



MANHATTAN HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

# EASTWARD

A Literary & Art Anthology

Menucha Glatzer, '26

# 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*

**Shaina Bober**

*Harry and Rose Kaplan Scholarship  
Second Place Prose Award*

**Matea Frieber**

*Harry and Rose Kaplan Scholarship  
Art Award First Place*

**Batsheva Ben-Itzhak**



MANHATTAN HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS  
**EASTWARD**  
A Literary & Art Anthology

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# Foreword

By Mrs. Estee Friedman-Stefansky, Principal

I had no idea that I once made ribbons out of a Shabbos dress by cutting it up into horizontal stripes starting from beneath the collar. Apparently, I produced the ribbons in a state of curiosity and creativity, not anger or frustration. But I have no memories of this, just the anecdote my mother has shared.

But recently, I opened an old stale box that holds childhood stuff. Comprised of old picture albums and school projects, my mother saved them for me when she was packing up our house after many decades of life there. She was emotional when she handed me the box. “I tried to save the memories for you, *Mame-la*,” she said, “Wish I had saved more of the art and crafts, feel bad that so many of them just fell apart, after hanging on the fridge for so long with all that glitter and glue.”

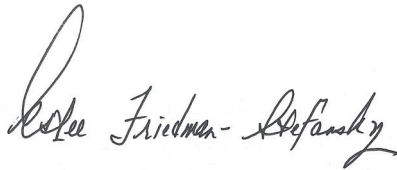
When I closed the box, I knew new things about myself that I had not known before, and wondered about my parents and siblings and friends whom I thought I knew so well. The box was stuffed with smiles and secrets and songs. During the hour of rummaging, it was enchanting to be carried back to a faraway place I could never find among the layers of life stacked in the storage of my soul.

This anthology possesses a fabulous array of prose and poetry, both fiction and creative nonfiction. Particularly special are the range of memoiristic writings that pulsate with rich sensory images and distinct atmosphere. So many of our writers succeeded in creating magic for us — they allowed us to peek into their pasts while helping us wander into our own.

Our writers and artists have succeeded in finding the child within themselves and the child within each of us. Seeing life through the eyes of a child is magical, especially when we are both the child and the adult at once.

Select from the rows and rows of candy captured in the *shuk* of Machne Yehuda on a bustling Erev Shabbos (Kudos to Menucha Glatzer!), or slide into your puffer and produce those sparkling

snowballs before they melt into your mittens (Kudos to Shana Feder!) — how blessed we are to belong to a school where authentic voices are celebrated and talent continues to be cultivated both in art and literary forms. How blessed we are to learn from teachers who are unparalleled in their devotion and skill. Thank you to Ms. Leah Klahr, Ms. Miryam Lakritz, Mrs. Zisi Naimark, Mrs. Raquel Benchimol, Mrs. Nechama Birnbaum and Mrs. Dena Szpilzinger.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Relee Friedman-Refansky". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned in the lower-left quadrant of the page.

# Editors' Foreword

Dearest Reader,

Before we travel *Eastward* together, we would like to advise you that in your hands is a treasure chiseled of Manhattan High School for Girls' ambitions, originality, and creativity. The difference between fruitless daydreams and what you see before you are the hours upon hours of hard work and dedication invested in these ideas, bringing them to life. The Manhattan High School (MHS) annual Literary and Arts Journal, *Eastward*, publishes diverse styles of writing, including short stories, creative nonfiction, poetry, and memoirs accompanied by arts in any medium a student desires, including pencil illustrations, paintings, and digital art that offer original insights, unique perspectives, and uncommon observations. At MHS we believe that developing skills in the arts and fostering creativity are integral parts of a young woman's education. Accordingly, we require every MHS student to submit original prose. We would like to thank every member of the student body who shared their imagination with us. This Literary Journal would not exist without your hard work. While not every short story or personal composition can be published, our editorial team has invested time into each and every work, carving rough gems into the jewel you see before you. We hope you value it as much as we do.

It feels strange for us to be finalizing our last ever *Eastward*. As seniors, we have been contributing to this publication throughout the past four years. Originally as timid freshmen and now as diligent, opinionated, well-read upperclassmen with one foot out the door. However, as we shut the lights in our cozy little editing classroom for the last time and head out for the great big world, suddenly that timidity has started to creep back in. Once we leave this safe haven of creativity and encouragement behind, who knows what awaits us? While we hope you will become very well acquainted with the voices of the incredible students of Manhattan High School for Girls, we are forever grateful that we got to contribute to cultivating them. This Journal is our legacy; we will forever appreciate MHS for giving us the opportunity to build it.

Thank you to Ms. Klahr, for her dedication and support throughout the editorial process and for all her intuitive insights throughout this journey. We would also like to express our gratitude to our layout advisor, Mrs. Szpilzinger, for her dedication to this endeavor and for equipping the student editors with the skills needed to tackle this project from best-laid-plans to lay-out-proofs. We express our gratitude to our devoted writing and art teachers, Ms. Lakritz, Mrs. Birnbaum, Ms. Benchimol, and Mrs. Neimark who model patience, process, and persistence for us daily. As always, we owe gratitude to Mrs. Friedman-Stefansky for providing her students with endless opportunities for creative expression.

*Eastward* and onward,

Your Editors-in-Chief,

Yael Mayerfeld and Aviva Notkin



# 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.



**“Don’t Forget - no one else  
sees the world the way you  
do, so no one else can tell the  
stories that you have to tell.”**

**— Charles De Lint**



# The Cracks of the Outside

By Matea Frierber

It was a late hour of the night, but one little boy remained wide awake, dreams flying through his mind and thoughts crowding his head. A couple of hours before, his mother had closed the fifth storybook of the night, and tucked him into bed. The book lay shut on the oak bookshelves, but the boy still wondered about the world far away from his family's small brick cottage in the forest, a world full of new people and new friends, new feelings and new scenery, new colors and new ideas. A world beyond his books and beyond his own vivid imagination.

He couldn't remember when, exactly, the seemingly endless adventures the cottage had offered had begun to feel quite lonely and small. As his mother read to him, his head lying on her shoulder and his small frame tucked into her side, the boy wished more and more, to reach past the books he read, past the backyard and past the far reaches of the woods, to see a world that was brimming with thrilling possibilities. Of course, he knew the rules. *We don't leave the forest*, his mother had whispered to him lovingly, time and time again, *because we're happy in our little cottage, together, you and me, reading this book right here. Why would you ever want to leave?* It was a question the boy had no answer to. He had only hope, and curiosity for what lay past the gnarled trees crowded by grass and tiny blooms, the home so familiar it felt stifling.

The boy's eyes began to droop, and his breathing slowed, the outside world painted on his eyelids.

When morning came, the boy watched the sun's rays shatter in fragments across the small stone path, and he followed the shards of light, the leaves rustling around his feet and the grass brushing his ankles. Further and further into the forest he went, until the trees that had become his favorites, and the

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# My First Snow

By Shira Eisenstein

deepest corners that had become familiar over the years, disappeared into the mass of evergreen and lilies behind him. The boy tired quickly, his aching feet slowing his eager strides. Though he could catch a glimpse of houses and shops from the distance, through the cracks between the branches, the boy suddenly wished he had not gone quite so far, and wished he felt just a little less alone.

Angrily, he pushed the tendrils of doubt away before they wrapped themselves around the little resolve that kept him walking towards the real world. Of course he would be alone, cold, and hungry, when he finally made it to The Outside. And it would be more than he could ever dream of, with bustling people and vibrant colors. So why was he sitting down under a weathered pine tree, and why was home where he wished to be instead of his dreams?

To his chagrin, tears began to stream down his dirt-streaked face. The Outside, now so much closer than he could imagine, had never felt more far away. Too scared to move forward, too determined to return home, the boy suddenly felt helplessly, frighteningly lost. As he cried quietly into the rough bark that smelled of pine and wind, the boy felt tired once more, and wished for the comfort of his own blankets and his own little cottage in the woods, and his mother's arm curled around him, holding him tight, as her soft words that became worlds in his imagination kept him warm.

Maybe one day, he would be brave enough to walk past the trees intertwined and the brick cottage, and see the storybooks come to life. But for now, as he eagerly retraced his footsteps, he found he was more than happy to return home.

# People of Note

By Basya Saperstein

There was a piano  
That I once played  
With fingers like butterflies  
Flitting quickly from key to key  
Making music that filled the room  
And filled me  
But there was one key that made me stop  
And brought the music to a grinding halt  
It just didn't work  
I pressed it again  
but no sound came  
So I played a different song  
Only to discover that  
There was another key that stayed quiet  
These were uncommon notes, to be sure  
On the edges, in the periphery  
But they were still important  
And with them not working  
The song was incomplete  
I went on through that afternoon, looking for a song  
That would work without the missing keys,  
But there was no song, from beautiful  
composition to musical nonsense  
That wasn't affected by their absence





# Shoes

By Zippora Harris

# The Shoes

By Serach Soloveitchik

“They tell me your skill is unparalleled.”

The cobbler studies the woman who has just entered his shop. Her voice is brisk and businesslike; it matches her angular face and sharp haircut. She looks like she hasn't felt joy or excitement in years.

“Well?” the woman says, rather impatiently. “Can you repair these shoes or not?” She thrusts forward an open box that holds elegant silver stilettos. The heels are cracked.

The cobbler peers calmly over the rims of his glasses. “Certainly, ma'am. If you would just place them on the counter for me... thank you. Please wait a moment.”

The woman waits with pursed lips (perfectly coated in red lipstick) as the cobbler shines a pale yellow light on the shoes. His hands, small and wrinkled with age, shake slightly as they turn the shoes this way and that. He appears to be studying the history writ in every crack of the shoes' lining, discreetly watching the woman from the corners of his eyes. For five full minutes he doesn't say a word, and all that can be heard is the sound of New York taxis honking outside and the winter wind whistling through the weathered wooden window frames of the shop.

*Thump.* The woman jumps; the cobbler has just dropped the shoes back into the box.

“No.”

The woman blinks. “Excuse me?” Her words are still brusque, but sudden nervousness has surfaced in her voice. She seems rattled by his bluntness.

“These shoes went out of stock years ago. I do not have the supplies necessary to craft them; I'll have to fly them in from Avondale. You'll have to come back another day.” He shuts the lid of the box and turns his back to the counter and the woman,

**He appears to be studying the history writ in every crack of the shoes' lining, discreetly watching the women from the corner of his eye.**

shuffling among the crates and tools at the back of the shop. The woman mouths soundlessly for a few seconds and finally lets a word escape.

“Avondale?” she says in a faraway voice. Her face is pale as a ghost.

The cobbler appears unconcerned as he walks slowly back to the counter. He has a slight limp. “Little town in the south of Maryland. Raised my family there; that’s where I get all my stock.”

The woman takes a deep, deep breath as though emerging from the depths of an ocean. “I can’t believe you can’t fix a simple shoe like this.”

The cobbler places his fingertips on the counter and leans forward slightly. The woman takes a step back.

“As I said,” he says slowly, loudly, and clearly, “I do not possess the materials. Come back another day.” He stares at the woman through his small specs.

“I can come back?” she says shakily.

The cobbler bends down, opens a drawer beneath the countertop, and pulls out a roll of tissue paper, thin and white like his hair. He wraps the shoebox in the crackling paper and places the box in the woman’s hands.

“You are always welcome here,” he replies gently.

The woman stands in frozen silence for a moment, clutching the box like a shield. The cobbler watches as her eyes flash with thoughts of another time and place. Then she turns on her heel and hurries out the door. The bell jingles a soft tune as the door closes behind her.

The cobbler lets out a breath and sits heavily on a nearby chair. With old, wistful eyes, he gazes through the window and watches his daughter trudge away through the whirling snow.



# Leah, My Namesake

By Leah Solomon

Back in third grade, my classmates and I were tasked with putting on a play based on a pivotal story in the *Torah*, the ever famous story of Rachel, Leah, and both of their marriages to our forefather *Yaakov*. I, of course, played Leah.

**The hazy figure of who my great-grandmother was evolved into a tangible embodiment of will, resolve, and leadership**

I was the obvious choice, being the only girl in the entire grade with my name. But that didn't mean I wanted to be Leah. From my childish view, she was the less critical matriarch who cried so much that her eyes were always red and blotchy; who was destined, as the oldest daughter, to marry a wicked man, the oldest son; who, in the end, married a man who did not choose her. She

was forever on the receiving end of pity and mercy. I didn't want to play that part.

I grew up with a close neighborhood friend named Lea, and we were often confused for each other. People who didn't know us laughed when we told them our names, and then used them interchangeably. And, sometimes, I liked it.

Leah was old and boring; Lea was new and fresh. Leah was biblical, a character; Lea was contemporary, a blank slate.

But a blank slate was elusive to me. On frequent visits to my great-aunt, I was reminded of where my full name came from: my great-grandmother. As time went on, tales geared towards an eager little girl evolved into developed and detailed stories. The hazy figure of who my great-grandmother was evolved into a tangible embodiment of will, resolve, and leadership.

The original Esther Leah Solomon was highly educated, strong-minded, and devoted. Going to college in a time when women were extremely underrepresented in academia and the work force and raising

an observant, Jewish family in a secular environment, she was unfazed by her harsh circumstances and was an indefatigable proponent of Torah values. In short, she was a hero.

Biblical Leah cried over her proposed marriage because it went against her ingrained values. She married a man who didn't choose her because he was the realization of the moral life she had been striving for. She, exactly like my great-grandmother, was deep-

ly connected to Torah ethics. Having the name Leah means I carry with me the struggles, challenges, and accomplishments of many past Leahs. The ability to sacrifice without sacrificing beliefs, the resilience needed to push forward despite external circumstances, and the strength of will that allows you to do anything are just some parts of the package. Lea is a beautiful name, but it's not my name. My name is Leah.



# Freedom

By Tamar Eberstark

# My Little Guy

By Mali Epstein

While keeping a pet fish for two years seems insignificant in most respects, the nine square inches Little Guy and his bowl took up on my kitchen counter were a huge part of my life growing up.

The little red betta fish had been a birthday present from my neighbor. When I first held his bowl in my hands, I was sure I would be flushing its contents down the toilet by the following week. However, when my first week taking care of it passed, and then the second and third, I grew confident in my ability to keep him alive.

I'm the middle child in my family, with two older brothers, one younger brother, and one younger sister. I love my siblings, but being sandwiched between them is a full time job. My siblings all have their own roles in the family, and it often feels like they each bring their own identity to the table. Me? I'm still trying to figure out who I want to be.

Sometimes I feel like my older brothers set the bar too high, but that I'm still expected to hurdle over it. I have high aspirations, but I doubt my capability to achieve them. I

have a classic case of middle child syndrome. Not quite old enough to be an "older kid," but too old to be a "younger kid." So I just hang around in the eye of the hurricane, in the middle of everything, but also nothing.

During my first few months with Little Guy, I left it to my father to do the only part I wasn't ready for: cleaning the bowl. In order to do this, the fish needed to be removed from the original bowl and placed in a new one. I was far too afraid of dropping him or not being able to get him into the second bowl fast enough, and so I simply refused to do it.

However, my father eventually grew tired of the task and decided that it was time for me to start doing it. As all beginnings are, it was very difficult. Little Guy dodged my gloved fingers for as long as he could before I finally grasped him. As I carefully lifted him out of the bowl, there was a sudden movement. A flash of red shot through the air.

Little Guy had jumped out of my hand.

Hands shaking and eyes filled with tears, I picked him

up with my bare hands and dropped him back into the water. I thought that was the end of him, but seconds later, he was back to swimming around in his endless circles. I was afraid that my father would be upset by the incident, and I was surprised to look up and see him smiling. He told me that he was so proud of how calmly I handled the situation. I realized that it hadn't been my fault that Little Guy jumped, but it was because of me that he was still alive.

How and when I became so attached to that fish I don't know. But there was a feeling about having something of my own, while he lived in the kitchen for all to admire, that gave me an immense feeling of pride. As his time with me stretched from the summer through the winter months, and back around again, so did my mindset on my qualification for the task of taking care of him.

However, all good things come to an end, and the same was unfortunately true for Little Guy. I walked through the door one day after school, and as I approached the counter in my kitchen where Little Guy's

bowl had sat for almost two years, I noticed that something was wrong. He wasn't making his usual circular laps around the bowl. Instead, my little red fish was floating at the top of the water. I knew what it meant. We all knew it was coming; my parents had been telling me for weeks that he was "slowing down." I just wasn't ready to accept it. But there was no avoiding it now.

Little Guy was dead. But I had taken care of him.

My betta fish was my pride and joy for two years of my life. Some people get perfect attendance awards, others make great scientific discoveries. Young entrepreneurs create businesses that change the world. While I do aspire to make a difference in the world one day, whether by being a doctor who helps people in need, or a teacher who builds the leaders of our future, I know that I have a lot to do before I get there. In the meantime, knowing that Little Guy's dreaded toilet bowl fate was pushed off due to my very own care and responsibility is enough for me.

# Ballet Lessons

By Meira Halton



# Reading Fiction: Good or Nah?

By Yocheved Miriam Landy

I'm a writer, just putting it out there. I love to write, prose and poetry. I'm constantly in my head thinking, "That back-story would make for an interesting character," or, "That situation would be a great stanza." But my most common thought process is the "what if?" of my overactive imagination. Whenever I pause in the middle of a book, I make up a continuation in my head. Other times, I add a character and watch how they change the whole plot. As I'm controlling everything, I get to learn more about myself.

Usually, when reading fiction, we're faced with a character that we relate to. They could be going through a situation similar to ours or just mirror our personality. For me, it was Severus Snape and Luna Lovegood from *Harry Potter*. While reading their stories, I watched them grow and analyzed their decision-making and values. I saw Snape choose to protect Harry because of his friendship with Lily, and Lovegood choose to continue to be her eccentric self even though she was bullied for it. In the end, I learned about loyalty and the

power of staying true to oneself, from Snape and Lovegood respectively.

Fiction doesn't only teach us about ourselves. We also learn about others, getting the chance to listen in on others' thoughts and motivations. For instance, we get to see that Nick Allen from *Frindle* is driven by the pursuit of understanding, which leads to the creation of a new word.

By reading about the motives of complex characters, we can learn about the different things that drive other people, even if they don't inspire us personally. It's a chance to learn about differing opinions and values, how others make decisions, and other things that go on in the brain that in reality we are never privy to from other people.

In fact, it's been proven that reading more fiction is connected to greater social skills. In 2006, a cognitive psychologist, Keith Oatley "conduct[ed] a study that linked reading fiction to better performance on empathy . . . tests." This is because the reader gets "the

opportunity to enter fully into other people's thoughts and feelings." With the ability to get in the characters' heads and view their perspective on life, it makes perfect sense that people who constantly read fiction are better at understanding and empathizing with other people.

Reading fiction is an opportunity for us to learn about ourselves and also encourages emotional growth. Children should be reading more fiction. Schools often push non-fiction into their syllabi in hopes that their students will learn facts about the world. However, reading fiction is a purveyor of learning empathy and should be emphasized as well.

I have seen this happen before personally. In *The Land of Stories* series, Conner Bailey, one of the protagonists, is faced

with the death of his uncle, who just so happens to be the villain. The author explores his thoughts, explaining that it was a complex issue, and that Connor had to deal with the tension between loyalty to family and opposition to villains. After experiencing a similar conflict, I found it validating to see how other people go through problems like these, too. And that is a significant benefit of reading fiction—the reader feels validated when faced with a character whose situation is similar to theirs.

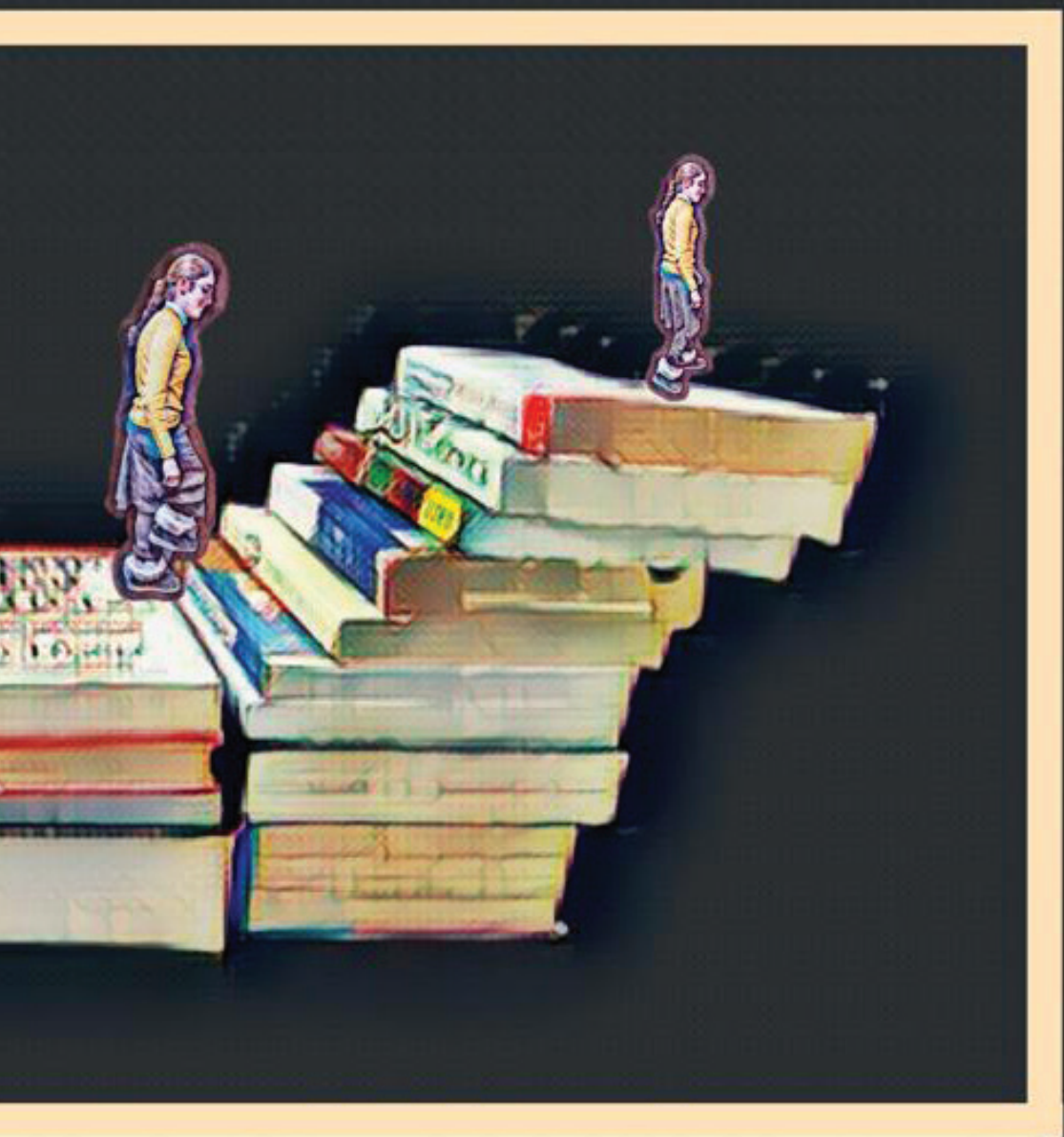
The escapism of fictional stories inspires self-reflection and sensitivity towards others. For the sake of relaxation and distraction, crack open a sci-fi novel or a thriller and enjoy the benediction of fiction.





# Bookstairs

By Batsheva Ben-Itzhak



# Caught Green-Handed

By Rikki Genack

I was crouched behind a small bush in the school playground. I bravely peeked out and spotted the tree. Daniel was far away enough from it. I took a deep breath and ran for it. By the time Daniel spotted me, it was too late. I had already slammed into the tree and screamed, “Free for all.” Everyone excitedly popped out of their hiding places. They ran over enthusiastically, but not towards me. We all stared at the tree. From one minute to the next, the normal, healthy tree became shriveled, dark and gray.

I checked my cover; it was on.

I was scared.

The nurse took one look at me and said, “This time it’s not a joke. You’re as white as a ghost.”

For the first time in all my visits to her, she called my mother right away.

“What’s going on?” my mother asked as I put on my seat belt. “The nurse said you didn’t look good.”

“A tree,” I said, “I killed a tree.”

My mother stopped the car. Cars beeped angrily behind her.

“What about your cover?” she asked. “Was it on?”

I nodded lamely.

My mother sighed.

I watched TV for the rest of the day to take my mind off “The Tree.” Later that night, my dad came home with a bag from Home Depot. He took out a bunch of mini plants and made me touch all of them with my cover. They all died. My parents shared a glance. I knew exactly what they were thinking—I had outgrown the cover. I had become too powerful.

....

**I am a murderer  
who never  
murdered, yet  
I am in jail.**

I was born with a green thumb. I'm not good at planting or anything like that. It's the exact opposite.

My thumb is green. I don't know how or why, but the first finger on my hand is the color of Mike Wazowski.

It's not just green, though. It has this power that any plant I touch dies instantly.

When I was younger, my parents had a cover made. It's like a glove but just for my thumb. It was great—it hid my Mike Wazowski thumb and stopped it from killing anything. But then "The Tree" happened and my parents and I realized that I was too strong for a little cover, so I stopped going to school. I was home-schooled instead.

As time went on, my powers got stronger. It wasn't only my thumb anymore. First, if any part of my body touched a plant, it died. That's when I stopped going outside. My parents didn't want me to kill all the grass in our backyard and neighborhood. They didn't want anyone to find out. Then, I killed plants that were already cut. Salads would shrivel in my mouth, and picked flowers my dad bought for my mom would die. The only good thing about this was free dried fruit.

My parents were afraid of what would happen if I went outside, especially with my powers increasing. They thought if I went outside, all wildlife would die.

The plants outside my house were dead even though I hadn't been out in years. It was like I was a disease spreading through the air. I mostly stay in my room now to be as far away as possible.

I am a murderer who never murdered, yet I am in jail.



# Arbor

By Miriam Landau

# Finding Meaning in the Noise

By Rivky Lamm

A shiver runs through my body as I step into the cold, dark room. I put bright green earplugs in my ears which get covered with massive black noise-canceling headphones. As I lay down on the bed of the MRI machine, the technician puts weighted heated blankets on me. They ask me if I'm comfortable. Obviously, I'm not, but I hear myself say yes. I'm told to lay super still. Someone presses a button, and I start moving into a small, dark, and cramped tube. They go out of the room. Silence. I hear a voice through the speaker, "Rivky, are you ready for us to start?" Again, I hear myself say yes, and again, there's silence. Until there isn't. All of a sudden, the machine explodes in head-splitting noises. I managed to lay there for an excruciating twenty-five minutes. The noise finally stops. I slowly readjust to the light and the quiet.

When my younger brother Naftali was six months old, he was diagnosed with Williams syndrome. Williams syndrome is a rare genetic mutation with an occurrence rate of only one in 10,000. It affects males and females of every race and ethnicity in the world. It cannot

be cured. People with Williams syndrome have all forty-six chromosomes but are missing twenty-eight genes in chromosome number seven.

When my mother first told me about Williams syndrome, she showed my older brother and I a video published by the Williams Syndrome Association. It explained, using colorful, whiteboard-style drawings, that you could think of Williams syndrome as a library.

In this library, there are twenty-three books, and each book has two copies. In the first copy of book number seven, a few sentences are missing. These sentences include vital information, such as the name of the main character and the setting. As I've gotten older, I too use this analogy to explain Williams syndrome to my friends to help them understand.

Although people who have never heard of Williams syndrome might not realize, Naftali has all the typical facial features that people with Williams syndrome have. He has gorgeous deep blue eyes that have an intricate flowery pattern. He has an upturned nose, a long

upper lip and small teeth. Although Naftali does have the heart condition that comes along with Williams syndrome, which requires yearly visits to a cardiologist, he is one of the very few kids that did not need to have surgery to correct it.

Like most children with Williams syndrome, Naftali struggles socially, academically, and behaviorally. Up until recently, he had a hard time holding a conversation, and he wouldn't look at the person while talking to them. He would stand too close to the other person and would often interrupt them with completely off-topic comments. Unlike most other thirteen year old boys, Naftali struggles with small household tasks like getting himself a snack, or choosing what to wear in the morning.

Even though he's made progress in some of these areas, I still find myself preparing my friends in advance about things he might say and do, and, despite that, still find myself embarrassed by his behavior. It's especially hard when I hear about my friends' siblings and how they can talk to them without needing to think about how they will react to what they say,

while everything I say needs to be calculated and thought out.

Because of my brother's medical concerns, Covid was a bigger threat to my family than most others. I needed to wear masks a lot longer than most of my friends. I felt out of place and different from everyone else, and I would get a lot of rude comments for still being careful. I always felt I needed to explain myself to everyone.

At the same time, many people who meet Naftali find his personality very charming. In preschool they nicknamed him "the mayor," and in my neighborhood, my brother knows every dog by name, breed, and owner's first and last name. He can meet a person once, only see them again a few years later, and remember everything that happened the last time they met.

My brother, like most people with Williams syndrome, is very in tune with people's feelings. When I come home after a hard day, I know that he will be there to offer me a hug or a kiss. When I was studying for midterms, there was a specific subject I was having a hard time with and he came to my

room with a cup of water and ice and offered me one of his favorite Pokemon cards. While it didn't help me feel less stressed about the midterm, it felt really good that he cared so much and tried to make me feel better. He always knows what to say when I need to laugh.

I am back in the observation room as my brother gets his turn in the MRI machine. For the past four years, we have been participating in a study on the brain structure of individuals with Williams syndrome. Every other year my family goes to the National Institute of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, Maryland for one week in the

summer. Siblings, like me, provide the control group for the study. The scientists compare a normal brain belonging to a sibling to a brain belonging to someone with Williams syndrome and look to see the difference in brain development.

Sometimes, having a brother with special needs feels like going into the MRI machine. It's loud and claustrophobic, and I'm anxious about what comes next. But then I remember the joy he brings to so many people, the smiles he puts on so many faces, and the impact he's had on so many lives. And then I know it's all going to be okay.



# Chocolate Chip Cookies

By Sofia Kestenbaum

The chocolate chip cookie reminds me of my great-grandmother.

The smell of warm desserts coming out of her oven,

The apron is full of flour, yet she is spotlessly clean.

My cousins and I are sitting at the white straw kitchen table

Surrounded by the long floral window drapes.

My great-grandmother smiles

as we devour everything she's worked tirelessly to bake

in seconds.

I see her smile as she watches each of her generations bond with one another.

I see the love on her face as she gives us all the presents

she handpicked for each of us.

I can still feel the thrill of putting that new bandana on.

It feels as though she is still here,

Still asking me for the latest news,

Complimenting each part of my outfit.

I see the shadow of her thick pearl necklace and matching chunky studs,

I sense the warm embrace and follow her hand waving goodbye to us

My forehead glued to the window.



# Grandma

By Ilana Dinkovitch

# Just Like Me

By Kayla Francis

My grandparents love collecting anything and everything; going through their house has become a favorite activity of mine. For a period of my life, while my house was under construction, I had actually lived in their house.

My cousins and I hang out in our parents' old cluttered bedrooms, as if they are our own bedrooms. My aunts' old beds are still made with their colorful linen. When I walk into their bedrooms, I feel like I was just sucked through a time machine straight back to 1985.

I pick up my aunt's old Barbie dolls, which have bright pink lips and bleach blonde hair. The old doll's clothing is in immaculate condition; the shiny pink somehow never faded, and not a single sequin fell off. Even the synthetic hair on the Barbie dolls is still intact; their curls somehow never lost their original form and plastic smell.

I find my mother's coloring books from her preschool years, which have a small yellow sun in the corner. It looks like the small yellow suns in the corner of my own drawings. I dig my hands through

the drawers of the rickety desk in my mother's old bedroom. They are full of beaded bracelets and bright jewelry. Friendship bracelets from her summercamp years and jewelry that she received for her Bat Mitzvah. For my Bat Mitzvah, great aunts, whose names I could never remember, gifted me shiny bracelets and earrings. It never occurred to me that my Mom also contained those memories. Her desk and shelves are filled with the same junk and clutter that occupy my own bedroom.

I creep down into my grandparents' basement. There are stacks of grandmother's sketch books, yellowed from age. The smell of dust fills my nose as I pull these sketchbooks out from tall stacks of notebooks. She dated each drawing, expressing that they were sixty years old. That seems like a lifetime ago to me. I dreamt of being a princess with big fluffy dresses in a massive pink castle. Once I found my grandmother's drawings, I realized she dreamed about that too. She was once a little girl just like me.

Knees deep in junk, I dig up camp awards that my aunts won from day camp. My own

day camp awards are filled with vibrant colored papers with similar stickers. The orange and yellow papers are now wrinkled and faded; my mom and I felt those same feelings of pride and happiness.

As I set foot into the room that used to belong to my uncle, I found a dusty guitar that was out of tune. At some point, I attempted to learn guitar too. I guess we both had dreams of becoming a big pop star performing in filled stadiums, or maybe because he grew up in the 80s, he dreamed of performing alongside rock stars. My uncle's hands must've been covered in calluses from

the rough strings. In the back of his worn down wooden drawers, I find dozens of stray guitar picks, and dust gets stuck under my fingernails as I try to dig them up.

As I tuck myself into my mother's old bed, with the washed out floral linen, I look around her room. The framed pictures on her dresser never seemed to bore me, even though I have seen them millions of times and practically memorized them. I sink into her overused mattress and stare at the cracked ceiling. The last things my eyes see before they shut are the worn blue carpet and the discolored walls.

# They Could Have Been Brothers

By Zeldy Itkin

It's cold, so cold at night. The frost snakes through the trees like poisoned hands, killing all vegetation. Frost bitten fingers, heavy limbs. Then it is hot, so hot in the day. Sticky and sweaty, swarming with vicious clouds of flies, buzzing predators. Red sunburned bodies, thirsty throats. Through it all, he waits for a glint of metal in the trees, the telltale sounds, and that rotten smell. It's a world of no compromise.

The letter came as dusk was falling, casting dancing shadows across the homey dining room. The celebrations of the previous week still linger. Bright flowers, wilted by now. A graduation cap proudly displayed upon the wall. A family sitting by the table eating a home-cooked dinner, a safe alcove away from the political chaos that overran the country. But the notice. It was in the news. Leaders appalled, the palpable unfairness, the tyrant's maniacal perseverance threw the world into shock. The letter was something that has not been done for the past eight and a half decades. Citizens were suffering from boycotts and lack of freedom. Now this. Tens and thousands fled, yet others had no choice. It was the law. The young man eating dinner turned white. The boy of eighteen with brown hair and green eyes, who loved sports and art, who had a future medical career, had to leave.

The sirens blared as the night deepened with darkness and peaceful quiet. Upon the night table lay a bouquet of flowers, a report card. The young teen lay tossing and turning in excitement. A family sleeping deeply in their beds, a contrast to the premonitions whispered in the past months. But the siren. It came suddenly. Leaders appalled, the palpable unfairness, the tyrant's maniacal perseverance threw the world into shock. The attack wasn't something that happens in the civilized world. Lost homes, family, basic necessities, all gone. Thousands fled yet some stayed behind to defend their home, their town, their country. The young man in his bed sat up determined. The boy of eighteen with black hair and brown eyes, a sports and music fan with a future business career, had to leave.

The next week, he found himself in the midst of bone wearing training. Training that would be a prelude for the difficult months to come. Fire, march, salute, repeat. Homesickness comes in waves. Home. If only he could be there. His family, his life, the

people he loves can all be gone in an instant. The future he dreamt of as a child may never come. Fear and determination are what he knows now, and then he can come home.

Soon it was time. Tearing through forests and trekking through fields and towns, all the while keeping a vigilant eye out, playing a game of tug of war. There was an ambush that day, and a flash of color flitted by in his periphery. Hearing the rustling of leaves, he turns.

Heart thundering in fear, the boy lifts his weapon. If it hits its mark, a world is destroyed.

They could've been brothers, on the opposite ends of the battlefield.

**They could've been  
brothers, on the  
opposite ends of  
the battlefield.**

# Van Life

By Reggie Klein



# I'm Just Russian

By Shaina Bober

Mama cooks fish jello and borscht. In other words, my parents are Russian. Growing up, Mama and Papa would play Russian music in the car. I didn't like Russian music and begged them to change the station but they never listened. In my mind, this was for the sake of annoying me. But I thank God every day that they tried to do so because Russian music became the story of my life. It became the thing that connects me to my childhood and what relates me to my Russian identity.

Even though I've never actually been to Russia, I've listened to the song *Moscow Moscow* so many times to the point where I feel like I've been there, strolling past the tall majestic buildings and beautiful parks and gardens, waving to all the native Russians in their fur hats and coats.

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Papa's favorite Russian song talks about childhood running away.

*Childhood childhood where are you running, I haven't had enough of you. Childhood childhood where are you hurrying, I haven't had enough of*

*you.* - Yuri Shatunov

I loved my childhood. I was born into a warm family full of laughter and hugs. The thought of my family in itself is enough to bring me a wave of comfort. On a snow day when my stubby fingers were numb from playing in the New York icy cold snow, Mama would sit me down on the couch, give me a cup of boiling hot tea with a spoonful of sugar, and listen to me as I would rant to her about my day.

I've always felt blessed to grow up in America and not in Soviet Russia. But sometimes, American children can seem almost as brutal as I imagine the KGB was. Though I adored my childhood, it wasn't perfect. Kids in my first grade class would taunt me for calling my parents Mama and Papa. They would always use the terms mama and papa when playing house during recess. They thought of it as a childish way of calling parents that only "babies" use. I'm not a baby; I'm just Russian. *Dear childhood, I can't catch you. It remains to remember with sadness, but I want you, I want you again.*

*If they tell us: "Your train*



*has gone,” we’ll simply answer that we’ll wait for another. - Verka Serduchka*

But what if there is only one train to take? There was only one reasonable option I deemed fit for my situation. To conceal it. Since I didn’t feel comfortable telling my friends that I call my parents Mama and Papa, it was a struggle every time my friends came over for a play date. “Papa, can you drive us to the park?” would come out of my mouth as, “Ummm, can you drive us to the park?” and “Thank you for dinner, Mama” would simply turn into “Ummm, thank you for dinner.” My Mama and Papa were renamed to *Ummm*. I didn’t want them to know that their names embarrassed me and I didn’t want to call them *Ummm*, but the only other train in existence was going in the wrong direction. They aren’t Mom and Dad. Those aren’t their names. *Ummm* was the best alternative.

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I grew up differently than my American friends. I’ve always known that my family was different. I have a Babushka, not a Grandma.

Babushka always made sure I ate a lot — she still does.

*Antoshka, Antoshka prepare your spoon for dinner! Antoshka, Antoshka prepare your spoon for dinner! - Vladimir Shainsky and Yuri Entin*

Babushka always fills my plate with food heaping higher than the Triumph Palace. I lick my plate clean, but she still asks, “*Shaina, why isn’t there anything on your plate?*”

The answer, “*Because I ate it all,*” doesn’t suffice. She always fills up my plate once more. I learned to let her.

During my seventh birthday party, Babushka didn’t let anyone leave the table if they didn’t finish their pizza. Little eyes darted at me like dozens of lifeless matryoshkas as Babushka, in her heavy accent, asked my friends why they weren’t finishing their food. She would tell them to sit down and finish eating before they went to get face paint. I would look away, pretending not to notice. I didn’t want my red face to reveal to Babushka that I was embarrassed of her.

They just don’t understand, I thought. The kids around me don’t know what a Babush-

ka is. In fact, they never even pronounce her name correctly; they call her *Babooshka*. I have a *Babushka*, not a *Babooshka* and not a *Grandma*. But who would understand that if I tried to explain? They wouldn't understand that you always need to finish the food Babushka gives you. Never refuse.

So I didn't explain, I just looked away.

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*And it will be alright, everything will be alright, everything will be alright. I know it, I know. - Verka Serdutchka*

Even though little me didn't know it, big me does. The pros of my heritage outweigh the cons. Growing up with Rus-

sian parents and grandparents brought me memories that kids with American parents would never have. Like singing the Russian happy birthday song: *Ya igrayu na garmoshke* (I am playing the harmonica), but mistakenly singing *ya igrayu na kartoshke* instead (I am playing the potato), sitting next to Papa as he unsuccessfully tried learning how to play *Kalinka Malinka* on the keyboard, and Babushka buying me three packs of BJ's blueberry muffins every time I come to visit since I mentioned that I liked them once.

Big me realized that Mama and Papa and Babushka are something to be proud of.





# Sledding

By Chaya Friedman

# The Musical Mathematical Approach

By Chavi Weiner

It was a cold winter night, and Shinichi Suzuki had just finished teaching his last student when a gust of wind scrambled the music sheets he had been looking at. Suddenly, seated beside him was Pythagoras. These two people played a large role in the development of music, but thought about it in two different ways.

Suzuki, a talented Japanese violinist, lived from 1898 to 1998. He related to music so strongly that he felt that learning music parallels learning a native language and therefore came up with a new philosophy to learning music. The Suzuki Method teaches music as a native language. Just like with a language where one learns to speak before reading, a child learns how to play by ear and communicate with music, only learning to read musical notes later.

Pythagoras, an ancient Greek philosopher, lived from c. 570 – c. 495 BC. He is perhaps most famous for the Pythagorean theory which is named after him. He is often referred to as the “father of numbers.” Pythagoras thought of numbers as of great importance to understanding the world around him, and he studied how numbers relate to music.

Suzuki sat dumbfounded in his chair, while Pythagoras looked around in awe, gaping at the advanced world around him. From the electricity to the technologies, he couldn't get enough until his eyes settled on the musical instruments and sheets that lay scattered around the room.

After Pythagoras introduced himself, the two started talking about music. Suzuki argued that music is a way of self-expression and thus can be taught as a native language. When Pythagoras looked at him questionably, Suzuki jumped up and explained how he tried learning German when he was older and struggled. Yet, he was

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around him.**

able to learn Japanese (his native language) when he was very young. This was because he was surrounded by that language environment. This helped Suzuki realize how important it is to start learning music at a young age. He also realized that students should first learn to produce music before learning how to read notes, the same way one learns to speak before one learns to read and write. He believed in “creative repetition, positive encouragement, and daily practice.” With an end goal to “create beautiful human beings,” when a child finished the Suzuki method, whether or not they were an excellent musician was not the main point, rather the end goal was to have acquired patience, confidence, and dedication.

Pythagoras felt intrigued by this new way of viewing music. As a mathematician, his approach to music was one of metrics. He had always analyzed it, rather than appreciated it as art and as a language that a child could understand. He started explaining the Trivium and Quadrivium system and explained how music was considered part of the math and sciences, as it is counting beats across the transmission of time.

Pythagoras explained how he had plucked strings of different lengths to experiment with the tones they produced. When some ratios of string lengths were harmonious and some were not, he discovered the physics of intervals. He went on to say that the way he sees the structure of music is with a natural tone and its fundamental frequency as well as the additional frequencies above it. These additional frequencies have a mathematical relationship; they are particular multiples of each other and thus are proportional relationships.

Suzuki and Pythagoras then both realized that their understanding of music was not complete and there was still so much for each of them to learn. Suzuki came to understand the science of the art that he loved, and Pythagoras was now exposed to the artistry and expression of the music he studied. They both agreed on the vital importance of the creative arts and that the education

of an individual requires both art and science. They realized that anyone can become a master or reach great heights when it comes to studying a craft and mastering a skill, but there is always more to learn.

They also saw the change in the times and longed for one other's world. For Pythagoras, as a Greek citizen, music was known as essential to the curriculum and every student in Greece studied music. However, Suzuki mourned the fact that the arts were no longer given that prestigious spot in the curriculum, as now instead there was a larger emphasis on math and numbers, Pythagoras's domain.

Then as Pythagoras began to take his last looks around, Suzuki stopped him and asked, "Wait, how were you able to come here?"

Pythagoras stopped and broke out into a smile, then calmly said, "It was easy. Music is timeless."



# First Lost Tooth

By Naomi Bistrizky



# Beneath the Silence

By Kayla Felman

“I didn’t mean to kill her.”

He said that again and again with the same sad look in his eyes every time. When was he going to realize that sometimes sorry was just too late?

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My mom cried for three days. She didn’t leave her room, not to make me dinner, not to wash the dishes. Then, suddenly, she stopped. She came downstairs with her hair pulled back and her eyelashes glittering with mascara. No one said a word. We acted like nothing was wrong. Just like we always did.

I walked up the stairs, looking at the perfect family photos that adorned the walls. I saw my brother’s warm eyes beaming down at me, his smile looking so genuine and real. I can’t remember when those eyes became so empty, or when that smile lost its sweet sincerity. I hurried past his photo on the wall, trying to escape the painful truth hidden in his innocent face.

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I can still recall the first time that my brother got drunk. I was fourteen years old, still living with the illusion that my family could do no wrong. I remember lying in my bed when I heard shuffling downstairs. I noticed that my brother had been coming home later recently, as if chipping away at my parents’ patience. Each day, he would push the boundaries just one inch further, pulling away right before he got burned.

Over the next few weeks, my brother turned into a shadow of himself. His eyes became hollow and his face sunken in. Every night, he would sneak out and end up stumbling through the door at three a.m. The smell of alcohol always accompanied him, traveling into my nose and spreading throughout my body. That smell penetrated my bubble of safety and comfort; it reminded me that my brother wasn’t okay. He needed help.

And yet, I still didn’t tell my parents how worried I was. I kept covering for him. I didn’t realize that my brother didn’t need protection from my parents’ scolding. He needed protection from himself.



# Tree in the Dark

By Yehudit Pinto

One night when my brother came home particularly late, I decided that I was going to confront him. I just wanted to make sure he was okay. As he fumbled over the doorstep, I called out to him.

“Zach, what are you doing?”

My brother turned around, looking startled. He didn’t expect anyone to be awake, let alone his younger sister. His hair looked ruffled; his eyes had a glazed, unfocused look. He looked so much older than seventeen, as if his secrets and pain wore him down, robbing him of his youthful innocence. Finally, after considering his answer for a few moments, he looked back at me.

“It’s fine, just go back to sleep. Don’t worry. I got everything under control.”

I don’t know why I believed him. Maybe he just said everything I wanted to hear. Regardless, I went back to sleep, letting myself slip into the illusion that everything was fine. And honestly, everything was fine. Well, until the accident came and changed everything.

It’s been a few weeks since the accident, but I remember the details perfectly. I can still see the policeman standing next to my couch — his crisp blue uniform looked so out of place against my family room’s gentle wallpaper. I couldn’t make out his words, but I could hear my mother’s piercing scream.

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gentle wallpaper**

I’ll never forget how her small body crumpled to the floor as if she physically couldn’t handle the pain. My father reached for her, but even he couldn’t fix this. He just kept staring at the wall and muttering, “It’s okay. It’s going to be okay.” He repeated it like a mantra, like if he said it enough times, it would finally be true.

“Ma’am, this is your son, right? He’s in police custody now. His blood alcohol level was .13% at the time of the incident.”

I could hear the policeman's voice but I couldn't process his words. Drunk driver. Your brother. Teenage girl. Dead. That's all I could extract. After that, I just remember wanting to run. I didn't have any particular destination in mind. I just needed to get out.

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Freshman student, Maya Lieber, was killed by a drunk driver last night. [Press this link to share your condolences with the Lieber family.](#)

I stared at this email in my inbox for hours. At the bottom of the email was a picture of Maya. Her smile was so pure; she looked so sweet and innocent. I had never been close with her, but we were on the soccer team together. She had always just been another face in the background, but now I saw her everywhere. As I walked through the school halls, I saw poster after poster of Maya's face, each with a different phrase underneath: "Take on something in Maya's memory!" or "Spread awareness of drunk driving! #do-it-for-maya." Even worse than the posters was the whispering. Whenever I walked by people in school, I would hear their voices drop low, signaling that the gossip train was starting on its track...

"Did you hear that her brother was the drunk driver?"

"Do you think he's in jail?"

"I feel so bad for her. It's so embarrassing."

I always kept my head down and walked past the comments. Sometimes though, I just wanted to scream. I wanted to tell everyone that I was guilty too. I knew that my brother's alcohol consumption had gone from a hobby to an addiction, and yet I didn't do anything to help him or stop it. If I had just told someone, Maya would still be alive.

But no, I kept quiet. And that silence killed someone.

I carried that guilt around with me everywhere. The pain and regret were like a heavy burden on my chest, pressing down on my heart until I felt like I couldn't breathe. After a few days, I couldn't take it anymore. I decided to tell my mother everything.

I started with the first time that my brother came home drunk.

I revealed how scared I had been, how I was always worried that my brother would stop coming home altogether. As I let all of my worries and fears from the past few months spill out of me, I looked at my mother's face for any sign of anger. I had expected my mom to yell at me or lecture me on how I should've told an adult right away. But, she didn't do any of that.

Instead, she just held me. She let me cry away the guilt and sit with the pain, no matter how uncomfortable or scary it felt. The hours of crying in my mother's simple and unconditional embrace allowed me to realize that somehow, healing could be possible.



# City

By Malka Ostreicher

# My Constant Green “Friend”

By Batsheva Benitzhak

I can still see my green suitcase, staring at me with its broken handle and dirty wheels. Its poor shell cracked, and its zipper dangled off. It carried my clothes, books, and comforts as I moved from my sister’s house to my brother’s house, to my friend’s house, and countless other moves over the course of two years. It walked with me on the pavement of many blocks and got shoved into many cars and aeroplanes, but still, it was my suitcase.

At the age of fifteen, I had to accept that my older brother, married with four kids, was diagnosed with brain cancer that left him a month to live. Based on the doctor’s prognosis, my parents dropped everything and moved to Israel in order to be there for my brother, his wife, and their children. Those four weeks turned into six, then eight, then eighteen months, leading to the endless moving to siblings’ and friends’ houses. During that time of displacement and uncertainty, the only constant thing in my life was my stuffed green suitcase.

Thankfully, he survived, with the help of my father. My parents are both immigrants from the Soviet Union who met and married in Israel, where they fled after escaping Communist Russia. Nearly a decade later, they moved to America to ensure that their children would have a better life than they did. Perhaps it was my father’s upbringing under a communist regime, or perhaps it was just him, but he never trusted doctors, especially when they were talking about his son.

My brother was not lucid, and acting as his power of attorney, my father refused chemotherapy and other risky treatments. I thought my Dad was going to kill my brother, and all my siblings protested my father’s decision. Regardless, he drowned out all other opinions and did what he felt was right, researching holistic treatments that could help. My brother’s sur-

**My green suitcase was no longer a symbol of my dependence and pain; it became a symbol of my strength.**

vival was nothing short of a miracle, but for me, life still had its many challenges.

Socially, it was difficult for me to bring friends to my house, and actually live a carefree, normal childhood. I often worried whether my friends who came to my house would see my mother suddenly break into sobs, overtaken by the fear of losing her son. However, I still made sure to spend time with my friends and build new friendships.

Academically, it was difficult for me to keep my grades up, but my determination to do well never wavered. There were times when my siblings would ask me why I kept going and urged me to just take a break from school. But how could they say this? It was my education and I loved school. I continued even against my family's protests, not missing a single day.

Getting out of bed every day was a struggle. Not only because I feared I was losing a sibling, but because I felt as if I was losing my whole family to my brother's cancer. The people who once comforted me were now the ones who came to me for comfort. I was forced to let go of the childhood fantasy that my parents were superhuman, and had to accept that they too feel. I stopped holding onto my suitcase as if it were the only constant aspect of my life and became my own rock.

My green suitcase was no longer a symbol of my dependence and pain; it became a symbol of my strength.

As I zipped up my suitcase, I knew that any rough terrain ahead would never break me.





# Seashell

By Ahuva Jacobson

# My Name

By Rashi Bell

“Rashi, read the Rashi,”

I look up for a second, give a quick smile, and look anywhere but at her. Do people really think they’re so smart? Did she not think that I had a billion other teachers who came up with this “brilliant” joke?

My name is Rashi. It’s a very different name that no one forgets. I was named for the French medieval commentator on the Bible. When I was younger, I loved my name. Everywhere we went, people’s jaws would drop, eyes would blink, and faces stared when they heard my name. Adults’ eyes sparkled with jealousy. They never thought of naming *their* child with such a distinct name.

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That seems all nice and wonderful, but kids think very differently from adults. As soon as I started elementary school, I got the shock of my life. My name didn’t make me cool or special; it made me strange and weird. I got stares but not in a good way— and mean comments, too. Instead of the interest in adults’ eyes when they heard my name, my classmates would give me

a confused look. Some whispered jokes about my name in front of me. I pretended to enjoy the jokes, but I didn’t. They were seriously getting old.

I especially dreaded every first day of school. The same thing happened, year after year. It didn’t help that I was one of the first in the alphabet, being that my last name is Bell.

This is how it would go:

Teacher: \*squints at the sheet, not sure if there’s a typo or something\*

Me: *Oh boy, she better make this quick*

Teacher: “Rashi Bell?”

Me: “Here!”

Teacher: glances at paper, at me, and back at the paper, confused. I sighed and waited for the questions to begin.

“Do you spell it like THE Rashi from *Chumash*?”

“Are you related to Rashi? Are you like his descendant or something?”

“Is that your actual name? Like, your *real* name? Like, not a nickname?”

I answered all the questions dutifully, but my heart slowly

broke with each one.

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At this point, I hated that my name was a joke. I hated the stares. I hated the comments. I hated that my parents gave me such an unusual name! I once loved the uniqueness of my name, but as the years passed, each whisper and insult chiseled away at my confidence and assurance that my name was something to be proud of. I constantly thought, “Why did my parents give me such an uncommon name? Why me? Why not my twin?”

I felt judged and uncomfortable from the moment I mentioned my name. People always made assumptions about me based on it. I couldn’t run away from them. I couldn’t run away from my name. It haunted me, and I dreamed of changing it.

\*\*\*

My parents spent days trying to convince me not to change my name, but my mind was made up. I wanted to be a completely new person, not

the Rashi I had been for eleven years. I convinced myself that if I could somehow drop it, I would be normal. Spoiler, life doesn’t work like that.

I tried to have people call me by my middle name, Yakira, but eventually I gave up correcting people. It became apparent that I just couldn’t get away from my name.

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After a while, I grew to appreciate my name and its originality.

“Hi, I’m Rashi. What’s your name?”

“Nice to meet you, I’m...”

“Is Rashi your real name like from the Chumash?”

“YES!” I say, my face lighting up with a smile.

Now, my name Rashi finally means something to me. I know I will get questions, comments, and stares wherever I go when I tell people my name, but I no longer care. Rashi is an expression of the person I want to be.



# Bedtime Stories

By Michali Rosenberg

# The Stranger On The Subway

By Ronit Rechtschaffen

Meredith, I like to call her. I don't know what stop she gets on at, for I get on every day on the tenth. For the past fifteen years, I have gotten on and off the same train at eight a.m. and five p.m. I became acquainted with most of the consistent passengers, the same-car-every-day type of people. Most of us get off at Grand Central because the business district is there. Some of my coworkers are part of that bunch.

Some of us on this train are in business attire, your typical blue-striped shirts pressed black blazers and uncomfortable oxfords. Then there are the construction workers, they generally get off at a stop before mine. In the morning they are wearing clean casual clothes but when arriving back at night the smell of concrete and not yet dry paint follows them. These are people I like to call "typicals." Every morning we greeted each other, and every evening we complained about our work.

One day, there was someone I didn't recognize on the train. She was an old lady whose years had started tearing her down, but she looked strong enough to hold herself up. She had a cane that was not of necessity. Her white hair was pulled into a bun and her bright blue eyes held a sad sort of gaze that looked like she lived through a thousand years of hardships. Of course, there were typically strangers on the train, but they would come and go as the days do. Not Meredith though.

Before I knew it, a month had passed and she had not spoken a single word, but we had become acquainted with each other's presence. On a particularly warm day in March, I went up and introduced myself,

"My name is Mr. Lamphrey, but you can call me Jack."

I stuck out my hand in hopes that she would shake it and greet me back. Instead, she turned away from me with a look of disdain

**Before I knew it, a month had passed and she had not spoken a single word, but we had become acquainted with each other's presence.**

and replied,

“My name is none of your business and you can call me so.”

I sat back down in my seat defeated. So I just continued referring to her as Meredith.

Fifteen years later, the train had become less of a community and more of your average train car. My coworkers either quit or retired, and there were about four of us left. Meredith’s strong standing personality started to fade, and with it, she did too. I would find her mumbling to herself sometimes, and she looked frailer, older. She no longer was the “mystery lady.” She was now just your average crazy old passenger. I, out of nostalgia, took the same car even without the community.

One day as I walked into the train station, something felt off. I couldn’t figure it out because everything seemed fine. The train station had its normal smell of trash, rat poison, and different perfumes. The train pulled to a screeching halt. I boarded car number four. *She* was missing. I figured she may have just decided not to ride the train that Monday, but a week and then three passed and I still saw no sign of her.

My curiosity turned into worry. She may have died, I thought to myself. I did not know her name or anything about her, so I was not sure how to find out. I ended up going through newspaper obituaries and wondering if I would find a picture of her, and hoping for the opposite. I figured, when I couldn’t find anything, that she had just disappeared. It became even more evident that the old lady known to me and my friends as Meredith was not returning when, for the first time, I noticed that the train seat she had occupied for the past seventeen years had now become occupied by a stranger whom I had no desire to get to know.

On the way to work that day, I took car seven and on the way back it was car two. There was no more purpose or meaning to car four.

One day in late June, while I was eating my breakfast which consisted of poached eggs on toast, a hot coffee and cinnamon-filled oatmeal, I suddenly felt a curious tug to flip to the obit-

uary section of the newspaper I was enjoying. On the page there was a picture... of someone I recognized from my past. It was Meredith.

Anne Lee Maxwell

age: 87

“Loving mother, wife and grandmother”

No mention of her legacy on the train. No mention of how she ignited a burning curiosity in me about who she was.

I began to cry. Tears of sadness for a memory that had been lost, tears of happiness from all the good times. Like Anne, I had to move on.

I hopped on car four for the last time, deboarding at 42nd street. I went to my boss, and let him know that I quit. Arriving back at the station, I stepped onto the first train I could catch. I would, too, leave my own mystery.

When asked my name I would counter:

“Well, that is none of your business and you can call me so.”

Within a month I became a regular. Nobody knew my destination.

I wonder what people called me.



*Seder*

By Ellie Trapedo



# Control

By Lily Perla



# Nothing Left to Learn

By Aviva Notkin

Fridays were busywork days. The seniors' focused train of thought had long since left the station, and likely wouldn't be returning before Monday morning. This course was barely even a class; it was mostly a senior lecture series designed to keep us at our desks for an extra forty minutes. Today as the sun rose on the north-facing window of the twelfth-grade-girls' class at 8:30 a.m., the air was a-buzz with end of the week gossip and weariness, teetering on edge of boredom. It was a second semester Friday, after all. College acceptances had come and gone, and the senior trip and valedictorians had long since been determined and selected. As there was nothing left to compete for, a friendly sense of lazy camaraderie had long since befallen the grade.

The cross-desk shouts hushed down into quiet murmurs when our elderly teacher slowly shuffled into the room, and the decibel level of the class remained that way for the first fifteen minutes of the lesson. She taught. We listened. Three girls took notes, five went to the bathroom, and six shared homemade cookies baked by Eva the night before instead of doing the homework.

When her third attempt to quiet the classroom failed, Mrs. E just shook her head and continued her spiel. It wasn't until the sixth girl got up to "use the restroom," that she objected.

"I know it is hard to believe, but I was once a young girl just like all of you."

She finally raised her voice, making the class jump, as it was a surprising tone coming from the usually tranquil woman. We braced ourselves for the inevitable lecture about behaving, even with one foot out the door.

"As some of you know, I was not born in this great country. When I grew up, in 1967, I don't know if you learned the history, we were teetering on the outbreak of a war. The Six-Day War."

**The little  
woman's spirit  
seemed to  
inhabit so much  
more of the  
space in front of  
the classroom.**

The commotion quieted down, as her voice began to shake. Everyone wanted to hear where she was going with this.

“While it was chaos outside, we carried on as normal teenage girls. We went to school, gossiped, and felt as if we owned the world.”

Oh here we go again, and our attention spans slowly drifted away.

“That was until they started mandating that at the beginning of every class, when a new teacher walked in, the young women would exchange a bracelet with a key attached. We all knew the key opened a cabinet attached to the wall.”

Her voice shook as she spoke, recovering everyone’s curiosity, assumedly relieving a painful memory that she had kept locked away for decades.

“In the cabinet were cyanide pills.”

The grade sat up simultaneously as Mrs. E’s voice began to break and she looked down, not meeting the class’s eyes. Even the slowing sound of shuffling papers seemed to echo too loudly across the stillness.

“We knew a war was coming, we knew we were close to the borders, so the city of Jerusalem decided that if we were invaded, it would be more ideal to take the pills than suffer at the hands of the enemies.”

You could hear a pin drop.

It was silent for the rest of the class, as every single girl stared at the space behind Mrs. E. The little woman’s spirit seemed to inhabit so much more of the space in front of the classroom, transforming from victim to venerable leader. Her previously doddery movements turned deliberate. She seamlessly continued on, connecting her tale to her history lecture as if it was just another trivial anecdote. I still didn’t watch her. Not because I wasn’t listening, but because I couldn’t help imagining sitting in her city. With her class. With that locked safe on the wall.

The next week, as finished homework essays were passed to the front of the classroom instead of fresh baked goods, Mrs. E didn’t comment.



# Babby Preparing for Parsha Class

By Rachel Diamond

# Twins are Different People

By Eliana Giloni

I've always been a twin, since the day I was born. It's probably the most interesting thing about me, and definitely a good conversation starter. Without fail, whenever I tell someone I'm a twin, they ask the same few questions.

"Do you two get along?" they scrutinize. When I was in preschool, my siblings and I found many ways to entertain ourselves in the long afternoons after we came home from school. One day, my twin and I decided to make an obstacle course. We took the cushions off the couch and used chairs so we could jump from one place to the next around the living room. We started jumping and running around, going faster each time we got to the start. After going around many times, I decided that my twin was going too slow. I moved to go in front of her.

I always was like that, doing what I wanted, always expecting her to just let it go. This time, she yelled at me to stop. When I yelled back that "she was a slow-poke" and I wanted to go faster, she did something I would never have expected.

She bit me.

Lets just say, I had a bite size mark on the top of my back for a year after that.

"Do you share friends?" they probe. "Can you go away?!" Those are the words spoken every time one of us has a friend over. My twin will be hanging out with someone, and because we're in the same grade, I usually know them, so I'll stop by her room to say hi. "Hi" turns into five minutes of talking. And then five more. Until she finally tells me to *get out of her room*. The same happens when I'm the one with the friend over. Once in a while when we both have friends over, we all hang out together. But mostly, we keep to ourselves.

"Do you like dressing alike?" they interrogate. Just like every year, when Purim started getting closer, my family started trying to find ideas of what to dress up as.

"Let's be Care Bears!"

"No, that's stupid!"

"How about chefs?"

"That's so boring!"

On and on we went until finally everyone decided to just do their own thing that year. My older sister decided

to dress up with a friend like a farmer, and my dad decided to be a leprechaun since Purim fell on St. Patrick's day. My mom didn't want to dress up. After much deliberation, my twin and I decided it would be cute to play into us being twins and dress up as Thing One and Thing Two from *The Cat in the Hat*.

Usually, we hate matching, but we thought this time it would be fun. What's a better day to be topsy turvy than Purim? We got Thing One and Thing Two shirts, blue tutus (when I accidentally only bought one and I wanted it we argued over who would wear the old one), red leggings, and cute blue fluffy scrunchies to imitate the Things' blue hair. Twin One and Twin Two.

"Are you identical?" they inquire. With my dark hair, my twin's blond hair, my tan skin, hers pale, and the fact that I'm

a full head taller, still people don't remember which twin is which. I had an old neighbor that would call both me and my twin EliShana. My name being Eliana and hers Shoshana, he figured combining our two names would get him out of trying to figure out who was who. It's not that he couldn't tell us apart; it's that he couldn't remember if the tall, dark one was Eliana or if the short, blond one was. So, he continued to call us EliShana to make it easier for himself. Whenever I see him around town, he still calls me and my sister by that name, even when we're next to each other. Even now.

EliShana.

Thing One, Thing Two.

"Can you go away?!"

"So" they inquire, eyes locking, "Do you like being a twin?"

CHILDHOOD  
RECONSTRUCTED





# First Party

By Yehudis Halton



# Return from Afghanistan

By Eliana Schwartz

It was drizzling. He had an umbrella, but he couldn't take it out. He wasn't allowed to move. Trapped in formation, third column, fifth row, he waited. Frozen in time. It was the first time he was in America in five years, and that had only been for a month. He hadn't *really* been home for ten years.

He had a wife and two children that he had only seen on Face-time and Skype, and only when he had wifi, which wasn't often. Serving in the U.S. Air Force was a hard job. One of the rules is that when soldiers return from wherever they were working, this time Afghanistan, they had to stand in formation until a family member or a friend taps them on the shoulder or hugs them. And so, he stood there, among dozens of his fellow soldiers, waiting.

As the wind smacked his stubbled cheeks, he thought he heard footsteps. He stiffened. Could it be them? Would he know if it was? What did they really look like? He knew exactly what his wife, Lucy, looked like, of course, but what about his kids, Ryan and Carley? Were they tall or short? Did they have some of his features? Did they care about him?

He heard a squeal before he saw the source of it. It was a little girl. She hurtled herself towards the soldier on his left, Nancy. Nancy hugged her back. He recognized the girl as Nancy's niece from the picture Nancy kept in her breast pocket and always pulled out to show her fellow soldiers. Nancy was free to go.

He suddenly felt a bit lonely, even though there were numerous other soldiers waiting to be tapped out too. A few hours passed. None of the soldiers near him were tapped out either, though he heard shrieks of delight from rows further down, so he assumed there were plenty of fellow comrades who were tapped.

Just as he began to feel comforted that he wasn't the only one waiting for his family, a little boy crashed into Darek, the soldier on his right. Darek's face broke into a large grin as he lifted the boy and spun him around. He felt his jaw drop. Hard, cold-shouldered Darek? Ten years in Afghanistan and he never saw the guy crack a smile. He supposed that every soldier had someone back at home that perhaps they didn't talk about out of fear of the home-sickness overwhelming them.

The day continued with soldiers all around him being tapped out by family and friends. Terry, Jonothan, Audrey, and Sophia were all welcomed home by various relatives. By 4:00, Ben met his son for the first time, Grace's fiancé re-proposed in front of everyone, and Phoebe's sister brought all the nieces and nephews.

Were they not going to come? What happens if no one tapped him out? Would he continue to stand there, alone?

It wasn't the waiting that bothered him. He had waited for hours in the camps in Afghanistan. It was the flashbacks that were the worst. The smell of blood, the sound of a gunshot. The look of an innocent little boy's face as he watched his father fall to the ground, never to rise again.

The rain had stopped. The sun was setting. And then, he was the last one left waiting, hoping. Wondering if they would come.

A stubborn tear slipped out of the corner of his eye. He didn't move to brush it away. He was a proud soldier, a loyal fighter, and he wouldn't break procedure. He would wait for someone to tap him out of his statue-like state.

It was 5:17. By 5:30, it would be dark, and he would be stuck there in the dark, still waiting.

All of the sudden, he heard a car engine. He didn't dare look, the fear of his dashed hopes combined with the instinct to follow the commands of his captain, keeping him still.

"Dad?" he heard a voice call. The sound of a slightly high-pitched voice of a not-yet teenager penetrating the silence of nightfall. "Daddy!" came the high-pitched voice of a little boy. Then a little body threw itself at his legs. Looking down, he met the wide brown eyes of his son. "Ryan!" he managed to choke out before the sobs overwhelmed him; he hugged his little boy tightly before he felt Carley wrap her arms around his legs.

He lifted his head and met the familiar shock of green eyes. There she was. "Lucy" he managed before the world turned blurry again and tears fell. She nodded and laughed while tears streamed down her face.

"Welcome home, Steve. Welcome home."



# Bouquet

By Rina Gloni

# Girl on Paper

By Nechama Friedman

The doors close from letting the rush hour commuters on. I'm here, witness to the mess of bodies scrunched together for the sake of getting home. You can't be sure they're all people because you can't see all the faces. Lots seem to like light-up rectangles that keep their faces out of view. Lots like paper-stacked rectangles that they turn and stare at and turn. And some just stare into space with white props poked into their ears. I wonder what it's all for. What they all do. The objects, and their owners. After two weeks of being displayed on this train's wall, I've learned a lot.

I've learned that I'm a person too. I know because sometimes I catch my reflection in people's eyeglasses when they glance at me. Sometimes I see myself in the selfie cameras of tired girls who slouch in front of me. And sometimes I catch similarities between them and me. The girls usually don't see many themselves, but some of their eyes say they hope one day they will be like me. It feels nice to be appreciated, nice to be looked up to. But then there are some people who squint their eyes at me like they're disappointed, and I don't know why.

A man settles in front of me, half blocking my view, luring me back to the present. That's of no use, pulling me out of my thoughts, because I have nothing to do but sit here. And his poise-postured back is making it difficult for me to do my job of being seen.

We ride and ride, seeing black throughout the stops and through all the windows. I enjoy a quiet train. But it will stop soon. It will stop moving, and it will stop being quiet. I anticipate the attention I'll be thrown. I get so much that at this point it's become an entitlement. The minutes go by, and when it's time for the doors to open, the people go by. They go in. They go out. So many people.

I am a person, but I don't think I'm like them. They're rushing,

**They have so  
much to see,  
and I'm here  
only to be seen.**



# Coloring Book

By Ava Nissanov

busy and eager. They have so much to see, and I'm only here to be seen.

Turbulent noises fade in quickly to the scene as people swap the spaces they occupy. I'm still shortsighted from the action since I guess the man in front of me has a long way home. He doesn't plan on getting up to allow me a peak of the new crowd. Although he shifts over to make more room for the endless number of additional ongoers, only one more can fit on the bench.

I see just enough to notice two girls arrive. I'm always happy to see girls! They're usually nice to be around. One is lugging four fat books in her arms, her face framed by loose hair streaming out of a ponytail. Pretty. The second one has a smile on and sways in a light movement as the train starts again. The ponytail girl nearly drops her books at every blunt stop. Her friend is glad she packed lightly.

I'm keen on what they'll say about me. I patiently observe while I wait for their observation.

"Hey that's that actress," the second girl nods at me, despite her accessible hands.

"Hmm. She's pretty," the ponytail girl admires wistfully.

"No, she's fake."

The brief compliment crashes into the contempt of the girl with the now-fading smile.

"I guess," says the other. "That's a shame."

The two stare at me, projecting questioning expressions. I was once confident I'd please them, but these girls confuse me. They are curious but also concerned. I don't understand why. I'm just a girl on paper. Isn't it a dream to see someone this beautiful?

Three stops later they're gone, and I'm glad. I just want to leave their reviews behind.

# Leo v. Boyen Laboratories (2023)

By Tova Berger

“How’s Leo?”

“Still sedated, but we’ll know soon. I’m pretty optimistic about this, Professor Boyen.”

“I’m happy to hear. I’ll be waiting in the office.”

Professor Boyen returned to his desk and sat there nervously. The clock above his head read 3:56 p.m.; fifty-six minutes after the operation ended. When would Leo wake up? His phone buzzed, startling him.

“What is it, Dr. Helung?”

“Project MALS is a success! I repeat, A SUCCESS! Leo can speak!”

Professor Boyen fell back into his chair and his face broke out into a smile. He hadn’t realized how fast he had been breathing.

“I knew we could count on you, Dr. Helung. Can I come see him?”

“Of course! His speech isn’t perfect, and we’ll need to hire a speech therapist to work with him, but I think you’ll be very pleased.”

\*\*\*

“Prof-f-fessor Boy-yen, I c-c-can’t thank you en-nough,” Leo said. “I’m the f-first of m-m-my species to be able to s-speak, I’ll b-be able to expr-ress myself and be unders-stood...” His voice trailed off as tears filled his eyes.

“Leo, you have no idea how much I appreciate that sentiment,” replied Professor Boyen. “We worked so hard to get IACUC approval for this project; your validation is invaluable to me. And of course, we’ll find you a speech therapist who will get rid of your stutter in no time.”

**Amicus briefs  
poured in  
from around  
the country,  
philosophers  
and animal  
rights advocates  
equally invested  
in the outcome.**



# *The Warmth from Within*

By Rasi Hecht



“Leo,” said Dr. Helung, “it’s time you take a rest. The operation was very taxing on your body. We’ll come see you again later.”

As Helung and Boyen walked away together, they turned to face each other with confused looks.

“Did you also notice something strange about Leo?” asked Dr. Helung. “He seems to understand English better than he did before the operation. As far as I know, he had no additional exposure.”

“I noticed that, too,” admitted Professor Boyen. “I’m hoping it only appears that way because he can speak. Maybe he understood this way before, but couldn’t express it.”

“Why do you hope that? What happens if he suddenly did acquire more understanding?”

Professor Boyen stopped walking, his face a little pale.

“Well, the DNA you inserted into his genome contained a large portion of junk DNA. In other words, we couldn’t entirely isolate the speech gene because the Cas9 recognition site was a little farther away. We didn’t think the rest of the DNA actually coded for anything, but...”

“But what?”

“We may have inadvertently discovered the gene for human intelligence.”

Dr. Helung didn’t quite understand the implications of this. But Professor Boyen knew. He knew, and he was terribly afraid. This was exactly what he promised the IACUC would not happen. What was he supposed to do now?

He decided to ignore the problem.

\*\*\*

“Professor Boyen,” Leo said one day, “I can’t thank you enough for everything you have done for me. Listen, I barely st-stutter at all anymore!”

“You’re right, Leo. I’ve been paying close attention. One more week of therapy and your speech will be perfect!”

“Just one more week? R-really? Oh, wow! I can’t wait to go show my family what I can do! Thank you Professor Boyen, thank you!”

Professor Boyen gave him a funny look. Then he turned and left the room.

“Dr. Helung, we’ve got a serious problem on our hands,” related a frantic Professor Boyen over the phone.

“What’s the matter? Is Leo not well?”

“Oh, no, he’s very well. A little too well. And he thinks he’s going home next week.”

“Hmmm, that does sound like an issue. Oh! Here’s an idea: let’s build him a habitat that’ll be just like his old one. We’ll even stimulate lions for him to interact with. We’ll explain to him that because he’s part of an experiment, we can’t send him home just yet, but he should be comfortable.”

“That’s a great idea! Can you get on that? I’ll let him know when I see him tomorrow.”

\*\*\*

“AN EXPERIMENT! What do you mean, an experiment? Is that all I am to you? Professor Boyen, I thought you were kind enough to share your gift of speech with other creatures. But no, you’re just like all other humans, self-centered and cruel.”

“Leo, you must understand. Of course, I care about you. But we can’t let you roam the wild. We don’t know what could happen. You’re not a normal lion anymore. You’re a human with the strength of a lion. We can’t let you go.”

“Okay,” said Leo with a mischievous look in his eyes. “I won’t go. I’ll follow all the rules. And I’ll make sure you follow them, too.”

Professor Boyen left the room feeling unsettled, certainly, and perhaps a little nervous. But he had no idea what was coming.

“I said I would make sure you follow the rules, and false imprisonment is against the rules. Let me go, or pay the price.”

\*\*\*

Leo v. Boyen Labs moved through the courts with record speed. It wasn't long before the case came before SCOTUS. Amicus briefs poured in from around the country, philosophers and animal rights advocates equally invested in the outcome.

Leo's lawyers explained that as a result of Professor Boyen's lack of responsibility in working with CRISPR, the definition of man needed to be expanded. Dr. Jane Goodall testified that through her work with chimpanzees, she discovered the difference between man and animal to be "not in type, but in magnitude."

Boyen's lawyers explained that Leo was not a person because he had the strength of an animal and therefore did not deserve *habeas corpus*.

And then it was over. Professor Boyen sat with bated breath as he listened to Chief Justice Roberts announce the court's decision. After that, he silently got up and exited the courtroom.

"Well, what happened?" asked a desperate Dr. Helung.

"We're not allowed to do these experiments anymore. Raises too many philosophical questions. CRISPR Cas9 is outlawed, and CRISPR 2.0 can only be used for curing genetic diseases."

"And what about Leo?"

"Leo has to go."

# It's Just Like Riding A Bike

By Baylie Habib

I've driven a few times before. But only in a parking lot and with my dad. So, I finally convinced my grandmother to let me drive her car for a few blocks. My first time driving on a road.

My foot is outside the car tapping in anticipation to finally *do* this. As the oldest, sometimes you just need a place to escape, and the freedom to go wherever you want, whenever you want. I guess that's why I am so desperate to get on the road so quickly, to finally get that independence I have been longing for.

As we are pulling out of the driveway, I start gripping the steering wheel tightly to stop my hands from shaking.

*I find it funny that I am thirteen years old and I'm first learning how to ride a bike now. My father has tried to teach me how many times. It just never stuck. I never got the hang of it. But I never really felt the need to learn until now. During Corona, my sister, cousin and I would go at least three times a week to my grandmother. They would ride a bike and I would ride on my scooter. It was a funny sight, a*

*thirteen year old on a scooter. I guess this is what prompted me to learn. Lazing at home all day with nothing to do during quarantine gets you to try new things.*

*Which is why I am taking the effort to learn how to do this.*

My Bubby is in the seat next to me. She continues talking to me like everything is normal and she seems totally relaxed; that is making me calm down and feel more focused. Balancing the steering wheel, brakes and gas is way harder than it looks, but you can't learn how to drive unless you are in the car. Just a little step on the gas and I feel like I am speeding. I'm shaking at the thought of someone else coming into the street and I hit them.

*My sister, Esther, is thirteen months younger than me. She is the braver and more adventurous sister. She had already learned how to ride a bike a couple years back. She had the latest and greatest new bike. It was a teal blue bike that said "TREK" and she's added some bike accessories like a phone holder, lock, and bell. All the bike shops were already sold out of it, so she purchased the*

*last one. We went on a quiet street and put this cool new blue bike in front of me.*

*She said that she would hold on, and to “just start pedaling and it will take you.”*

*So that’s what I did.*

*One foot in front of the other, one foot then the other foot, just repeating the same motion.*

I am not sure what to do with my hands. Whenever I see my parents drive, they are constantly turning the wheel an inch or so back and forth, so I am constantly fidgeting with the steering. But I know I have to keep my steering wheel straight. That is my one job. That is what will keep me in the middle of the road.

*I am too focused and distracted to feel her grasp let go of the bike, but she did let go. I am pedaling and pedaling. I keep on twisting and turning. Keeping my balance is the biggest challenge for me. I am gripping the handle bars to keep the bike straight. That is the key to keep me in the middle of the road.*

I am grinning from ear to ear. I can see all of my neighbors waving and making me

feel as cool as ever. With every block I drive, my smile grows. I am having trouble sitting still in my seat, my body suddenly has tons of energy like I have the ability to do everything. As I keep driving, I start to balance all the different aspects. If I step on the gas this much, I’ll

**As the oldest,  
sometimes you  
just need a place  
to escape, and  
the freedom to go  
wherever you want,  
whenever you want.**

start speeding. If I break like that, I’ll short-stop. If I take the turn too early, I’ll end up on the sidewalk. I take a few short stops, but that is not too bad.

Except when I realize we are approaching a stop sign.

I have never been to a stop sign.

When do I start pressing the

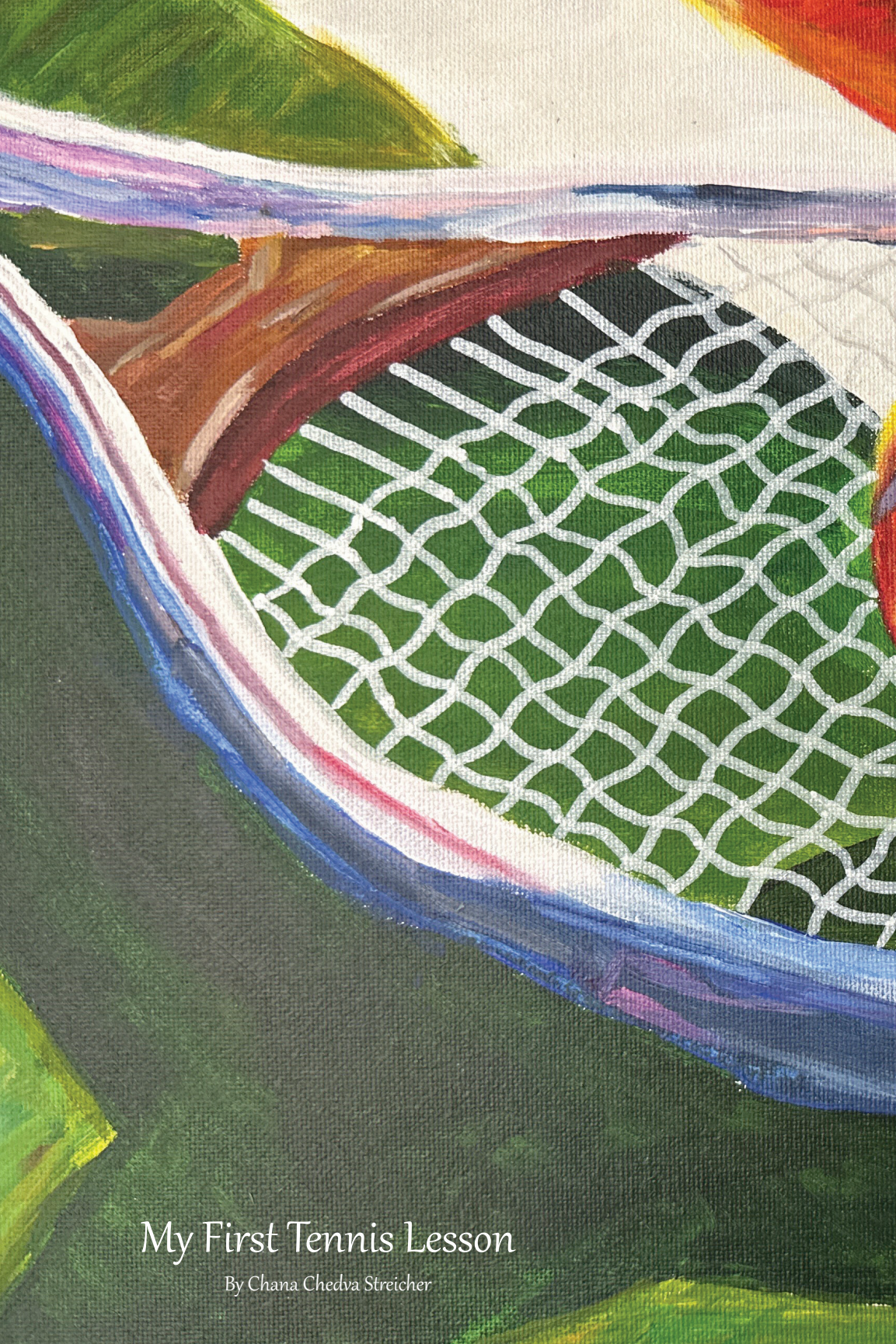
brakes? How long do I have to stop for? So, I ignore all the questions and just run the stop sign.

*After stopping and starting a few more times, I finally started to feel a breath of air on my sweaty palms. My cheeks start to turn rosy and my eyes are sparkling with excitement. In this moment all I care about is me and my accomplishment. I finally learned how to ride a bike. While turning the corner, swelling with fulfillment, I hear a faint voice behind me calling*

*my name. Stupidly I decide to twist my head round and all of a sudden, I feel my bike come to a halt. I crashed right into a tree. I broke the bike. My sister's new big, blue, and most importantly, sold out bike. That sense of satisfaction disappeared right then and there.*

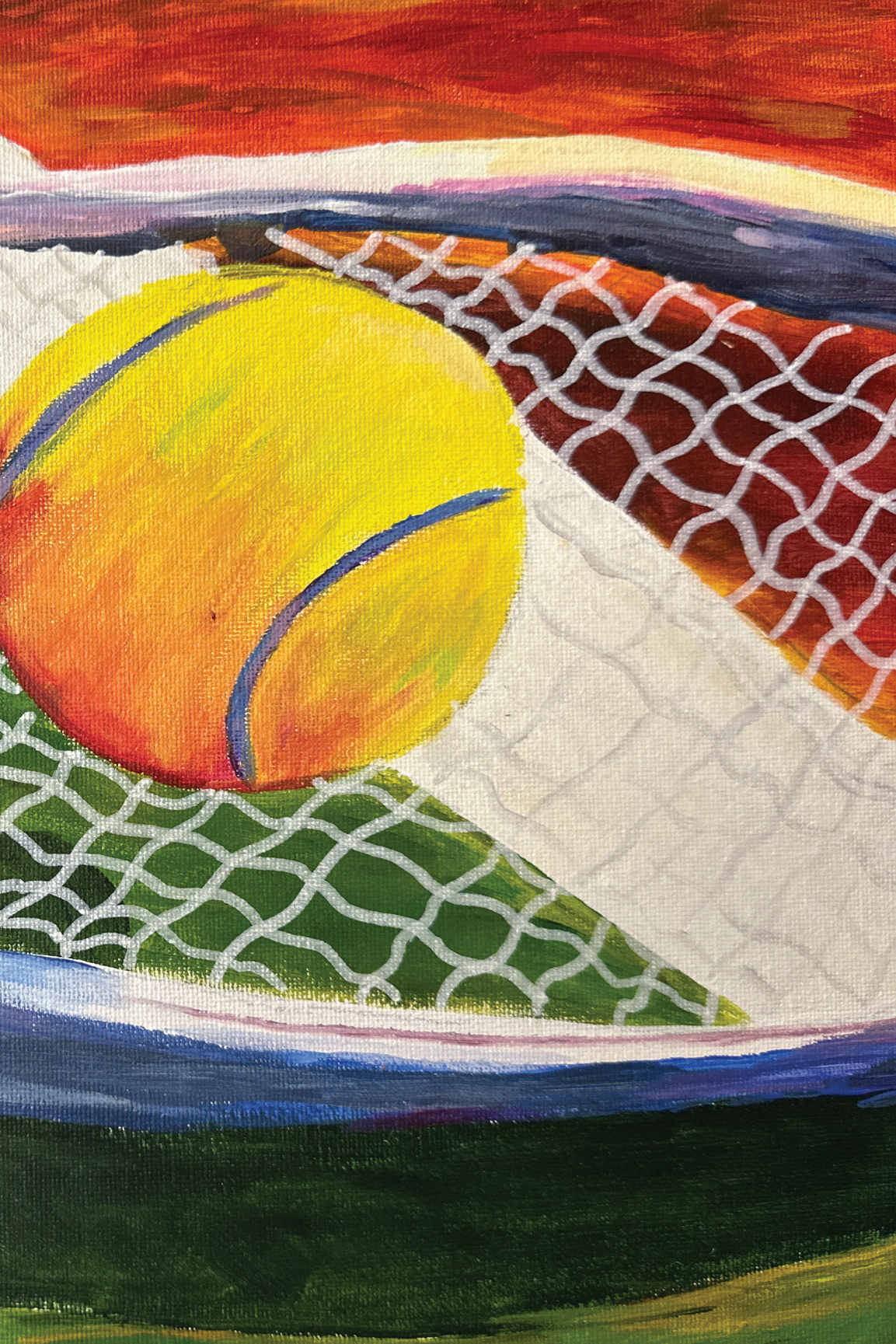
*I knew this would be my first mistake of many.*

My first illegal mistake while driving. I know there are many more mistakes to come.



# My First Tennis Lesson

By Chana Chedva Streicher





# Bring Me Home

By Sarah Pinczower

I wish to live forever in this place, severed between heaven and earth, mind and feeling, space and time. With outstretched arms and a fresh breeze, I'll swing in the air between dreams and reality, where infinite imagination and longing of the soul unite.

Leave me where my heart feels welcome, at peace, in the dark bristled branches and cool, fresh stone vibrating with the warmth of life. Keep me to gaze at the perfect blue sky, where peace has made its home. Some say that the sky cried as it filled with smoke so many years ago, or wept at the missiles it hosts. But I'll say, the smoke of our sacrifices will fill it once more, and the heavens welcome the hopeful eyes that look to it.

Shelter me between the twisted roads and paths that lead to the heart of it all, and forget me there. Some say this is where we walked in shackles to exile. I'll say this is where we will once again travel to unite our nations. Keep me in the alleys of Your city, where some may hear screams and gunshots, But I'll hear young boys wrapped in white cloth, in their fathers' arms, and the stamping of feet as they twirl in joy, to celebrate eternity. This is the dust of my Fathers, so protect me in the gates of Your city. Where some may speak of persecution, I'll say they mark the gates of Heaven.

**Keep me to gaze  
at the perfect  
blue sky, where  
peace has made  
its home.**

Amidst the shattered ruins, I find solace; where blood and tears have stained the earth, and where terror once reigned, hope and resilience keep their roots. We'll witness the laughter of children as they play in the sunshine, under the clear blue sky, on the same cobblestone roads, through the twisted alleyways, and to the cracks of the wall that keeps our faith. And there, old men will look on with the wisdom of years, and old women will gaze at the shining eyes of young idealism.

So, leave me within the cracks and stones of Your wall, for some say it's been twice destroyed, but I'll say it will once again return. And when it does, we will dance in winding circles, pointing to the center, proclaiming that it was *my* G-D who accepted my tears and frustrations, whom I know and recognize, from my place. The One who embraced me, when I could not do so for myself.

And then, when we listen closely, to the stillness of the city, we will hear the echoes of children and the tears of gratitude, and the lifted eyes of trust and we'll drink in the songs they sang years back and the haunting melodies of history. And then, we'll dance our hearts away, in a city that claims its scars of endurance, holding on to these echoes, for we have achieved eternity.



# Yom Yerushalayim

By Noa Abehassera

# Editors' Afterword

Dear Readers,

It is safe to keep untold stories inside, just as it is safe to keep a boat docked at bay. To expose yourself to the seas, a sea that can demolish your most cherished vessel, seems daunting. For fear of drowning in self-doubt is always a possibility. But a boat, a boat was never meant to stay anchored to the shore. A boat was made to be taken by the helm, and sailed into the depths of the sea. Meant to command the wind to the corners of the earth.

When we first sat down with this Journal, we were intimidated. But this community helped us transform stories in the wind into what you are now holding in your hands. The authors of these incredible works have allowed their thoughts to set sail into the world, and graciously welcomed us on their journeys.

To our dear writers, thank you for allowing your stories out into the waters, where they are not safe. And dear readers, we thank you for keeping them afloat, embracing them, and guiding them home. Thank you for joining us on the journey of this Journal, and we hope to see you again soon.

*Eastward* and onward,

Your editors

Yael, Aviva, Ariella, Eliana, Rasi, Chaya,

Rochel Leah, and Meira

**“Boats that stay in the  
harbor are safe, sweetheart,  
but that’s not what boats  
were built for.”**

**— Fredrik Backman**



Shana Feder, '23