

Celebrating Writers and Writing in our Communities

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Celebrating Writing in our Communities: An Anthology of the Winning Entries of the Redwood Writing Contest 2018

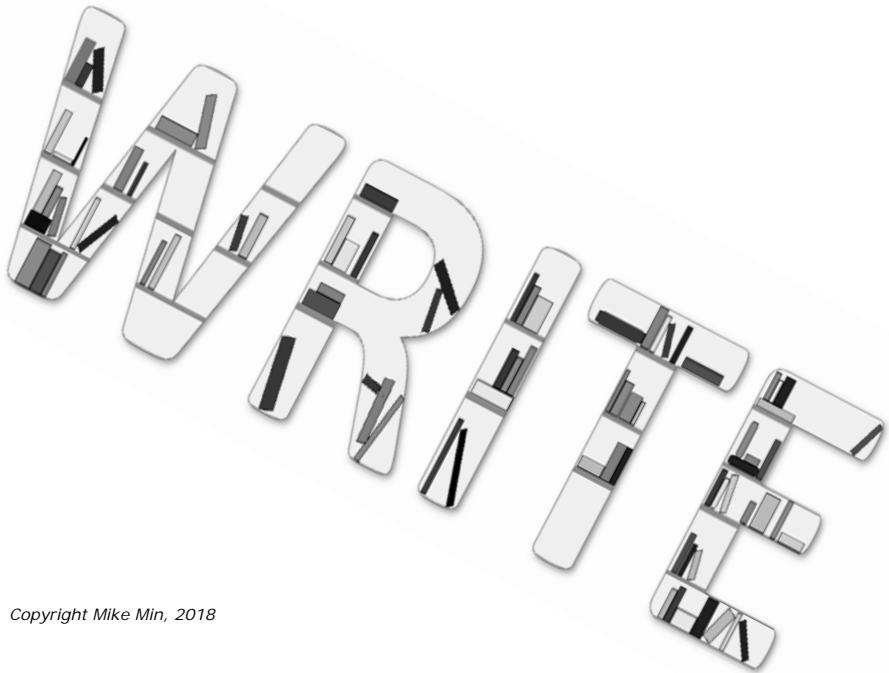
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Celebrating Writers and Writing in our Communities



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**An Anthology of the Winning Entries of the
Redwood Writing Contest 2018**

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About this Anthology

Celebrating Writers and Writing in Our Communities is an anthology that includes the award winning works of students grades 3rd through 12th in the surrounding Humboldt County area. The journal is available in both digital commons at digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/ and as a printed, bound copy available through Amazon.com.

The annual writing contest is sponsored by the Redwood Council of Teachers of English, an affiliate of the California Association of Teachers of English. Student entries are submitted to the Redwood CATE Writing Contest 2018 by mid-April in order to be considered.

This anthology is published annually in the late spring at the conclusion of the annual Redwood CATE Writing Contest with its award winning entries. Any student in the local area can submit one piece for each category to be judged. All the awarded entries are published for the students to share with their families, schools, communities, and any student who might share their love of writing.

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Table of Contents

Poetry

Grades 3&4

1st place - <i>The Night and Day</i> by Shaylee Daggett.....	1
2nd place - <i>River Sounds</i> by Kayman Mandon	2
3rd place - <i>Life</i> by Mahayla Broussard	3

Grades 5&6

1st place - <i>Pencil</i> by Lillian Afridi	4
2nd place - <i>The Sea Will Come</i> by Sasha Love.....	5
3rd place - <i>The Horse Inside Me</i> by Ayla Kimmel	6

Grades 7&8

1st place - <i>Flight of the Phoenix</i> by Ai-Lan Mcboldrick.....	7
2nd place - <i>Them</i> by Taylor Cole	8
3rd place - <i>The Belly Dancer</i> by Stephan Chittenden	9

Grades 9&10

1st place - <i>The Beauty of Ignorance</i> by Isabelle Unsigner	10
2nd place - <i>Dawn</i> by Mercy Arnold	12

Grades 11&12

1st place - <i>Red Wood</i> by John Lazzarotto	13
2nd place - <i>A Love Created Through Time</i> by Saahirah Mahmood	14
3rd place - <i>To Be a Rose</i> by L. Grace Bugnacki.....	16

Informational/Argument

Grades 5&6

1st place - <i>Colonial Tavern</i> by Zayne Morris-Slattery	18
2nd place - <i>Is Too Much Technology Bad or Good?</i> by Paige Thacker	21

Grades 7&8

1st place - <i>Mathematics Education</i> by Kyla Berman	24
---	----

Grades 9&10

1st place - <i>Apartheid and Prejudice</i> by Kenna Wendt	27
2nd place - <i>Finding Home</i> by Brenden Owsley	34
3rd place - <i>There is Magic and There is Madness: A Look Inside</i> <i>Karen Russell's St. Luchy's Home for Girls Raised</i> <i>by Wolves</i> by Luan Scrivner	38

Grades 11&12

1st place - <i>Well Behaved Women Rarely Make History</i> by Cathryn Noel-Veatch	43
2nd place - <i>Liberation</i> by Alyssa Jimenez	48
3rd place - <i>Empathy: Below the Surface</i> by Olivia Dennison	54

Narrative

Grades 3&4

1st place - <i>Be Careful What You Wish For</i> by Jaida Dusel	59
2nd place - <i>The Irish Jig</i> by Laurel Straka	64
3rd place - <i>How Animals Saved My Life</i> by Maila Andersen	68

Grades 5&6

1st place - <i>The Celebration of Carvahal</i> by Owen Peterson	74
2nd place - <i>The Race Goes Wrong</i> by Lincoln Paff	78
3rd place - <i>The Tournament</i> by Adrienne Downs.....	81

Grades 7&8

1st place - <i>The Minstrel</i> by Caleb Brown	83
2nd place - <i>Taking my Morning Run was Scarier than I Thought</i> by Mach Albers	87
3rd place - <i>I Hate Spiders</i> by Teryn Madison	93

Grades 9&10

1st place - <i>My Wallflower</i> by Taylor Hawthorne.....	96
2nd place - <i>My Storm Clouds</i> by Steven Hadley	100

Grades 11&12

1st place - <i>In Medias Res - A Stranger's Paper Bird</i> by Jewel Blanchard.....	105
2nd place - <i>Conquering the Stage</i> by L. Grace Bugnacki	111
3rd place - <i>Last Song</i> by Ethan Fischel	115

The Night and Day

By: Shaylee Daggett

The night is howling
The stars are dancing
The bushes are whistling
The sun is opening
his eyes

Wake up
sunshine
Wake up please
Wake up the bees
Wake up the people
Wake up the animals
Wake up the world!

River Sounds

By: Kayman Mandon

The river is
Blue just like
My eye, I am
Swimming
Gracefully when I am
Having a good
Time. The trees,
The bees,
Are having
A day, will
You please
come to the
River today.

Life

By: Mahayla Broussard

Life is like a river
it flows by
right before your eyes
and it travels all around the world
when close your eyes tonight
think about your memories

Pencil

By: Lillian Afridi

My pencil
draws drawings of deception
while dancing and flying
off the page
sometimes drawing a
dog doubtful of unfamiliar faces
or stars staring skeptically at me...

My pencil
writes words of wonder
wondrous words of the winds
leaping and twirling
like a ballerina on pointe
scribbling and scrabbling
a song that swirls about
a story that tells itself...

My pencil
is orange and mechanical
like a robot that painted itself
orange
Now wait a minute,
where did it go?

The Sea Will Come

By: Sasha Love

The sea will come,
Devouring her old friend the land,
The sea will come, the sea will come,
Fighting the mountains and battling the lakes,
The sea will come, the sea will come,
Enveloping abandoned towns in its salty power,
The sea will come,
Rising over the once vast, lush forests,
The sea will come,
The sea will come,
Everyone knows, but no one believes,
The sea will come

The Horse Inside Me

By: Ayla Kimmel

There is a horse black as night in me with long hair like Rapunzel.

It neighs like my mother's voice when she sings.

Its hooves hit the ground like my father's hands when he beats his drum.

It moves like waves crashing on the beach.

The horse is in my heart and makes me happy.

It makes me feel like I am free.

Flight of the Phoenix

By: Ai-Lan Mcboldrick

The phoenix is shy at first to the burning fire
but it soon learns not to fear
for the phoenix is born from within the fire
At first it greets its
slight of confidence
that is growing inside it
It watches with reflective eyes
as the flames dance
swaying and twirling
as if one the bird joins the flames
hungry for the dance
It twirls and sways
all through the night till the flames slowly die
till it's but one tear of sadness
as it goes out forever
The phoenix, confused by the disappearance, searches but finds nothing
but ashes, but as it looks a small figure appears
at first the head
then its brilliant red tail
another phoenix has been born
They join each other in the non-existent fire as they begin to dance
each turn rebuilds the fire till alas the fire is restored to its full glory

Them

By: Taylor Cole

If I had to leave today, I would miss my sister's
soft hands, lightly pounding the keys of our piano,
her golden hair shining brighter than the sun,
her inspiring laugh that would give us headaches,
her volcanic eruption of a room that would make
your feet burn when you stepped on the sharp
corner of a Lego,
and her calm voice with the ability to make you
lose yourself.

I would miss my mom's
way to turn every vague situation into a story
that would be told over and over,
her obnoxious saxophone playing while I'm trying to watch TV,
how she laughs at my jokes even when
they're not funny,
and how cute she is when she plays volleyball.

I would miss my dad's
loving personality,
how he walks in the door, grass stains
on his knees, dirt under his fingernails
and how much he cared.

If I had to leave today, I would miss
my family.

The Belly Dancer

By: Stephan Chittenden

There she stood,
There she danced,
Where her hips and veil swayed with the wind,
Sword at her side,
Scabbard near her pants,
Her arms moving up and down,
Her chest moving forward and back,
Side to side,
Across the desert sands,
In a magic land,
She danced like a Jinni,
She danced like the breeze,
Under the moonlit sky,
On the sand,
Or on a carpet in the clouds,
She brings her dance wherever she goes.

The Beauty of Ignorance

By: Isabelle Unsigner

~ To My Parents

Isn't it beautiful? The sight of eerie delight in her eyes?
No one told them it would hurt.
She tells them she wants to sail the seas,
Instead she is taught the ABC's.
"A... B... C..." And so on.
As her giggles fill the room,
The child breaks another glass vase.
Her first steps could someday be her last,
And she'd never know the difference.
She shows you a story written in chicken scratch,
About a girl who visits Neverland.
Peter Pan couldn't save her.
When she skins her knee, it hurts.
"It stings! Why does it have to hurt?"
They wish they had the answer.
She is older now, a little girl in spirit.
"I'm pretty much an adult! You can't tell me what to do!"
But no one ever told her it would hurt.
Keep being that little girl,
The one who puts chalk stripes in her hair,
And only likes her cherries in popsicles.
The one who dances to Christmas music in August,
And watches Teletubbies 'till bedtime,

The one who doesn't like the local news,
Because it's "Grown up."
Ah, the beauty of ignorance.
That they wish you still had.
Adulthood is not as fun as you thought,
Is it?

Dawn

By: Mercy Arnold

Rays of sunlight engulfing the earth,
Swallowing darkness in minutes.
Birds singing a melody that no one understands,
And creatures of the night returning to their homes.
A chill breeze blows across the fields,
Leaving a stark coldness in its wake.
Morning dew dripping off single blades of grass.
The stars hidden behind the disguise of day.
Humans, resuming life,
Knowing nothing of what took place during the night.
Its secrets to be concealed forever.

Red Wood

By: John Lazzarotto

Soaking seeping weeping leaves
Foggy air so clean to breathe
Green made up of dark and light
Brown so subtle in the night
No one knows and no one sees
In this place beneath the trees.

Wonder and fright looms the air.
Forget the cause and lose the care.
Drizzling mist surrounds the whole,
Calms the heart and soothes the soul,
Clears the mind and breaks the chain,
Harmonious among dry rain.

A Love Created Through Time

By: Saahirah Mahmood

I remember...

scampering through the monstrous golden stacks of dried grass that served as the horse's meal. Crouching, kneeling, and hiding. I spent this time attempting to catch my breath. The prolonged days were spent beneath the bright warm sun that illuminated our faces. I spent this time attempting to catch my breath. Once your eyes caught me, it was extensive hours of chasing. Playing on this unknown land with you connected me to my roots. You showed me where I come from and the beauty my father's country holds.

I remember...

arriving again at my second home. Countless open arms were waiting to squeeze me. My aunt hauled me and surrounded me with her snug comforting arms. I recall rotating the round knob and sauntering through the red door. I was astonished to spot you on the other half. My eye quickly caught your finely ironed blue salwar kameez and the black shoes I had sent you. The cologne gifted from me to you danced throughout the home. Slowly you ambled and addressed me as you painted a ray of sunshine over your countenance. My responding smirk brought a jovial feeling in your heart. Only you and I knew the true story behind the two smiles.

I remember...

traveling to the beautiful town and river of Naran in Pakistan. As the sun drowned in the horizon, its rays of light glimmering in the darkness of the clouds faded and the pale moon peeked at me from the stars. A cool chill traveled through me and I shivered. You took out your arms from your jacket's sleeves and placed it on me. As I beheld the words "I love you" being pronounced on your lips, my cheeks flushed to the color of a rose. The butterflies in my stomach flapped their wings to the rhythm of my heart. Shortly I was comforted by warmth.

I remember...

your hand tightly gripped on mine while clasping them as we said goodbye. Neither did you or I want to let go. As I turned around, you took my hand and pulled me in. Your assurance of you not forgetting me and promising our next encounter will be coming soon brought a relaxation. I remember glancing towards you as we parted. My eyes focused only and only on you until the car and home's distance didn't allow us to be seen.

To Be a Rose

By: L. Grace Bugnacki

I saw you hang above the stove
And I imagine your beauty, never once opposed.
Your petals must have been dipped in gold
Because they look more valuable than all the riches one could hold

I awe at your beauty, though you slowly wither
And I wonder how beauty has turned so bitter.
You are simple and elegant even through the winter.
Your appearance so natural and your falsehood not but a sliver.

I stand in the hall on a busy school day
And wonder at how all the girls persuade.
They cake on their orange powder
As if their makeup could give them the beauty of a flower.

Half of society tells me I'm perfect, the other half tells me lies.
They tell me to cake on my orange powder and win my prize.
Because this was the only way that I could possibly get by.

I used to think that beauty came from within
But now boys tells me it's just what's on my skin.
Your smile couldn't matter less,
Unless you had a new Maybeline lipset.

But give it a thought,
Do roses use the new face wash?
Or do they put on this foundation?
Or even primer?
Do you think they can do a perfect wing with eyeliner?

So ask yourself this:
When did the beauty of a rose become
Less of an ideal than makeup?

Don't you suppose
You'd be more valuable
As a gold dipped rose?

Colonial Tavern

By: Zayne Morris-Slaterry

Did you know that a tavern keeper kept and received all the mail in their tavern because there were no post offices? The colonial tavern keeper was an innkeeper, much like a person who runs an inn in modern times. A colonial tavern keeper was a very important part of the town because he provided rest for travelers, held formal balls and meetings, and also provided food and drinks for the town. Tavern keepers had several daily duties to tend to. The Colonial tavern keeper provided rest for tired travelers and horses. Traveling by horse was the fastest way to travel during the colonial times. Travelers would typically find a tavern in a city or town, according to Edwin Tunis, "It was its own building with two separate floors. The upper floor was where the beds were for sleeping, and the lower floor was where the bar and tables were for eating..." The main drinks at the tavern bar would typically be hard alcohol and beer. The tavern keeper would also have many other duties. First, the tavern keeper would have to go to the butcher very early in the morning to get meat. Next, they would have to go to the miller to get yeast for brewing beer. Then, the tavern keeper would harvest fruits and vegetables from the garden. Finally, he would return to the tavern and start preparing food and drinks for the day. The tavern keeper would also buy many tools and items from a lot of the other colonial trades. An example of the other trades he would visit would be the blacksmith, the carpenter, and the chandler. These trades were necessary to run the tavern and help the townspeople work together and survive.

The tavern keeper used many tools to perform their trade. A good example is a spitjack which was used to cook meat. Knives, pots, pans, forks, spoons, plates, and glasses were some other tools important to the tavern keeper. The glasses were used for serving drinks such as rum and beer along with other popular drinks of the time. Knives, forks, spoons, and plates were used for eating food. Likewise, knives, pots, and pans were used for preparing and cooking food for the guests. Cooking on a spitjack was a very long process. This process required spinning meat on a skewer for twelve to fourteen hours a day. Nobody really liked spinning a spitjack for that long, it was tiresome and hard, plus there were other chores that had to be done. So the tavern keeper used dogs to turn the spitjack. The dogs were small and nimble, so they could run fast. According to NPR, "Bondeson thinks possibly it's the queen of England's favorite dog, the Welsh Corgi," that turned the spitjack. First the tavern keeper would put the meat on the spitjack. A spitjack was a metal stand that had a bar through it so the spitjack would turn. Then the spitjack dog would be tied onto the spitjack with a rope. Next a spitjack dog would be placed on burning hot coals so it would run. Finally, the dog would run and the spitjack would turn evenly to get a nice even cook on the meat. This is how the tavern keeper made meat. The tavern keeper made many products for the travelers and town people.

Beer and alcohol were served at formal balls, parties, and meetings, along with meat and salads. A colonial tavern keeper had to know how to calculate prices. This meant that they had to know basic mathematics. According to Kathy Wilmore, "Small colonial towns had no post offices, so mailmen often left mail at the

inn. Townsfolk would stop by to see if any mail had come for them." The colonial tavern keeper also would serve drinks to people of all ages, according to The Montgomery School Organization, "The principal drinks were Rum, small beer, and cider. These were used freely by men, women, and children." The tavern is where the townspeople went to gossip. According to The Montgomery School Organization, "The tavern or ordinary was not only a lodging place for travelers but also so a drinking house and a place of general gossip for the village and neighborhood."

In conclusion, a colonial tavern keeper was a very important part of every town because he provides rest for travelers, town entertainment, mail services along with food and drinks for the townspeople. Many people are tavern keepers at hotels in modern times people have employees and there is now high tech gadgets involved to help them do their trade. My trade is performed locally by all of the hotels in Humboldt County on a smaller scale, they provide a place to rest for travelers. I would not like to perform this trade because I don't want to burn little dogs feet and I would not enjoy serving alcohol to the townspeople due to problems it can cause. I still think the colonial tavern keeper was important because this is where hotels started and they were the center of town. I think that the colonial tavern keeper was one of the most important trades in the colony.

Is Too Much Technology Bad or Good?

By: Paige Thacker

Is technology helping or hurting students? There are many studies about technology hurting us, distracting us, and aiding in our academic decline. Technology is not good for students due to the fact that it can cause physical harm, is a major distraction, and it can help lower grades. We, as a nation, are spending too much time on our devices and students are suffering because of it. A lot of parents don't want their precious kids hurting themselves. Could you imagine having your eyes damaged and constantly having headaches?

Too much technology can physically hurt you. It can give you bad headaches every time you have screen time. Also, it can give you eye strain known as asthenopia. Eye strain is an eye condition with symptoms such as fatigue, pain in or around the eye, blurred vision, headaches, and occasional double vision. Students are required to spend hours on a computer at school and at home. This is causing dizziness and headaches. There is no reason to be spending this much time on a computer at school and home. The symptoms often occur after reading on screens, or when playing on technology. According to Healthy Living Center, "...all that screen time is causing eye strain and other vision problems." Many doctors have spoken on the cause. According to a new report by the Vision Council, a nonprofit trade association,

states, 'The longer you look at a computer screen, the more eye strain you tend to have, which can cause headaches,' Technology not only hurts us, but it can also distract us.

Technology can distract us from important thing like sleeping, eating, and homework. I feel like it distracts us because we are on YouTube, Instagram, and weird websites. There are many games and videos on the web all over the world, some can be bad and some ok. Most of the videos are usually just to keep you on technology, and make you want to keep watching. Parents or kids, are mostly only on their phone or an electronic device. Often times, they don't even pay attention to their fellow family members, and just pay attention to their electronics. According to Duke University economists, "With no adults to supervise them, many kids used their networked devices not for schoolwork, but to play games, troll social media and download entertainment." It's not just distraction and physically harmful that's making technology bad, it is also causing many students' grades to go down.

Grades are very important for kids. Good grades will help them get into a good college, and get a good education. If technology is bringing down grades, then adding more technology will cause students to continue to suffer. Students often goof off when they are supposed to be writing a five paragraph essay, and at the last minute they write down two sentences and call it done. Next thing they know, they have a 'D' or an 'F' in writing. They usually think that grades don't matter until they get into high school, but your work habits continue to travel with you for a lifetime. We are not developing hardworking students. According to Duke University economists who did a study on children

receiving technology at low income schools, "When their computers arrived, their reading scores fell off a cliff." Additionally, Duke University economists state that overall test scores declined as soon as technology arrived at these schools over a period of a few years. If this is true, we are in a technology caused crisis with our reading at stake. Technology is not helping us, it is hurting us instead.

Technology is hurting students in many ways. Technology is distracting us. It can ruin focus. Not only that, it can damage us physically. It can aid in bringing our grades down. I hope that in the future more people would agree with me on this and help get students succeed. We must limit our screen time at home and at school. Technology definitely has its place, but it does not belong in the classroom on a large scale.

Mathematics Education

By: Kyla Berman

Many people struggle with math. In America, 50% of all college students don't pass algebra with a C or higher. (Saxe and Braddy, 2015) This is a problem because math is necessary for all STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) professions and these are well-paid jobs.

All over the world, you will hear people say "I am just not a math person." When you tell yourself that you are not good at math or not a math person you can actually hurt your future. There may be some small genetic component to math skills, but studies show that hard work, preparation, and self-confidence outweigh genetics (Kimball and Smith, 2013). All over the world people come into math classes with different backgrounds and levels of preparation. ON the first few tests, the well-prepared students get good grades and the unprepared students struggle. The unprepared students usually assume that their poor grades are because they are 'just not a math person' or not good at math and they may give up, or not try as hard, making them fall farther behind in future classes. The well-prepared students may decide that they are math people. This type of thinking results in them having more confidence and working harder in the future. This scenario can happen whether you consciously think about it, or just decide that you are not that good in math. Tests were done that sowed that people who say that their math ability can't change becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy (Groth, 2011). "Convincing students that they could make themselves smarter by hard work

led them to work harder and get higher grades” (Kimball and Smith, 2013). If you have a growth mindset, work hard, and believe you can get better at math, you will.

Locally, there are math education problems too. Foster care kids are not getting the math help they need. Data from foster kids in 2015/2016 showed that only 13% met or exceeded the math standard from our public schools. There are approximately 330 foster kids in Humboldt County (Houston, 2017). That means about 300 of those kids did not meet the math standard. In comparison, about 39% of non-foster kids met or exceeded the standards (Houston, 2017), which represents a 24% difference.

The United States is falling behind in mathematics. This affects people’s career opportunities and our country’s ability to contribute to STEM fields globally. Locally, not everyone is getting a good math education either. These issues needs to be addressed locally, nationally, and globally which takes a united effort between parents, teachers, and schools. By helping students have a growth mindset and supplying them with additional help if they need it students can have bright futures.

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Apartheid and Prejudice

By: Kenna Wendt

Discrimination, as defined by the dictionary, is the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex. Throughout time, people have been faced with the grisly actuality of discrimination in society. Even today in our modern world you cannot turn on a television, search the web, or read a newspaper without witnessing accounts of inequality. Those who choose to behold these injustices do not have to search for long, simply the touch of a screen can send the mind spiraling into narratives of discrimination and prejudice. Debates, discussions, and full blown arguments are featured daily on newscasts. Discrimination is among one of the most discussed topics in politics today, especially evident in the recent comments from our very own President of the United States that clearly favor one race over the other. Many important issues debated in society boil down to discrimination, the most commonly known probably being racism. Did you know 95% of African Americans believe that they are discriminated against (NPR). 55% of white Americans think they are discriminated against (TIME magazine). 68% of women think that there is discrimination against women in America still today (NPR). Discrimination can have disastrous results on personal health and functionality as a society. This is generally the idea Steinbeck is trying to convey in his novel, *Of Mice and Men*. In the novel, Steinbeck follows the lives of two ranch workers, Lennie Small and George Milton. Lennie is mentally disabled and relies on George to help him through life.

In *Of Mice and Men*, John Steinbeck demonstrates how the less powerful are discriminated against by society through the characters of Crooks, an African American stable buck, Candy, an aging ranch worker, Lennie, a mentally disabled laborer, and Curley's Wife, a woman defined by the relationship with her husband.

One example of racial discrimination is the character of Crooks, an African American stable buck working on the ranch. In one instance, Crooks is speaking to Lennie and Curley's wife in his room, right outside of the stables. Curley's wife is being rather hostile towards Crooks, and states, "Well, you best keep your place then, nigger. I could get you strung up on a tree so easy it ain't even funny," (81). This is an important example of how Curley's wife, who has a higher rank in society because of her place on the ranch as Curley's partner, treats Crooks, a black ranch hand who is looked down upon in this time period. Curley's wife threatening Crooks shows the amount of power she has over him, though she is discriminated against herself. Another good case of this happening is in the same instance, before Curley's wife comes into the picture. Crooks is speaking to George about how hard it is for him to function on the ranch, and says, "S'pose you didn't have nobody. S'pose you couldn't go into the bunkhouse and play rummy cuz you was black(...)" (72). Crooks is talking about how he isn't permitted to go into the bunkhouse where the other men stay because of the color of his skin. This also ties into how lonely Crooks is, and how much he envies George and Lennie's companionship. He isn't allowed in town or where the other men stay based on the color of his skin, and even has a room separated from everyone else, near a pile of horse manure.

The symbol of Crook's discrimination is his room. This really shows just how separated Crooks is from the rest of the ranch, and the rest of the men. He lives next to the stables, where he cares for the animals. One important thing to note is that all of the other men on the ranch live together, in a bunkhouse. Crooks is the only one to live alone, minus the boss and Curley, though there is a significant difference. The boss and Curley live alone because they are powerful and possess enough power and money to live that way, while Crooks is forced to live that way because he is black. Segregation was and still is a huge issue in our society today, and is obviously in this book and time period. Crooks is forced to reside in this room, while, as he tells Lennie, he would much rather have companionship and live with the other men. He specifically points out his books distastefully as bad company, and wishes for fellowship. Crooks is lonely, but is forced to be by society, and the men on this ranch.

Candy is an aged ranch worker who is also discriminated against on this ranch, but for a different reason than Crooks. Candy is discriminated against because of his age, and the physical disabilities that come with that age. Those on the ranch think he is useless, and he believes he is not needed anymore, and that that will lead to his expulsion from the ranch. An example of this is when Lennie and George are explaining their dream to Candy, and Candy states, "I got hurt four years ago(...). They'll can me purty soon. Jus' as soon as I can't swamp out no bunkhouses they'll put me on the country," (61). This is an example of how disposable the ranch owner thinks Candy is, and how the powerful boss treats Candy, a crippled, aging, poor ranch hand. Another example of Candy's discrimination is when Curley's wife is in Crooks's room

with Lennie and Candy, and Curley's Wife threatens to "get Crooks strung up on a tree". Candy immediately stands up for Crooks, claiming that, "If you was to do that, we'd tell." Curley's wife tells them that, "Nobody'd listen to you an' you know it. Nobody'd listen to you." This is obviously connected to the men's place on the ranch, specifically at Candy. She believes she can treat him however she likes because no one cares about the opinions or feelings of an old, disabled ranch worker. This is a good example of how the powerful, Curley's wife in this situation, treats the less powerful, Candy.

Lennie is one of the main characters in this story, and from the beginning it is clear that he isn't the usual hero we find in our childhood fairytales. Like the previous characters in the novel, Lennie is discriminated against inside and outside of the ranch. Although we don't actually get a peek into the mind of Lennie until the end of the novel, Steinbeck makes it evident from the beginning that Lennie has some sort of mental disabilities. He does this by taking us through a small portion of his life, where we experience his actions and the way he is treated in society. This type of discrimination, called ableism, is still a hugely controversial topic in our world today, and it most definitely was in Steinbeck's too. Steinbeck explores in his novel the different types of discrimination that exist in our world, then and now, and includes them in the telling of Lennie and George's experiences. There are countless examples of ableism in *Of Mice and Men*, but the most prominent is just in Lennie's everyday life. Lennie is constantly treated differently because of his disabilities, and the trouble they tend to cause.

Then, there is Curley's wife. She is an interesting character, to say the least, because she represents both sides of

discrimination. She, at first, is shown in a position of power over the men on the ranch, the power coming from being Curley's wife. But at closer glance, she herself is discriminated against, especially by the fact that she is Curley's wife. The very thing that brings her control over others is also the thing that brings her no dominance over her own life. The men on the ranch sneer behind her back, calling her a "tart" or "tramp". These accusations originate from the fact that she is the only woman on the farm, and looks to men for company. In the beginning, most audiences would believe she was a flirt, just by the small scene and rumors we had read about on the ranch. However, it becomes most pronounced towards the end of the story, when she speaks to Lennie in the barn. She says, "I don' like Curley. He ain't a nice fella.(...) I coulda been in the movies, an' had nice clothes-all them nice clothes like they wear." (89) This is important to Curley's wife because it shows she is more than just a flirt, and that she had aspirations and dreams. Another example is when George is warning Lennie about her. When he says, "Ranch with a bunch of guys ain't no place for a girl, 'specially like her," he means that the ranch a bunch of men work on isn't a welcoming place for Curley's wife.(13) There are numerous examples of this injustice throughout Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, however the most obvious is likely her name.

The symbol of the discrimination against Curley's wife is absolutely her name, or her lack of name to be more exact. Throughout the story, she is referred to nothing more than "Curley's Wife", and a few other crude insults not worth mentioning. I believe Steinbeck excludes her name from his novel for a reason. If I had to make a guess, I would say it's to further make an example of the idea her name has no value in this time

period. Her name isn't important, simply her relationship with her husband is. The way she is defined by Curley is one of the largest examples of discrimination in *Of Mice and Men*. She even expresses to Lennie at the end of her short life that it wasn't her plan to marry Curley, and yet now she is bound by her relationship to him. One of the main issues is, it's not as if no one on the ranch knows her name. They just don't feel it's important to use it, because it is just like if she was an object. Just Curley's property, just Curley's wife.

Steinbeck's message in *Of Mice and Men* delves much deeper into the discrimination our society faces today and has faced in the past, mainly through the aforementioned characters like Lennie, Curley's Wife, Crooks, Candy, and the symbolism each one represents. Discrimination is an important issue in our society because it affects the dynamic of our world as a whole. Even back in the 1930's Steinbeck is trying to convey this idea through his novel *Of Mice and Men*. There are many lessons we can take away from this book, though I believe the most prominent may be the idea of how discrimination affects lives. True, we have come far from the days that Steinbeck is referring to. But in some ways, nothing has changed. Discrimination is still alive and thriving in our communities, though not even close to how severe it used to be. Who is to say what the future may be like? Optimism provides us with a hope that in the future things will change for the better. However, as history and reality show us, it may get worse before things can begin to improve. The only way to make certain that discrimination is never to come knocking at our doors again is to teach ourselves, and our children different morals. Sure, it may take generations before discrimination and prejudice and bigotry

are completely wiped from our world, but the result will be worth it all. So, if we begin to believe and teach divergently than what we have been exposed to, we can avoid inequality in the distant future.

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Finding Home

By: Brenden Owsley

I remember sitting on a bank of the Mad River with my grandfather and waiting for the fishing pole to bob. I called out to my grandfather. He came running because he thought that I had been hurt, but I was reeling in a big one. The line came closer and I was so excited I could scream. My grandpa told me to pull it out of the water quick. The fish came splashing out of the water. I can't exactly recall what the size was, but it wasn't very big. My grandpa told me, "It's not the reward that you get in the time, it's who you spend the time with." He always told me that. His words last longer than pictures. I felt extraordinary.

I've been fishing down here for as long as i could remember...i love this part of the river it's nice...Oh there's a salmon, but wait this salmon seems different...What is that above the water...This salmon is beautiful...This creature doesn't seem that terrifying...Where is it going?

Over the years that I have gone fishing, I have seen how the animals and the ecosystems coexist together and how they help each other survive. The trees outside a river drop leaves and provide nourishment for macroinvertebrates that salmon feed on. My grandfather helps me. Without him, I wouldn't have a home. He helped me be the person I am today.

His words last longer than the salmon season.

His words last longer than the winter

His words last longer than my cousin who just passed away.

His words last as long as the migration of salmon

I've been thinking about how every living thing migrates, though salmon certainly have a longer journey than most. Idaho salmon must migrate nine hundred miles and climb seven thousand feet. The annual migrations of salmon are a miracle of nature.

Like salmon, my grandfather and I migrate down to the river. When I was younger we would go every weekend; it became like an instinct to go fishing. When we went out to the river, I felt like I was a part of something much bigger. It wasn't about catching the fish; it was about helping the ecosystem survive. If we would see garbage, we'd pick it up and take it to the dump.

My grandfather and I haven't gone back to the river to go fishing for a while. There's just not that many fish in the Mad. All over our region, the salmon population is decreasing.. Salmon are threatened by overfishing, pollution, and dams. On the Rouge River, the Savage Rapids Dam was used for irrigation diversion. It stored 543,000 pounds of sediment. The reason for removal of the dam in 2009 was because of fish passage concerns. The concerns for salmon is because the sediment can decrease plant life around the river, and can harm the fish/wildlife in the area.

Eventually, The loss of salmon could cause a huge domino effect on the ecosystem. Many of the animals that depend on salmon for food could starve or be forced to find a new habitat. This disturbance could be very dangerous and harmful to the ecosystem.

We are dying, The fish kill hasn't helped...We need to help the salmon or they will die...I don't understand why their doing this

to us...We need to at least try, something...All we need is help...We need to help.

Many animals depend on salmon for food for example, black bears, many species of birds, and many humans. Many of the native animals who depend on salmon for food could and will disappear if salmon go extinct or dwindle in population size, the loss of one organism in the food web can affect many other animals that depend on that living organism. Salmon are a keystone species, which is a species that other species depend on, without that species other species would go extinct. So it's very important that the salmon don't go extinct. Like salmon my grandfather is the keystone in my family because he provides me and my family with a source of food. Without him some of my family wouldn't even have a home to live in. The salmon are very unlikely to disappear but may struggle to survive as remnants of once flourishing species in small portions of their original range. The decline in the salmon population could affect surrounding plant life, for example the nutrients that the salmon produce normally feed the trees and plants surrounding the river, which in turn feeds the animals that eat the plants. Eventually the animal would die and the nutrients could make its way back to the river and feed the fish, but without the fish many of those animals and plants won't get that nutrients. These many living things depend on the salmon and the river for nutrients. spawning salmon contribute up to 25% of nitrogen in the foliage of trees, resulting in tree growth rates nearly three-times higher than in areas without salmon spawning. These trees eventually fall in the river/stream and provide shelter for the salmon and protect the gravels that adults use for spawning. These spawning grounds are very important to the

salmon. Without them many juvenile salmon would die, because there wouldn't be any area for juvenile salmon to hide from predators. The spawning grounds are usually in a secluded area hidden from predators. Many of these salmon provide on plants, trees, and rocks to fall into the water for protection. I depend on my grandpa because he protects me from the outside world.

I remember sitting on the side of the river skipping rocks and seeing a Native fishing, what was he thinking...The boy watching me across the river was white all they wanted to do was own everything...but wait this boy was not mean but innocent, were we thinking the same thing...I've heard stories about Indians how their "savages" or at least that's what everybody else called them, but this man seemed no different than anybody that I'd see in town... I remember stories of when I was a child of how my native brothers and sisters have been here since the beginning of time...was it true has this native been her since the beginning of time.

Many salmon in a river can tell if it is healthy. Scientists can take this data and determine if work needs to be done to help the river or if the river is healthy. This is very important to not only my grandpa and I but native Indian tribes, animals, and many plant species. The salmon depend on the river to be healthy, just like I depend on my grandfather to keep me healthy. Just like the salmon I'm on a journey to find home.

There is Magic and There is Madness: A Look Inside Karen Russell's *St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves*

By: Luan Scrivner

There are many writers in this world. We can see this in the colorful shelves in bookstores, all packed with titles such as: *The Hunger Games*, *The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon*, *War and Peace*, *The Audacity of Hope*. But let us really dive into the subject: what makes a great story? Some may argue that a great hero makes the story exceptional while others would decide that the story is great because of how much action is shoved into the story. Not many people give attention to the mastermind behind the scenes, the true genius of the story who deserves as much if not more of the attention the fictional character is getting: the writer. What makes a great writer? Vladimir Nabokov strongly voices an opinion. "There are three points of view from which a writer can be considered: he may be considered as a storyteller, as a teacher, and as an enchanter," states Nabokov. While our bookshelves are colorful, not many, by Nabokov's standards, fit the criteria.

Of the many stories that circulate our culture, the one that is worthy of joining the cannon of short stories is *St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves*. The story is a complex and elaborate world created by the brilliant mind of Karen Russell. *St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves* is both a thrilling and subtle

narrative worthy of applause from the respected Vladimir Nabokov. Russell combines logic and fantasy to create a story that leaves you haunted and with questions.

In *Good Readers, Good Writers*, Nabokov states that “one should notice and fondle details.” Russell, in short, concise, and detailed sentences paints an image of detail that is frighteningly realistic. “...at first, our pack was all hair and snarl and floor-thumping joy. We forgot the barked cautions of our mothers and fathers, all the promises we’d made to be civilized and ladylike, couth and kempt. We tore through the austere rooms, overturning dresser drawers, pawing through the neat piles of the Stage 3 girls’ starched underwear, smashing lightbulbs with our bare fists. Things felt less foreign in the dark.” It is interesting that Russell categorizes her characters from Stage 1 to Stage 5. To break apart her chapters, Russell includes a small definition of what the new stage indicates and implies so that the meaning of each stage is not lost to the reader.

Nabokov begins to explain that a book is a work of art. Therefore, it is the creation of a new world, a new perspective. Nabokov argues that one must approach it as this new world, full of new life, unforeseen possibilities, and see it without any obvious tie to the world one left in order to get to this new world. Russell’s title, seemingly innocent, jars the mind of the reader within heartbeats. And the deeper the reader delves inside this world, the more one must realize that this is no ordinary girls home. In the first paragraph, Russell writes: “The dim bedroom was windowless and odorless. We remedied this by spraying exuberant yellow streams all over the bunks. We jumped from bunk to bunk,

spraying." Russell makes the reader think, she helps the reader make connections. In this part of the story, she notes that wolves mark their territory by spraying the boundaries. In human society, it seems that people feel more comfortable with boundaries because all that they know is in these boundaries; what they know is safe and reliable, not faulted and uncertain. Quite vividly, she makes the reader realize this correlation to the natural world.

Nabokov argues that to begin a book with a ready made generalization, the reader has already decided what to expect and what should happen. Nabokov warns against this saying, "Nothing is more boring or more unfair to the author than starting to read, say, *Madame Bovary*, with the preconceived notion that it is a denunciation of the bourgeoisie." To Russell's credit, she leaves little time for the reader to assume something of the story. She has, in this piece mastered the art of captivating using just the title: *St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves*. Perhaps Russell intended for there to be slight interpretation of her story, for the reader can glean a slight amount of information, enough in fact to create a small assumption. But whatever assumption is made, will quickly dissipate from just the first sentence alone.

Perhaps Nabokov's most interesting point is that a writer must be a storyteller, a teacher, and an enchanter. Magic, story, and lesson. There must be magic in this story for once the reader starts, it quickly becomes a world which accepts the reader more than it accepts its own characters. There is magic and there is madness. There is such logic to *St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves* and yet there is a lack of logic that somehow makes sense. To create such a world where sanity and madness coexist and even

make sense together, and to have a struggle of sanity and madness within the character that you take this journey with... that to me is a true enchanter.

Russell has a stylistic writing that is simple. But the details that she is able to bring forth are not. To be able to enchant people as well as birth such an unique world is what a true storyteller is able to do. Russell pokes subtle hints with irony and at absurdity. At one part of the story, one of the girls is being frightened into behaving. "Do you want to be shunned from both species?" The projected message is shown to the girl. The fact that the two groups are considered species in it of itself is ridiculous. But given the context it makes so much sense that the reader doesn't even question it.

Nabokov states that the third facet of a great writer is lesson: to be able to teach. Russell, through the eyes of wolf-girl Claudette, is able to voice a quiet opinion of modern society. She writes, "The main commandment of wolf life is Know Your Place." Russell then goes on to open the reader's mind to this thought. "Being around humans had awakened a slavish-dog affection in us," Russell writes. "An abasing, belly-to-the-ground desire to please." Russell almost insists the reader to think about this and how it translates into our society. Is this what school does? She seems to ask. Is this what society tries to do?

Being able to provoke such thoughts and questions is what I think a great writer should be able to do. To be able to break the glass ceiling, to see something that others don't is what great authors can do. To state that Karen Russell is a good writer is almost an understatement. I believe that Karen Russell is an

excellent if not perfect vessel upon which Vladimir Nabokov's thoughts on great writers can rest upon.

Well Behaved Women Rarely Make History

By: Cathryn Noel-Veatch

Throughout history women have constantly had to deal with oppression from society. This constant oppression has led women to rebel as they want to fight for their place in history and in our culture. This has led to many female role models in both fiction and real life. Strong women like Amelia Earhart or Susan B. Anthony have shown how women can fit into society while fictional role models like Leia from *Star Wars* or Xena from *Xena: Warrior Princess*. Throughout the play *Antigone* a lot of conflict is shown between the characters and in the basis of the story. Antigone as a character has to face a lot of discrimination because she is a woman in a predominantly male society. As she makes the conscious choice to bury her brother and by doing so breaks the new law from Creon she knows that this is a choice she will stick with. She believes that by burying her brother she is following the path that the Gods have set before her. Her act of burying her brother is a demonstration of her values and what she believes to be important, which is her family. Antigone is overlooked by Creon because in his eyes, she is just a simple woman who followed her heart and didn't think her plan through. Even her punishment is lessened due to her gender though Creon made it clear that whoever buried her brother Polyneices would receive a terrible punishment. She fights for her opinion to be heard and in the end

she dies for her cause. As Antigone is overlooked by her king, as her punishment is less than that of a man, and when she is imprisoned for her actions Antigone has faith in herself. Sophocles' feminist ideas explore how women have are often treated and see how they deal with the ideals of men that she is constantly surrounded by.

In many classical societies women were often looked over by men and this is true in *Antigone*. In the theology of ancient Greece, a polytheistic society, the female goddesses of the pantheon were often overlooked as they represented concepts that were traditionally viewed as ideas suited to women such as Aphrodite goddess of love. In his play *Antigone*, Sophocles shows the struggles of women as the main character of the tragedy, Antigone, is forced to deal with unfairness in her society. When we see the initial argument between Creon and Antigone about her decision to bury her brother Creon says that "But a woman will never rule me while I am alive" (489). This quote is a direct example of how Creon feels about women specifically Antigone. In this quote Antigone has just explained to Creon why she has chosen to bury her brother. She says that the gods have not made this law so why should she follow it. Antigone says to Creon that her choice was her own, and that she made it in full awareness of his punishment. She says "Nor did I think that you're human proclamation had sufficient power to override the unwritten, unassailable laws of the gods." (419). She knows that by her theology it was more important to follow the just rule of the Gods than to follow anything laid down by a human king. This, however, becomes an issue with Creon as his hubris makes himself to be more important than his gods. Antigone's defiance displays how

women were really treated, how they never had a say in their own destinies. Antigone is an example to all of women of how they have a choice when it comes to their future. This overlooking of Antigone because of her gender continues when she is discovered to have broken the law by burying her brother. Antigone has to deal with discrimination from men in a different way. She has a lessened punishment from Creon because she is a woman. As punishments go Creon's ruling of what should happen if any man bury Polyneices is intense. He decrees that "Whoever disobeys him in any respect will face death by public stoning" (30). However later, when Antigone faces Creon and she openly admits to burying her brother Creon changes his mind. Instead of his original punishment, he decided on to simply banish her to a cave to live out the rest of her days. Part of his decision might have had to do with the fact that she was a part of his bloodline, she was engaged to his son Haemon which might have swayed his decision. It is highly likely, however, that her punishment was lessened because she was female. When the Sentry first reports her actions to Creon and presents Antigone to him he says "You bring this woman...Where and in what circumstances did you arrest her?" (375-376). This line has a tone of surprise to it meaning that when the Sentry first brings Creon his prisoner he definitely was not expecting a woman. Creon later talks about Antigone with her sister Ismene, when asked what Ismene is to do without her Creon replies with the line "She...Don't speak of her. She no longer exists" (533). This line is explaining how Creon no longer wants to think of Antigone, he would rather know that he has spared her life and exiled her. Creon doesn't want to face the fact that he has had a minor rebellion in his kingdom, a rebellion led by a women no

less. This could give his people a reason to think that he is weak and not fit for his newly claimed throne. He would rather her memory be erased so that he can ignore what has happened rather than face the growing change around him. His choice of lessening Antigone's punishment showing how in her life Antigone is treated as a lesser. How her gender makes her supposedly weaker than a man.

The punishment that Antigone has been sentenced to is different that what others would have been given. Her move into the cave displays how society would hide away their women almost as if they were ashamed of their wives, sisters, and daughters. When Antigone is banished to her cave she stays there for an unknown period of time and Creon debates what to do with her. He ultimately decides to free her but when he arrives at her prison he discovers that she has killed herself. In her small prison she has managed to, "Hanging by the neck suspended by the linen noose of a garment" this act of desperation shows how much Antigone cares about her opinion (1172). This is showing readers that she would rather lose her life defending her values than allow Creon to silence her. She has seen her sister fall to fear of what Creon will do to them if he finds out what they have done. She wants to be stronger than what she has seen, stronger so that when she dies she can face what she has done. It is shown that Antigone is proud of what she has done she says "There is nothing shameful in honoring my own flesh and blood" (470-471). In her mind it is better to follow the Gods than to follow anyone else. Antigone knows that Creon would never let her be truly free if she chooses to listen to his rule. Her sister Ismene also learns this lesson. That her destiny is her choice, she sees that it was not wrong to believe

in herself that a man's rule is not always correct. Antigone and Ismene want their people to know that now is not the time to stand by and be oppressed. She commits this act to prove her point, that her burial of her brother was the right thing to do.

Antigone faces a lot of criticism for how she buried her brother. Her actions that were unlawful according to Creon have led Antigone to realize what kind of society she lives in. She wants to show people especially Creon that she as a woman can make her own decisions. That she does not make frivolous decisions, not someone who can be deemed hysterical by the death of her brother. She proves to Creon that she is her own person that others do not control her actions. She is in charge of her own fate, she knows that what she has done is right in the eyes of her gods. She wants to be seen as an equal to all others so that they will hear what she has to say. Antigone provides this story with the classic protagonist; however, what makes this story special is that Antigone shows readers that in her story her beliefs are one of a kind. As the play continues Antigone gains followers like Haemon and her sister Ismene, but what she fought for in the beginning was her own cause. She fought for her beliefs which is something that had never been seen before. Her oppression within her society, Creon's misogynistic views against her, her oppression all show how Antigone has to live in her time. How she must fight for her actions to be seen, for her voice to be heard against a sea of people who don't want to listen. Her actions show who she is and how she will fight for herself.

Liberation

By: Alyssa Jimenez

“What was she wearing?” always seems to be the first question asked when inquiring into the rape of women. The follow up question always seems to be “Well was she drinking?” If either of those two questions are answered in a negative way, the victim is once again victimized by society and is blamed for her assault. More often than not, this is the brutal reality. One need only read an article on the Brock Turner v. The People case to understand the lenient rape culture within our nation. Turner received a guilty sentence yet only served 3 months in jail of his pathetic six month sentence. Worse than even this, Harvey Weinstein is only now being brought to justice after years of sexually harassing and assaulting women. In a world where we came very close to having the first female president in the United States, it’s difficult to believe these acts of men lording their power over women are still widespread and relate to a novel published in 1759. Yet, in Voltaire’s hauntingly accurate satirical novel *Candide*, depicting the plight of women in a time where the barbaric nature of men ruled over all, and the objectification of women was commonplace, he does just that. While the novel is mainly from perspective of the novel’s namesake Candide, this also illustrates the supporting roles women were expected to play. By using the characters of the Old Woman and Cunégonde, Voltaire demonstrates the abominable conditions in which women are expected to survive and flourish, when they lack a say in their lives and are constantly being hyper sexualized by the opposite sex.

Voltaire explores the lack of control women in European high society had over their fate, and how the sexualization of women during this time negatively impacted their self-worth.

Voltaire asserts that women have had their sexual power stripped from them specifically from high powered males, and is exemplified by the character Cunégonde. When Candide is banished from Westphalia, he is banned for having relations with the Baron's daughter Cunégonde. Despite Candide being the one who is banished, the real target of the Baron's anger is his daughter for choosing her own sexual partner. The satirical evidence Voltaire implements in the situation depicts a particularly nasty and under exaggerated scene where, "the Baroness boxed her ears... a general consternation was spread over this most magnificent and most agreeable of all possible castles" demonstrates that even in the most "enlightened" of places, women's sexual freedom was at best dictated by the rules put in place by her male superiors (2). While the Baroness is obviously a woman, her being the one to slap Cunégonde symbolizes how women also played into the suppression of freedom of choice by punishing other women for their choices on the basis of their husband's command, and judgements based off of a patriarchal society. An important thing to note is the sentiment that Cunégonde's home was "the most magnificent and most agreeable of all possible castles," meaning that if the possibility for the freedom of choice were to be available anywhere, it would be in a place of amenable nature (2). Later in the novel, Cunégonde is forced into being the mistress of two men after being subjected to a rape, and soon after became the sex slave of a captain who has gambled away all his money and after becoming tired of bedding

her, sells her to the Jew Don Issachar (18). By having Cunégonde repeatedly sold, shared, taken, and passed around like an old milk goat among a rural village in a third world country, Voltaire once again reiterates that fact the women's sexual power was subject to the whims of wealthy and privileged men. To really illustrate his point, once Cunégonde is reunited with her beloved Candide, she must become the mistress the Governor Don Fernando d'Ibaraa to save both herself and Candide. It is clear that Cunégonde will never have the control she both desires and deserves and the sexual freedom of men in European high society.

Voltaire expands upon the theme of the sexualization of women in society, particularly with the symbolic character of the Old Woman, or Pope's daughter, whose diction clearly illustrates her belief that her only worth was her beauty and youth. One particularly memorable part of the Old Woman's history is when she describes, "Already I inspired love. My throat was formed, and such a throat! white, firm, and shaped like that of Venus of Medici; and what eyes! what eyelids! what black eyebrows! such flames darted from my dark pupils that they eclipsed the scintillation of the stars—as I was told by the poets in our part of the world" (24). The use of parallel structure in this statement emphasizes both the Old woman's sense of superiority and her ignorance on what is valuable when it comes to the human condition. However, her sense of accomplishment and pride over the fact that she is beautiful does not solely stem from her own beliefs, but a society which only values women for their appearance. By teaching women that their only value in society is to reproduce children and or to be objects for men to manipulate, it teaches them that their opinions and ideas are unimportant. These teachings degrade their value as

human beings, and appropriate a philosophy that have spanned over generations of society.

Through the use of the Old Woman as a symbol for the perpetual suppression of women, Voltaire demonstrates the parallels between Cunegonde and the Old Woman and how the vicious cycle of oppression occurs. There is an implied comparison between that of the Old Woman's story and Cunegonde's that resonates with the reader in a horrifying sense. Both women are raped, both are forced into slavery, both become the mistresses of multiple men, and both women are valued for their beauty above all else. The Old Woman also seems to realize their similar misfortunes stating, "I am determined to share your fate, and have been much more affected with your misfortunes than with my own" to Cunegonde (29). It can be inferred that with all the atrocities both women have suffered that the Old Woman is more "affected" since she sees herself in Cunegonde and does not want her to share any more of the same struggles she was faced with. Voltaire also parallels the two women by naming the titles of their chapters respectively "The History of Cunegonde" and "History of the Old Woman." This comparison builds on the previous example by illustrating that this was not an anomaly during the 1700s, but a rather common occurrence for women. Men use and discard of these women at will without any regard as to how this affects their sense of worth. A prime example of this occurs during the telling of Cunegonde's story and how a Bulgarian captain "being grown tired of my company... sold me to a Jew," which reaffirms how dispensable women were treated in comparison to men (18). This attitude and disregard of their humanity sets up for many people to

be negatively impacted by the idea that women and men alike are not of equal importance.

The bases for the satirical novel that is *Candide* is, “that things cannot be otherwise than as they are; for all being created for an end, all is necessarily for the best end” (1). While it became abundantly clear that the world is nowhere near perfect, a perfect world is most definitely one where all have the ability to have an equal voice. In Meghan Markle’s speech during a UN Women conference in March of 2015, she delivered the powerful closing statement, “It is said that girls with dreams become women with vision. May we empower each other to carry out such vision—because it isn’t enough to simply talk about equality. One must believe it. And it isn’t enough to simply believe in it. One must work at it.” It is not enough for us to agree that women deserve the same rights as men, that they deserve to have the same sexual liberation and power of self that men are so freely given. A world where “all is necessarily for the best end” is a world that includes the thoughts, innovative ideas, and dreams of powerful women and it is the job of every person to make this a possibility. The #metoo movement demonstrates this wonderfully. Women who have had their safety, their pride, their sexuality, and their sense of comfort in the world are reclaiming their lives taking back their power as women. By admitting and talking about their trauma they have found strength in numbers and many of these women are being heard and cared for possibly the first time by the mass public. To heal our broken system we must empower those who have been ignored and put down so we can begin to move towards a brighter world. There have been magnificent strides to make our part of the world a better place, yet we must continuously work

towards making equality a priority, so let us not forget the important role we all individually have to play because we all make an impact.

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Empathy: Below the Surface

By: Olivia Dennison

Empathy is a concept that is constantly taken for granted and forgotten, but has played an essential role in the evolution of humans since we first began to develop. The foundation, the core of our brains is constructed by the very basis of this widely underrated word. It has created an internal voice that instills our minds with mental conversations of morality and aids us through social interactions with one another. Ironically, many people of the world are truly unaware of the meaning behind empathy even though we all experience it on a daily basis. That voice, that conscience we hear in our thoughts, is a universal aspect to humans directly stemming from empathy's importance. Now, what exactly is empathy? According to most definitions, it is the act of putting oneself in another person's shoes. However, it is more than just this. It is the ability to not only put oneself into another person's perspective, but also is the attempt to understand that person in a way that deepens one's own perspective, that opens one's mind to the stories of other people free of judgment. This concept of empathy amplifies our existence by expressing itself through a multitude of occasions throughout life.

The true core of empathy lies within the beauty of an open mind. If a person proceeds to narrow their mind to only the thoughts of their own making, their overall existence would lack the details of psychological diversity. We, as humans, need this diversity because it helps us to become who we are. It helps us

find our purpose, our meaning. A famous writer and actress by the name of Andrea Arnold once said, "I always think that if you look at anyone in detail, you will have empathy for them because you recognize them as a human being, no matter what they have done. Arnold's way of describing empathy demonstrates the importance of having an open mind by emphasizing the art of seeing people as simply other human beings. If one broadens their perspective and looks past the imperfect things a person has done, they will eventually be able to put their self in that person's shoes and attempt to see life through their personal lens. Feeling this empathy will, in turn, cause the reflection of one's own thoughts and will create a different point of view to consider.

In another aspect of empathy, the maturing of social behavior is an increasing outcome. For example, if someone is feeling depressed or upset and another person communicates with them about understanding what they are going through, they are more likely to feel less alone and isolated in their situation. This exchange can create a bond between the two people and can have a strong impact on their behavior. In a song written by Alanis Morissette entitled, "Empathy," a lyric that expresses this idea is, "Thank you for seeing me. I feel less lonely." These brief lyrics capture the strong significance of empathizing with people and portrays the long-lasting effect empathy can have on them. Knowing that there are more people in the world who have experienced similar situations can truly help them persevere through their struggles. Once people are capable of using their own empathy to help one another, a grown, more matured form of social behavior is reached.

Possessing empathy generates a stronger inner self and leads to an improved emotional life. In an article titled, *How Practicing Empathy Makes You A Better Person*, author Anna Chui states, "Empathy is the most important skill you can practice. It will lead to greater success personally and professionally and will allow you to become happier the more you practice." Because of the ability to feel and see through another person's point of view, people can obtain a state of mind where they feel stronger emotionally. This happens because when a person empathizes with another, their mind accepts the thoughts and emotions of an alternate thought process. If someone is capable of fully absorbing the emotions of the people around them and is able to put their self into a position of another person, this person's own way of thinking may be reinforced, influencing them to gain a better understanding of their own mind. Furthermore, if one is aware of the mental states of people around them, it can reveal a sense of their own self-awareness because of the relations created with other people.

It is agreed that with empathy, there comes a bias. This is a word that is defined as "the prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair" (Dictionary.com). Now, in the process of putting one's self into the position of another, humans do generally tend to gravitate their empathy toward a specific person or certain types of people in their own choosing, exhibiting the bias. However, this argument is just one side to empathy that does not represent it as whole. Of course, the beginning of empathy can start with a bias choice, but this choice only sets the base of a large tree that has the opportunities to branch out to many types

of people and situations. If someone were to empathize with a person only because they were, for example, "attractive," they may learn the qualities of their change in perspective which would yield to a vaster range of empathy. This empathy is something that is constantly readjusting within our brains, always leaking its way into our thoughts. In order to begin empathy for each other, we must let our minds choose who to empathize with and if that means to start with a bias choice, then it is just the beginning of a sprouting tree of empathy.

Ultimately, the concept of empathy is something that we are all capable of exploring. Unfortunately, an overwhelming amount of us narrow our minds to only our own thoughts without taking in consideration the perspectives of our other fellow human beings. But, with empathy, the ability to place ourselves through the point of view of another person, it opens our minds to a world of peace that is able to aid us through the interactions of others and can teach us acceptance of not just the people around us, but ourselves included. Our consciences, our internal voices that are instilled within our minds guide us through the many paths of empathy which bring us to a growing social behavior, a growing mental self, and an opening mind. This simple, yet complex word yields the basis of who we are as moral citizens and provides us with a way of living that is accepting and open to much more than what is on the surface of life.

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Be Careful What You Wish For

By: Jaida Dusel

You're not living if you can't experience the dazzling colors of life, it's a necessity, that you can't live without. My name is Isabelle-Rose. I have a medical condition called Achromatopsia, that's where all you can see are only black, white, and in some cases, gray. This makes life incredibly boring, because, well, it's hard to explain, just think about this, if you were a bird limited to one yard of screaming pasture, would you want to break into the forest? I overthink everything. I love to think. If you give me a piece of paper, I can pour my soul out into twenty paragraphs, and still need to write. I can't be an fiction author, because I don't make up stories, I tell everything that is true, and try to explain it. I tell you my deepest thoughts. My eyes are locked to the paper, and I forget about everything else on the planet. All I need is my brain, and my deep soul. When it feels like I've been writing for hours, I glance at the clock, two minutes. I take a deep, harsh breath of reality.

Tomorrow is my first day of sixth grade and I think I'm going to wear this shirt with the ruffles and...

"Isabelle! Are you picking out your clothes yet?" my mother boomed.

"Yes, Mother!" I replied.

I look at the picture of the rainbow on my ceiling, wishing that even if it was just a dream, I could see those colors I longed for; a warm, salty tear dove down my cheek onto my gray shirt (at

least I thought it was gray). *I wish, more than anything, even if it was a dream, I could see color.* I looked around at my room, each wall was a slightly different shade of gray, sometimes I inquire, what are colors? I lock my eyes on a dark tree outside, as I think about things, things you don't think about. Things like, why do citizens choose to trap themselves though the whole time expanding your vocabulary, burgeoning your brain? Language is endless. Why limit yourself to only outputting a shivering sentence once? We only have so long on this wonderful earth, why do we follow rules, or try to impress someone?

Tonight my mom demanded that I be in bed before 9:00, because I almost forgot, the first day of school is tomorrow! I climbed into bed a few minutes early because I wanted to read my favorite book. It doesn't have pictures because I hate books with color pictures. When I was a kid, I would stare in envy at the gray, black and white illustration. *I know you always want what you don't have, but, I'm an exception, well, not really. I love all my senses equally, but then again I do because I cherish every sense.*

"Time to get up sweetie!"

"Are you sure mom, already?" I should've gone to bed at 8:00! I curled my (black?) hair in momma's curling iron, I pulled on my ruffy shirt and black, stretchy yoga pants. My mother brushed my hair and put it up into a (light gray?) scrunchie. "Plop plop plop..." my feet felt heavy on the dark gray floor, like an elephant, with feet heavier than its graceful reflection. The girl as slow as a sloth, feeling no reason implied to hurry, stomped to the room humdrum to most activity seekers.. I sat down in my white, fluffy chair as the bright sun touched my forehead and black and white images flash underneath my eyelids, a pain split down my

back as I tried to imagine color. It was impossible. *I can't describe the feeling to need to do something, but you can't. You have probably felt this feeling, but this feeling, you don't remember feeling. It's like trying to imagine a new color, or dreaming that you're going to heaven. You can't think of something you don't know. It's impossible.*

And it hurts me like a knife down through my skull to say, this that would never in my hopefully many years left to the time of a great passing, will color fill my eyes. It is as if a thirsting mouth to the purest water known to the great Niagara Falls, but you could just taste its mist.

"Let's go Isabelle!" mom belted.

"I'm coming!" I boomed.

Then, I thought about what my first day would be like, what if they laugh at me? In a blink of an eye I was at my new school, my teacher greeted me. I even half smiled back. But I'm not sure about this school, I see a lot of kids who I'm pretty sure are very loud in class.

The day started moving along fine, but at recess, something unpredictable happened. *It felt like the whole world was moving in slow motion, and I remember seeing my body dropping to the ground, like a dead leaf that couldn't control it's fall.* Although, I don't remember what it felt like. I looked around at all the black and white faces around me going blurry, as it all went dark. I gathered my strength to peel open my eyes, as I looked around, but I wasn't at school anymore, I was somewhere, somewhere that felt like I was in a dream. But I was aware of myself, so, I was sure I wasn't dreaming. I found myself in a field, on a bench but wait, there was a letter.

The letter said, "Dear Isabelle-Rose, I have arranged a quest for you to prove, that you are worthy of color. Go through the door next to you, and your wish may be granted.

"Huh? I wonder what they mean." But surely, there was a three foot tall door next to me. It was some sort of wood, it was dark, but not black. I was so desperate, "Gulp!" I crawled through. I looked around, all I saw were beautiful, gray trees. I walked around before I plopped my exhausted head onto my newly manicured hands for what I think was just a few minutes. At that moment, I knew that this was the start of an adventure that would change my life forever.

Then, suddenly, I found another note, it was plastered to one of the five foot wide trees. The letter spoke, "Dear Isabelle-Rose, find the green gem hidden in these trees. You have two days to find it. Sincerely, anonymous." So, I looked and looked as it felt like time wasn't passing, but this time, that was excellent. It was the weirdest thing, it felt like I could breathe, but my chest wasn't moving, I had only a speck of encouraging hope, filling my overwhelmed body, I missed my family, I wondered if I would ever return to the life I had come to love.

"Why? Why do I have to go through torture to be truly happy? Everybody else receives it for free!" I scream at the trees.

"Maybe, you are not like everybody else? Maybe you are special. Maybe you are something everyone else is not," murmured the wind.

I devoured the gross, salty sweat that had formed on my lips.

As I found a small sparkle hidden in the dirt, my fingertips froze with excitement. I finally found it, with only one hour to

spare. There in the jungle, I waited until the time was up. When it was, a voice exclaimed, "Please trust me, put the gem on your head and you will see color." Hearing those words felt like eating the creamiest, richest chocolate I had ever tasted; was there really hope that I could see color? I placed the crystal on my head. Finally, my eyes peeled open as I saw my mother in front of me, I saw something, something I had dreamed of for years, and something that would stay with me my whole life, something called color. She was wearing an olive shirt and jeans as blue as the ocean. I could not express what I was feeling. My eyes were plastered open and tears of joy dripped onto my purple shirt. I jumped two feet high out of the hospital bed and gave my mom a giant hug like a grizzly bear. I smiled and...

"It's time to get up, honey," my mom spoke.

I opened my eyes and saw nothing but gray, black and white. I felt like I hadn't eaten in five years. I felt my heart drop to my feet and ooze out of my toes. It was the worst disappointment of my life. Be careful what you wish for.



The Irish Jig

By: Laurel Straka

You can do this, Laurel! I was in line, along with many other novice Irish dancers. The judge was a woman, with brown hair about five inches past her shoulders. I was dancing the light jig, and I honestly didn't expect to move up in levels since I was dancing in novice, and I usually only dance in beginner level two. I should have expected different.

There are five levels in Irish step dancing. Beginner One, Beginner Two, Novice, Prizewinner, and Champion. I am mostly in Beginner Two, but I have some dances in Novice too. In addition, there is adult dancing, but I usually don't count that. Two days before, I had been driving up to San Francisco in a stuffy, hot car with my friends Siri and Gemma, and of course, their mom. We were staying at their friend's house in a town about twenty or thirty minutes away from San Francisco, and sometimes getting to the church where Siri and I had our competition was a struggle due to traffic.

After we had curled our hair, eaten breakfast, gotten dressed, and piled ourselves into the tiny car, we arrived at our destination. Before I knew it, we were all lined up in front of the judge. My heart was like a drum, beating so loudly it was making my whole body tremble. My clenched fists were sweaty, as if I had just washed my hands and forgotten to dry them off. I could almost taste the judge's coffee, making my mouth water. I was seventh in line, which means I would dance third because you

dance three at a time. Before I knew it, it was my time to dance. I moved up to the stage, feeling like a mouse cornered by multiple cats, far away from my comfy home in which I dwell. Once the music started playing, I could barely keep my feet still.

I danced the best I could, but I still didn't think I'd move up since I was in a higher level. After that, I was done with my dances, so I decided to sit and watch Siri dance until the results of my dances were posted. Then, after I had watched almost all of Siri's dances, I asked Gemma if she thought the results were posted yet.

"I don't think so.....," she responded.

"But we could go look in case they have!" exclaimed Gemma.

"Okay, sounds good!" I replied.

"Let's go ask your mom first though and make sure it's okay with her."

"Alright!" sang Gemma.

Then, we happily skipped to find Wendy, to ask her if it was a good time to see if the results were posted.

"Okay," she replied, "but don't be gone too long, Siri has a dance soon and I don't want you guys to miss it!" she hastily added, before we could bound away.

"We won't!" we cheerfully sang in unison.

Finally, we flew out of the room, racing each other to the dark, musty room where they posted the results on the plain, gray wall. Once we reached our destination, we hurried to the wall where we saw a group of people huddled around multiple pieces of paper.

"I hope I move up!" I whispered.

"I hope you do too!" Gemma happily whispered back.

I walked up to the group of people, not expecting anything special. Next, something truly special did happen, and I was very glad of it. My heart was beating so loudly, I swear everyone else could hear it. But if they could, they weren't paying any attention to it. I shifted my eyes to the paper that said "Novice". Under that, there were many papers with words scribbled on them. I pushed through the crowd, so I could get a closer look at the blurs on the paper. I struggled in the crowd, each one of them as anxious as I to see their results.

Then, I saw it. The paper said **Novice Light Jig** in **bold** so it was easily seen by eager eyes sweeping the wall for results. I zoomed in on my vision, my eyes getting pushed to their limit. I looked to first place. Not me. Not this time. My heart dropped down to my toes, and my back drooped. I was disappointed, even though I had known deep down in my heart that I wouldn't move up to Prizewinner. Then, I realized I could still move up. There was still a chance I could get second, or even third! Though a slight chance, I decided I would risk being defeated and overrun. I slowly uncurled from my disappointed stance, and took a second look. It was as if my body was teasing me, making me wait. My eyes were a fox, waiting to pounce on the words that would announce clearly for all to see, either my victory, or my defeat.

My head was slowly moving upward by an invisible force, either pure motivation, or my impatience to see if I would be allowed a victory for once. Either one, I could not tell; but I think the second thought would be more like me. As I looked to the paper, I thought there was a mistake, maybe a typo. Maybe Lauren Starka was the true prize winner champ, and they had

mistaken her for me. But there it was, clear as day. I had moved up to prizewinner! I read it again and again, still not believing my eyes.

Was I truly prizewinner? Was that actually my name? Were my eyes just playing tricks on me? I called Gemma over, who I do admit I had completely forgotten about during those few seconds, or was it hours? It surely felt like hours to me. She gasped in excitement and, unbelieving her eyes to, asked me if I saw what she did.

"I think I do, if you see my name up there on the wall in second place!"

We hi-fived each other, and ran as fast as we could to break the news. I was so dizzy with excitement though, I had to stop a few times to catch my breath and stop the world from spinning. *Prizewinner here we come!* I thought. *Watch out ladies and gentlemen, because you're about to eat my dust!*

I will never forget the extraordinary day I had on February 17th, 2018. I also learned a valuable lesson, along with my victory. I learned to never doubt yourself, and to always try your best. I also learned never to give up, even in the most difficult situations. And even if I didn't move up, I would have learned a good lesson. Of course, this story would be quite different, and I wouldn't have that nice medal hanging on my wall. I am almost certain I would have tried my best, and that's all that really matters; to try your best, and enjoy the process. That's really the only reason that I continue to do feises (fesh-is), because I enjoy them! I also hope that you learned a valuable lesson, and always try your best, no matter the circumstance you are in.

How Animals Saved My Life

By: Maila Andersen

Rachel Jamieson sat on her porch swing sipping fresh-squeezed lemonade. She hummed her favorite song "Sorry" by Justin Bieber and tapped her feet to the beat of the music. Rachel, her mom, and her little brother, Matthew, had moved to New York City a few years earlier to, as her mother said, "Start a new life," after Rachel's father had passed away from a heart attack. Even though Rachel's father was always silent, Rachel felt more comfortable around him than her mother because it wasn't a cold silence but very warm indeed. Rachel missed her father so much that sometimes at night she cried into her pillow before going to sleep. She really missed her best friend, Layla. Even though she had been in New York for some time now, Rachel hadn't made any friends yet, so there was nothing to do but swing.

"Rachel," her mom said coming onto the porch, "Look at this flyer I got from the animal shelter a few blocks away. They need volunteers to help with the animals. I thought that might be a fun activity for you to do during the summer. Maybe you can make friends and it may be fun." Rachael knew she couldn't argue because she knew when her mom began a sentence with, "I thought that..." she was actually telling her to do it. "Ok" Rachel sighed and that was the end of that.

The next day Rachel's mom drove her to the shelter. When they got there, Rachel took a deep breath, told herself she was going to be fine and followed her mom into the shelter. When they

walked in, they saw a lady with shoulder-length blonde hair, sparkling green eyes and glasses, sitting behind a desk scattered with file papers. She was surrounded by dogs of all colors, shapes and sizes.

A German Shepard laid at her feet while a Chihuahua scrambled up on the desk to greet Rachel and her mother. "Hello, my name is Kim. May I help you?" the lady said.

"Yes," replied Rachel's mother as she handed Kim the flyer. "My daughter Rachel would like to volunteer in this program." "Very well," Kim said, "and how old is she?"

"Eleven," Rachel's mom answered. Kim stood and pointed to the hallway. "You'll need to talk to Jamie. She is in charge of all the volunteers. Her office is the last door on the right. I'll buzz her and let her know you are coming." Rachel followed her mother into a dark room where a round woman with long brown hair and glasses was sitting behind a desk. A single chair and potted plant were the only other furniture in the room. There were no windows and a desk lamp was the only light. "Hello, I'm Jamie." the woman said. "Melissa," Rachel's mother said, extending her hand. Jamie sat down and Rachel's mother stood on the other side of the desk. "Hello. Kim tells me y'all wanna volunteer, do ya? How lovely!" Jamie said, "Just fill out this form and y'all will be ready. Training starts on Monday morning at nine." Jamie said. Rachel's mother read over the safety form, filled in the empty lines and finally, after what probably was only twenty minutes but seemed like an hour, signed her name. She handed Jamie the form and smiled.

Monday morning Jamie greeted them. She led them along each aisle giving Rachel instructions on how to take care of the animals, including what to feed them. Rachel couldn't wait to get

started. After her orientation, she was finally able to work alongside the other volunteers. She bathed and brushed the dogs, fed the cats and fish, exercised the birds by letting them out of their cages and allowing them to fly around the room for a few times, and cleaned out the turtle tank. Before she left, she said goodbye to Jamie. She heard a voice say "Bye, Jamie!" "Hello," Rachel said to a Parrot. The bird copied her again. Rachel laughed. The parrot laughed. "Name's Sheila," said Jamie. Rachel's first day of training was over. Jamie walked Rachel and the other volunteers to the lobby where the parents were waiting. "See you on Wednesday," Jamie said. That night Rachel took out her father's picture from her top dresser drawer. She stared fondly at him caressing his face with her hand. "I miss you," she said, "I wish you were here right now. The move has been rough even for me, your tough cookie. I guess my natural glow hasn't attracted anyone yet. No one wants to be my friend." She placed her father's photo back into the drawer and lay in her bed. She tried to sleep, thinking about the animals and how much fun she had. Her favorite was the rainbow parrot, Sheila, who copied everything Rachel said.

Tuesday felt longer than a regular day. Rachel wanted it to be over. She couldn't wait till tomorrow. After a long day in which minutes seemed like hours, Wednesday finally came. Rachel bounded into the shelter that day, leaving her mom and little brother to catch up as they trailed behind her. Kim looked over the rim of her glasses when she saw them walk in. She was talking on the phone, so she waved her hand towards the hallway motioning them to go to Jamie's office. When they reached the door, Jamie said, "Good morning, please sit down." This time there were two chairs. Rachel and her mom sat down. "We would love for you to

keep volunteering with everyone else. Did you like it? Would you do it again?" Rachel beamed and nodded. She left the shelter crowned in her glory. Her mother, who was proud as could be, took Rachel and her brother, Matthew, out to ice cream. They celebrated all good stuff with ice cream. It was their father's favorite. Rachel got Lemon Lime sherbet and Matthew got Vanilla. Rachel felt proud and happy. She was surrounded by her loved ones.

After three dreadful days in which the storm clouds never seemed to pass, it was the first day of volunteering. When Rachel got there, the volunteers were getting split into groups to work with different animals. The teams were divided. Drew Maxwell and Laura Jane were one team, Betty and Annie Mcrae, the sisters, were another and Rachel, Ava Johnson and Jake O'Connor were the last. Next, Jamie assigned each group animals to work with. Rachel's group got cats. Each person in the group had a job. Rachel's job was to clean the litter boxes. There were twenty seven cats and twenty seven litter boxes. Rachel got twenty seven plastic bags, a mask and gloves and set off to work. She had just cleaned the fifteenth litter box when Ava, who was sitting next to her petting a cat, decided to introduce herself. "Hi, I'm Ava," she said, "I think you already knew that but anyway I'm telling you just in case you forgot." Rachel giggled and a small smile began to creep onto Ava's face. Since Ava had a way of making Rachel laugh with her good sense of humor, Rachel was sure she would be a good friend. They became friends fast.

It was three weeks later, and Ava and Rachel's job was to clean out the litter boxes again. Just as the girls began to work, Jake came over to see what the girls were doing. "Hey," he said

startling both girls and causing them to jump. "Hi," said the girls in unison. The girls looked at each other and laughed. Kim came into the room looking panicked. "What's wrong?" the girls asked.

"We're having a community dance to raise money for the shelter and to try to get some pets adopted," Kim said almost crying, "and we don't have anybody to make the posters."

"We will!" the girls shouted. "Really?!" Kim perked up. The girls nodded. "Can I help, too?" Jake asked. "Sure," they agreed. Kim thanked them and walked away with a look of relief on her face. "Hey," Rachel whispered to Ava and Jake, "give me your phone numbers and we can meet at my house one day to work on the posters. Okay?" Ava and Jake nodded. They wrote their phone numbers on the back of the poster board.

On Monday Rachel asked her mom if Ava and Jake could come over. "Sure," her mom said. Rachel phoned them to say they could come over. About an hour later, Ava's mom dropped her off and shortly after, Jake rode up on his bike. Before they started working, they had a quick snack of grapes and granola bars. Then they got to work. They finished all four posters at six o'clock. Then Rachel's mom drove them around town to hang the posters on poles or trees. "You kids did great on the posters. Kim will be so proud and happy," said Rachel's mom putting the hanging supplies in the back of the car.

The day of the dance rolled around soon enough. When Rachel arrived, there were about two hundred people at the dance. Rachel looked around the room and saw Jake standing with Ava by the drinks bar. She wandered shyly over to them. "Hey, guys do you wanna get drinks?" she asked, with a smile on her face. "Uh, er,..." Jake stuttered "Sure." Ava laughed. They got fruit punch.

When they were finished with their drinks, the music started. "Wanna dance?" Jake offered. "Sure!" They danced on the dance floor until they collapsed. "I'm thirsty. I'm gonna get a drink," Jake said, exhausted. "Do you want one, too?" He asked. "Sure, Ok!" the girls replied. In a few minutes Jake was back. He handed Rachel and Ava their glasses of lemonade. "Let's go sit down," Jake said. They all walked over to the bleachers. Once they were all settled, Rachel started crying from joy, and thought about how proud her father was because she had made such good friends. Both of her friends had their arms around her. A content smile crept onto Rachel's face. This was a summer she would never forget. For this summer was the summer that animals saved her life.

The Celebration of Carvahal

By: Owen Peterson

After the first big snow, when almost nothing is brown or green, the holiday of Carvahal takes place. Each person receives seven items of extreme value from their family. The gifts are practical and useful; ones that a person could use for a long time. This is the story of how Carvahal began and, how two people found happiness and family again.

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Hawthorn, breathing heavily, hid under a stump of a long-rotted spruce. He heard the high gravelly, deep-throated scream of a rarely seen mountain lion. It sounded like a woman screaming in pain and torment. He gripped his bow tighter, a slightly recurve flatbow. A soft leather quiver on his back, belted around his waist and shoulder contained 7 crow-fletched arrows. Both of the objects had served him for many years. Hawthorn had been on his own ever since his small village had burned in a raid from the people of the Far East. He waited in silence for the beast to find him, he knew it was only a matter of time. His blood-soaked pants would make sure of it, not his blood but the blood of the caribou he had just begun to butcher.

Down by the creek he had felt the presence of an animal behind him as he was butchering his kill. He only had seconds to turn around to see the mountain lion, only 50 yards away. He slid down the side of the nearby ravine, grabbing branches of small shrubs, anything to slow his descent. When his feet landed on flat

ground he ran like he never had, and never would again. He saw the spruce log and hid, knowing he could not outrun the cat.

The growl came again this time closer. Then nothing. The stalk, he thought with grim certainty, would be silent, as would the killing strike. He was not disappointed. The beast jumped over the log and turned with the speed of a storm toward him. He knocked an arrow. He let himself see the shot, following the arrow along the shaft to the lion's chest. He felt sure of the shot as his fingers slipped of the waxed string. His arrow's path was true, embedding itself into the hide and muscle of the cat's chest, up to the fletchings. One last scream was torn from the animal. Slowly it came to rest facing East with the sun almost midway in the sky. Hawthorn's heart was still thumping inside his chest but he felt the calm starting to roll over him. The calm that comes when one is safe again. Even when the danger is still there in front of you and yet seemingly gone.

He thought of what he must do next. He would honor the tradition that every animal killed would be used to its full extent no matter its history. Humans had done much worse and it was not right to blame when your kind should be blamed to the same extent. He had just started to skin the lion when he heard the almost imperceptible noise of a small branch cracking. He immediately turned from his work, knife in hand but almost as quickly realized, there was no need to worry. It was a boy of about 13 years. He did not carry much; just a small but well made, powerful bow; a quiver filled with hawk-feather fletched arrows, and a pack slung over his shoulder. One that must have carried all the rest he owned.

"My name is Red Hawk, I mean you no harm," said the new comer in a hesitant manner as if not sure what to expect.

"Why are you here in the wilderness alone?" replied Hawthorn, wiping off the blade of the knife and sheathing it as he did so.

"The village I lived in is no longer anything but ash and scorched rock. Pillaged by raiders. Set a-flame when almost nothing remained. The raiders have weapons like none I have ever seen; balls of metal shooting from a metal tube. Not as quick to reload as our bows but still able to cause an enormous amount of damage," Red Hawk answered.

"That too is my story. The men of the East raided my village and left me to fend for myself...until now," informed Hawthorn, a sad edge to his voice.

"What do you mean *until now*? Will you let me join you?" inquired Red Hawk only daring to hope.

"If you wish but you must pull your weight on this journey, as I will," answered Hawthorn, laying down the terms of their partnership.

"I accept and hope I will not hinder you" replied Red Hawk eagerly, sure not to miss his chance. The dark, cold winter was fast approaching, he stood a much better chance with a partner.

After many hours of butchering and hanging the meat, the two set up camp. Using spruce boughs and small saplings they built a medium-sized dome shelter against a large spruce. By that time a tinge of pink had come into the sky. Taking out his bow drill, Red Hawk started a fire close to the front of the shelter. He got out the heart of the caribou and placed it on a spruce board so he could season it with some herbs and shantrel.

They gathered for dinner, not saying much as they ate, just the occasional comment on the meal. The sun had gone well below the horizon before they went to sleep in there small shelter. Hawthorn, not a heavy sleeper, woke up early the next morning. Still dark, he could see seven stars not obscured by the large, winter clouds. He woke Red Hawk to see this. Rubbing the sleep from his eyes he slowly looked up to see why his new companion had woken him. Upon seeing the stars, Red Hawk had an inspiration.

"Hawthorn, those clouds are bringing winter, they are also bringing change. Since both our lives have so completely changed we should think of a new tradition... Let us celebrate by the giving of seven gifts, one for each star. What do you think?"

"A holiday for two people. One to recognize that much is changing but to give thanks to another," Hawthorn agreed. "Seven is a good number. There were seven arrows in my quiver when I killed the lion." he added almost as an afterthought.

"So let us sleep until the sun rises then gather what we will give and enjoy the new snow if the morning brings it," suggested Red Hawk.

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In the morning there was the utter silence, as it is when the first snow falls. Reflected light from the snow beamed into their faces. Later, being the thing that woke them up to prepare for the celebration, they gave it the name Carvahal - first snow.

The Race Goes Wrong

By: Lincoln Paff

"WHAM!!" The most excruciating pain I had ever felt, like someone set fire to my leg. How could I have hurt myself this early in the day? And, why? Thoughts swam in my head like an ocean of fury.

"Why!?" I moaned, "Noo!"

It was early morning, I had just gotten to school. Shoot, I thought, just a second ago I realized that today was Freshwater Field Day. Although I was not prepared, I was extremely excited, I had been anticipating this day for the whole year. How could I have forgot? As I entered class, my teacher, Mr. Eagle, mentioned something about another race. I sat down at my desk and I decided, why not? It would not hurt if I did another race. But I had no idea how terribly mistaken I was.

As my class and I walked out onto the track where the races would be held, a small voice in the back of my head asked me, "*Are you sure you want to do this?*" I ignored this feeling. It was just practice for the remaining running races. I thought there would be less people out on the track but there were more than thirty-five kids. The cold morning breeze slapped playfully against my face. There was a sharp scent in the air which I realized as fresh cut grass, this day was perfect for running. I went up to the front trying to get a prime spot so that I could get a head start in the beginning. My chest felt as if someone was beating it as hard as they could with hammers. *This was the moment!* I had to get first place!

“READY!?” The parent volunteer roared, “GO!”

There we went, it was all under control. I easily past the person in fifth place, likewise the one in forth. All I had to do was get past the person in third and second. I shot past the person in third. *Only second and first*, I thought. Wait, I knew who that was! It was my friend, Eli. There was a fair distance between me and him. Excitement pumped through my veins, this was the time, I could get first place!

I quickened my pace knowing that Eli was a speedrunner, which means he was fast, but not a long distance runner. I knew I could outrun him if the race was just a little smaller but as I looked up I saw the end of the race, it was dangerously close. As I rounded the fourth and last corner I realized there was no way I could win this race if I did not speed up, I sprinted as fast as I could, my leg muscles screaming in protest, all of the sudden Eli cuts in front of me. I stumble, trip, then fall.

“WHAM!” The pain was unbearable, like someone had took a white hot dagger to my knee. I knew with one look at my knee that there would be a scar there for a long time.

“AHH!” I screamed.

I sat there on the track for what seemed like hours, moaning, hot tears of grief rolling down my cheeks. How did I hurt myself this early in the day? There were so many other games today, how could I ruin all of those activities due to a fall? I was so immersed in thoughts that I did not notice Eli trying to get me to get off the ground. Zayne, the winner of some of the fourth grade races, was also there, but their words were muffled. It felt as if reality was distant. I sneaked a glance at my knee, it was crimson, blood was pouring down my leg, small streams starting down my

knee. To add to that, the pain was not cooling. Finally, Eli pulled me to my feet. It was as if I had just regained consciousness.

"Are you okay?" Zayne asked with a hint of uncertainty in his voice. I shake my head. *No way*, I thought.

I knew at the very moment the race started that I should not race and it would ruin many weeks of my life. That voice in my head was right. My lesson that I learned was when you can't decide what to do, follow your gut feeling. I also learned, life gives you scars if you don't listen to it.

The Tournament

By: Adrienne Downs

"Wake up!" my dad said.

I woke up once my dad left my room, and I was exhausted. It was a Saturday and I had to wake up at 6:30 A.M. I hurried and picked out my outfit. What I wore was a blue disc golf shirt with a dreamcatcher on it, and I wore some black leggings. Once I got dressed I hurriedly grabbed my water bottle and my blue disc golf bag, because my dad and I thought we were going to be late to my disc golf tournament. We rushed out the door and got in the car.

All I could think about was what could go wrong today.

I was so nervous. What if I embarrass myself? I thought. My dad and I soon arrived at Chevron and we hurried into the store to get some snacks. I got M and M's and an energy bar. We actually made it to the tournament on time. I was excited and nervous at the same time. My dad was super glad that I wanted to compete in this tournament.

"You go practice putting," my dad said.

Once my dad paid for me, I realized that I was the only youth there. I wished that another kid was there, but it wasn't too bad. We played one round at the Pumphouse and one round at Boprey. When I played at the Pumphouse all of the leaves were orange and yellow. I love the sound of crunching fall leaves as I walk. There was also a nice breeze. It is fascinating to watch the disc fly through the air gracefully. I did not beat anyone at the Pumphouse, but I did beat one adult at Boprey, and I could not believe it. I was so proud of myself, and my dad was too.

Everyone was super nice to me and thought it was cool that I was a youth who liked to play disc golf. I love to ride around on the golf carts at Boprey and feel the wind blow onto my face. My dad and I got a private disc golf cart because a lady took ours. It had a bunch of American flags on it and a heater. The inside was mostly wood. Once we were done playing at Boprey it was time for awards, and the raffle.

I won lots of cool prizes. The first prize I won was a black bag with some water, a disc, and some stickers. The disc was blue with some goddesses dancing on it because I was playing at the Goddess Games. It had some other things in it too. My dad bought me a disc that was white with a tree on it. At the end of the day, awards were handed out. I got a bouquet of flowers that were yellow, maroon, and green. I also got two more discs. The reason I got those were because the lady hosting the competition was super happy that I was a youth who competed. We also did a raffle and my dad bought some raffle tickets. We didn't win anything but a nice man gave me two bracelets that he won. One of them was blue and purple with a silver heart charm, and the other one was gold and pink, with a gold leaf charm. He won most of the prizes because he spent one hundred dollars on the raffle. After that we went home.

I had a lot of fun and I will definitely compete next year. Doing this definitely makes me want to practice more. I got a lot less nervous after a while and my dad loves that I want to compete again. In conclusion, I will try to improve my throws and I can't wait to compete again next year.

The Minstrel

By: Caleb Brown

I once was passing through a town and happened across a minstrel who played the harmonica. He bore a sign which said "Instruments sold here." I was eying one of his harmonicas when he said, "Do you want to hear the story of Saint Bernard the minstrel?" I having no interest in such tales told him that I just wanted to buy a harmonica, but right before I could take the harmonica he spied a group of kids and said "Don't give thy flak, but cut me some slack as I am a minstrel through and through." With that he sat down and started telling them a story.

"There once was a town, this very town in fact which was plagued by ants. They were everywhere, and they did all sorts of monstrous things; they drank the holy water, ate all the food and crawled on everything! There were so many of them that you had to wipe them off your feet on the doormat before you came in!" With this comment all the little children giggled. I had no interest in such tales normally but the sheer talent of the minstrel wound me within the tale he weaved and I stood rooted to the spot. The minstrel continued, "The lord was so distraught that he offered ten pounds of gold to anyone who could get rid of just half the ants in the town. So many exterminators came through with poison and vinegar to kill the ants, but none succeeded for the ants had already tasted poison and no longer succumbed to that trick.

Then one day a young minstrel named Bernard came through the town and noticed the fliers advertising for an

exterminator. These posters gave him an idea and he thought to himself *this could be a test of my skill for if I can entrance a tone-deaf ant surely I can entertain a mere knight or peasant*. So then he headed off to the lord's house to take on this enormous task. But when he arrived the guards just laughed at him and teased him for even attempting to get rid of the ants, so Bernard played his harmonica. Its sound was so beautiful that the guards broke into tears and they let him pass out of kindness, although they knew quite well that there was no way a penniless minstrel could succeed where so many others had failed.

When he told the lord of his goal the lord obliged out of sheer hopelessness because as he said, "You may do this task but if you do not succeed I shall fall upon my sword and die for in heaven there are no ants." And so Bernard went to the town square and spied a hole in the wall of a house, he then sat down and played his harmonica three times in front of the hole. At first nothing happened, but then ten seconds later a deep rumbling was heard. The rumbling got louder and louder, simultaneously the walls of the houses bulged outwards and the walls pulsed as if alive! Then the walls burst and the ants poured out and flooded the square. Everyone fled except for a single knight rooted to the spot by fear, feeling that something was to happen, Bernard grabbed the knight's sword with one hand and raised his harmonica to his lips. Then he played, suddenly all the ants stopped moving and turned towards him transfixed by his heavenly music.

Now another wall started quaking and as the ones before it had, it burst but this time instead of a torrent of ants pouring out, out shot a giant ant queen 2 ft in diameter at the middle and 8 ft long! Bernard stopped playing and brought down the knight's

sword on the queen ant whose head rolled off into a nearby gutter! Sensing that their queen was gone, the ants all spread out into the wilderness in an instant, these ants never returned and not a single one was ever seen again in the town.

Upon seeing this, the town rejoiced and there was feasting and merriment. Just as the lord finished paying Bernard, the silversmith rushes up, his heavy apron flapping in the wind, while still several yards away he begins saying, "I heard about what you did in the town today! Thank you so much for getting rid of the ants! Please take this harmonica as payment in addition to the gold offered by my lord," and with that he handed Bernard a harmonica made of the finest silver that shone like the moon. Bernard refused, but the silversmith insisted, so he took the harmonica. Then content Bernard set off to ply his trade at another town.

One day he saw a poor minstrel dressed in rags with only a small wood flute that squeaked when it was played, having mercy on the poor minstrel, Bernard handed him the harmonica made by the silversmith. The poor minstrel was shocked at this but still gladly accepted the harmonica. The minstrel paused and told them, "I was that minstrel/" with this last comment he whipped out a harmonica and began playing. He played for about a half a minute before he stopped and told the children to *run along now* then he handed me my harmonica and apologized for the wait.

Just as I began to walk away I realized something this harmonica was made of metal, the one that I bought had been made of wood! Then I looked down and realized another thing: the harmonica wasn't made of any old metal it was made of smooth polished silver that shone like the moon. I turned around and hollered "wait!" but the minstrel had already disappeared into the

crowd. Then I realized I had been chosen to bear this great gift and that it must continue to be used to help others and someday I would also in the fashion of the men before me pass it on to a worth person.

Taking my Morning Run was Scariest than I Thought

By: Mach Albers

Hi, my name is Jack. And today I'm gonna tell you a story of when my friends and I took our "morning run". But what did we really do?

It all started when Mom told me a story of when she was my age, and she saw something orange covering the entire river bar. (Which by the way, she won't speak of.) Now, when I first heard this story I thought Mom was pulling my leg, like she always does.

Before high school started, I wanted to enjoy my summer vacation. "What are we doing this weekend?" I asked Mom.

"Just staying home," Mom replied with a smile.

"Yess!" I exclaimed.

"How come?" she asked.

"Because I was wondering if James, and Ervin can come over," I said.

"That sounds good," Mom said with a bigger, more joyful smile.

"Sweet thanks, Mom!" I yelled behind me as I ran for the phone.

I couldn't wait for Friday! When my friends showed up, we went outside for some activities: Bike riding, Skateboarding, a game of basketball, and we even got to watch the new movie:

Black Panther. And then bedtime had snuck up on us. So we got ready for bed and told scary stories.

The first thing that popped up in my head was the story Mom told me when I was a little younger.

I told that story to my friends, with every detail I could remember. I'm pretty sure James was into it, but Ervin on the other hand, didn't believe me. I couldn't tell if he was faking or he was just being that way.

"Is that true?" James asked.

"Of course not!" Ervin exclaimed, trying not to believe it.

"Shhh. Yes it's true. My mom said it's alllllll true." I said trying to bring out the 'alllllll'.

"Where did this take place?" Ervin said with an accusing voice.

"Near Somes Bar." I replied.

"What do they look like?" Ervin asked again.

"Mom won't speak of it." I answered.

There was silence for a moment. Then James broke it, "Why don't we take a look?"

"That's a dumb idea," Ervin chimed in.

"Not really. I know how to drive Mom's stick shift," I suggested.

"You guys are crazy. Aliens don't even exist," Ervin said with a smirk.

"You scared?" James said with a smirk in return.

"Of made up creatures?" Ervin laughed like it was a joke. Then realized we were serious. "Of course not," he cleared his throat.

We snuck out of my room at around 1:30am. I grabbed the Honda Civic keys that were hanging up by the door. I didn't want to drive around in a minivan, and on top of that I needed to practice with the Honda, since it had a clutch. I got in the driver's seat and James called shotgun. Ervin had to crawl in the back.

Luckily, the car was pretty quiet, so it didn't wake up the dogs. I shifted into first gear and pulled out of the driveway.

We got to the highway, but I had a sick feeling in my stomach.

"You know, we don't have to do this," Ervin said.

"I know," I said hesitating.

"Let's go then, press on it!" James shouted with a smile.

I shifted to second and turned left, towards Somes Bar.

We finally made it to *Spink's Ranch*. That's where Mom went to her summer camp and saw things covering the river bar. I turned off my headlights and turned down the volume of the radio. If we got caught trespassing with my mom's car, what would I say to the police? "Sorry officer, my buddies and I stole my mom's car to go look for aliens." Yeah, I don't think so.

I parked the car near the road but far enough away to keep it hidden from the highway. "Ok, whatever you do, don't get caught," I ordered.

"Aye, aye cap'm," Ervin said mockingly.

We made our way down to the river bar, and hid behind a log the size of the bus. I climbed up to the top of the debris and took a peek.

I quickly climbed back down. I slipped and almost fell flat on my face.

"C'mon, check this out," I said with wide eyes.

We all started climbing the bus-like log. Once we made it to the top we took a peek. I saw orange hazard suits covering the entire river bar. All lined up, like ants marching one by one.

There was a quick sound behind us. We all instantly turned around. None of us had flashlights, which was pretty stupid of us to leave behind. But at least I had brought my phone. I quickly grabbed it out from my pocket. I turn on the light and hoped to not see anything.

There was a little alien in a hazard suit, about the size of my two-year-old sister. At first I couldn't see its face, but then I walked a little closer and put my flashlight to its head. I barely got a glimpse before it shrieked at the top of its lungs (if it had lungs). We all quickly covered our ears.

"Run!" I shouted. But it was too late. I saw a light turn on in the distance, a house window. *Oh, snap*, was as all I could think. I grabbed James's arm and turned him around. We ran straight for the river bar.

We pushed our way through the tall orange life forms. By this time I had seen headlights coming behind us, and the extraterrestrial life forms were watching us. We ran for the river. Suddenly I felt a hand grab my arm, so I turned around thinking it was Ervin. Instead it was a tall alien looking down on me. I froze. Then I felt many more arms grab me. I looked around and saw Ervin and James being dragged away from the water. I kept thinking, *Aw, man. Aw, man. Aw, man. Aw, man. I'm dead. I'm dead. I'm dead. I'm dead. I'm dead. I'm dead.*

I couldn't take it, I wasn't just gonna disappear away from earth with these...these things. I reached for the nearest orange

helmet I saw, and ripped it off. The alien screamed before turning to dust and collapsing. I looked in shock of what I had just done, and so had all the other orange hazard suits. Ervin and James froze.

“Rip off their helmets!” I shouted at the top of my lungs. Neither one of them hesitated. I saw bodies drop faster than you can sing Mary Poppins Super-cali-fragil-istic-expi-ali-docious. Anyways, we were winning the fight. We ran back to the woodlands. Luckily, we were far from the headlights earlier, but we were also far from the car which seemed our only way out of this hell hole.

I quickly ran to the opposite side of the river bank and told my friends to follow me. But there wasn’t a house at all. The only house we found was a half-burnt cabin. So where was the light coming from?

Once we found the car, we quickly got in. The radio was still on...oops.

We turned off the car half way down the driveway so we wouldn’t wake the dogs. I shifted to neutral and coasted the rest of the way.

When we parked, we snuck back inside, up the stairs, through the hall, past the bathroom, and made it to my room.

If there’s anything I learned that day then it was to never borrow your mom’s car and leave it on for an hour or two. Because the next day Mom used the car, and it died before she even left the driveway. So I lost my privilege to have anybody over at my house for a while. Which sucked, but at least I could go to other people's houses. One of my questions, even to this day is, what was that light I saw? Did Ervin and James see it? What about the two

headlights? These are questions I might never find the answer to. And if there's one thing I would change, it would be to remember to record the whole thing.

"Whoa, that was close."

"Yeah, tell me about it."

"A little bit too close."

"Boys, you should be sleeping." Mom said walking into the room.

I looked at my clock. 4:23 am. "We just got done taking a morning run," I said with a smile.

I Hate Spiders

By: Teryn Madison

7:30 AM Sunday in December:

Cold, cold, cold, cold, cold. That's the only thing I can think right now. Well, other than, *Oh my gosh, What should I wear?! I have to do dishes and wash my clothes and—"Owww!"* I wince and look at my foot. I had just stepped on a tack!

"You okay?" My grandma asks with a concerned look on her face.

"Yeah, I'll live," I said. I had just gotten done with putting my long hair in a ponytail.

After an hour of cleaning, washing, scrubbing, rinsing, and sweeping, I was all tuckered out.

"Can you pull out all of the loose clothes from behind my dresser, Teryn?" Grandma asks.

"Yeah, sure. Can I get to the end of this chapter in my book? I'll stop right after that."

"Yes, you may, but hurry up. I want to get it done before your Grandpa Bub comes home."

I get to the end of the chapter and put my book marker there. I walk over to grandma's dresser and started pulling out a bunch of clothes that I had never seen before.

"Where do you get all of these clothes? I've never seen any of them before in my entire life!"

"I just pick up things my size here and there that look nice. Now, go put those dirty clothes in the wash," was my grandma's reply.

"Okay."

I get back inside and head straight for my book.

"You're wonderful, Teryn."

"I know," I say as she hugs me and we exchange *I love yous*.

There are a couple of strands of hair in my face, so I use my middle and index fingers to tuck the hair behind my ear. As my two fingers are behind my ear, I see my sister, Sweet-Pea, brushing her hair and making faces in the mirror. Grandma is taking a drink of ice water out of her blue water bottle. I hear the clink of ice on ice as she puts the cap back on. The smell of pot-roast in the crockpot makes my saliva get thick as I chew the spearmint gum in my mouth. I bring down my hand from my ear, and I see a spider! A big, black one.

"Aaaahhhh! It's a spider! It's a spider! DIE! DIE! KILL IT!" I'm yelling this as I run to the back door. Grandma has already smashed the spider with her shoe and is hugging me. Sweetpea is laughing a lot, and grandma chuckles a little.

"Wow! That was so scary!" I said.

"No, it was funny watching you yell 'die, die, die, kill it, and then see you running the the back door screaming," stated Sweetpea.

"Well, you're alright now, so go read that oh-so-great-book of yours," says grandma as she grabs a magazine. I sit on the couch and read my book. Sweet-pea has the WiiU, and it gets quiet for the first time all morning.

A few minutes later, Grandpa Bub comes home. He stops, and looks at us. "Well, what did I miss?" The three of us look at

each other and start laughing. I stop laughing and look at Grandma.

“I will never get behind your dresser again. I hate spiders!”

My Wallflower

By: Taylor Hawthorne

"I got this for you. You're just like Ponyboy, at least in your heart you are. You'll understand. I know. Okay? You'll just really love this book," Michael quietly murmured to me. From this point, I knew he thought about me. I knew that he cared, and I loved him for it.

It was my birthday, about four years ago, and we were all at my apartment complex during that particular time of my life. My family who lived together, and a couple of my friends, came together for a little birthday gathering. The most important person in attendance, outside of family, was Michael. Now, let me tell you about Michael. He was my best friend, and was one of the greatest people I've ever been blessed enough to meet. His eyes were like fireflies on a crisp, cool night. His smile was a sparkling twilight sky. He was such a beautiful, graceful and eloquent human being. I don't ever believe I could truly put him into words. He was something of a wallflower, but because of one of his favorite novels, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, by Stephen Chbosky, he liked the way he was described. "You see things. You keep quiet about them, and you understand. You're a wallflower," which was Michael's favorite quote in the book. Although he was somewhat of a wallflower, he could fight. Fight for what he believed in and what he thought was right. He never put anyone down, and he always said he'd get out of that deadbeat town we grew up in. He promised me we'd go to college together. He'd wait that one year

for me, save up some money. We'd rule the world, and lead a successful life. Full of culture and education and happiness. He could make me see it. To believe in myself and him, too. Never, have I met a boy so personally influential.

It was my birthday, as I've told, and everyone had a little something to give me. May it be a card or a little trinket with the small amounts of money they scrounged just to show some love to me. Michael asked me if I minded him giving me my gift from him last. I had no issue, just more confused than anything. After the treats were dished, and people started to scuttle off into their own business, when my birthday bash seemed to have ended, that is when Michael gave me his gift. "Close your eyes. Keep em' shut! I can tell if you peek. I know you'll try, too. I think you're going to like this," Michael gushed as I sat with my hands open. Have you ever shut your eyes so tight, you swear you can see patterns and shapes, maybe even a few colors dance around in the darkness? That's what I did, and that's exactly what I saw. I felt a small, and slightly dense rectangular thing get placed into my open palms. I opened my eyes and grinned. A book, he had gotten me a book.

"I got this for you. You're just like Ponyboy, at least in your heart you are. You'll understand. I know. Okay? You'll just really love this book," he spoke in a quiet and gently stuttered speech. I understood that this was very meaningful to him then.

The novel that was given to me was *The Outsiders*, by S.E Hinton. The book had a glossy, smooth paper back cover. The pages smelt of old libraries and a coffee house. A library where you know everyone. The ones you image with old ladders to reach the most prominent books on the highest shelves. An old coffee house, the kind you can just sit in and breathe. Where time doesn't really

exist, unless you want it to. It was memories and heartbreak and jubilation smashed into a small bind of a little less than 200 pages. To me, this book was Michael himself. It was our friendship and hardship as children in a tough neighborhood. I've read this novel, this particular copy, over 50 times. I can quote parts of it exactly, thanks to my birthday and best friend.

Michael, I've learned now, gave me the book to teach both of us. To teach me to open my eyes to the world a little bit more, but to never give up hope, to teach himself to be open to help, and to teach us both to never let friendship like this go. We can never move anywhere all by yourself. You need a little help, and a little love from someone else. Michael started to learn that, and I hope I'm starting to understand.

When we least expect it, someone may come into your life and change everything completely. They may open your eyes to things you've always seen, but never knew. They can make you feel and learn things you will never forget. The inevitable truth in this is that they will always have to go away. Michael passed away due to a shooting on January 11, 2016. He was my someone of change. I could have never anticipated the gravity and deep influence he became in my life. I miss him, every day, but he taught me many things I will never let go. At the time, I may not have understood these lessons or the importance it would carry later, but, looking back, I can see how much I've changed. I see things about the world I was otherwise blind to. I'm learning to accept help and give back to others. Michael did a large part of this for me. I realized so much about not only the world, but myself as well. I thank the universe and whatever other worldly being may be out there. I thank them for Michael's time on this earth, and I

thank them for our time. I shall never forget him, or how much I've understood since that last great day. I hope, by having Michael and his lessons in my life, I'll be able to look upon the world with more open eyes, and a more open heart. That is what I got from Michael, the boy that was my wallflower, someone I loved in ways I only now realize, and my best friend.

My Storm Clouds

By: Steven Hadley

When we least expect it, people inspire us in the weirdest of ways. That's what I thought anyways after being inspired by watching a man walk the Cutten school track in the pouring rain. Back then I'm sure I thought differently.

I yelled up and the air and slammed my foot on the old wooden floor. This always happens, I end up saying things that I'm never proud of, and it makes me thoroughly disappointed in myself. Often I'll apologize immediately, and they always understand, but I still feel worthless, ashamed at how immature and weak I am.

Nothing helps. I'll open my computer filled with games I love to play, but that doesn't help. I try to draw, but ideas never come to me. Even when I jot down my feelings, the ink never leaves the pen. Frustrated even more by my inability to accept what I've done, I flop onto my bed and close my eyes, praying for sleep to come, hoping that I could just enter a quick, eternal sleep, but unfortunately, I'm still here.

The sky was dark, filling with clouds like water filling a sinking ship. I banged my fist against the wall, leaving a small mark in its wake. People started yelling. My brother tried to calm me down, but I shook him off telling him that only I am to blame.

"That isn't true!" he cried! "Steven, you didn't hurt anyone!," but I know I did. I know that I hurt everyone, and that it certainly is all my fault, and that there wasn't anything that I could do, only sulk, and wait for these horrible feelings to go away. I

awkwardly excused myself from the room, and decided to take a walk. Maybe I wanted to clear my head, or maybe I just couldn't stand living there at that moment, surrounded by problems that I created.

I kicked a soda can. The clouds appeared now to cast an ever present shadow, projecting its gradient across the landscape. Cars zoomed by in an instant, with people in warm, passenger seats that couldn't take their eyes off me. I walked down an alleyway, just hoping to disappear like a vampire in sunlight. A light mist began to appear and then soon a fog, a fog so thick, that it was strenuous to see the block ahead of you. Shaded in darkness and feeling a sense of privacy, I finally felt at rest. Finding a nice quiet mailbox, I propped myself up and drifted off to sleep.

I awoke fairly shortly after that to the rain, which fell in large sheets, each one filling the ground like a shot of poison being injected in someone's arm. My body was soaked to the bone at this point, my skin partially visible through my soggy shirt. I thought about going back home, where it was warm and I would surely have a kind reception waiting for me, but I didn't want to go back, I still felt ashamed for what I had done. So, I kept walking. Many, many blocks went by. The numerous seedy convenience stores and gas stations all seemed like a blur. Around the block, past the stores, and even to the place where the streets become cul de sacs.

The sharp chill in the air rattled every part of my being. The wind picked up and buffeted me this way and that. The rain remained merciless with its downpour, and it flowed like the mouth of a great river in every drainage system. The large trees in the distance gave me an idea. The forest appeared extremely

comforting to me right now, it would be dry inside, and it would help me sleep. For no real reason at all, I started to run, looking around everywhere frantically, almost as if I wanted to not exist. I ran down a slope, which was completely wet at this point because of the rain, and entered the forest.

However, this time it was different. Instead of kids playing and laughing on the playground, there was nothing but what looked like a vacant lot. There were no animals. Even the screech of the howler monkeys, which usually could be heard every few minutes, was gone. I felt as if I became the only person in the entire world. I shouted, and only received echoes in return. Sleep wasn't what I wanted anymore. I needed to run again, run far away, so far, that I would arrive at the ends of the earth.

The forest looked menacing almost as I left its brush in my wake. I needed help, I needed to go home. Without a phone or money to access a phone, my situation was hopeless. My home, which I would have welcomed in open arms at this point, was several miles away and so, I decided to just keep on walking. The rain felt like it had slowed, but that was just how soaked I was. I kicked some trash and at that same moment, the clouds looking like they were about to burst, sagged, and began to pour out massive amounts of water. Then, I ran again, always running farther and farther away from my problems. My old elementary school was nearby, and I knew it had protected areas, so I kept on running. My lungs ached. My heart hurt, but I wasn't going to stop, not when I was so close to peace. I ran past the sign with faded letters, around the dumpsters that smelled of old vegetables, and around the corner next to the bathrooms. I was exhausted. There was so much sweat, that you couldn't tell the difference between it

and the rain water. I just needed to sleep. So, just as before, I propped myself up against a classroom door and fell asleep.

About an hour passed, though I couldn't tell you for sure. All I knew was that it was still daytime and that it was still raining just as hard as before. Sitting up, I noticed someone out of the corner of my eye. A man, mid-twenties probably, with a tank top and greasy black hair, was casually walking the track. He was completely soaked. I wanted to call out to him, ask him what he was doing and why, but I just sat up and watched. An hour passed. He was still walking. Two hours past, and he was still walking, with the same rhythm and vigor he had two long hours ago. Then, another hour passed, and he was still walking. I felt as if I was synchronized with his rhythm, as if I had been put under a spell. Completely hypnotized, I began to tap my foot every time he took a step. Tap, tap, tap.... He let out a large sneeze. Tap, tap, tap SNEEZE. I started tapping the wall to contribute to this new rhythm we had created and I even made my own sneezing noises. Tap, tap, tap SNEEZE, rap, rap. Tap, tap, tap, SNEEZE, rap, rap.

Then, just as I was getting into the beat, and just after I calmed down, the rain abruptly stopped, the sun came out and the man stopped dead in his tracks. He looked up at the sky, then over to me, nodded, and rubbed his greasy black hair. He was also completely soaked at this point, both of us looking like we had just been submerged in water for several hours straight. He finished his last lap, and began to walk away. I waited for him to leave, and started walking home myself, with a smile firmly planted on my face.

At the time, I didn't understand why I smiled that day, when the man ran round and round the track, but in the year since

that day, I have come to understand that it was because of his dedication to his task. Even though it was pouring rain, and even though he was soaking wet, he still walked, and that gave me a new perspective on how I should treat my issues, just like him. Never stopping, always pushing and moving forward with a blunt force. This lesson not only made me more successful in school, it also helped me learn about how people and interpersonal relationships work, which has had a huge overall impact on my life. With a more positive attitude going forward after that point, I was able to earn amazing grades, and make some wonderful friends at the same time for the remainder of my eighth grade year, and hopefully for a long time going forward.

In Medias Res - A Stranger's Paper Bird

By: Jewel Blanchard

"...I guess this is goodbye then. You were the love of my life, Greg, I want you to know that. Good luck back home. I'll be thinking of you in the city.

-Bree

"P.S. -Remember this bird from first day of Freshman year? I found it in my stuff. I'm not throwing away, just passing it on."

I picked up the origami crane, folded from paper-backed foil, that accompanied her goodbye message. I clutched it and sunk to the kitchen floor sobbing.

Three Years Later

"Morning," grunts my boss, Ryan, pacing past my cubicle. "Promotion treating you good? Liking the new space?" A cardboard box full of desk accessories sat waiting to be unpacked on my new desk. One folder lay open on the tabletop. It was crammed with post it notes and scraps of lined paper I had doodled on over the years. Crimson ink splashed on manilla paper. Emerald pastels smudged across blue stripes. I was in the process of tacking them all up on the carpeted wall of my new workspace. Ryan shoved his way beside me to snatch a pink sticky note and peer at it. A flash of silver was laying underneath it.

I picked up the foil crane. As I gazed at it, I was transported to the messy classroom where Bree first fished the origami from out of the trash. I grinned as I recalled her words:

"Look, someone threw away a masterpiece...Promise me you won't throw away any of your comics like this. They're too valuable."

The next time I would see the foil crane, it was a parting gift from her.

Seeing it now, shining against the drab office, I was reminded of how much I had lived. How much I had been shown. How much I owed her. And how I had somehow ended up here. In a grid of gray cubicles and fluorescent lights. In a small town where nothing mattered.

I must have stood there for several minutes, coming to a decision. I nested the crane in my shirt pocket and strode out of the office, past people I didn't care about, hard at work for a goal they couldn't even identify. No one even looked up to question me.

The sunlight was strange after the dim cubicle. I got into my car and drove straight to the subway. There was little traffic. After waiting on a graffitied bench, I spent the train ride gazing out the window. Freshly-plowed fields rolled by, sprinkler systems chugging and spraying over the soil. I retrieved the crane from my pocket and considered the worn foil sitting in my palm. Half-remembered conversations flickered through my mind.

"So that's how you ended up here at community college. Where dreams die." Bree smiles dryly. "Some old dude told you to settle."

"Maybe I'm not going to go take special art classes in the city to mess with play dough with a bunch of rich snobs," I exclaim. "But at least I have a plan for my life!"

"Oh, so you have a plan, now, do you? You have a plan to get an average education to work an average job with average pay and have an average life! What a phenomenal plan!"

"You think you're better than me, because you're going to a school you can't afford!"

"No," she whispers. "God, I don't think I'm better than you. But all my life, I've had this one thing. And I always knew I would chase it." Bree gazes up at me with dark eyes. "I just hate to see you not chasing yours. Come to the Academy in the city with me, Greg! You've always been talented, but art classes would teach you so much more. We can make it work!"

The train lurched to a stop. I slipped the foil bird back in my pocket, and climbed out of a station crammed with people and sounds that could only be found in the city. They hearkened back to when I used to live here with her. From the best days of my life. It was still light outside. The air smelled like salt and gasoline. The bay breeze cut through my shirt.

A car lurched close to my sidewalk, blaring its horn. I flinched back, and caught a whiff of something unpleasant. I covered my nose with one hand and held my other arm out, hailing a cab. A yellow-painted car flashed past without stopping, then another.

"Oh, come on!" I dismayed under my breath. Finally, a taxi pulled over.

"Where are we heading?" the driver said in an accent I never encountered back home.

"Academy of Art."

When we pulled up to the building, I paused outside the doors. Knowing the silver crane was in my breast pocket gave me strength. With a deep breath, I strode inside.

A receptionist sat at a rounded kiosk. She had unruly frizzy hair and an assured face.

"How can I help you, sir?" She smiled. A name tag reading *Mona* was pinned to her flowy blouse. I glimpsed the wire frame of a bird cage sitting on the floor behind her desk. A song bird the color of sunshine warbled a tune on its perch.

"I'm looking for someone," I said. "Breanna Gaines." Mona frowned in thought.

"Oh!" The receptionist exclaimed at last in recognition. "She works here."

"Is she, um, working right now?"

"Is who working right now?" My heart stopped when I heard the voice behind me. I turned and Bree was there. Her hair was cut in a sharp bob. She was in a two piece suite unlike anything I'd ever seen her wear. She looked into my eyes, and glided toward me. I just gazed back, helpless to say anything now that she was before me. I glimpsed a sparkle on her left hand.

A wedding ring.

Just like that, the illusion was broken. I remembered the fight; how Breanna had chosen the city and a teaching position at the Academy of Art over our hometown and a life with me. How she had left me in our city apartment along with a note and some origami.

The anger I had felt melted away over the years to become a shrine built to her in my heart, where I worshipped her endlessly. This morning, when I was sitting at my desk and found I was in

hell, I had run to her, so she could fly me back to heaven. But I saw Breanna now, at the foyer of our old school, and the halo I remembered her with was shattered.

"You're married?" I asked, chasing her roving eyes with mine, craving a connection.

"Engaged." Breanna clasped her hands mechanically. "My fiancé is on his way to pick me up. Maybe we could talk outside?" I nodded, and followed her outdoors. Finally, she looked at me. "Greg," she said, "How have you been?" I cringed at her mundaneness.

"Good." I remembered this was the same person I once gave my heart to, and the truth tumbled out of my mouth. "I got stuck, Breanna, back home. Just like you said." When Breanna didn't butt in like normal, I continued. "I got some desk job. It pays well, I even just got a promotion. But I'm just another pencil pusher." Bree remained quiet. Unnerved, I changed the subject. "So, you're teaching? Like you always wanted?"

"Yeah." she smiled forcefully. "I guess I'm living the dream." She pursed her lips, breaking composure. "At first, it was everything I hoped for. And then I realized teaching at an institution is no different than working on a factory line." She looked out at the traffic speeding by. "I just wish I was back to when we were young. Back then, teaching ceramics meant something." After a pause, I pulled out the origami crane.

"You taught me to never give up on yourself," I said, holding it out to her. "We might be stuck right now, but we can make it. I was stuck before, and you were there to help me." Breanna took the origami gingerly. "You're stronger than them."

"Breanna!" a dark-suited man called from outside a parked car across the street.

"Thank you," she said, smiling shyly. "For this. And everything else."

"No. Thank you." I watched her step neatly across the street toward the man she was going to marry, with a stranger's paper bird in her hand. She greeted him before she got into the car. He tugged at the crooked hem of her collared shirt. A flash of silver fell into the street. The engine growled to life and the hungry tires rolled over the unsuspecting paper bird lying in the road. It was left mangled on the black pavement.

And the car drove away with a part of my life in its back seat.

"Dammit, she left!" the receptionist exclaimed from behind me, gesturing after the car that rolled away. She held a leather portfolio. "She forgot her briefcase..." I spotted the tiny yellow bird, now nestled within the depths of her curls. The sight of the girl and the bird gave me an idea for a comic, like the kid U used to storyboard when I was a kid. I smiled to myself as she bounded back in side, plans for the future unfolding as I crossed the road to return home. A title for a graphic novel began to form in my mind, something like "The Girl With the Bird in her Hair." When I passed the flattened crane in the street, I stepped around it carefully. I didn't look back.

Conquering the Stage

By: L. Grace Bugnacki

When I was three years old, I asked my parents for a violin. We were sitting in a church pew and my oldest sister's best friend was playing her violin in a musical number during Sacrament Meeting. I don't remember how long it was after that Sunday, or how many more times I asked for a violin until I got one, but I remember being in awe as I sat next to my mom on her bed as she unzipped the black violin case, revealing the dark Irish green velvet that surrounded the holy instrument that I played religiously without lessons for three years. I thank my mother often for never telling me to stop playing my violin, even though for some three odd years I had no idea how to play; I was just sawing the instrument with my bow, putting my fingers down on random places on the strings and thinking to myself, "Wow, I must be as good as Mozart!" I wasn't nearly as good as Mozart and I'm still not.

I didn't start getting violin lessons until I was six or seven years old. In the town I grew up in, most successful student musicians began taking lessons when they were three. So by the time I started violin lessons, I was a few years behind. I was fortunate enough to be taught by a patient and loving teacher who never once told me I that I was behind the rest of the kids my age. I remember my first recital vividly, I was one of the first students to perform. I was scheduled to play early on in the recital, sandwiched between two five-year-olds. Later during the recital I

watched a boy two years older than me play a Bach Concerto. But that didn't bother me at the time, I was completely oblivious to the years of experience and work that had separated me from the rest of the kids in my age group. I didn't even fully realize how behind I was until I was ten years old.

Every year, the youth music program that I was part of put on a student "Bach Concert", in which students only played pieces by Bach, to honor and celebrate him and his influence in our music and education. I was playing in the Children's Ensemble which had students from about the age of two months to twelve. During a rehearsal I was placed next to a girl who couldn't be more than five. The young girl looked at the music which I had on the stand in front of me, music covered with the names of the notes and their fingerings. She squinted her eyes, first at the music and then me. Then, in the most innocently judgmental tone I have probably ever heard in my life so far, she asked, "You don't know how to read music?" She said it so loudly, loud enough for the whole ensemble to hear, and I was MORTIFIED. I was so flustered and caught off guard that I lied to her, saying that my music was from a few years ago when I was still learning how to play, but honestly, I just barely knew how to read music. I remember during the concert I stood on the stage, looking out at the daunting audience and feeling so insecure standing with the ensemble who I felt was judging me deeply, because of how behind I was. I later had a rather mean girl who was also in the ensemble tell me that I was exceedingly far behind in music when compared to her and her friends. I felt awful and embarrassed. Quite honestly, I didn't want to play anymore because I felt judged and out of place for starting violin so late and not being as good as everyone else. But my

parents never let me quit. They never told me I was bad or not good enough. They were constantly reminding me that I had so much potential.

When I was twelve my family moved to Eureka, where I was enrolled at Zane Middle School. Eureka City Schools has a music program, which was something my previous school district didn't have. So because of this, I got to take music classes at school. I didn't feel as judged in the school orchestra and it wasn't long before I lost my fear of being behind. It was during this time that I actually began excelled to be more than I ever thought I would be in music. In the seventh grade, Mr. McCay, my music teacher at Zane placed me in the First Violin section, which was something he had never done before. In eighth grade, I was placed as First Chair Violin, which made me the Concert Mistress. In Middle School this title doesn't mean much, but I was very proud of holding this title. At the end of my eighth grade year, my fellow orchestra members voted for me to receive the Outstanding Musician award which was given out to one orchestra student every year. During my freshman year, I played in the first violin section, which was uncommon for a freshman to do. I also taught myself how to play the viola, which I never imagined myself doing. When my sophomore year came around, I got placed as First Chair Violin, which once again gave me the title of Concert Mistress, and this time, the title meant more. It not only meant that I was a distinguished violinist, but I was the leader and someone that the rest of the orchestra could look up to.

In the spring of my sophomore year, the orchestra traveled to Chico to participate in an instrumental festival. It wasn't until our guide was leading me and the rest of the orchestra to the stage

that I realized something, that I had been on this stage before. It was the stage I performed on at the Bach Concert, when the five year old exposed me to the whole ensemble. For a brief moment as I took my seat on the stage, I felt terrified and incompetent. I felt all of the fear that I had previously let go of, rush back into me. I felt like I was nine again, unable to read music and embarrassed to be so behind. But then I looked at the music, which I could read fluently with no issues, and I looked at looked at my fellow students who were looking up to me. That's when I realized that I had come a long way since that Bach Concert when I was nine years old. I still wasn't a violin virtuoso, but I was able to recognize the progress which I had made because I didn't give up or quit when I felt so behind and discouraged. I was able to once again let go of all of my fears and perform in pieces in front of me.

I performed on this stage twice. This stage is nothing special. People don't come from all around the world to perform on this stage. But to me, this stage symbolizes growth. It symbolizes confidence and success. To me this stage is hope. To me this stage is potential. I don't know if I'll ever get to perform on this stage again, but I know that if I do, I will be even better than I was last year and that's because I won't ever give up, I'll conquer all of my fears, and I will never forget that I am capable of reaching my potential.

Last Song

By: Ethan Fischel

She could not catch her breath and instantly fell into my father's arms. Her breathing was agitated, and her eyes were full of tears that trickled down her cheeks and onto my dad's tan shirt. Her face turned bright red, and she couldn't articulate the right words to explain what had happened. Neither Brendon nor I had never seen our parents wrought with such emotions. My father tenderly comforted my mother and combed his hands through her brown curly hair. I was confused. I stopped noticing the noises around the campsite. It seemed like the campground kids stopped playing and the dogs ceased barking.

It was summer break and my family and I had traveled southeast to Lake Almanor. We had never rented an RV for our summer vacation. Staring out into the picturesque scenery, I began to appreciate my surroundings. Trees danced in a conga line as we approached the campsite. Birds serenaded each other with their harmonizing sounds. Clouds formed big smiles above and appeared to be laughing with me. The gravel popped with each turn of the camper's wheels as we came to a screeching halt. I was happy. As soon as Dad stopped the RV, my brother and I quickly opened the door and ran excitedly toward the water with all of our toys. While my Dad came with us to supervise our multitude of games, my mom leisurely walked to the front office building to check her messages.

I was five years old. Camping allowed my brother and I to feel free, play hide and seek, tag and catch at every stop on our vacation. While I always found the best hiding spots in these forested playgrounds, my brother, Brendon, always caught and threw balls with slightly better accuracy than me. I remember this one ball that could have been the symbol of our youth. It was plastic and yellow with holes throughout. It couldn't be mistaken from our other wiffle balls, as it had survived the strong jaws of our dog, Gus, who had accidentally chewed on it mistaking it for his toy. I wore my favorite swim trunks that I had received as a birthday gift from my grandparents the year before. While my swimsuit had blue stripes, my t-shirt was bright orange with a green grasshopper on it representing the Greensboro Grasshoppers. I ran everywhere with my black sandals with white stripes made by Nike. My brother happened to be wearing the same t-shirt in white as my mom liked to dress us similarly. After ten or fifteen minutes of the intense game of tag, I was ready to rest. Then, suddenly, my mom came running to our campsite crying hysterically.

"Why is mom crying?" I asked with my high pitched five year old voice.

"What happened, Dad?" my brother softly asked.

"Boys, Aunt Lizzie has passed away."

Flashbacks of my mom's sister came pouring into my brain. I remembered the Times Square apartment that we visited in the fall of last year. Her studio apartment was barely 100 square feet and it looked like it had been through a recent earthquake. While my bathtub at home had rubber duckies, bubble soap, and animal shaped sponges, her bathtub had mounds of clothing piled on top

of one another. All of her operatic music papers were scattered on the floor. I remembered Aunt Lizzie to be tall with pale skin and blue eyes and a big voice. I learned years later she was only 5 foot 1 inch tall and a great opera singer. During her visits to California, she perfected her imitations of famous actors or family members in her big extroverted way. Years later we reminisced that those scenes were some of the highlights of her stays in our home. One of my dearest memories of my aunt came from the Yankees singing toy she gave during the prior Hanukkah.

As my brother and dad consoled my mother, I felt confused.

My brother remarked, "I'm sorry, mom" and patted her softly on the back.

"She's at peace now," my father delicately explained.

No one else in the family had ever died since I was born, and I didn't know how to feel or act. Why was I not crying like my mother and father? Why was I not comforting my mother in an empathetic way like my brother? My brother who was seven at the time seemed to understand the significance of the situation. While Brendon simply knew that this was not a time to joke around or irritate our parents, I however, felt lost like a child who can't find their parents in a crowded subway.

I blinked and my parents had packed the RV for the immediate ride home because my mom needed to fly to Florida for the funeral. On the way home everything was solemn to me. The clouds now frowned in my direction. The birds now whined as if they were crying. The trees appeared bent, as if mourning themselves. The silence was deafening. The once animated RV on our trip toward Lake Almanor, now turned lethargic and heavy.

Imagine a female combination of Jerry Seinfeld and Luciano Pavarotti. That was Elizabeth Ann Connor. Not only did we lose that day one of the most loving people in our family, but the world lost an amazing opera singer and comic. Later our family learned that at the young age of 46, Aunt Lizzie had overdosed accidentally. Now, while my mother doesn't mourn every day, birthdays or the anniversaries of her sister's death really saddened her. Whenever we go to synagogue, we stand up and announce her name for the mourner's kaddish. Every year we light yahrzeit candles on the anniversary of her death to keep her memory alive. While we no longer take vacations to Times Square, we do visit her grave site yearly where she is buried next to her father.

Aunt Lizzie's death changed me and my family forever. I could no longer feel safe that my parents or my brother would be permanent parts of my life. Who was to say that my mom would remain healthy? Who was to say that my brother wouldn't fall sick? As a child you think that what surrounds you is fixed and constant. But time, maturity, and experience make us face the impermanence of life. I have since lost my Grandpa Mort, my Great-Grandpa Mort and my Great Grandma Molly. While they passed in their nineties after long fruitful lives, the death of Aunt Lizzie at the young age of 46 felt more like a life stolen from us forever. Looking back now at his tragedy, I realize that one must treasure every day, every experience, and every person in the family with the same passion and affection as the day before. No household is exempt from sudden tragedy and loss. But the way in which families choose to honor those that pass can help to keep memories of those individuals alive forever.