the world

The dancing trees in the harsh wind

The intense movie that draws her in

The reflection of herself looking back in the mirror

Or the home she knows so well.

We know what that's like.

He didn't.

Not the exquisite taste of chocolate mousse

The rich flavor of quality ice cream

The sweet taste of a sticky taffy

The flavor of his mother's chicken soup

The oily taste of a good pizza

Or the sour flavor of a pickle.

We know what that's like.

She didn't.

Not the smell of her mother's favorite perfume

The smell of the cinnamon in her kitchen

The smell of the salty water at the beach

The smell of chocolate cookies in the oven

The smell of her brothers dirty diaper

Or the smell of the rain that hits her window.

We know what that's like.

He didn't.



Not the touch of a hug from his best friend  
The feeling of a soft blanket across his lap  
The rough fabric of an old shirt  
The itchy feeling of sandpaper  
The squishy slime that stretches so far  
Or the comforting feeling of his parent's hand in his.

We know what that's like.

She didn't.

Not the feeling of joy when listening to her favorite song  
The sound of her friend's voices as they tell a story  
The laugh of a sibling  
The sound of the birds singing in the morning  
The loud crash of a glass shattering on the floor  
Not even that dreaded alarm in the morning.

They have none of these things.

The things we take for granted.

The things they were deprived of.

The things that we know so well.

To be able to see tall mountains from far below

The sight of your brother's little face

A rainbow that paints the sky

Or the stars that shine so bright in the night

To be able to taste some salty potato chips

The sweet flavor of cotton candy

The sour taste of a grapefruit



Or a strong coffee that wake you up

To be able to smell steaks cooking on the grill

The oak trees in the spring

The crisp autumn air

Or the intense smell of spoiled milk

To be able to feel the touch of a sharp cactus

The feeling of a warm coat wrapped around you

The grass on your bare feet

Or the harsh wood on a tree

To be able hear the cry of a baby

The sound of a car's engine

The loud squirrel eating an acorn

Or the howl of a wolf as it looks upon the moon

We have all of these things.

The things we take for granted.

The things they were deprived of.

The things that we know so well.

# Not Too Sharp

By Pearlie Goldstein

On the Friday before my aunt's wedding, I thought anything was possible. With all the business involved in picking up our gowns after the final alterations, confirming the arrangements with the florist, and making mini pizzas with seven cousins all within a span of five hours, I was completely enthralled and excited by the whirlwind of *happening*.

But once my pizza was already in the oven, I needed to find another way to keep it going.

"Mommy, I want to go downstairs and play!"

My mother didn't need a complaining five-year-old to slow everything down. "Esther, take Pearlie down to the basement."

My sister Esther was annoyed. She was making her own pie, meticulously placing olives evenly on top of the cheese. "I'm busy."

"She needs someone to watch her. You can finish your pizza later."

"She doesn't have to watch me," I remember saying. "I'm a big girl."

"Esther," my mother said. "I don't want to have to ask again."

Esther pulled herself away from the counter and turned towards the basement door with a huff. "Fine. But only for a little bit."

Elated by the potential for more fun, I bounded down the stairs towards the playroom with Esther trailing reluctantly behind me. At the end of the room was the closet containing all the toys that I loved to play with. But from all the boxes of LEGOs, Barbies, dress-up tiaras, and princess gowns, I headed straight to my favorite Bitty Baby dolls.

When I first received the doll, it had long light brown hair pulled into two pigtails. Since then, it had been "restyled," as I liked to put it. After all, my mother was a hairdresser and gave haircuts all the time. But I didn't have real-people clients like my mother did, so I washed my doll's hair in the sink as best as I could, and after the hair was wet, I snipped and snipped

**But I knew  
how to cut hair.  
Even my Bitty  
Baby approved  
of my styling  
techniques.**

and snipped. But now, when I wanted to play hairdresser again, her hair was still too short to cut again. Frustrated, I flopped onto a beanbag chair. Pushing my hair out of my face as I stood up, I had a genius idea.

But it would only work if no one distracted me; after all, hairstyling requires focus and precision. Fortunately, Esther was completely drawn into the computer game she was playing in the opposite corner of the basement.

Climbing up onto my mother's swivel chair, I examined what I'd be working with. Since my hair was so long, my mother always put it in a high ponytail. My mother said that my natural curls would be so pretty at the wedding. But natural curls also come with natural frizz and tough tangles. Even though I begged my mother to cut my hair, she said it would have to wait until after the wedding. But I *knew* how to cut hair. Even my Bitty Baby approved of my styling techniques.

I grabbed the cutting shears from the drawer where my mother always kept them. This was going to be so fun! After spinning around a few times, I reached under my pony, grabbed onto the strands of hair, and *snip!* A large swath of hair fluttered onto the floor. Even though I was a professional, for some reason the scissor didn't manage to cut through all of my hair at once, so I had to cut again and again. When I was done, I climbed onto the counter to observe my handiwork in the mirror. I looked *fantastic*.

Even though I wanted to go upstairs to show off my new "do" to my family so they could be as proud of me as I was, I needed to clean up first. I gathered the clumps of hair from the floor and flushed them down the toilet. I was kind of annoyed about the fact that Esther was still completely hypnotized by the screen. Shouldn't she recognize greatness when she sees it?

"Look, I match my Bitty Baby now!" I announced triumphantly after running up the stairs, clutching my Bitty Baby at my side so my family could observe the uncanny likeness of our most trendy hairstyles.

My mother turned pale and began to cry as she stumbled for words. Chaos broke out in the kitchen. I looked around in confusion: why were so many people panicking? Why were so many people laughing? What was wrong?

"Esther!" my mother shouted while running, practically falling down

the stairs to see what had happened.

“Where’s the hair?” My mother asked me, in a panicked voice.

“In the toilet!” I exclaimed in a responsible voice; I had even cleaned up!

I stood in the middle of the basement as my mother headed to the bathroom to see the damage I had done. By that time, Esther had turned away from the computer and joined the ranks of family members watching the drama unfold.

At last, my mother settled me into the tall swivel chair that I had seen so many customers sit in before me and attempted to salvage what was left of my hair. Aside from the uneven strands, there were bald spots on my head. Even with my mother’s skills, my hair was hopeless. In the end, she put a large headband on my head and said that I would have to use that to conceal the damage.

While I had previously been confident about my hair cutting abilities, I saw from the reactions that I received that day and from the length of time that it took for my hair to grow back that I was not as skilled a hairstylist as I thought I was. It took three years for my hair to grow back to a length that required going to a hairstylist at all. Even then, I never cut my hair shorter than a slight trim. I won’t have my hair cut short ever again and if I do, I certainly won’t be the one holding the scissors.



# Pears

By Temimah Schulhoff





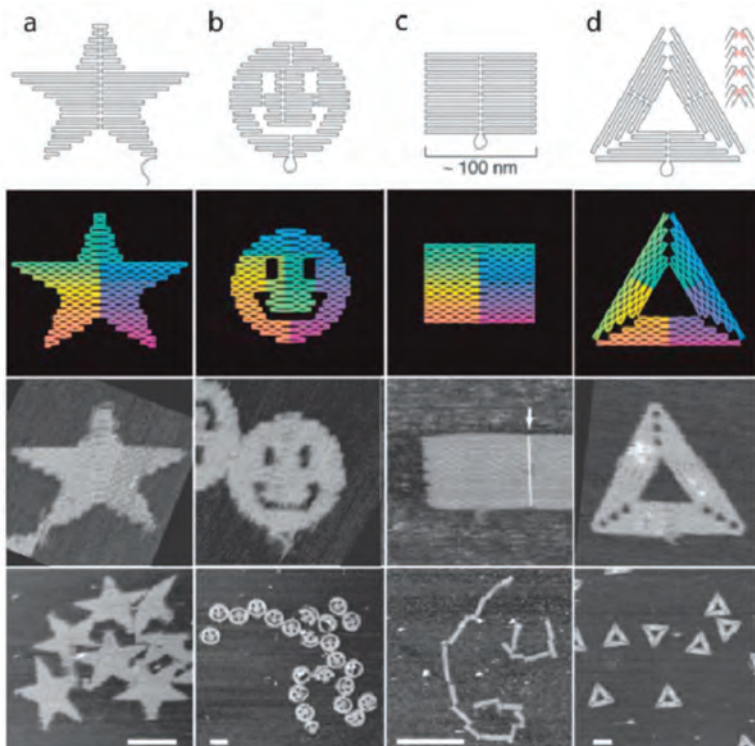
# The World's Greatest Superpower: Nature

By Golda Schuster

Picture a robot. What picture came to mind? I'm sure not many summon an image of double-stranded DNA, but I would submit that you should.

In order to understand how DNA went from being a gene information molecule to a robot, I'll need to take you back to 9th grade biology. As we've learned, DNA is genetic material that contains the information for how we look and

how our cells behave. Put simply, DNA is basically a molecule that stores information, kind of like a computer. It is composed of four nucleotide bases: A which pairs with T and G which pairs with C. The bases will not pair any other way. Using these rules, we can gain full control over the shape of a DNA strand. Scientist Paul Rothemund, a researcher at CalTech, was able to create a single stranded DNA



with the order of base pairs that he wanted, which caused the DNA to form in the specific order that he programmed. That's how he made cool shapes.

I am sure we are all very proud of the scientist who used millions of dollars and endless hours in the lab to make stars and smiley faces, but what was the point? The truth is, until scientists got the DNA to move, there was no point. So they played around with more of DNA's properties, one of them being polarity, which causes DNA to be attracted to other polar materials. In 2019, a team of researchers from Wuhan University helped DNA take its "first steps." They were able to give DNA "feet" to move and with that, a robot was born (Li et al 4055).

Now, you might be wondering, what is the point of a robot that's too small to even see under a microscope? Before answer that, I want to ask you a question. How many people here have volunteered for or donated to an organization that helps patients fighting cancer? Maybe at some point during November? Now imagine if no one here had to answer "yes," simply because no one in the world had cancer. Ever.

That could be the future of DNA bots. And that future can be soon-

er than we think. In an experiment done by researchers under the National Natural Science Foundation of China, scientists injected DNA bots into a mouse with cancer, and tested the mouse to see if the bots had any effect. It was a success. The amount of cancerous cells in the mouse significantly decreased, with no negative side effects (Ma et al 4506). No healthy cells died. No hair loss. No dehydration. And a 100% recovery rate. That sounds like a wonderful alternative to chemo.

**I am sure we are all very proud of the scientist who used millions of dollars and endless hours in the lab to make stars and smiley faces, but what was the point?**

You may be thinking, that sounds too easy. How can a simple strand of DNA be the solution to a disease that for years has stumped scientists? The answer lies in what cancer is on the cellular level. Cancer develops when a cell replicates



in unreasonable quantities with no way of stopping. Normal cell life would force a cancerous cell to apoptose, or cause its own death, when the cell sees there's something wrong with itself. However, a cell that has a malfunction in its programming doesn't have that check to kill itself, so it will keep on reproducing, resulting in an influx of cancerous cells. The DNA bot is programmed to force a cell into apoptosis so that the negative cycle of cancer cells never occurs.

Although this process is still in its testing stages, with DNA bots, the possibilities seem endless. They can be programmed to cure any disease, deliver anything to our cells, and once they're finished their job, our bodies already know how to dispose of them safely.

Scientists still have a long way to go, but in the meantime, we can take a new look at the world around us. We take nature for granted because it's always there, unchanging. However, a natural molecule that's been in our bodies as long as humanity has existed holds the power to cure diseases. And there are many other examples of how nature is keeping us alive. How many natural processes did your body undergo in the past minute alone? As it's been said, everything we call natural in the world is really a miracle we've just gotten used to seeing. But if you start viewing the world through a different lens, you will see infinite miracles occurring each minute. All it took was for one scientist to look at DNA differently, and a miracle occurred: the cure for cancer is now within reach.

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# Humans of the City Bus

By Adina Metzger

On my first day of high school, I stepped onto the New York city bus expecting an average ride. But I soon fell into the engaging and immersive world of public transportation. I saw all sorts of people that day and in the weeks since. Riding with these Humans of New York day after day, I am repeatedly reminded of how lucky we are to be living in a city with such diversity and culture, and the variety never ceases to amaze me.

Every winter morning, an older man would step onto the M102 going down Lexington Avenue. He leaned heavily on a cane and wore a camouflaged army cap with an American flag patch on the right shoulder of his coat. He wished the driver a good morning, paid, and sat down delicately. Eyes down, he would hum to himself. Others' eyes darted to him often, not because of his veteran paraphernalia, but because of his humming, I imagine. While people were reading, listening to music, sleeping, thinking about dinner, work, their kids, and when to call their cousin across time zones, this man would sit peacefully and hum. Everyday, I thought of what his life and his story might be like. It was the same everyday. People got on and off at various stops along Lex. I did my homework to the sounds of the bus beeping, lifting, and lowering,

and to the humming of the veteran rider.

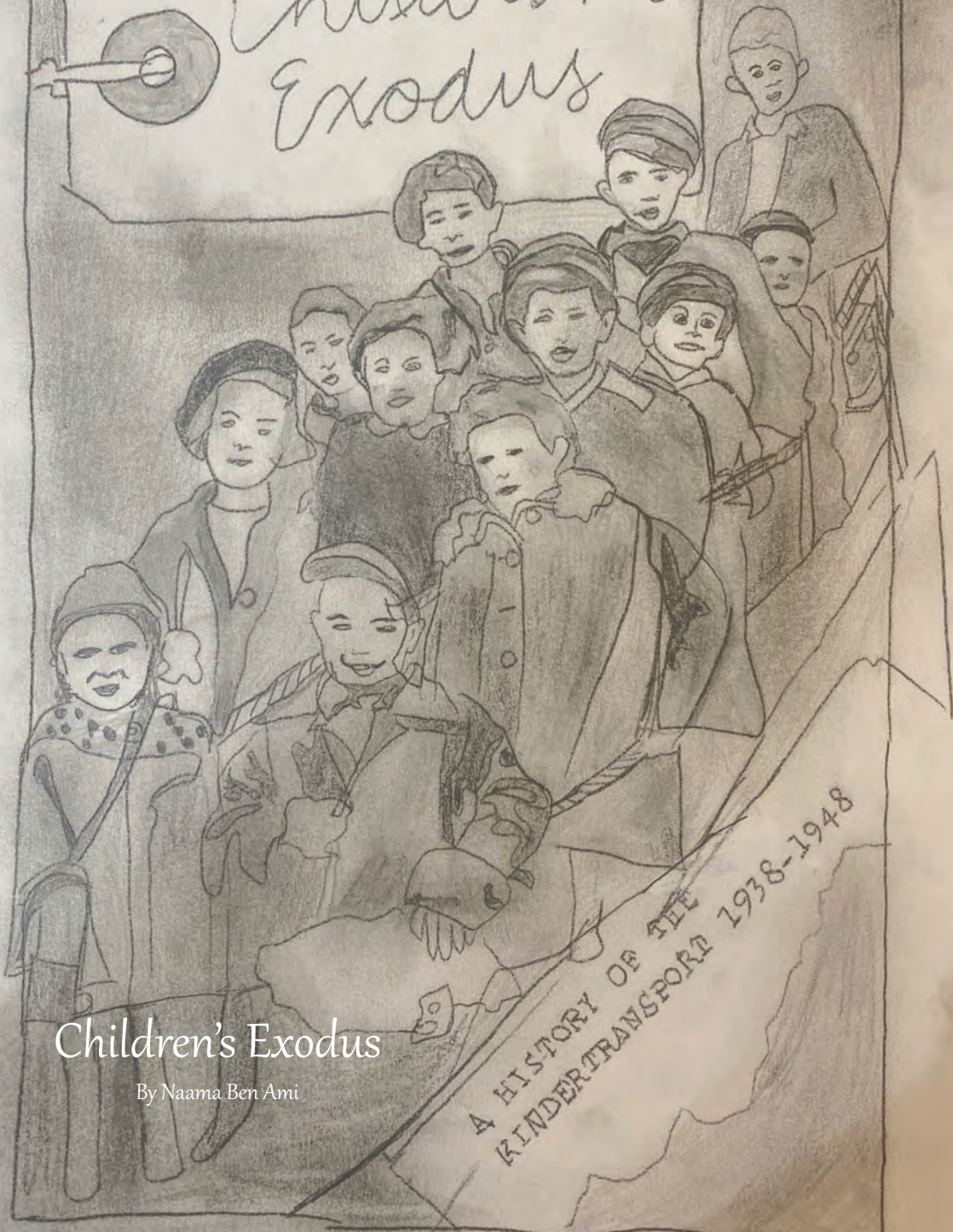
One day, just before reaching her stop, a lady paused in front of the man in the camouflage cap and said, "Hi, I just wanted to say thank you so much for protecting our country. I know it may not always seem this way, but we are forever grateful for your service and appreciate your efforts."

**Everyday, I thought  
of what his life  
and his story  
might be like.**

"Thank you, thank you," he nodded proudly. He then glanced around the bus with an expression that said, "Yes, I am a veteran, and yes, we do appreciate it when you say thank you."

As his smile faded, I imagine he was thinking back to the time he spent in the army. Again, I found myself wondering about my fellow passenger. When and where did he serve? Was he in combat? Did he have a family? What does he do now? I didn't think I'd ever know the answers, but I did know what I had to do next. On my way off the bus, I stopped and said thank you to the veteran. And it felt good.

# Children's Exodus



## Children's Exodus

By Naama Ben Ami

A HISTORY OF THE  
KINDERTRANSPORT 1938-1948

# It's All Spine

By Eliana Schwartz

Creak. The noise echoed throughout the classroom. Several pairs of eyes glanced from their papers to where the noise was coming from. I winced and quickly adjusted the brace. It wasn't hurting, but it really needed to be tightened. I was in the middle of a math quiz. I quickly finished and apprehensively raised my hand. My teacher looked on inquiringly.

"May I please go to the bathroom?"

"No, you can wait till the break between the double period."

I took a deep breath, and the brace creaked again.

"May I please go tighten my back brace?"

She blinked twice. My face flushed. I asked again.

This time, she consented right away. I stood up and walked to the door of the classroom, this time with everyone staring at me, as I tried not to exhale, so the brace wouldn't creak again. I made it to the bathroom, my face bright red, and the brace finally quieted.

...

I found out about my scoliosis in fifth grade. It wasn't a big deal, at least to me. Every six months, I'd go

to the pediatrician and she would check my back. In sixth grade, she noticed that the curve in my spine was getting worse, so she recommended that we go to the back doctor. When we went to his office, he had me X-rayed and said I should return in six months and to keep tabs on it if anything felt different or painful. I shivered, thinking of the massive X-ray machine that looked like a rocket.

...

My mouth was killing me. I had gotten my braces on the day before and Motrin did nothing to stop the pain. Sunbeams cast light on the examining table and small chair at the orthopedist where Sylvanna the PA had ushered my mother me. Then Doctor Godfried came in. He looked like Donald Trump, only his face wasn't as orange, he was skinnier, and he seemed nicer. It didn't help that his tie had yellow ducks on it, though. He was very nice and courteous and greeted me as well as my mother. I smiled and my muscles relaxed. A nice doctor who treats children with as much respect as adults wouldn't hurt me, right?

He took a look at my X-rays. Then at me. Then at my mom. Did I mention my mouth was killing? He



cleared his throat. I gritted my teeth with pain. Why, oh why, does Motrin never work when you need it most? He looked straight at me with Donald Trump hair and said, "You need a back brace."

My mother started with a boatload of questions which the doctor was patient and kind enough to answer. Eventually, he had to go to other patients, so he sent in Bob, who was bald, and wore glasses on his bald head which made an awkward indent.

My braces still hurt.

\*\*\*

The ride to the orthopedist was long. And kind of pretty. There were endless stretches of green grass and trees. Oh, and an occasional roadkill or two. Finally, we arrived. The difference between this guy, John, and Dr. Godfried, was that Dr. Godfried diagnosed scoliosis and did some other stuff with fancy big words while John was the man who actually made the brace.

I had to get sized, which meant they had to strategically place stickers where the brace should fit according to the X-ray. The stickers were bright yellow. The iPad would scan me and sense the stickers, sending the shape to a robot which

was a replica of my body. Then, the brace would be formed on the robot like a corset.

John called me over to his computer. I glanced at it. There were pictures of all the different brace designs. He told me to pick one, so I scrolled through them all. There were all different types: stars and hearts and trucks and animal patterns and solids. I chose light purple with butterflies on top.

When we returned to John a week later, I met my *closest* friend for the very first time. She was so beautiful, I couldn't just call her *it* or *the brace*. I decided for fun's sake that her name had to rhyme with "brace."

Just like that, Grace was named in a whole fancy ceremony which involved me complaining that she was really uncomfortable.

\*\*\*

I walked with my arms awkwardly placed at my sides like a robot, my back straighter than straight, my head and legs the only free body parts. The sun beat down on me as I headed down the block. My hair stuck to me, as did my clothes. And of course, Grace did too.

I pushed the door open and slid my bag off my back.



"I'm home!" I called out to this mess called Friday.

"Come to the kitchen," my mom hollered back.

I headed into a swarm of scents: cholent, kugel, and yummy cake. My mother told me that she had bought me a few new outfits today, and wanted to know if I could try them on. I gently took the shirt out of the bag. I gave the shirt a look. The shirt had a few buttons going down the front. "Ma, I really appreciate it, but . . . I can't wear this!"

"Why not? It's really cute!" exclaimed my mother.

Well, yeah, but buttons. And the brace. The buttons end up looking like they don't know how to stay in a straight line and I end up looking like I don't know how to get dressed. Sigh.

\*\*\*

I raced down the mountain, my friend from the bus calling down to me to "wait up!" but I was too excited. I collided with Chaya Sara in one big embrace in which we almost fell over.

"Your brace is hard!" she exclaimed, laughing.

"Believe me, I know!" I said.

That first night in camp, I intro-

duced the brace to everyone. There were a lot of questions. It was like scoliosis celebrity night.

"Does it hurt?", "Can I touch it?", "How long do you have to wear it for", "Why is it named Grace?"

Enjoying the attention, I answered all their questions, but then another girl turned to me and asked, "Will it affect your shidduchim?"

I turned to the girl. "If someone doesn't want to date me because I wore a back brace at 15, I don't want to marry them either." The girl looked at me, mouth wide open. I looked back, daring her to answer. There are bigger problems in the world, at least mine was solvable. This girl had to understand that.

\*\*\*

I walked through the door, the strong smell of hospitals hitting me hard. This time, I didn't care. I bounced up the ramp with my mother trailing behind me. I had a feeling this would be my last back doctor appointment. He even said last time that I only have a year left.

I jabbed the elevator button with my elbow. Floor 8, but first we had to go to the X-ray department on Floor 3. I grinned at the lady who brought me to the X-ray. I did

everything I had to do before she even said it. It was my third year going, every six months. I was a pro.

We headed upstairs to the orthopedic department. I twisted my fingers, jumping when I heard my name called. I practically ran into the room. When the doctor came in, he smiled at me as usual, and I looked down, suddenly nervous.

He looked at me and said, "Congratulations!". I perked up. Was it...? Could it be...?

"You've been doing a great job," he said, as my heart rate increased. "Come back in six months," he said, then he walked out. I clutched the table, the room spun. My eyes filled with tears, and I didn't bother stopping them. I wanted to wreck the room, throw the computers, ransack the office. I had to restrain myself.

Three years. I had to wear my brace for three long years. Yes, I had received new ones as I grew out of the old ones, but three long years of being squeezed and restricted from doing activities that other girls could do, from wearing clothes that other girls could.

He told me I had to do this for *another* six months? I was crushed.

\*\*\*

I sat down in the green/blue chair and opened my mouth. A bright light shined directly into my eyes and I blinked twice. The orthodontist, a kind man in his fifties, adjusted the light to shine into my mouth. Dr. Kleinrock fiddled around for a few more seconds and then scraped at a bracket or two. His eyes smiled, although the mask covered the bottom half of his face so I couldn't be too sure.

"These look great!" he said, as I struggled to gargle out a thank you with my mouth wide open. "Sorry, sorry, you can swallow now," he said. Then he called my mom in to update her on how much longer I had to wear my braces for. "She can get her braces off today!" Dr. Kleinrock proclaimed.

"What?!? That's 3 months early!" I grinned, showing off my clean braces. Dr. Kleinrock always praised my hygienic side and how white my teeth were, even with braces. I was one of the few patients who he let have colored rubber bands because my teeth were so clean, but I never dreamed of getting them off early!

Twenty minutes and braces-free teeth later, I bounced back to the car. As I ran my tongue up and down my freed teeth, I felt the squeeze of Grace around my

torso. My excitement died down. When would I get *that* brace off? My sight became blurred. I desperately wanted this back brace saga to be over already. But then I felt my smooth teeth again with my

tongue. Another shiver ran through my body. Maybe, just maybe, if my mouth braces could come off without warning, my back brace would come off soon too.

# Zaidy Moskowitz

By Chani Malek







# Letters

By Chana Guelfgat

The End.

The end of a strenuous, stressful, and exhausting day. Hair sprawled out over the pillow, the lights dimmed, alarm set. Slowly, slowly, the stars came out, and ever so gently the soft hum of breathing filled the room.

“She’s asleep,” Little ‘o’ whispers to Capital ‘I’.

Then, like little mice secretly milling around, all the letters swirled together, taking their places as the dance began.

With a twinkle in his eye, Capital ‘I’ ceremoniously clapped his hands and the symphony began. A mix of Beethoven, Mozart, and Bach overcame the letters as they skipped to their places. As they passed their fellow alphabet-members they couldn’t help but share smiles and exchange winks. Their excitement escalated as they danced for hours. (More precisely, 8 hours).

Hands and feet coordinated perfectly. With the grace of a Russian ballerina, Little ‘o’ wrapped his dangly arms around Little ‘v’ and they tiptoed carefully across the glossy sheet of paper. With the clicks and clacks of their shiny shoes, the letters swung around each other, eyeing one another. They knew the message. Only they knew what she would wake up to read.

When Capital ‘I’ clapped again they instinctively switched partners. Like a dream come true, they stomped along with the music, allowing it to lift them up to greater heights. Higher, higher, and higher.

From the corner of his eye, Little ‘e’ could see Capital ‘I’ carefully examining his pocket watch and then tucking it gently back into his pocket.

*No! Not yet! It can’t be over! This dream of a sort can’t be winding toward the end!*

He shut his eyes and erased this sad thought from his mind, but then he heard the clap, this time with a heavy heart.

**They knew the message. Only they knew what she would wake up to read.**

Capitol 'I' clapped his hands in a double beat.

*Clap-Clap Clap-Clap Clap-Clap Clap-Clap.*

The music slowed, and as the violin played its last string and the piano shared its last note, the letters finally fell into place.

Capitol 'I' stood at the front, beside him Little 'I' with his friends Little 'o,' 'v,' and 'e' joined together.

Skipping like joyful dancers were Little 'y,' 'o,' and 'u.' With all the letters aligned now, Capitol 'I' signaled their que.

They reached out their arms, ready to link together into words. Squeezing their eyes shut, they prepared to sing the finale of the Note-Making Ceremony.

"Wait for me!!" squealed Exclamation Mark.

He waddled into place right beside Little 'u.'

"And us!"

In came the famous twins, M&M, and the less-well-known-but-deserving-of-honor set of twins, A&A. Quickly and efficiently, as they were known to be, they arranged themselves in a M-A-M-A pattern.

"I'm here... I'm here." Huffing and puffing, Large Heart ran in, climbing over the twins, settling into his classic lopsided position.

"All ready!" he announced.

"Woohoo!"

"Yay!"

Now it was time. 5:59 AM.

"Capitol 'I,' I'm nervous," Little 'v' whispered.

"Shush! We're on display! Any minute now! You'll be fine!"

They stood there with bated breath.

6:00 AM

*Beep. Beep-Beep. Beep.*


It clicked off pretty quickly, the light turned on, her feet slipped into her fluffy slippers, and she trudged toward the door.

“Uch! She missed us!”

“No. Wait and watch.”

*Oh! I forgot my glasses. No wonder everything's so blurry!*

She hustled back to her nightstand and there it was.

*I love you* 

*MAMA*

# The Girl of the Night Watch

By Yehudis Ginsberg

“Sir Rembrandt, there is one important addition to the painting that you must include...”

\* \* \*

My family is amongst the poorest in all of Amsterdam. My father is a barge navigator on the canals, carrying wares from the big ships in the harbor to all corners of the city. This barely provides enough income to support one person, but my father works to support my mother and me as well. My parents always wished they could provide some sort of education for me, even a meager one. I often overhear my parents discussing my personal needs and they frequently say that I am intelligent and deserving of some sort of education. But in 1642, the most a parent could hope for is that their twelve-year-old daughter would survive into adulthood.

My father caught an awful fever and was not able to work. We could not afford a day of lost salary, but there was nothing we could do. Over the years, my father often showed me how to steer and control the barge, but even if I wanted to take my father’s place, it would be impossible; the job could only be done by a man or boy. “What if I pretended to be one?” I thought.

The sun woke me up early the next morning. I got up more abruptly than I generally did. I would have to work quickly for my plan to work.

I knew that my mother would be busy taking care of my father, so my parents would barely notice that I was gone once I left. But I couldn’t be caught leaving, and especially not with what I was bringing with me. I took some ratty boys’ clothing that we had in the corner of our attic and ran off. When I got to the boat, I hastily changed into my new attire, shoved my hair into a boy’s cap, and took my father’s boat out onto the canals.

After a long and hard day’s work transporting people and cargo around the canals of Amsterdam, I had to dock the boat and return home before

**Hearing whispers,  
I pulled the barge  
to the side of the  
tunnel and quietly  
tried to keep the  
boat from moving,  
hoping that the  
people whose  
voices I heard  
would not notice  
me drifting along.**

it became too dark for me to be out of my house and my parents noticed I was gone. Even for a boy, it would be quite dangerous to be out at night. As I was tying up the boat, a man walked up to me and asked me for one last ride. He was quite old and looked very wealthy.

“It’s much too late, and I’m not taking any more customers today,” I told the gentleman. The man looked nervous but was noticeably trying hard to hide it.

“You are the last boat here. I have got to get to Utrecht urgently. You must take me! Won’t you?”

“Sir, I really must be getting home now,” I answered.

“Very well then. And what if I offered you five silver pieces?”

I must have thought for a moment too long because he then said, “I’ll give you ten silver pieces!” Oh, how giddy I felt inside when he said that! With those wages promised to me, there was no way I was going to allow that offer slip by, no matter the danger.

I reached Utrecht and let the man get off. On my way back, I reached a canal with a strong echo. Hearing whispers, I pulled the barge to the side of the tunnel and quietly tried to keep the boat from moving, hoping that the people whose voices I heard would not notice me drifting along.

“The attack must be violent; it needs to be remembered forever!” one voice called out into the darkness. “The Night Watch of Amsterdam is strong. The watchers are the wealthiest in the city. They supply their own weapons and I can guarantee that they are smart and powerful. We must be prepared.”

“Very well, it is decided!” another announced. “Tomorrow at midnight, the attack begins on the town. Don’t forget, Frans Banninck will be the first one dead!”

Shocked, I realized that almost every person that my father serviced could be dead by tomorrow night, including Frans Banninck Cocq, the mayor! I lost control of the boat and crashed it against the wall of the archway. The two men on the other nearby boat shone a lantern toward my face. They knew I was listening. I navigated the barge as fast as I possibly could, but they followed me in another.

“We know you heard what we said! And now we have to make sure that you don’t tell anyone!” I got off the boat, tied it quickly, hoping that the knot was strong enough to hold the barge until my father returned to



work. Because they were clearly on the hunt for a boy, I quickly tossed my cap into a dark alley, let my hair down, and ran as quickly as I could to Sir Frans Banninck Cocq's home to tell him what I had overheard. I needed to let the Night Watch know what was coming.

"Please, Sir Frans," I begged, banging at his front door. "You need to believe me! An attack will occur at midnight tomorrow and there is almost no time to prepare. Please, Sir, please!"

He answered me from a window with seething anger. "How dare you barge onto my property like this?! I am not the person to tell your personal issues or lies to. Now gather your filth and leave at once!"

I left his home dejected. There was nothing I could do anymore.

The next evening, I remembered that the Night Watch gathered by the gates. I went there and was surprised to see that they were prepared to fight, Frans Banninck Cocq giving orders to various nobleman in the crowd.

"Pardon me, Sir, but what happened?" I asked him. "I thought you didn't believe me."

"One of our watch guards traveled far and discovered that there would be an attack. We didn't know when it would happen, but your warning put us on alert and permitted us to gather with haste. We owe you greatly."

When the attack was successfully put down, Frans Banninck Cocq and the Night Watch went to the great artist of their city, Rembrandt Van Rijn, to commemorate their victory in a painting.

"Sir Rembrandt, there is one important addition to the painting that you must include. A young girl needs to be put in the front of the painting. She saved the city and deserves that her bravery be memorialized forever!"



*The Night Watch*  
Rembrandt van Rijn

# The Way Home

By Batsheva Spira







REQUIRED



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# The Art of Taking Notes

By Noa Szpilzinger

I sit upright at my workspace,  
A plastic chair with a wooden desk,  
In a fluorescent bulb-lit space.

No need for drop cloths or smocks,  
My master pieces are limited to 8 ½ x 11 inch frames,  
to be completed in 45 minute increments.

My medium is paper, ink ,#2 lead  
and a rainbow of highlighters all set  
The college ruled recycled paper.

My backpack is my portfolio of work,  
My thick binder is the lamination,  
The dividers show my different styles of art.

My canvas is my paper,  
my paint brush is my pen,  
the paint is my ink,  
and the eraser is my first layer.

The words are the sketches,  
the heading is the title,  
The doodles that fill my margins are my signatures.  
The mistakes are erased and painted over.

The many different colors highlight the important lines,  
the underlines underscore important details,  
The parenthesis apply shadow and depth to information.

The application of colored ink provides whimsy,  
The bullet points are the outlines,  
The punctuation provides details that bring it all together.

The flourishes, details, and sudden bursts of inspiration,  
are reserved for the margins as not to complicate or interfere  
with the methodical art form  
given center stage.

Unlike a mainstream artist,  
the inspiration is not unique,  
nor my own.  
My teacher is my inspiration,  
She sparks many ideas for me,  
so I can proceed to finish my masterpiece.

I endeavor to replicate what she says in an accurate way  
Making it visually pleasing to keep me engaged  
and information memorable.

I share my gorgeous work with people who want to study it.  
They don't need the original; they'll take the reprints.  
The satisfaction you get when sharing notes  
Is as though a connoisseur bought your original works.  
I look at my notes and admire them like a perfect piece of art.



# Down by the Bay, Where the Watermelons Grow

By Ahuva Horowitz

Dearest Jimmy,

At first it was all just a funny joke, I thought you knew, but... I guess I took it too far. Because of my words, which I confess I believed were totally harmless at the time, I pushed you, my beloved son, away from me. I spent many hours thinking about what I've done, unable to comprehend how I could've carried on and on without noticing that it was bothering you...

I couldn't believe it when you left. We spent so long looking for you – the police couldn't find you anywhere. Yesterday, one of your friends came running to us saying they heard your voice singing by the shoreline. Of course, we rushed to the bay. When we finally found the rocky nook you were hiding in, we were so relieved just to see that you were alive. But, as you know, every time anyone came near you, you went berserk and started relentlessly chucking watermelon rinds at them, singing that song all the while.

We're all so scared for you, Jimmy. The odd, sea-dwelling fishmonger that's "taking care of you" refuses to tell us anything and won't let us near the place again. You must be so cold

and dirty and hungry and scared. I can't bear the thought of it. If you don't come home soon, I don't know what I'll do. It's been four days already. The police arrested that strange fishmonger guy, and they haven't stopped looking for you since you've disappeared again. I've heard how scary it can be down by that bay – I've been horrified, hearing rumors that shady young hooligans hang around that place too. I simply can't imagine how terrifying this whole thing must be for you.

Please, Jimmy, know that I truly never, ever meant the things I said to be anything more than just playful banter. Know that I would have never said any of it in the first place if I knew how much it would hurt you. Jimmy, I'm worried sick. Your father and I are heartbroken. Your brothers and sisters miss you terribly. Even the dog whines for you sometimes. I promise I am going to do my absolute best to make sure I never cause anything like this to happen again.

I couldn't believe  
it when you left...  
the police couldn't  
find you anywhere.

You have my unwavering promise that I'll never mention bears combing their hair, or the goose-kissing moose, or whales with polka-dot tails ever again. Please, don't stay down there by that watermelon bay anymore. You don't have to sleep by the cold seaside, eating nothing but watermelons and the sardines that you get from that creepy old fisherman. Now that he's (thankfully) been thrown in jail, that leaves you with even less food than before. Come back to your warm bed and cooked meals, come back to your family and friends. We all love you Jimmy and we miss you. Please, Jimmy, come home.

So much love,

Mom



# Cotton Candy

By Esther Ryba



# On Hand Sanitizer

By Orly Setareh

Before Corona, we were just acquaintances  
Coming into contact in public bathrooms  
But now  
I can't imagine my life without you  
You are with me on the subway  
I hold you dearly on the bus  
You fit right into my pencil case pocket  
You keep me safe  
I just wish I knew you  
Before I got pink eye.



# Watching the Wheels Go Round

By Pessie Bernstein

I never understood why people say “it’s as easy as riding a bike,” when, in fact, riding a bike is no simple task. I find bikes with training wheels okay, but regular bikes are as intimidating as driving a car but more so. At least cars have suspension systems and alignment balance. Perhaps this is why my parents avoided teaching me to ride a bike. By the age of fifteen, this biped was still incapable of pedaling through the streets like the rest of the neighborhood children.

As a high school student, I was taunted by the two-wheeler in my driveway and begged my parents for professional intervention. After three lessons, the instructor finally let go. With my helmet fastened, I wobbled down the street and said a few silent prayers. Vulnerable and helpless, I somehow made it down a half of the block before plummeting to the ground. Stationary bikes were always an option, I thought, but I knew this soul needed to cycle properly. The more I tried to defy gravity while doing cardio, the more I couldn’t imagine how children were able to do this.

Lying there on the ground, I saw the wheels spin, but my mind was spinning faster. Children are fear-

less, I remembered, and that’s why they can accomplish anything. They don’t consider the pros and cons or calculate the risk factor of falling and getting a concussion. Children ride with the wind worry-free. I needed to tap into my inner child to do this. And I knew she was in there somewhere.

**Stationary bikes  
were always an  
option, I thought,  
but I knew this  
soul needed to  
cycle properly.**

The next time I got on my bicycle, I rode for miles effortlessly because I pushed reason, probability, and consequences aside. A cool breeze whipped by as I began to pick up speed. My practice paid off and my confidence reflected right off the shiny handlebars.

Until I fell again.

I had missed a pothole in the middle of the street, and after that, I was back on the familiar gravel, but this time, the path onwards and upwards was already paved.

# Mudpies

By Kayla Felman

*Here it goes again.* My mother's eyes fell back into that all-too-familiar crease as she began to tell the story I had heard hundreds of times.

Although my mother didn't talk about her childhood a lot, this one story was a well-known tale in my house. It always starts the same way, describing a perfect summer day at my mother's childhood home: 17173 Strawberry Drive, Encino, California. My mother explains how she was spending the morning at her neighbor's house when she had the brilliant idea to make a mudpie. They gathered multicolored flowers from the garden, long leaves from the surrounding plants, a plastic container from the sandbox, and a rusty pair of garden scissors. As part of the preparations, my mother held the leaves on either end as her neighbor trimmed them. Accidentally, her neighbor cut a bit too close to my mother's hand and cut off the tip of her thumb. Screaming and crying, my mother ran across the street to her house, looking frantically for my grandmother. Upon seeing the blood dripping down my mother's hand, my grandmother brought my mother straight to the pediatrician. As the doctor examined my mother's thumb, my grandmother declared matter-of-factly, "You can use

the skin of my thumb if you need it to fix my daughter's." And that's where the story ends.

**My mother never told us the rest of the story. Everything that happened after that was irrelevant.**

My mother never mentioned whether the doctor was able to reattach her thumb tip. My mother never talked about whether she needed stitches, a skin graft, or surgery. My mother never told us the rest of the story. Everything that happened after that was irrelevant. All that mattered was that my grandmother had offered her own thumb to save my mother's.

\* \* \*

During third grade, my grandmother passed away. Although I wasn't mature enough to understand where my grandmother had gone, I could sense the blanket of darkness that had descended over my house. My aunts' and uncles'

eyes were always red; their eyes were stained with tears. The next day, my mother woke me up, explaining that it was time to go to the funeral.

Although I was still young, I remember the way people spoke about my grandmother. In my uncle's speech, he focused on my grandmother's strength; she had escaped the Holocaust and spent her childhood in a displaced persons camp. Then, my aunt spoke about my grandmother's dedication to the Jewish community, highlighting that my grandmother donated a lot of money to the local Jewish school. My cousin recalled how my grandmother would always wake her grandchildren up with delicious pancakes infused with love.

Finally, I watched as my mother walked up to the podium. I had never seen my mother so vulnerable. I shifted in my seat, preparing to hear another one of my grandmother's great accomplishments. I expected to hear about how my grandmother left Poland and integrated into a completely different culture. Maybe my mother would

tell everyone how my grandmother rose from the depths of darkness and created a family. I was ready to hear about my grandmother's role in building the Jewish community in Encino, California. But, as my mother stood in front of the crowd, I saw the image I knew all too well: my mother smiled kindly, she looked into the eyes of her audience, and then she began telling the mudpie story.

I sat there confused. At my grandmother's funeral, when my mother had only a few minutes to talk to encapsulate my grandmother's impact on the world, she told everyone about a childhood memory on a summer day so many years ago. Why didn't my mother discuss one of my grandmother's much more significant accomplishments?

But, perhaps, *that* was my grandmother's greatest accomplishment. And I am not sure if she even realized that on an ordinary summer morning on Strawberry Drive, she left the greatest most enduring impact of all.

# Hopeful Memories

By Golda Bamberger

A memory we take,  
On our journey as we embrace,  
is your time being spent wisely,  
your memories will be ivory.  
If your time is being wasted,  
you'll be upset and twisted.  
If your memories are wasted,  
your living life untasted.  
Once you learn to cherish,  
Your memories won't perish.

A memory we take,  
On our journey as we embrace,  
Are the times you said "I love you,"  
To someone who meant the world to you.  
You felt the right to say it,  
And they'll always overplay it,  
Because that's a memory that for forever,  
You grant them the endeavor.

A memory we take,  
On our journey as we embrace,  
Are the family moments we spend,  
Pitching those rocky tents.  
Burning those white marshmallows,  
With a covering layer of chocolate,  
Sandwiched in graham crackers,  
It's as clear as the stars in the open night sky  
That family time does matter.

A memory we take,  
On our journey as we embrace,  
Are the times that you checked,  
That bold want of your bucket list.  
You let go of the toughness,  
Through you didn't rush it,  
You came further than expected,  
With the mindset of inspection.  
You sled down that deep stilt,  
On a slope farm far away,  
One covered in white snow,  
you made memories to place.

You'd think that they leave,  
like a lot of other things do.  
You have to learn to sing,  
so it can bring hope to you.  
The younger days are passing,  
we're just trying to cope.  
To hold tight onto the memories is important,  
so they can give you hope.



# Time Together

By Tehila Spira







# A Wish is a Dream a Film Creates

By Ariella Paneth

As a small toddler, my mother got me hooked on Walt Disney's movies. From the moment I laid my eyes on Cinderella and her journey to becoming a princess, I knew that I needed to be a princess when I grew up, too. Immediately, my actions directly reflected those of Cinderella. At the age of two, I decided to ask my mother to rid me of my crib and buy me a bed. Why? Because Cinderella did not sleep in a crib, she slept in a bed. From that moment on, everything I did was carefully calculated according to whether it was regal enough for a Disney Princess to do the same. Some of the ideas that were crafted in my two year old mind still influence my decisions until this day, fourteen years later.

According to an article in the *New York Times*, movies and television shows curated for young audiences impact and shape the actions of young children in their future decision making. A new Disney show, *Alice's Wonderland Bakery*, displays many characters with diverse cultures to teach acceptance, lessons in improvisation, and flexibility with the hope of influencing children to develop these traits. They also use organic ingredients

to promote healthy eating habits in toddlers. Furthermore, a study performed by the University of Florida shows that children who watch more "educational television" are more successful later on, as opposed to children who watch "entertaining television."

Yes, it is true film companies deserve the freedom to create whatever inspires them, but what if the implementation of educational scenes can change people for the better? By simply showing children interesting shapes, exotic animals, or a new food, film producers can change the way young people think long term and spark creativity within them. It is essential for movie and TV producers to tediously craft and censor their materials, as they effectively influence children's future values and decision making. Film companies can execute their ideas perfectly, while at the same time channeling positive messages towards children.

Film makers have the power to change the world. Simple protagonists in TV shows can teach children to be happy, creative, loving, and accepting. They bring hope to the next generations, and instill important values in them. So please,

be a part of influencing our children to make better decisions, act with kindness, and bring a new direction to our future.

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# Scratch Work Time, It's Workout Time

By Avigail Greenwald

It's already 9:30 pm. I feel myself getting tense as I glance at my to-do list and realize I only checked off three out of seven tasks due tonight. It's been a week since I last exercised, and tonight was supposed to be the night I got back on track. Of course, I know the saying, "It's not about having the time, it's about making the time," but isn't it nearly impossible for me to make time when I hardly have the time to complete my homework?

As a sophomore, I began to understand the benefits of exercise for students, although I don't believe all teachers do. Since school pushes students to work their hardest, students deserve the chance to take care of their hardworking bodies. Exercise isn't just an efficient way to boost metabolism and lower cholesterol levels, exercise is the adrenaline that keeps teens motivated and happy. However, there isn't enough time in a student's packed schedule to be physically active.

Research shows that only 23.2% of students exercise on a daily basis whereas, during the pandemic, the percentage of physical activity rate increased by 88% because people had more time for themselves at

home. Not only that, those who exercised during the pandemic came out happier than they came in. If the world-spreading COVID pandemic was able to positively affect a significant amount of teens' physical habits, how hard can it be for schools to do the same?

Andre Picard, a specialist in health claims, "Children being active is more important than homework." Exercise prepares the mindset to be more alert and improves the brain's ability to retain more information in a short period of time. Additionally, students who have higher fitness scores also have higher test scores. Not only can exercise better students' academic behavior, but according to an article in *The New York Times*, exercise also improves students' mental health, alleviating symptoms of ADHD, depression, and anxiety disorders. This means that teens who don't exercise are more likely to fall into mental health problems than those who value exercise.

Although schools may argue students should spend their time at home productively by busying themselves with homework, research proves that homework has no academic influence and is a



huge stressor in a student's life. For students who sit at a desk 8 hours a day, it is completely unfair that after an exhausting day at school, they are working all night for no proven purpose. Focusing on oneself is far more important than focusing on academic studies. Physical activity can help minimize the anxiousness of a student and can even train the brain to remember their material more significantly than the homework would.

Schools must understand the perfect ingredient in improving students' grades isn't by assigning different tasks and homework each night, it is through exercising; the most integral aspect of creating mentally and academically well-rounded students. I have no doubt that if schools promote this, teachers will see a drastic difference in both their student's behavior and grades.

# Human Emotions

By Ahuva Horowitz





# Golden in Glasses

Nechama Friedman

A shopkeeper's bell chirped as the door swung and I was in an optic ocean. I didn't come here so often, but this shop held muffled memories of the start of small eras that divided up my 13 year old life. It began the phase of cool metal bendable frames through first grade and skinny specs that bore my first reading phase, helping fantasy worlds of literature meet my eyes. There were mellow blue ones that I went through my first year of camp with, and bright purple frames in soft squares that I loved the most of them all. In eighth grade I had a new dramatic shape, as I tried to advance my daring style with each year's pair, advance a smart seeming persona with a fun twist. Despite it all though, I'd begun to crave being like most kids in my grade, which was being simply frameless. I nagged my mom to schedule an appointment for contacts. This would be a *new* new.

High school was veering close, and similarly seemed like an opportunity for a fresh start, like the one I'd get with contact lenses. Sitting in the waiting room, I let the thought of new people and places lace my imagination. New experiences waited for me a few months away, and my confused mixed feelings- anxious, excited, intimidated- tried to shape how I felt about

a new look. It was decided delight one minute, and distinct dread the next, as a new thought plagued me: Would all the new people know me if I didn't look like the classic me?

On the way home my head fluttered all around in the car, out the window, at the mirror, at my mother, as my thoughts raced back and forth about my decision on the matter. Since my contacts were already paid for, and they were already coming, it was best for me to make the most of it. I was excited for a change, so I let it overpower my doubts, for now.

Covid quarantine, however, consumed my optimism. In the late months of eighth grade when all I saw of people was on zoom, I was restless from being kept from my transformation.

"We don't know when they'll be in. There's so much backed up right now. No workers. Could be a few weeks." The same woman would say the same story whenever I called to ask.

My new contacts couldn't be shipped to the shop. All I had were trials that didn't work so well for me. They weren't my exact prescription, but I tried to persevere.

Summer came while school ended, and busy zoom days had me forgetting about the optimism

for my new look. What was I thinking! My personality couldn't show without my glasses. In my room after a long online day, I put in my contacts to retry them. It was hard to wear them and look at a screen all day, so I'd ignored them for a while. As I settled the wacky face I always had to make to fit them in comfortably, I thought about what this change meant. Did it work on me? The mirror showed a cool new me, but I suddenly wanted to back out, remembering ninth grade that stood waiting for me after the summer. All the people I was soon to meet wouldn't know the me that my friends knew I was if I showed up like this. My aspirations of elegance started to fade.

High school's first days were visited by a glassed me. I decided all first impressions had to be of the previous me before we hit the contemporary. Being in a mask further stressed me towards this decision, because I had only half my face to portray my personality to the new world of people here. My tenacity was brittle, and had now compromised my excitement of long ago, of looking towards new beginnings, and now I sought to merge the new with some old. But no decision was ever definite. Some days I'd get fueled with inspiration to project my "new" image, and some

days I'd want it to be what it always was. So my glasses/contacts choice varied day to day.

"Hey, what's your name?" we each asked about a hundred times on the first day. "Where are you from?"

I gazed at the rows of girls around me while we sat in class, wondering what to make of everyone I'd met, who I'd be friends with, and how I would do in all my classes. But most of all: Will everyone get me?

In the early schoolwork days of September, I got a text from a girl in my class.

*Can you send me notes from bio today?*

A subtle exhilaration from a new name on the screen dragged my eyes across the words. It shouldn't feel unusual, to be asked for notes, or to explain something. It was what I was always used to in elementary school. It really wasn't the text, but suddenly seeing myself recognized in the same way, to new friends and new people.

In tenth grade I wore my contacts all the time. My mornings became shaped around them, became orchestrations of finding the time before davening to slip them on my eyes because I couldn't wear



them during my commuting naps. My nights wove around alarms that reminded me to take them off after twelve hours.

With new classes of girls to meet, on rare occasion I'd hear that someone hadn't even known I was a glasses girl. This thought was

compelling. I realized, to others, this picture of me is the only me. And now, I think it's become the only one to me too. I'm me when I'm at recess in school just as I'm me reading with glasses in bed, because when I thought otherwise it was all just in my head.



# The Baby

By Sofia Kestenbaum

# Der Baum Meiner Vorfahren (The Tree of My Ancestors)

By Chavi Weiner

In the Augarten Park, my mother and I sat on a wooden bench, silently taking in the view. I had recently done a project in school about my great-great-grandmother, who had grown up playing in this park. The longer I sat, everything else in the park blurred more into the background besides for one tree in particular. It was enormous compared to the others, big, tall, and beautiful, surrounded by green grass, bright flowers, and loose branches. It reminded me of something you'd see in a fairytale. Its branches swayed in the wind, as though they were performing a delicate ballet routine. They looked animated, swaying and falling rhythmically, trusting the roots to hold the tree firmly in place. The roots are what keep the tree grounded and what let the tree grow new branches and renew itself. A perfect duet.

\* \* \*

Towards the end of eighth grade, my parents and I boarded a plane to Vienna, Austria. On Shabbat morning, my parents and I walked to one of the city's synagogues. We took in the buildings around us as we talked about the history of the streets we walked through. Suddenly, we stopped. I looked at my

parents imploringly, reaching for my map that I soon realized I had forgotten. "We're here," my father announced, as he gestured to the two white, five-story houses and motioned for me to walk through the unassuming door.

**Voices of the past  
and present filled  
the air, a sound  
most pleasing to the  
ear and to the heart.**

"This is the Seitenstetengasse Temple. This is the *shul* your great-great-grandparents got married in," my mother whispered to me as the prayers commenced. The shul had a magical feeling, similar to the tree, something beyond words. The domed ceilings featured a lantern hanging in the center peak with a ring of twelve columns running along the walls supporting the two-tiered women's balconies. Voices of the past and present filled the air, a sound most pleasing to the ear

and to the heart. I looked around in awe, trying to memorize every detail. The red, velvet benches helped me focus in this palace. Years ago, my namesake had stood in the very same oval room. Looked at the very same walls. The very same ceiling. And said the very same prayers.

After davening, my parents explained to me that it was the only surviving *shul* in Vienna from before World War II. Its building is fitted into a block of houses and concealed from street view, due to an edict issued by Emperor Joseph II. Like many Jews, the synagogue's hiding caused it to survive the war. After the Holocaust, many Jews returned to Vienna, to their *shul*, to the community that had been once persecuted. Today, it is home to more than 7,000 members and is able to, once again, serve a thriving community.

As we walked out through the heavy double doors, I noticed something my jetlag had previously made me miss: an Israeli flag that proudly greeted everyone who walked by. This was the only addition to the *shul* after the war. While the flag was new, the spirit of the flag had remained within the building since its groundbreaking nearly two centuries ago.

\* \* \*

We dedicated a lot of our trip to walking around the districts of the city, letting the geography tell its own story. District 1's cobblestone streets were crowded with people. We walked past the Hapsburg Palace, a row of city scooters, the Spanish Riding School, and a CVS. The spotless streets and unique architecture gave over the essence of the "European charm."

In just ten minutes, we arrived in Leopoldstadt, District 2, where we were able to connect Vienna's vibrant present with its complicated past. District 2 was home to a flourishing Jewish community before the war and now, again, a Jewish community had risen.

Gone were the imperial apartments and the magnificent European coffee houses. Gone were the palaces, opera houses, and symphony halls. However, I think their replacements surpassed them. Although not as grand, the spirit of my ancestors was imbued in every building. Every street. Every alley. Every stone.

Walking through the streets, I passed signs that read "Einbahnstraße" (One-way street) and signs reading "כשר, מִהַדְרִין" (Strictly Kosher). The swarms of tourists in District 1 dressed in crop tops and shorts were replaced by local

Orthodox girls dressed in crisp uniforms of blue button-down shirts and pleated navy skirts. Boys proudly showing their *payot*, side-locks, for the world to see. Men were discussing Torah on the street corners and mothers were pushing double strollers to take their children to *cheder*, Jewish day school. This was a new world. A world of old. I preferred this over the bustling District 1. This was my home.

\* \* \*

We continued along until we arrived at Blumauergasse and Glockengasse and passed my great-great-grandmother's former house. Every stone holds memories. Their stories danced in the air, entrancing me. I smiled next to the almost-too-bright white house as my mother took a picture of me.

Frequently, I look at the picture and I see the house and me. It persevered. It is still standing.

\* \* \*

I let my eyes skim over the green bushes, purple flowers, and historical statues. This is where I knew

my family had retreated to it as a green escape, to simply have fun. However, during the war, the park was used for something far less humane. The park still contained Flak towers – large, anti-aircraft gun towers that could fire 8,000 rounds in a minute – that were constructed by the Nazis. The nature surrounding me was innocent-looking, yet it had protected Nazis – the worst of the worst. A chill overtook me. Wasn't the park I so admired just as guilty as Auschwitz? The purple flowers didn't look as pretty anymore.

However, while the tree's branches that had hosted the Nazis were gone, the tree my great-great-great-grandfather climbed as a child was standing right in front of me. Its roots are stronger than ever. The Nazis may have polluted the park with their Flak towers, but my great-great-great-grandfather's roots were still strong and growing.

The park was once more beautiful.



# Editors' Afterword

Dear Reader,

Unexpressed ideas can weigh us down like lead, but once pencil is put to paper, lexical alchemy produces literary gold. The writers of this journal have built what once seemed impossible. Through their creativity, craftsmanship, and cultivated nerve, they've made the magic of their experiences and imagination accessible to others.

We appreciate the time you spent with our journal and hope the worlds these words created stay with you long after you close the back cover.

We wish you many happy returns and wondrous new adventures.

Goodbye for now,

Adina, Chaya, Miriam, Naomi, Aviva, and Chavi

**“The true alchemists do  
not change lead into gold;  
they change the world into  
words.”**

**– William H. Gass**



Rikki Klein, '22