

Eagle Talons

Literary Magazine



2023-2024

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Unsaid Things That Really Need To Be Said

by Anna Moore

HALLWAYS

1. Stay on the right side of the hallway. Don't be the reason there's a huge traffic jam.
2. Don't stop in the middle of the hallway. Again, Don't be the reason there's a huge traffic jam.
3. If you're making a left hand turn, wait until there's a gap. Don't shove your way through (it won't work and will only serve to make people angry).
4. If you stop at the water fountain, don't make a line extending into the middle of the hallway creating a roadblock. People will get mad and may shove you out of line.
5. Don't stop in the middle of the hallway with a group of friends to talk. As important as seeing your friends is, it is not worth a mob of angry people. Just meet on the side of the hallway. Then people won't get very angry and won't resort to shouting, pushing, and/or shoving.
6. Move with a sense of urgency. You shouldn't be moving at the pace of a banana slug and making the people behind you angry. People may resort to shoving.

BATHROOMS

1. Flush the toilet. I guarantee no toilet monster will erupt from the depths of the bowl and curse you. So just flush the toilet.
2. Don't use half a roll of toilet paper. It will probably clog and render the toilet useless until a custodian comes along and unclogs it.
3. Don't decorate your toilet with toilet paper or paper towels. As stylish as it may be, I doubt the next person waiting to relieve themselves will appreciate it.
4. Put the toilet paper IN the toilet. Don't put it in the trash can, the little white box, or the floor. Put it in the toilet.
5. Wash your hands. Imagine all the poor people you high 5, lend a pencil, and hold a bag for. YUCK!
6. Throw the paper towels in the trash. Not on the floor, not in the toilet, not in the sink to get it to clog. Just throw it away (in the trash can)!
7. Tell someone if a stall is out of toilet paper. None of your teachers will look at you as if you grew an extra head (unless you are a girl asking for a refill of toilet paper in the boys bathroom or vice versa).

Unsaid Things That Really Need To Be Said

CLASS

1. If the Teacher is explaining something, don't talk. The teacher is speaking for a reason, and if you don't care if you get an F, then show a little sympathy for the poor person next to you.
2. Independent work is called Independent for a reason. This is not the time to talk across the classroom, announce that you need to go to the bathroom, or play games on your chromebook with the volume on max.
3. Every time the teacher stops talking for a second, you don't have to say something. This will most likely result in the teacher getting mad and that's not a good thing.
4. Stay on the site you're supposed to be on. Teachers have this magical thing called hapara, and yes, they will use it.
5. Don't lie. Teachers can go back and see the sites you've been on through this magical thing called hapara, and prove to you that you've been lying, leaving you in an awkward situation.
6. Don't line up at the door 5 minutes before the bell. Think of all of the productive things you could get done.
7. Stay in your seat unless the teacher gives you permission. DON'T stand up and do a bear walk, a moon walk, a frog jump, a chicken walk, and other stupid walks you can think of.
8. Raise your hand. No one likes it when they know the answer and that annoying kid next to you shouts it out.

The Works of Terence Guo

Fortnite Parody
By Terry Guo

My friend stole my Vbucks, and he lost my trust
So I pushed him out of the battle bus
I thought I got payback, but my plan wasn't well
Because just as he landed, he got a Victory Royale
And right when that happened, he thought he was the GOAT
But then I told him, quote on quote:
"Don't think that you are so good and strong
Because your stupid victory won't last long
I'll just casually beat you into a tree
While reciting this Fortnite parody
So if we have a 1V1
In just 1 second, the fight will be done
You'll take yourself and your Deadpool skin
And throw yourself in a trash bin"
Hearing this, he got mad
Because he knew he wasn't a gigachad
And he went from being my best booty
To a literal freaking nobody
He challenged me to a 1V1
But I defeated him before the sentence was done
He screamed so loud a racer thought he was a McLaren
He screamed so loud that the manager thought he was a Karen
He screamed so loud that I knew he was mad
And he knew that at Fortnite, he was bad
And now, my gaming career is well
Because I got a number one victory royale
So he bought me a Vbucks Gift card
And apologized to me though it was hard
He kept on cringing but in the end
He said sorry, and now we're friends again
So don't try stealing somebody's Vbucks
Or for the next ten games, you'll have bad luck
And the only way to be unsurpassed
Is to buy the Fortnite battle pass

The Works of Terence Guo

Free Robux
By Terry Guo

One day I got bored and went on a site
While having 2 million gigabytes
And look at that, what amazing luck!
It's actually a site for free Robux!
To get it they said it wasn't hard,
I just had to give them my credit card.
And you know what? That's what I did,
But out of 5 stars, the site's rating was mid.
7 days pass, and my Robux aren't back
I'm so scared I think I'll have a heart
attack
Then my mom yelled and my heart sank
to the floor
Because the FBI was at the door!!
At that moment Mom was gonna erupt
Because now our family is bankrupt
And now my stomach is starting to churn
Because I don't have my Robux in return
So now, three more days have passed
And now I haven't since touched grass
Unfortunately, I won't ever get bailed
You guessed it right , I'm in jail.
So next time you see this site, don't trust
your luck
Don't think you can get free Robux

Mining Diamonds
By Terry Guo

One day I was bored and went on Minecraft Java,
But when I spawned in, I fell in lava.
I rushed out, then realized I'm on half a heart
But then I saw a zombie, and I did a fart
I decided to run and find some supplies
To give that stupid zombie a surprise
A sword that's what the surprise will be
It would be wise to also craft TNT
But how the heck should I get the sword?
I search so much that I got bored
And guess what? You wanna know what I found?
An abundance of diamonds, man am I proud!
I crafted a sword, and some TNT too,
Where was the zombie? I had no clue
But just then I heard an ugly growl
I started to sweat and got a towl.
Then I turned around and was about to strike
Zombies in Minecraft are a thing I don't like
I hit the zombie once at first
But the damage that it did was the worse
So then I had an Idea and smiled with glee
And I ignited my freaking TNT!!!!
The blast was so much that I also died
I was so angry that I literally cried
I decided not to mine diamonds anymore
Then aggressively threw my PC at the door
The PC broke and I got sad
So don't play mincraft 'cause you're not a gigachad.

'Sisters'

by Audrey Wang



'Beach'

by Audrey Wang



Poems by Jayna Marfatia

*They fight, unyielding, never succumbing
Yet, they feel powerless, hungry for more
More, more, more is all they can think*

Human Nature

*Subdued by the shadows, they finally succumb to the pain, The hunger, the wanting,
overtaking them like a cat Struggling for a mouse to hold on to*

*Survival takes over, and they rush
Out, in, wherever they can hide
To find themselves
To find themselves*

*Once they have found
It, they feel the weight
Of everything, of anything
The pressure usurps them,
Controlling, brainwashing
And they fall silent to the illusions*

Human Nature II

*Illusions of the mind, of others
Illusions more than them
They fear it, more than ever
So they lay to rest
The shadows
The shadows*

*They have engulfed the shadows
Overwhelmed them with the silence
And the shadows are no more*

*Yet something rises up ahead
One of their own, a betrayer
Of their kin
Searching, longing, for something more*

*And the cycle repeats itself
Over and over
Those who do not remember history are condemned to
Repeat it
Repeat it*

Human Nature III

*The greed follows them,
Taking shelter within the shadows
And it comes back to haunt them all*

*Those who remember fight,
But far too little
The agony of what comes next
Awaits them, lurking*

*Love will conquer all
Is what they say
But do they know
How*

*How does it conquer?
Does love find solace in the small things of life?
Does love spark heat, warmth, and fire?
Does love find others to take its call?
How does love conquer all?*

Sunrise

*White swirls streak across the sky,
Lit up with bold strokes of red, orange and
yellow
She stands victorious, proud and full
The cold wind flows past her, but she is
evermore oblivious
To the rushing winds of the past, instead
looking forward
To the bright life of the future*

Sunset

*Her one last hurrah
A final triumph
To those that came before
A gradient background in the sky
Lighting up the world in its glory
With pinks, blues, and purples
A hint of orange helping the transition
Day to night, light to dark
Or the other way around

Forevermore*

Rosa and Ruth

By Yousef Siddiq



Read this Normal or From the Bottom Up

By Anna Moore

Cats are wonderful

Nobody would ever say

Felines aren't awesome

It's true that

Dogs are slobbery monsters

No one agrees

Dogs are the best

Honestly,

Cats basically rule the world

One of the most untrue things I can think of is that

Dogs are wonderful

A TALE OF TWO FRIENDS

By: Diya Mittal

Diana

It was the first day of autumn. The leaves crunched underfoot, and the smell of cinnamon tainted the air and spread like wildfire. The trees were rainbows of reds, oranges, yellows, and browns. Apple cider was in the warm cup in my hands, crisp and sweet. The pumpkins that spread out at our doorstep were smooth to touch and orange as the sunrise. Autumn was pushing out any of the last traces of summer.

Of course that could only mean one thing to me. School! Sure, it had homework, and no one likes spending their entire day in one little classroom, but there were a few good things about it. I would finally get to see my friends, whom I don't often see because I live about a million miles away. It would give me something to think about, and do, much different from my mundane summer days. I would be bored out of my mind, sitting on the couch and subconsciously shuffling through news channels, where the most interesting thing was the rain.

I packed my school supplies a week before school started. I labeled everything with my name, and the school year: 2019-2020. I was just so excited! I would have opportunities to work with others and compete as a team. I could learn something new, and splatter all over canvases in art. No matter what, education was important to me. It would be awesome.

The first day of school, and I excitedly jumped out of my bed. I grabbed my bag and ran out the door. Autumn came to life all around me, and I was very tired after a restless night, but ready for whatever happened that day.

Things went smoothly in the morning. My bus came on time, I got to my locker all right, and I was ready to go along my schedule. I noticed that my two best friends, Abby and Ally, were in a different homeroom than me. *So what?* I thought. *We can still meet up after school, and we can do a ton of stuff together.* Even though they kept on saying that their teacher was the worst and that they wished they had gotten my teacher, they were very enthusiastic. I wasn't sure if they were *trying* to shut me out, or if it was something that they were just doing subconsciously.

They had gone on a trip together to an amusement park over the summer, and that was all they ever wanted to talk about, leaving me behind in the dust. I wanted to tell them about what we could do as a group this summer, but they were stuck in the past.

I tried to talk to them, but anytime I brought up a topic that all three of us could talk about, they kept shunning me. They just would start talking about some other ride, or the hotel they stayed at, or little things like a cricket they saw. I looked between them, trying to find out what had happened. 2 ½ months ago, we were a group. The Three Musketeers. Inseparable. But one summer break and trip later, I was shut off. I finally got what

they were trying to tell me without words, and wanted to curl up and cry. Our perfect group was gone. It wasn't "us" anymore. It was "them and me". I walked, miserable, as I went to my first class.

Starting in my first class, Social Studies, it was all I could do from falling asleep. My perfect morning had been ruined. I wasn't sure what I was going to do for the rest of the school year. Abby and Ally were the only friends I had ever known. I wish I could have gotten to go with them on their trip over the summer. I wish that our friendship would still be a strong bond instead of sections of cut string.

The bell sounded, leaving a ringing sound in my ears that disrupted my thoughts, throwing them into chaos. I walked out of the room dejectedly and barely paying attention. This was too much for me. I wasn't used to having to make new friends, but I should have known it would happen soon enough. After all, nothing lasts forever.

Rhea

It was the 5th time she had moved. *Seriously, mom and dad?* She couldn't help but think as she walked the halls of yet a new school. She kept her head held high and did her best to look as confident as she could. Otherwise, she had learned the hard way, you were most likely to be the kid with no friends and a bully chasing after you.

She managed to get to her locker all right. Rhea was used to switching schools and memorizing new layouts in a day. Every time she did, however, she slowly gave up the idea of making friends. Give it another year or two, and off she would be again. Her parents always claimed that they moved because they could see that she was unhappy and had no friends. *And, how exactly, am I supposed to make friends when you keep moving me every year?* She wanted to say but kept it inside. No point saying things like that. They wouldn't do anything except make her parents mad.

Rhea looked over herself in the tall, thin mirror she had put up in her locker. She was dressed in a new pale pink periwinkle sweatshirt that went with her bell-bottom light blue jeans. The outfit complimented her ivory skin and went with her wavy, almond-colored hair. She had startling green eyes, flecked with little sprinkles of gold and gray. Her hair was open today, with two thin braids framing her face.

As Rhea looked over the kids in the hallway, trying to sort them into groups, she noticed that a girl, clearly not wanted, was trying to strike up a conversation with two other girls. The two girls looked like they were twins, with long, blonde hair and highlights. They wore close-cropped T-shirts and black leggings. The girl trying to talk to them had silky, black hair pulled up into a ponytail. She wore a baggy sweatshirt and sweatpants, and she was looking a little depressed. She looked dependent on her friends, but her friends didn't look dependent on her.

Stop! Rhea wanted to yell at the girl. *Can't you see they don't want you there? Why are you trying to fit yourself into a puzzle you aren't part of?* But she doubted that it would be helpful.

Rhea wanted to help her. A little part of her even wanted to be her friend. But she shut it out. There was no point. As Rhea walked away, she saw the label on the girl's locker. *Diana*. She thought. *I'll remember that.*

Diana

I couldn't pay attention to anything. I was ready for the school day to be over. I didn't know how to make friends. As I walked out, I kept my head down. There was no point.

That day when I went home, I just ran to my bedroom. No homework on the first day of school, at least. I stared at the ceiling. I heard the garage door open, and I ignored it. I knew that it probably wasn't my mom. She would be away on a work trip, or to some fancy dinner, or something.

I was hoping that it was her, and all I wanted was to have more time with her. She was gone all the time, and she wasn't a part of my life anymore. The few times that she was at home were more precious to me than any amount of gold, money, or jewelry. They meant more to me than anything else that could exist.

She was gone all the time since she had a really good job. She was a caring person, and she tried to give me the best. We lived in a mansion, and when I say that it's my bedroom, I mean my floor. She gets me all the best stuff and would have sent me to a fancy private school, but I insisted on going to a public school. I didn't want to be the rich kid if it meant that I could never spend a moment with my mom.

I don't even have anyone else. Mom wouldn't talk much about Dad. All I know is that he isn't around anymore, and not to ask about him. My mom is, along with my friends, all I have. That's why I've always been so dependent on my friends, I guess. Now that they are gone, I just want to be with my mom.

Rhea

Walking home, she glanced back. She could see trees and bushes, perfectly placed flowers. It looked like a community that she had lived in some while ago, but that one was overrun with bullies. At least she felt no connection to the place, so moving wouldn't be too hard.

She could smell her mom's cooking coming from the kitchen but ignored it. She lay on her bed, staring at the ceiling. She ignored her mom as she called up for her, asking about her day. No homework, no reason to go downstairs. All Rhea wanted was to have time to herself to think and fume.

Only going down for dinner, she tried to make it as clear as possible that she didn't appreciate this new school, and that she didn't want to move again. She wished that they could settle down and stay somewhere for once.

Diana

However, I heard my mom's voice, calling tentatively from the doorway. I ran downstairs, heart in my

throat. I collapsed in a hug.

“You’re finally here!” I yelled in joy.

I could see that she was tired and worn from her many weeks away from home, but the moment she saw me, her face lit up. She forgot anything else that had happened and focused completely on me.

“Tell me all about your day,” my mom replied.

And I did. I told her all about what had happened. I told her about Abby and Ally, and I told her about feeling left out. I told her about not being able to pay attention at all. I let it all pour out of me, and even though I was talking about bad things, it felt strangely *good* to have someone to confide in and someone I could share secrets with that was meant to remain secret.

Silence.

My mom got up. I saw her walk to the cabinet and knew what she was going to do. It was my favorite comfort food, and if I ever needed it, it was now.

She made me some hot chocolate, mixed with a little bit of cinnamon, just like always. It was a thing that we did, something to show support. It always made me feel so much better, and it was the special thing that me and my mom did together. She sat down with me at the table, both of us holding big mugs of the warm liquid.

We drank in silence, and even though neither of us said anything, I felt heard. Of course, the hot chocolate helped.

After a bit, she spoke to me.

“You know,” she started. “When I was about your age, I had friend problems too. And my dad gave me a scrapbook. He told me to fill the scrapbook with pictures of my friends, the old ones. He then wrote a ton of quotes to help me get through it. I’d like to give the scrapbook to you so that you can fill it with pictures of your friends.”

She led the way upstairs to the attic, and I peered inside. It was full of boxes with no identification, but my mom seemed to know where she was going. She drew out an old book.

It had a faux leather cover that was cracked and worn down with age. A photo of my mom when she was a kid and some other girls were taped to the front, falling apart. A title, written in golden lettering that must have been pretty years ago, was faded and impossible to read. My mom stared down at the book affectionately and flipped through a few pages. They were covered in old notes and pictures. She closed the book and then turned to me. She handed me the old, old book.

“Read it, and I hope it helps you.”

She walked away, and I spent the rest of the day reading those words.

Real friends are the ones you can count on no matter what. The ones who go into the forest to find you and bring you home. And real friends never have to tell you that they're your friends.

A good friend is like a four-leaf clover; hard to find and lucky to have.

A friend knows you as you are, understands where you have been, accepts what you have become, and still gently allows you to grow.

True friends are like diamonds—bright, beautiful, valuable, and always in style.

Then my mom did something that I never thought she would. She said that I could stay home and that she would take a break too, just so that we could be together and so that I could get through the friend troubles.

Rhea

Diana hadn't turned up to school for a few days. Rhea didn't know where she was, but in a way she was thankful. Diana was the only person who had managed to bring back that buried longing for a friend, and she was afraid of what might happen if she tried to be Diana's friend.

As she went about her way, she was comfortable. Loneliness was a familiar friend.

Diana

As I looked through the book, the realization of the reality, that Abby and Ally weren't my friends anymore, sank deeper and deeper. And as it did, I felt better. I could accept it.

I wanted to remember the quotes because I was afraid that if I didn't, the longing to be Abby and Ally's friend would come back. I made mini versions of posters with the quotes on them to stick on my locker. I didn't care anymore if my friend's locker didn't look the same as mine, because they weren't true friends. And anyway, I could always decorate my locker however I liked. No one could tell me how to do what I wanted to do.

Rhea

Then one day, there was a major change, at least from Rhea's point of view. Rhea saw Diana's locker. It was covered in new posters that she appeared to have put up earlier in the morning. Diana also seemed different, more confident in herself. It made Rhea afraid all over again. She didn't want to experience another friendship ripped apart because of her, but more than that, she was afraid for Diana. No matter how much she seemed to have changed, Rhea doubted that she could hold through another fractured relationship.

Diana

I finally felt comfortable with trying to make a new friend. I found out that during the days I had been gone, the teacher had introduced a new girl named Rhea. Funny how we both got our names from mythology. Her name is from Greek mythology, mine from Roman. I wasn't happy or sad, but it was more of an opportunity for

are.

I went up to talk to her at the end of the day. When she realized I was just trying to be a friend, her confident and distant facade crumbled. She was lonely, like me, and would welcome a new friend anytime. And I knew that it was just the start of something big.

Rhea

“Hey, do you want to get together and know each other better? I think both of us could do with a friend.”

She was very surprised when Diana came to her at the end of the day. Rhea almost hit her head on the top of her locker, she was so startled. Her brain couldn’t comprehend.

Usually, whenever she did get the short-lived pleasure of a friend, she was the one who went up to them. She would go to someone lonely, and she would say the first word. She wasn’t used to having someone ask *her* for friendship. After all, she was the new kid, the one who didn’t know anything, the most uncool person you could imagine.

To have someone to ask her for friendship made her feel afraid all over again, and it made her feel at peace at the same time. She felt as though she were seasick, but at the same time, exhilaration and anticipation ran through her.

She was afraid that she would have to move again in a storm of anger, sadness, and depression. She was afraid of having herself break apart again, to have to leave another friend. She didn’t want to go through that all again.

But all the while, she wanted to have a friend, someone she could talk to. She wanted someone to hang out with and to spend hours together. She wanted to believe that no matter it *was* possible. She felt as though someone had seen and recognized that she existed, and someone had found her and believed in her.

And despite the marathon that the thoughts ran through her head, her mouth answered for her. It was as though it knew the answer she would give before her brain could get there. A definite yes.

She would be very sorry if she would have to move again. She wanted to tell Diana that *no, I can’t be your friend because I’ll leave anyway*, but the hopeful expression on her face was impossible to ignore. She thought that she might talk to her parents about staying this time. Even though it might not last, it was a start.

*

*

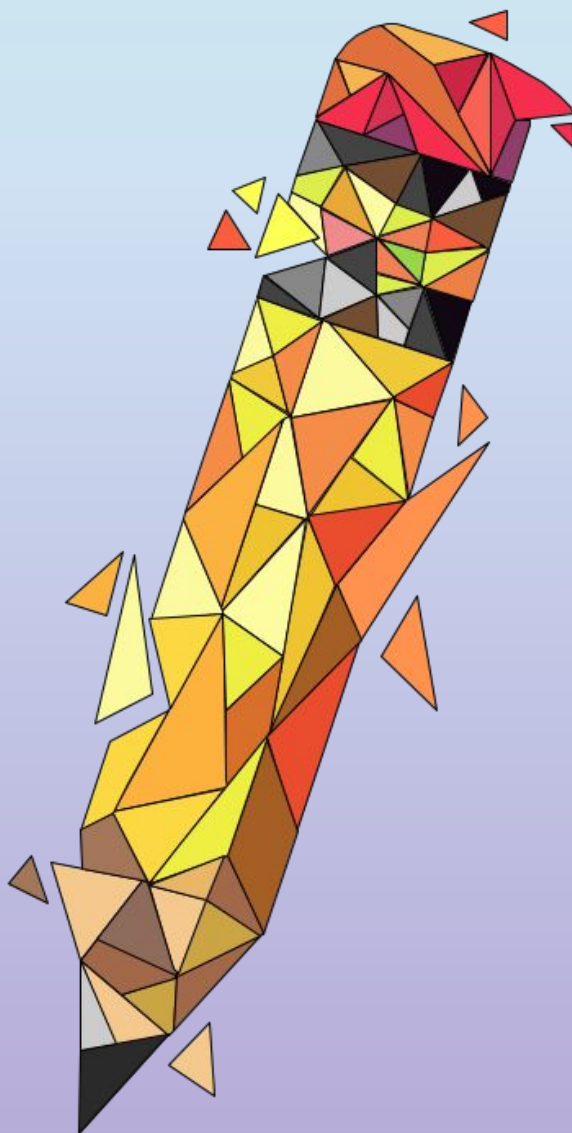
*

Rhea got ready to get going. It was the first time that she and Diana would be spending more than a day together, and she wanted to make it count. Something that both of them had found in common was camping. They were going to take a few hikes and then set up tents in a clearing that they had found. Rhea's parents would be there to chaperone, and Diana would be sharing a tent with Rhea.

The doorbell rang, and Rhea grabbed the bag that she was packing, sprinting down the stairs as fast as she could. She opened the door to Diana, who grinned with excitement. They piled into the car, and Rhea couldn't imagine anything better.

It was the start of a new adventure, and Rhea was sure that it was going to be amazing. She was certain that saying yes to Diana was the best decision of her life.

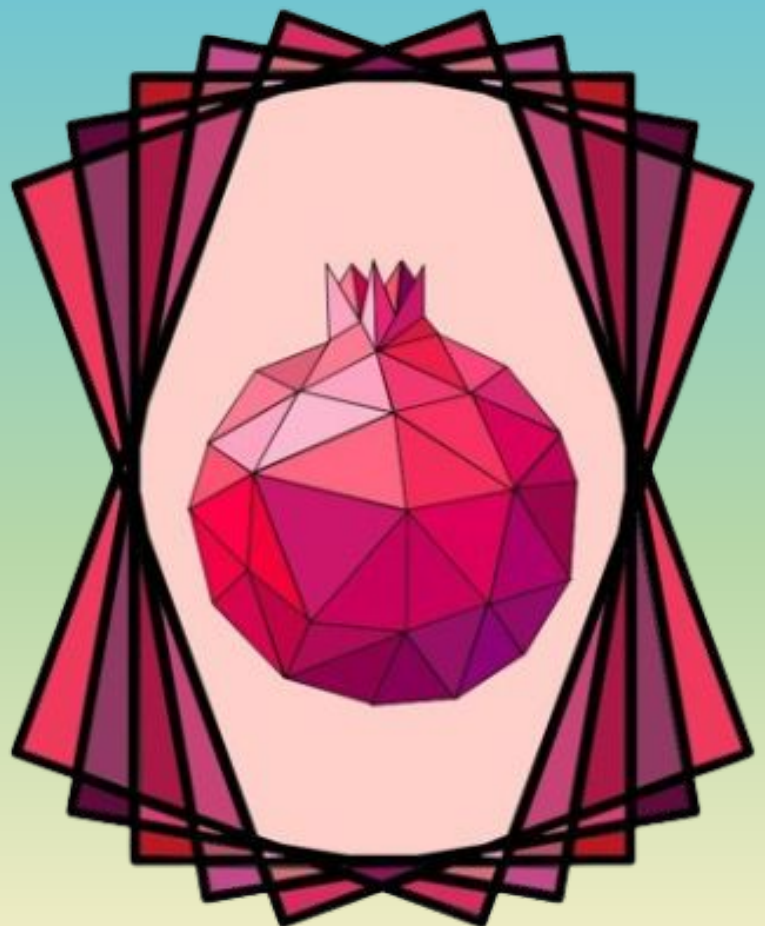
Pencil
By Katherine Li





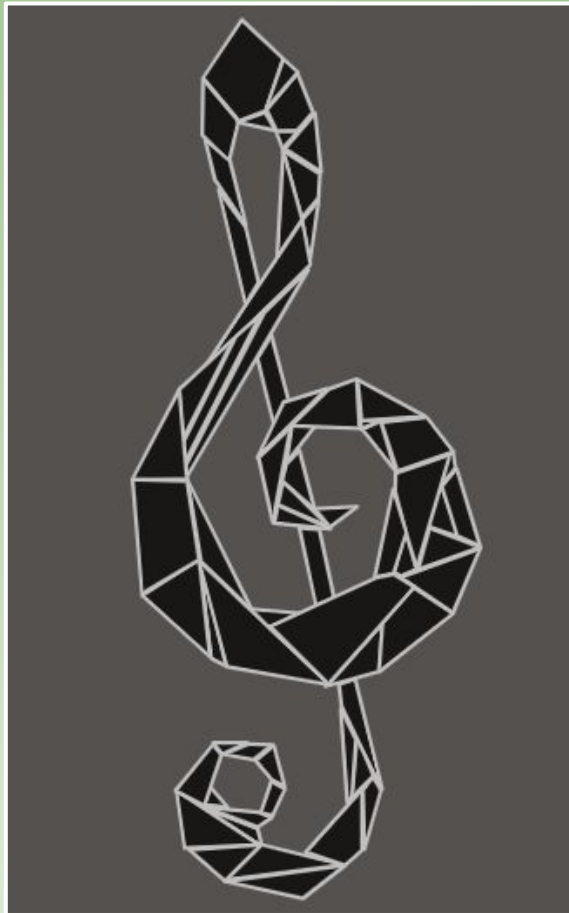
Artwork
By
Katherine Li

‘Pineapple’



‘Pomegranate’

'G Clef'



'Palm Tree'

A New Era of Cozylaya

By Charlotte Stanford

Chapter 1: Nonna

Luna Cioccolato

Everyone has a word for that old person in their life: Abuela, Oma, Grand-Mère, Nonna. They're all words for the older ladies in town who bake sweets and look after children. Sadly I am the last one in Sicily, a town famous for pizza and pasta. You see, Sindaco Alessandro Odioso was not kind to me; he decreed that to “modernize” the town of Sicily he needed to get rid of the Nonnas. We Nonnas acted as the protectors of the town, without us the Sindaco would be able to do anything he liked. I couldn't let that happen, so I officially began my crusade against Alessandro Odioso. My partner was an orphan named Celia. A few years ago I saw her reading a book on the street, when she saw me she looked up and smiled. I decided to take her in, you see I wanted someone to help me around town, and she obviously needed someone to take her in. We started by selling our crafts for cash, the money would go into a jar that we could give to the sick and poor. Sindaco Odioso wouldn't be able to stop us now, would he?

Chapter 2: Strange Birds

Celia_____

Nonna Luna was like the fond grandmother that I never had; I wished that I could repay her for her kindness. She always says that “Good actions have reasons, and those reasons help to heal”. She was the wisest person in the town and I wished that I could grow up to be just like her. Today she sent me to town to pick up some more yarn and ingredients for her world famous Wild Mushroom Soup or Zuppa di Funghi Selvatici as we call it here in Sicily. I met the forager (Mr. Capocuoco) in town. He was like a Grandfather to me, he would always give me the best of his mushrooms (If you ask me this is one of the contributing factors to the delicious soup and why it is in high demand). Today he gave me Pratolino, Porcini, Finferlo, Russula, Chiodini, and Pioppini. One of the best parts of the soup was that any (edible) type of mushroom could be used in the soup. After I accepted the mushrooms I went to the weaving house, a house where a group of ladies called The Tessitrici lived and worked. They were friendly enough, but they didn't deal in money, instead they dealt in Cannellini Beans. I had to make sure that I had a jar full of them to satisfy the formidable Tessitrici. After about five minutes of haggling for the price we decided upon the whole jar of Cannellini Beans for 10 spools of yarn. Then as I was walking through the market on my way home, I noticed out of the corner of my eye, a bird seller. I decided to make a quick detour there, when I got there I asked for three birds, I quickly gave the seller 1500 lira and went on my way. I knew that I was approaching home by the smell of Nonna Luna cooking. I quickly went inside to fetch my journal and let the birds go. They soared through the air, their yellow, purple, blue, and black feathers ruffling in the wind. I took careful note of their flight and went inside. Just like I suspected Nonna Luna was making cookies, Biscotti Nuziali to be exact. Nonna Luna with her tasty food, I could swear that she loved nothing more than to help people and to cook.

Chapter 3: Torture

Luna Cioccolato

Sindaco Odioso was on my heels now that he realized that I wasn't going to give up without a fight, he decided to make my life as difficult as possible. He started by sending his servants to knock

on my door at night. One night he even went so far as to do it himself, he came with an eviction notice, and if it weren't for Celia I would be dead meat. Celia answered the door, then she coughed in his face and said that I was sick with some sort of illness. He left immediately and his wife Bella made him go into a sort of quarantine for a month. Bella was a sort of friend to me, she had always looked after me, and it was probably because of her that I wasn't dead. I needed to find some way out of this horrible situation. I also, and more desperately, needed to protect Celia. She was all I had, and I couldn't afford to lose her. The next day Mr. Capocuoco came to our doorstep, he was sick, at least we thought so. As soon as we invited him inside he resumed his usual calm and composed demeanor.

He said "I am leaving in three weeks for Egypt, to escape the tyranny of Sindaco Odioso. If you want to come with me, I have no problems, but please remember that you can only bring things of the utmost importance with you." I had millions of questions swirling around in my brain such as *Why Egypt?* I knew that we needed to get out, but I was confused about why so soon.

Chapter 4

Celia —————

As soon as Mr. Capuoco left, me and Nona Luna started packing. We had three days before we left, so we needed to get started right away. To keep Sindaco Odioso off our heels we needed to act like nothing was going on. Sindaco Odioso is relentless when it comes to Nona Luna. I needed to go to the hidden corner in the market where it was dark, it was called Il Mercato Nero (the black market). I was going there to trade with Mr. Soldi in secret. Mr. Soldi was this blind old man, who had lots of money. I was going to trade me and Nona Luna's crafts. Why I had to do this in the black market was all because of Sindaco Odioso. Sindaco Odioso had recently decreed that no one was to accept anything from any of the Nonnas. For most of them the Sindaco evicted them and cut off their supply of money if he didn't kill them first.

Chapter 5: Escape

Luna Cioccolato

We were making the plans for escaping today, with Mr. Capocuoco. We were going to Egypt to hide among the tombs and pyramids, but also to seek out work. We think that we will be useful for our crafts and skills. Mr. Capocuoco though would have to find a new skill, in Egypt foraging was not in high demand. We started our long journey by boarding a boat on its way to the port in Alexandria, Egypt from there we would either walk or horseback ride to Cairo. Then we would get started building our new life in Egypt. Today we needed to get an audience with the leader of the shipping company, to find out when we would leave and if we could even leave. The leader was named Mr. Cose. He ruled his company with an ironclad fist, but he had always loved Celia. Celia was something of the town pet, everyone loved her, and she always got the best deals at the market. After our meeting with Mr. Cose, we figured out that we needed to wait three weeks and forge some important documents. He would give us a shipping container to hide in, he also said that it would be wise to have our stuff in the container beforehand.

Chapter 6: Preparation

Celia—————

We were leaving for Egypt in less than three weeks which meant that we needed to get food for the journey and get money to give us a head start. Today I went about the market collecting blankets, supposedly to "Prepare for Winter". Collecting straw to weave baskets to sell at the market was another of my important duties. Mr. Capocuoco was going into the forest collecting mushrooms and truffles daily to give us a head start. Sindaco Odioso was so far oblivious to our big plan, giving us the upper hand in this battle. By now my

hands were tired for weaving the baskets, and making the drawings and painting for the nobility. Once I had to make one for Bella, Sindaco Odioso's wife to help her please her husband. I knew it was to help Bella a kindly woman who donated to the poor, survive her marriage and please her husband. I had to paint Sindaco Odioso in a regal pose, enveloped in luxurious furs and silks. Unlike real life it portrayed the Sindaco as fit and tall, instead of the slouchy man we all knew him as. In the painting he had a perfect nose instead of the oddly shaped one that he had in real life. Before there was Sindaco Odioso there had been a loving, kindly man named Antonio Carluccio. He had sadly died three years after I was born, so I didn't have very many memories of him, I just remember being safe. Currently our savings were at 1000 lira, more money than we had ever possessed, but still not enough to sustain three people, and we only had two weeks left.

Chapter 7: The Forest of Love

Leonardo Capucuo

Of late I had been spending my days in the forest collecting mushrooms and truffles. After a few days of collecting I would have baskets to sell at the market with Celia. After all the mushrooms had been bought I decided to take Celia into the forest with me. Once we were inside I taught her different types of mushrooms and how to identify them. At the end of the day we had some of the rarest of mushrooms to sell. We set aside some of the mushrooms for us to take on the boat as snacks, but most of them we sold at the market. I began to realize that Nonna Luna and Celia were my family. I began to realize that I couldn't live without them, they were my reason for living, why I was still alive. I had been there when Nonna Luna took Celia in. Maybe because of my love for them, I had gone through the effort of planning the escape. The truth was that I had bonded with Celia over the course of her visits to me in the market. I was also beginning to have feelings for Nonna Luna beyond what had previously been experienced. Maybe I could write her a poem or give her my prized mushrooms for her to cook with. Or maybe I was just being stupid, maybe I wanted to have someone to be my partner in life. I remember that when she was a little girl and I was a little boy I had been one of those slack jawed boys looking at her like she was a goddess. Luna Ciocoletti used to have thick, brown, long, braided hair. She used to wear long skirts and scarves in the winter, she was rebellious, though, and loved the forest. Often she would camp out there, in her treehouse that she had built herself. Now Luna Ciococoletti captured my attention just as much, maybe even more.

Chapter 8: Mushroom Boy

Luna Ciococoletti

When I was little I had never fit in, I was different from most girls. First, I knew how to survive in the forest. Second, I was the top student in our class. We had two different teachers, one for the boys and one for the girls. One day I decided to bundle up my hair, wear a hat over it and dress in my brother's clothes. I showed up for boys class and finally got to learn more than just how to sew and be a devoted wife. I was learning how to do the Pythagorean Theorem and the Sieve of Aritocrotos. After three months of doing it I showed up to boys class with my braids down. The teacher was not pleased and decided to take me to the headmaster's office. The headmaster was kind and gentle, though, and allowed me to continue my classes. Leonardo the mushroom boy was in my class then and whenever he was around me just fumbled and mumbled, but of course then, I didn't know about love and crushes. Now I guess he has improved, but how am I supposed to know that he has changed his feelings? Anyway we still needed one valuable asset: MONEY, CASH, GELD, whatever you call it we needed 💰🏦, and we needed it fast. We also needed extra clothes to keep us warm during the boat ride. Our plan was to go to the Bank of Cairo to exchange our Lira for Egyptian Pound. Another thought that had been begging in my mind was whether we would even be able to survive in Cairo. I had lived my entire life on the island of Sicily, was it really possible to adjust to living in Cairo?

Chapter 9: Boarding The Boat

Celia———

This morning when I woke up I knew that today would be a day we would never forget, this afternoon we were going to board the life changing boat to Egypt, but first we had to survive the day. We needed to act perfectly normal in order for Sindaco Odioso to not suspect a thing. We needed to act like today was just a regular day. We needed to go through our daily rituals like usual. We knew that if Sindaco Odioso got even a whiff of what we were doing that we would be dead meat, and meat was in high demand by people around the world, we could easily be marketed as beef or turkey. We were going to go to the market, get some lightweight provisions, and be done with it. I look forward to a time when we can help people in our native Sicily again, but that will have to wait until Sindaco Odioso dies. When that day comes I will rejoice and come back to Sicily. Someday I hope to never be afflicted by the ailment known as love, never ever would I willingly kiss someone. I want to be free to live my own life free of emotional attachments to lovers. For family it will always be fine. In a way I am the last Nonna, because being a Nonna doesn't mean that you have to be old, you just need to care about people, you just need to have the capacity to love. Love is all it takes to live a joyful life. I went around the market buying sun dried citruses, chocolate coated coffee beans, and grapes. The boat ride would take two and a half weeks give or take. As we were nearing the port we saw that the ship was magnificent, made with strong steel and sturdy wood. The best part was that we would have a part of the ship to ourselves. The captain had already been informed of us being on the ship and was told to be a nice kitty cat if he wanted to be paid by Mr. Cose. We briskly walked up to our container, got inside of it to sit down. We suddenly started to feel lifted into the air and down onto the ship. Once we had reached the desired location they loaded up other containers and crates. After everything was ready Mr. Cose came to check that everything was in order, while also checking on us. While he was talking to us he said "you can roam around the ship if you'd like, but you must remember to stay away from the front and lower deck of the ship, otherwise you are free to roam anywhere on the ship" After that we were left alone to prepare for what lay ahead. Off to Cairo we go!!!

Chapter 10: At Sea

Nonna Luna

As soon as we felt the ship start to move across the bright blue sea we started unfolding the blankets and covering the cold metal floor in them. Then I decided I wanted to look around the ship with Celia. Leonardo said that he was going to stay and try to take a nap. So Celia and I put some of the dried oranges, some coffee beans, and about ten coins in a soft black blanket. We set out by opening the large container just a sliver and climbing out into the unknown. We went through a doorway which led to a long hall which then led to this giant room there were books covering one wall and herbs covering another. Me and Celia were so immersed in our state of heaven that we didn't notice a man enter the room. He was skinny and tall with a dark mustache and beard sweeping over his gaunt features. It looked like he hadn't been sleeping much lately, he had big purple bags under his icy blue eyes. We just stared back and forth for a while until he yelled out "You shouldn't be here" with a faint Russian accent. Celia bravely stepped forth and retorted "Who is to say who isn't, you seem like you have had your fair share of people denying you something that is yours." "How did you know?" He said in what can only be described as pure awe. "I have my hidden talents" she replied "I may have misjudged you. Can we start over?" He began.

Chapter 11: The Cat's Den

Celia-----

I couldn't believe that the man had given himself over, we soon figured out that his name was Nicola Ivanov, a man who had escaped from Russia after the Czar and his family were killed. He feared that his country had just become unstable and that it would never be the same ever again. He had arrived in Italy and gotten a job on one of the cargo boats. He said that until recently he had been getting paid relatively well, but now they had been making him work longer hours for the lesser pay. When he was in Russia he had a promising job as a scientific engineer, but that had all gone down the drain when he left Russia in search of a more stable life. So far he hadn't succeeded, but he was planning to get off and leave when the ship docked at the port in Cairo. During our time on board The Essence he showed me around and taught me about everything he knew, he taught me how to pick locks, a skill that I would take to heart.

Chapter 12: The Docks

Luna Ciococolleti

We were docking today, we were finally arriving in Egypt. Home of tombs, mummies, and pharaohs. We quickly packed all our belongings into rucksacks and made sure to make use of a little cart that we had brought with us. We cleared all our belongings making sure not to leave a trace of our journey. Nicola was coming with us so we made room for his meager possessions. Then started on our way, luckily a passenger ship with mostly steerage passengers had also docked so we had a place to hide. Hiding among the people we escaped from the port and walked towards the city. With the bustling and rustling of the city it was easy to fit in. Surprisingly when I walked up to a street vendor and asked for some of his food in Italian but he spoke back in Italian, but as we were eating Leonardo said he never knew that I could speak Arabic too, but Celia understood my belief that he had been speaking Italian.

The Modern Celia Cozylaya

A collection of poems by Charlotte Stanford

At the morgue
a sight most rue
was beheld for you
tis true
a sight most grue

A tinkling of hope
has no inkling of suffer
for once it got any indication
it would give up and cease to dust
for that was how it started

How we fade
as we wade
through the years
of suffering
of hope
how we want to hide
in the deep solace
of the shades of silence

The Modern Celia Cozylaya

A collection of poems by Charlotte Stanford

The pace
of the race
to chase
the face
of disgrace
with grace

Lotus petals
like precious metals
are sought after
greatly by the nettles

Night is the
plight of the dark
to rewrite
and ignite
the right
in spite
of the might
of the light

Open the potion
with the notion
that you will set in motion
an explosion

You deny
that you rely
high
on your ally
to comply

Oh how
we know
that the shadow
from long ago
will show
the blast
of the past
At last

The rain
of the pain
that shows no gain
can not be slain
by vain
ever again

The gate
of the hate
shown on slate
has a weight
beyond the rate

Pressure is a fissure
Beneath the skin
So go be a wisher
For your kin

We try to hold
The world
For gold
To fit the mold
Created by old cold
Airs of the past
That won't last

As you whine
Of thine
Vine of consign
To mine

Punishment of me
Shall be punishment of thee
So I shall make a decree
That I shall not harm thee
So I prithee
The kindness of thee

It's a hit or miss
To fall into the abyss
So don't dismiss
The chance to reminisce

Poems regarding “grace”

By Charlotte Stanford

The space between
Where Mother Nature shall preen
Wearing the greens
She alone is our queen
Of the serene
That shall be gleaned
As the place
That we have dreamed
For the grace
Of spring

We realize now
That we have failed
To change direction
From the artificial perfection
That doth plague us

We weed out the imperfect
To attain an impossible state
Of perfection
For a collection of meaningless
Which is keeping us

From diversity

A Bee's Life
by Ayush Kar



The Sonatina Festival

By Owen Hutchinson

Recently, I did a piano recital called the sonatina festival at Wentz hall in downtown Naperville. My cousin Mary, who was babysitting us because our parents went to South Carolina, drove my sister and I there. Once we got there, we realized that we were very early, so we decided to walk around town. I was beginning to become very nervous. I had been practicing this for a very long time, and working very hard at it. I had it memorized, and I was still very nervous. I signed in, and entered the waiting room. It was a large room with ash black folding chairs set up, with beige boring walls. I saw Ms. Jane, my piano teacher, and went to talk with her.

“Hello, Owen! How are you?” She asked.

“Uh, I’m okay, but a little nervous,” I stammered, growing more nervous by the second.

Responding to me, she said, “That’s normal. We all feel nervous about big things sometimes.”

“I should probably go, I have to play my song now,” I said, glancing at the clock above the door in the waiting room.

I walked down the hallway, and I found my judge's room. I went in, and once I got to the piano, I told her about my song and what the composer was like. After all of the practice that I had done, this was the big moment. I readied myself, adjusting the bench slightly, and thinking about what notes to play, and how the song sounded. I started to play, just as I had practiced. I messed up a couple of times, but I corrected myself and kept playing. The first movement went by okay, but then I had to play the second movement, dubbed tarantella, as your fingers moved like a spider. It was harder for people to play in general, and I was not as comfortable with it as the first movement. I started to play, moving fast and accurate. Again, I messed up, but it was okay.

After the song ended, the judge thanked me and I left. Surprisingly, the entire ordeal was only about two minutes in total. Finally, I got a certificate, and I would later get a trophy, but I didn't know how well I did. Mary and my sister, Lizzie, congratulated me and we left. Overall, I didn't think that it was as bad and didn't deserve the amount of worrying I did. I definitely enjoyed the entire experience though.

Epilogue: It was just a day after the sonatina, and my teacher texted my mom, who had come back from the trip, my score and what the judge, Ms. Osborn liked and disliked about my performance. I ended up getting a 94 and a silver trophy that I will get on Tuesday. I was disappointed because I was one point away from getting gold, and I had practiced for so long. In the end, I learned that things may not always work out the way that you want them to, but could still be pretty fun.

Colors

By: Diya Mittal

Brown

Brown is the earthworm, the lungs of Earth.

Brown is the bark of trees, a staple in life.

Brown is gooey chocolate, melting in your mouth.

Brown is the dirt that we live on.

Brown is the color of our skin and diversity.

Brown is the loving feeling coming from the depths of the earth.

Brown is the color of fuel for the raging fires.

Gold

Gold is the glittering, glamorous idea of riches.

Gold is the feeling of a kind, warm hug.

Gold is the autumn leaves falling, giving life to bugs, mushrooms, and trees

Gold is the warmth of the fireplace, shared with others.

Gold is the feeling of accomplishment, after grim determination.

Gold is the trophy of generosity.

Gold is the perfect crisp of a marshmallow, sweet and sticky.

Blue

Blue is the depths of the ocean, unknown

Blue is the sky, open and welcoming.

Blue is the rain, pounding down, the sky crying.

Blue is the color of rain nourishing the earth.

Blue is the color of juicy blueberries, bursting in my mouth.

Blue is the color of opals and sapphires, blindingly bright.

Blue is the water, the foundation of life.

Red

Red is the color of the flames, flickering merrily.
Red is the color of the autumn leaves, drifting down.
Red is the scorching sun in the desert, devoid of life.
Red is the sharp pangs of anger,
Red is the color of love.
Red is the gentle petals of a rose,
Red is the sparkles of a polished ruby.

Pink

Pink is the color of new beginnings,
Pink is the color of early spring blooms.
Pink is the first moment of the sky as the sun comes.
Pink is the color of sweet, surgery macarons.
Pink is the color of strawberry smoothies,
Pink is the color of tropical islands
Pink is the color of a new little girl, coming home.

Orange

Orange is the last ray of the sun,
Orange is the sweet juice.
Orange is the color of pumpkins in the fall,
Orange is the color of autumn leaves drifting down.
Orange is the color of monarch butterflies, releasing out into the wind.
Orange is the color of foxes, prowling through the woods.
Orange is the color of little fishies, darting through coral reefs.

Green

Green is the color of life.

Green is a new flower bud, not yet ready to bloom.

Green is the ocean, it's churning waves.

Green is the sky, right where yellow and blue merge.

Green is the color of kiwis, sweet and a little sour.

Green is an emerald, buried in the earth.

Green is the snake, essential to the ecosystem

Purple

Purple is sour but sweet.

Purple is the fluffy clouds, giving way to glittering stars.

Purple is the exotic fungi, unexpected.

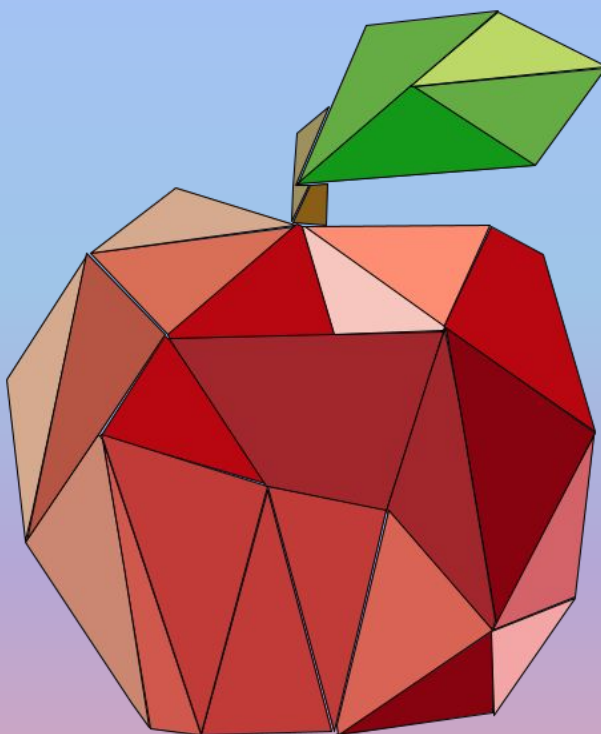
Purple is the figs, sweet and squishy.

Purple is the bird, pretty and unseen.

Purple is the lilacs, a natural perfume.

Purple is the color of passion.

*Apple by
Katherine Li*



HANGRY By Veda Karambakkam

I was sitting on the carpet since I was banished from my desk for reading. Honestly, it's not my fault. I was just distracting myself from the lecture of boredom. but apparently, that is a crime in Ms. Carrico's classroom.

The lecture wasn't dull. It just seemed boring because I was hungry, no HANGRY. As usual, Ms. Carrico was at the board explaining something boring. This time it was the strategies for narrative writing.

"Blah blah blah feelings blah blah blah point of view blah blah blah mentor text." Even though she was as loud as the announcer at the baseball game, all I could think about was the hunger in my stomach. Suddenly I Said Something I didn't mean to say at all at the moment.

"When will these women stop talking? I want lunch," I said *gurgle*. "Even my stomach says so,".

"Veda!" screamed Ms. Carrico "What rudeness was that?".I felt my body tensing up. At least twenty eyeballs staring at me. my face went all worried.

"Umm..."I said "I didn't mean it Ms. Carrico. I...was thinking out-". "nope. I don't want to hear it." she said in a stern voice "Go straight to the principal's office for disturbing the class with such ignorance." *sigh* I had no choice. I walked down the corridor and passed at least 30 classrooms Until I reached the principal's office.

My principal was excellent so I hoped she would understand me instead miss understand me like Miss Carrico. I walked into her office and she greeted me with a smile. I wave to her and she tells me to take a seat. I take one as she starts talking.

"Miss Carrico tells me that you insulted her during her class," she says.

"Hungry," I say

"Pardon," she says

"I hungry," I said

" Why don't you tell me why you're here?"

"You have to understand," I say to Ms. Sales "I was just tired I didn't mean to. ms Carrico just misunderstood me. I woke up at 3:00 am and I didn't get breakfast this morning so I'm just hungry, honest. I didn't eat breakfast."

"Really?" she said "Ms. Carrico told me you insulted her."

"Like I told you She misunderstood me," I repeated.

"She also told me your tummy gurgled in her class," she says

"That's cause I'm hungry!"I scream

"Okay okay, no need to scream I think you're getting kind of hungry," she says. "You noticed that now?" I asked in a kind-of (very) sarcastic way then mumbled "Makes sense for a pea-sized brain". "Excuse me young lady don't talk back to me like that." she replied with with an utterly stern look. But when I stared back at her she asked " Want to roast battle if you feel so good with roasts. I bet I could beat you!"

"Oh yeah? Watch this" I said, "You're so useless your mother disowned you."

"Your bald head literally blinded the sun!" "Oh yeah?" I replied in a sassy tone "Well when you went to the Zoo the zookeeper said you needed to go back to your terrarium."

"How dare you! When you went to the park they said mokeys weren't allowed."

"Well, your mom is so fat that when she went to the eating competition they said no whales allowed!"

"How dare you bring my mother into this! Your mother is so fat she starts the alphabet with O.B.C.D."

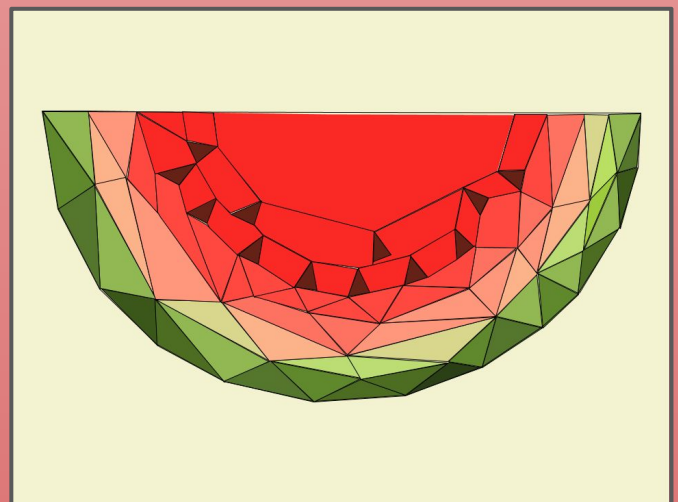
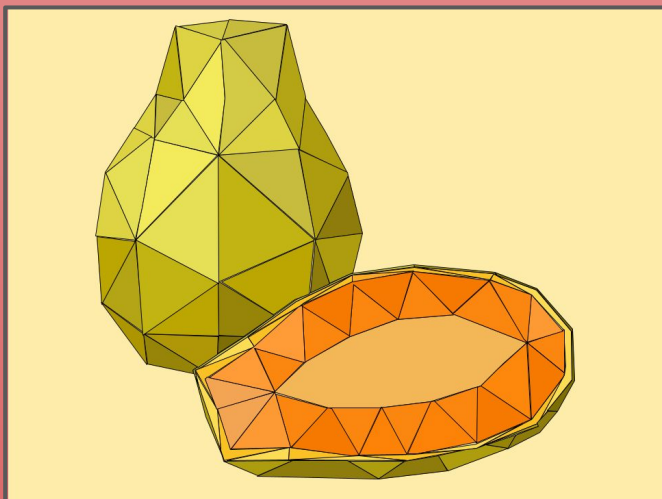
And that's how the principle vs. student Roast battle started. It was all over the elementary times. And some people even came in and filmed it. I think the nurse's office might have heard it and told the school. I was FAMOUS!!! Ms. Carrico was particularly pissed that I roasted Ms. Sales too.

At the end of the day Ms. Sales and I made up and agreed that we wouldn't tell either ones' parents (who knew principles got scolded by parents?). I walked to the lunch room to get a snack when I saw him. "Joe Biden! What are you doing here?" Then he said " I thought I would stop by to see the epic roast battle." "really?" I reply."of course!" he said "However, you may be good at roasting but don't cry when I beat you in a round of tae kwon do." Here we go again. Next thing you know that old guy is pinned down and the reporters are back. I knew the bald guy wouldn't stand a chance against me. Meh. Who cares anyway? He is just the old president guy. If I had headlocked him he would have died by now. A reporter came up to me and asked "How does it feel to beat Joe Biden and Mrs. Sales?"

I replied " It feels like I'm the Slay Queen."

THE END

*Watermelon by
Katherine Li*



*Papaya by
Katherine Li*

The School Lunch Interview

By Anna Moore

Greetings. I'm here to ask your opinion about school lunches. What do you think about them? Have they changed at all in quality or what?

"The normal food is worse but the chips and stuff have gotten better" Says an 8th grader, making a little face at the mention of the school food. "Better than elementary school but there are a LOT of repeats" a 6th grader admits. "There are a LOT of chicken nuggets."

Says a pair of desert craving 6th graders, "I like them but they need more desserts." His partner, wanting dessert even more, requests

"Can you take out the whole lunch and just make it a dessert?"

Clearly, these two have a sweet tooth to satisfy. "It's edible, so I eat it." says a 7th grader, clearly not a picky eater. "Better than

elementary, more options but pizza quality went down" remarks a

7th grader. "It's almost the same but there has been less variety and more chicken tenders" remarks an 8th grader. The next group I

visited had an insightful input "The chicken tenders (more like mystery meat tenders) are so dry they must have been cooked in

death valley" one of them remarks, the others agreeing. "It looks and tastes kind of like those huge erasers" another one says, showing a

picture of the huge eraser.



Mr. Linden's Library

By Jayna Marfatia

Mr. Linden walked briskly to the conference room. He had an important meeting with Mrs. Grisp, and did not want to be late. Mrs. Grisp was the Chief Librarian, and very punctual. It would look unprofessional if the owner, and most important person in the library, was later to a meeting of his own making than his employee. This particular meeting was about his daughter, Aurelia. Aurelia had a fascination for a specific book, one that was very dangerous. Mr. Linden dealt in dangerous books, but this one was new to the library. He hadn't been able to figure out much of the book, but he could tell that the book, which was called EVERMORE, had the most dangerous curse on it that he had ever seen in his 20 years of examining books. The curse on EVERMORE seemed very old, and it was powerful when it was first created. It was common knowledge between book curse examiners that the older the curse was, the more powerful it was. All of this was on Mr. Linden's mind as he took the long walk from the book examining rooms to Conference Room A.

When Mr. Linden finally arrived at the conference room, he swung open the door to realize that not only Mrs. Grisp, but most of his employees were already there as well.

"Well, well. Look who decided to show up," smirked Mrs. Grisp. Ms. Preeti hid a smile behind her hands while Dr. Rue snickered.

"At least I'm not the last one," Mr. Linden looked around nervously, embarrassed that he was late.

"You actually kind of are," said Dr. Rue. "Madeline is out sick, and so is Jeffery. And the cashiers are having their own meeting right now to discuss the increasing demand for books with tie-dye covers. I assume you know what this meeting is for, right?"

"Of-Of course, Dr. Rue," Mr. Linden had a bit of a stutter that came out when he was nervous, and right now, he was sweating so hard he almost wanted to turn the fan on, but he knew that his employees wouldn't like that, and it would only make them view him as more unprofessional. "So, we all know that this meeting is about my daughter, Aurelia. We know that she has a fascination with the new, deadly book called EVERMORE. Does anyone have any ideas on how to quench her thirst for this book?"

"I cannot say that I have many, Mr. Linden," said Ms. Preeti. "But I do have an idea."

"Well, then pray tell, Ms. Preeti." Mr. Linden politely, but he murmured some things under his breath that should not, and will not, be repeated.

"Your office is here, correct? And Aurelia is not allowed into The Great Room?"

Mr. Linden nodded.

"Then just keep the book in your office, and she won't see it. And as she stops seeing it, her fascination with it shall end. It's a simple solution bearing great effects, mainly, the effects that we want."

"But-" Mr. Linden protested, unsure if this really was the right thing to do. Lying, and intentionally keeping the book from his daughter seemed very criminal-like and Mr. Linden was not a man who wanted to be associated with criminal-like things.

"Mr. Linden, do you want to keep your daughter safe?" asked Ms. Preeti.

"Of course." replied Mr. Linden. "But I don't think-"

"I respect your wishes sir, you know that. But I really think that this is the only way we can keep her safe."

"Oh, all right." Mr. Linden finally said. After all, what harm could it possibly do?

The meeting was adjourned, and it would resume after Mr. Linden was sure that their plan had worked. Mr. Linden went home, as it was already getting dark, and he didn't want to be late for dinner.

Mr. Linden arrived home thirty minutes later, to find Aurelia rolling pizzaza crust and getting out the can of tomato sauce. Pizzaza was a special type of crust that Aurelia herself had created. Quite similar to pizza crust, Pizzaza crust only had one different ingredient; mashed potatoes that were stirred into the dough. The mashed potatoes made the crust soft, light, and more flavorful without messing up the texture. Mr. Linden sat down at the round table in the center of the small dining room, and waited patiently for Aurelia to serve him. She brought out the pizzaza twenty minutes later; it was slightly cool but still warm and tasty. The two ate quickly and quietly; the pizzaza was too good for them to stop eating. Suddenly, Aurelia asked a question, just out of the blue. "So, how was the meeting, Father?"

"Oh, it was fine," Mr. Linden said nonchalantly. He hadn't told her what the meeting was about, and did not want to spoil the plan. "Just the same old weekly meeting."

"Oh, of course." Aurelia said quietly, looking slightly sheepish. Why, though, Mr. Linden was not sure of.

They finished in silence, and Mr. Linden went up to his room unusually early, as the meeting had stressed him very much.

Mr. Linden woke early, very much earlier than usual. He sensed that something was wrong with Aurelia. When you're a single father, you have that sort of sense of your daughter's well-being. Mr. Linden rushed to Aurelia's room, and flung open the door, so hard that the poor door nearly cracked off its hinges. He found Aurelia laying on her bed, the book open next to her. *Oh, no*, he thought. *Please, please*. But he knew what had happened, and fell on top of her, sobbing hard, as if the sun had just lost the moon. *He had warned her about the book. Now it was too late.*

Mr. Linden carefully threaded his fingers through his daughter's short, dark hair, knowing that she would now be no more. EVERMORE's vines slowly wrapped themselves around Aurelia, and in a flash, she disappeared. Mr. Linden lay sobbing there forever, unable to return to the library that had killed his daughter.



He had warned her about the book.

Now it was too late.

Why People Should Learn a Foreign Language

By Katherine Li

When many people think of foreign languages, they think of complex words and hours of reading and writing. While people who learn a foreign language must practice reading and writing in the language they are learning, even the most difficult language in the world can become very easy to learn through a positive attitude and some hard work. That's why people should learn a foreign language.

First of all, a foreign language helps to broaden your horizons. There are many great job opportunities all over the world. You may find a very good job opportunity, but it is in another country where your future employer may require you to speak a particular language. Those who do not speak that language are unlikely to get feedback. For students, speaking a foreign language can help them broaden their horizons and gain extra credit. In the United States, students must attend a foreign language class in high school. Choosing a language they know can make it easier for them to learn, or maybe you can get a simple A.

Secondly, foreign languages have unexpected benefits. Foreign languages help students better learn their English language art courses. Although this sounds crazy, it is not true. The logic behind the grammar is largely the same. So, by practicing how to write sentences in different languages, they can learn the same logic in English, and vice versa. In this way, students can learn the logic of two things at the same time. Another thing that might be useful is being able to travel to a country and communicate with people fluently. This breaks the language barrier. Language barriers often cause problems and misunderstandings. Those who learn a language in a group environment will learn how to behave properly in the classroom, which is an important lifelong learning skill.

Thirdly, foreign languages connect people. As a student, many choose to study in group courses. Learning in group classes offers good practical opportunities, such as greeting classmates or tutors, speaking out loud in the classroom, and learning about tutors and tutors who will help you on your path to success. For example, I went to RCS (Ray Chinese School), and this year and last, I met amazing lecturers who inspired and encouraged me to continue learning a foreign language. You never know what will happen.

Overall, learning a new language is a wonderful experience because it helps to broaden your horizons, has unexpected benefits, and can connect people.

April

By Hannaa Ahmad

April

Rain is falling, snow is melting

Umbrellas pop up covering the streets

Birds start to fly back home

While nests start growing on trees

*Flowers of every color bloom, covering fields in a
lovely aroma*

*Finally, the clouds clear, Insects crawl into the
warmth of the sun*

*And up in the sky a radiant rainbow appears
Eyes fly to the sky, "seven colors of beauty".*

The Arizona Mountains

By Diya Mittal

Jagged stone knives cut the horizon
Hiding the sun arisen'
Stopping short of the golden sky
Across which echos a lone bird's cry.

And on those rocky plains
An ancient land, with no rains
Thousands of cacti in united sleep
Roots in soil with history deep.

Above the ground they are tall
Green men and women, they are all
Reaching out with hundreds of arms
Looking loving, bringing harms.

Daggers as long fingers extend from their skin
Prickly and sharp, ever so thin
But amongst these serrated prairies
Out come the seeds for babies.

Pink-tinted green pops up
A cocoon for the cacti pup
Thousands of seeds within
Each and every one kin.

The Darkness of the Night

By Zoha Ahmad

THE NIGHT IS DARK LIKE A PIT
TRYING TO ESCAPE THE DARKNESS
AN OWL HOOTS AT THE BLACKNESS
OH, THE DARKNESS OF THE NIGHT

THE STARS OF THE NIGHT SHINE SO BRIGHT
THEIR PURE RADIANT WHITE LIGHT
THE MOON THEIR MASTER UNLIKE ANY OTHER
OH, THE DARKNESS OF THE NIGHT

THE SILENCE IS SO CLEAR
THERE IS NOTHING TO FEAR
A CAT BREAKS THE SILENCE WITHOUT ANY
VIOLENCE
OH, THE DARKNESS OF THE NIGHT

The Hurt and the Betrayed

By Maya Ibrahim

I won't lie. I either tell the truth in part or not at all. I believe everyone has the right to tell the world what they desire and hide what they choose. Now don't think for an instant that someone out

there is perfect and has nothing to hide. Yes, they may not deceive, but they are rarely ever going to

speak the full truth, either. Although you don't realize it, everyone has something tucked away. Don't

believe you know all that has happened in your life; even your brain conceals information, filling itself

with hidden truths. No one favors dishonesty but were consumed by it. It makes no difference if you

accept it or not; it's always there. Yes, while no one enjoys lying, when we become engulfed in them,

we, too, become the lie.

So, when the officer asked if I had seen the murderer, I told him no. It's been true since my initial kill. I turned away from myself and stopped looking. Every time I passed a mirror or a surface with a reflection, I would urge myself to look elsewhere. Anything to keep me from looking at myself-anything to keep me from breaking at the seams.

It's not that I ever intended to be a "mass serial killer," but I'm not going to quit now that I'm this far in.

My whole life has been an immense doodle. Except for the day that sparked all the passion and fury.

"Don't trust anyone." He explained, his eyes clouding but clear within seconds. I never knew what he meant, until I did.

He was my best friend, my brother, and my lover, all wrapped into one. We used to laugh, hang out, and do anything and everything we could think of. He was there for me through thick and

thin, as they say. He was until he wasn't. The boy who stood by my side through my trials and tribulations suddenly was the source of them.

He took advantage of me, so I made him; all of them pay.

I had to be more cautious. I don't intend to let a girl like her ruin everything. Not when she asked for the kill, nor when she groveled for it. Arguing how I was wrong for what I did to him, to all of them. They had no idea what I had been through. No one asked if I was okay. I loathed the mere fact that she got into my head. I detested myself for not asking how I was at fault when he deceived

me,

rather than the other way around, before wrath consumed me. Her blood splattering across the wall.

I put my trust in him. We were constantly there for one another. To me, he was the world. But I never offered enough for him-he was constantly looking for more.

"Eva?" my sister asked, her nose running from the snow. She was always worried about me. I knew I'd made the proper decision every time I looked at her. I had rid the world of such a man. How could I keep my younger sister safe if a wrench like him was still polluting the air? "Pistachio, go back to bed." Mommy will be home soon." I attempt to calm her racing heart. She disliked being alone at home, but I had no choice.

When I made it out the door, I saw Lorlei awaiting my return on the couch, accompanied by her plush elephant, Moony.

I see tombstones of various shapes and sizes, some discolored, others new. I see his name in big, bold letters. Matthew Hendrickson. My genuine, unfeigned, and heartbreaking first love. As I sit and stare at the dull stone, I can still see him groveling for his life, his blood coating my palm like a crimson-red glove. But I can't seem to get my heart to forget him.

To forget his aroma, how he walked.

The way he betrayed.

I hear the crackling of fall leaves behind me, a cold breeze grazing my neck.

I'm reminded of the hard crunching noise of his bones. I turn to acknowledge the source of the sound, bewildered by the sight of him.

The sight of my first friend, my first lover.

My first and last betrayer.

Before I come to my senses, I feel a heavy crunch on my bones. A wet, sticky substance traced the region the cold breeze had once skimmed.

Everything went black.

Titanic Must Fall

Ajay Singh

The Captain contemplates the future
A postman and a spark argue
A boy inquires about dragon blood, which others think is funny
Theft echoes through the ship, a girl loses her money
A boy runs wild, as if he is manic
The passengers shuffle, as if in a panic
But none of this matters
For they are on 'Titanic'

Doomed as they are
The passengers live on
A baker hunts a rat
Walking, a socialite tries not to get fat
The second violinist prepares for a serenade
All on the first, second, and third class promenade

Far below, the sparks receive word
A Marconi-gram, arriving like a bird
It warns of ice ahead
It might even cause bloodshed
But the operator ignores it, gives it no priority
What danger could an ice field possibly present
To the ship that will never even have a single dent

The answer is in the distance, where an iceberg lays in wait
Watching, preparing to deliver Titanic's fate
It has seen all
From the conquest of Khan
To the renaissance in Milan
It has seen the toll
A poor boy, failing to his death
At the launch, a worker took his last breath
The ice has seen innocents mauled
And now he decides that 'Titanic' must fall

Friendship

By Jayna Marfatia

I stood in front of the hazy mirror, bunching my light brown hair into a messy, poofy ponytail. Yeesh. Okay, that was not the best look for me. I looked around the light blue walls of my dorm room, searching for a hairbrush. Upon finding one in our junk drawer(which was basically all our drawers), I raced to the white and gray vanity, trying to find the perfect hairstyle. I took the rubber band out, and tried a bun instead. Nope. Oh, whatever. I pulled my hair back into a nice, neat ponytail, like I always did, just as my roommate, Menaka, came in from the shower. Her dark black hair was wet, but *she* was able to cover it up with her baseball cap, as *her* hair wasn't long and thick, and distinctly messy in all ways possible. I quickly went to our closet and tried to pick out the perfect outfit, which was hard, considering the amount of clothes I had to work with. I finally decided on a light blue-and-gray skirt and top outfit. When Menaka saw it, she burst out laughing.

"You," she said in between giggles, "look like a mini version of my lawyer mom."

I, on the other hand, wasn't smiling. "Do you think it's okay?" I asked, "Do I look too lawyer-ish? Like, not enough college-y/doctor-ish?" I wasn't anything like Menaka, who was pretty and stylish in all ways possible. For example, she was wearing this super cute sleeved shirt and flare jeans outfit that looked like a million dollars.

Menaka stopped laughing and stared at me. "You're going to be fine, Niagara. This looks great on you. **Don't worry about what everyone else thinks. If you feel right in this outfit, then great.**"

I breathed a sigh of relief and set to work packing my bright blue backpack, which took a lot of work. I was thankful that Menaka, at least, had trusted me. I actually really liked this outfit, and I felt like it fit my personality. At least someone thought I looked good. That was one of the awesome things about Menaka. She was very direct and honest, and if she complimented you, you would know that it was true. After I stuffed everything in there, my backpack was basically an unnaturally shaped boulder, except three times heavier. I was getting ready to head downstairs when I glanced at the blue digital clock on our desk. Oh, no! It was already 9:30! "Menaka," I called anxiously, "We have to go right now!"

My roomie muttered something back, but I had already grabbed her hand and flown out the door, even with her protests behind me. Running down the tiny hallway of our dorm's building, I wondered: *Why had I stayed up so late last night? Even with the outfit worries and everything, I usually wasn't this late.* Oh right, it was because of my bratty little sister, who couldn't even figure out a linear function in high school. But, it didn't matter, because I WAS GOING TO BE LATE!!! I ran down the stairs to grab a muffin from the cafeteria, not having time to look at the posters of the university's famous alumni as I usually did, still in shock that I was going to be one of them.

I clutched Menaka's hand as I ran across the campus; fortunately, our classes were pretty close by. I allowed myself a couple seconds to breathe in the crisp fall air, before running across campus like I was being chased by a cheetah. The 3-story buildings flew by as Menaka and I tried to reach the last one without slipping on the piles of leaves floating around campus.

I was very scared, as my professor, Mr. Drakoni, was known for being the strictest teacher in the university. I plopped down in my seat right before the bell rang, as my cousin, Aryan, turned to me.

"So, are you excited for the dance?" he asked. Oh no, the dance! I totally forgot about it.

"I can't go," I said, trying to look disappointed but probably failing.

"Why not?" Aryan asked, keeping his voice low so that Mr. Drakoni couldn't hear us. I pretended to be focused on pulling out my homework from my binder, and plopping it on my desk, but I couldn't avoid Aryan's question forever.

"Because I have to-" I was cut short by a huge shadow gliding over us.

"Mr. Choka, Ms. Argenti. Would you care to explain what you were talking about with the rest of the class?" Mr. Drakoni, with his embarrassing request, brought me back to middle school, with horrible teachers, and pounds of homework. The only good thing back then was my best friend Kirta, but even she wasn't here now to save me.

"N-no, sir." I said, quickly adding the "sir" before the devil himself could lecture me on respect, responsibility, and all the other elementary stuff. *Wow*, I thought, *Mr. Drakoni really is as bad as everyone says*. I had known that, of course, but now I could really see it.

"As I thought." Mr. Drakoni said, walking back to the whiteboard to prepare for the next assignment. Aryan was frozen in the seat next to me.

"You can stop now," I whispered, rolling my eyes. Aryan always froze up when a teacher said something like that. It was one of his many annoying habits. Whenever a teacher got mad at us, he froze up, and left all the blame on me. Though, I couldn't really blame him now. Mr. Drakoni was very menacing; I could practically feel his angry aura.

"So, why can't you go, again?" Aryan asked quietly, throwing his head back like a weird fashion model. I guess he was trying to look good or something, I mean, I knew what the pressure of trying to look good felt like, but it just looked really, really weird.

I looked around at the dull gray room, searching for an excuse, and wondered how I had come so far from the community college.

"So, class, our, or more, your, next assignment, will be an essay on your time at college, which will be one-third of your grade." Mr. Drakoni went on to explain the deadline, and how long it was, and many other details, but all I could hear was that the essay was going to be one-third of our grade. That was practically the entire semester worth of work! And it was due tomorrow, October 7, 2024! Mr. Drakoni really was the worst teacher.

Imaginary Friend

By Audrey Wang

Elise sat on the edge of her bed, the hazy morning light filtering through in a pale cream veil. The skylight sat directly above her, letting the cool breeze flutter her coral-colored curtains and brown hair. How badly she wanted a friend, so she could play hide and seek, tell stories, and invite her to parties. But here, out in the 1900's countryside, even her relatives had lived in a whole other state, but they were all dead. Elise jumped up and down on her bed, imagining a sweet but far off dream of her playing with a new girl that she had invited to her house. Her bed, a white bed frame that was barely outlined against her plain white walls printed with petite yellow flowers, cheerful in the gloomy atmosphere of the house. Two ruffled pillows slept on the bed, trimmed with lace, next to 2 matching teddy bears, one clearly matted with tears. The corduroy blanket was made neatly on one side, while the other side spasmed in long wrinkles.

Through her bedroom door, she could see the dark hallway, draped in shadows and suffering. Elise stared blankly at the picture across the hall – a delicate painted portrait of herself and Kelly – Elise's sister. Her attention wandered to the golden frame; her eyes somehow unable to focus on the painting. Kelly's side of the painting was covered in an inky cloth. Candles placed below the painting on a white pedestal threw ghostly shadows on the faces, turning them into anguished ghosts. A clack of a doorknob turning into place jolted Elise out of her daze. Her father, Mr. Thompson, had left for work. Elise slipped downstairs, careful not to wake Raven, her youngest sister.

Downstairs, there was the familiar whirring sound as her mother, Mrs. Thompson, started up the sewing machine. A gentle clack of wooden knitting needles began, and soon blended in with the sewing machine, both of them singing in harmony. Elise's grandma was knitting, like she did every day. From the stairwell, Elise could see the opening to the living room, with light leaking out from the bay windows. In front of the stairs was the front door. A grand, rosewood beast sleeping on the front porch. Tiptoeing down the remaining steps, Elise treaded towards the kitchen. She carefully peeled an orange, ate it, and then slipped back up the stairs, into her room, and back on the bed, staring at the painting across the hall.

Elise's eyes drew blank as they clouded over with memories – Kelly struggling on the bed, taking in tight, ragged breaths of pain as she repeatedly twisted in the bed. Then there was nothing. A horrible silence that covered everything. Kelly froze in a contorted position, her face wrenched up into a grotesque scream. But there was nothing. No wheezing or coughing or moaning of fevers. Kelly was gone. Then there was another image – the one of her mom coming into Elise's room at night to calm her. "She's gone!" Elise wailed. "Why did I live when she didn't?" Her mom kissed her on the head. "Kelly was always frailer than you were." Her voice trembled.

"I want a new friend," Elise found herself saying. "So that if I lose her, I won't be as sad as I was losing Kelly." She climbed down the oak stairs, running her hand along the curved white railing. A few steps away from the living room, she heard her mom crying softly. Peeking around the opening, she saw her mother carrying Kelly's old blanket. "Mommy?" Elise whispered. Her mom looked up. She sniffed and said "Yes, Elise?"

"I thought we lost Kelly's old blanket."

"I found it a couple of days ago, in your treehouse."

Yoda

By Clarke Jackson



Butterfly and Flower

By Eva Calcutt

A Fun Way to Spend the Day

By Anton Podskocijs

There are a lot of kids that would spend their free of school and homework days on the console or the PC playing video games and I am one of them.

Hi! My name is Anton, and I am a kid who would like spending his free time playing video games. I like to go outside too, but with friends sitting at home and also playing video games, I thought I could have some time to myself.

While drinking Kombucha and playing my favorite game in my STEAM library, one of my friends, Ilhom, and his little brother, Imron, knocked on my window and gestured for me to go to the front door to open it. Then as soon as I opened the door, they pleaded, "Please bro, come outside, we have nothing to do, and as we can see, you too!"

Ilhom pleaded, while still standing in my doorway, "Yeah, our parents told us to put our consoles down and go outside." I saw some hope in Imron's eyes when he said that.

"Yo guys, I just finished my homework and thought of having some time relaxing but if you say so... Why not? Call Josh while I get dressed," I said with a bit of annoyance in my voice.

"OK!" They yelled in unison while running away in Josh's house direction.

While I was talking, my dad yelled from the table, "He (Me) would eat first and change his clothes, because it is cold outside, and then he would come, OK?"

But we couldn't hear the answer and we weren't waiting for it because we knew that these guys were already somewhere about 100 feet away from us.

So I ate, got dressed up and that is how I was ready for the adventure that I didn't know was coming.

The outside... I can feel the light breeze blowing in my face. I went to the secret place, where I already seen all of my friends, Ilhom, Imron, and Josh sitting and kicking the stone. "Yo guys, wussup?" I yelled, still far away to see what they were doing.

"Yo man, how you been?" Josh said back when I was closer.

"Guys, what are y'all doing?" I said after I saw what they were doing.

"We thought about going to the forest to see 'The Land of Tires,' Josh said with enthusiasm.

"That is a good idea, but why are y'all hitting the rock and why y'all have a stick?" I questioned them already knowing the answer.

"Oh...this?" He shows me his stick with an acute end. "This is for self-protection, there are coyotes after all..." Josh said but he couldn't finish the sentence because I already knew what Josh was going to say and already turned around in the direction of my house.

"Oh...got it. I'll go home for a second to bring some materials." I snuck back home and brought a half-dull kitchen knife, tape, a razor-blade knife, and some other materials.

When I returned, me and the boys had made our self-defense weapons but mine was the best of them. Mine had a razor at the end which made this thing the only kinda of a weapon. Of course, I wasn't picking anyone with it or throwing it because I knew it was stupid and dangerous. So me and the boys headed for the forest...

On the way to the forest, we called Alex. He just moved into the town with his family but Imron already knew him previously.

In the forest, Josh was just like in his own nature. He led us through spiky bushes and holes which he already knew about because he told us several times that he was at the land of the tires. We worked just like a team: Josh leading, me after with the stick to protect and to move objects (just in case), Alex as the tallest, Imron in the middle because he is the youngest, and in case something happened we could protect him, and all of this snake ended Ilhom with another stick.

In a couple of minutes, were near a small river, which was about 150 feet long and 2 feet wide making it a good stopping point.

“Actually, I think that we can make a small filtered water resource out of this river,” Josh said, with a questioning expression on his face that looked as if he was asking himself.

“Finally, this is the second great thought that came to your mind today (the first being the thought of going to the forest)” I said with a grin on my face.

“Yeah that’s true, but I know where we are and I know that there are some big bottles, rocks, and moss around here out of which we can make a filter,” Josh said with a giggle.

After this quick stop, we moved on but as I saw we didn’t have to. We already saw tires in front of us. We found a perfect place for a shack and stopped for a quick rest.

But at this point of our journey, our group was divided into two subgroups who wanted to do different things first.

First group consisted of Josh and Imron. My group consisted of myself, Alex, and Ilhom. Josh wanted to make the water filter first because he thought that the normal people camping wouldn’t survive without water and my group argued that we wanted to build the shack.

“Do you know that a human being can’t survive without water for even five days!?” Josh said with an expression of the smartest person in the world.

“It doesn’t look like we would be staying here for more than six hours.”

I tried to think logically.

“So what? We still have nothing to drink.” Josh said, with an expression of a thirsty and hungry predator.

“I can bring water and snacks and more of the other stuff.” Still thinking logically.

“I don’t care, if you want to work on the shack, that means that you work on the shack and I am going to make a filter.” Josh’s anger burst out.

And this is how we separated in the forest. My group was building a shack out of sticks and logs that were found along the way and Josh’s group was working on the water filter and walking for stones. They ended up bringing too many stones and we used them to make a campfire.

After a while, we understood that it could’ve been easier to just work together on two projects together and it could’ve been faster. But as soon as we were done, I got sent home to take blankets, food, and water. I came back, prepared the shack with blankets on the floor to sit, and showed our group the final result...

So our adventure was coming to an end. We hung out together in the shack near the campfire, drank coke, at Pokey Sticks, and just laughed at stupid jokes that Imron made.

After it turned dark, we collected the blankets and the trash and headed home. While going home Josh got into several spiky bushes and I went through the road. We separated again, but now it was a bet: Who’s way is safer and quicker? I won and Josh ended up with some scratches.

I would say that our adventure ended on a good note.

They Could

By Clarke Jackson

When the wind blows
Like a howling wolf
Everyone believes
That they could.
That they should.

When the snow falls
Like sugar on a donut
Everyone believes
That they could.
That they should.

When the gale begins
Like the waves on the beach
Everyone believes
That they could.
That they should.

The world knows they could.
The world knows they should.

I know
That they could.
That they should.
That they DON'T.

Couch

By Maya Ibrahim

- 1) A couch once forming laughter,
exhaustion, and tears,
- 2) now lay in the street.
- 3) The couch that produced feelings
stronger than mountains, and
happiness that could end wars;
- 4) now lay in the street.
- 5) The couch once filled with
memories and history,
- 6) now lay filled with mud and bugs.
- 7) Now comes a new one filled with
nothing but sleek cotton, and the
soft empty feel of silk.
- 8) While the newcomer lay in the
warm living room,
- 9) the one so filled with yesterdays,
- 10) now lay cold and chilly, in the
street.

Fall

By Katherine Li

Season of pumpkins
The weather turns cold
Crisp as an apple
Leaves turn the color of phoenixes
Red, Yellow, Orange, Brown
Students come in ready to learn
Apple cheeked because of the weather
Shivering from the cold
Ready to head inside
Soon comes November
When people are thankful
Even though, Halloween frights come sooner
We have much to be thankful for... in October and
September

For now, we are grateful
For nice teachers
For all 9 school teams
For languages, exploratories, and performance music
For the click-clack sound of shoes on linoleum tile
For P.E. and running on the school grounds in chilly
weather
For the 16 Habits of Mind
For kindness and teamwork
For studiousness and self-motivation
For school
For District 203



Julian Robert Oppenheimer

The Man with an Explosive Legacy

By Owen Hutchinson

He did many important things in astrophysics, nuclear physics, spectroscopy, and quantum field theory. He had a movie about him. He had way too many books written about him. He created one of the most destructive weapons known to man. Julius Robert Oppenheimer was a great theoretical physicist who played a major role in the development of the atomic bomb for the U.S, also known as the Manhattan project. He worked with other iconic physicists, the most important of which was known as Albert Einstein. Oppenheimer was one of the most influential and important scientists ever, as what he and many other people discovered changed the world forever by making a bomb that was easily able to instantly desolate miles on end. Other people would also follow in his footsteps to make even more discoveries related to splitting the atom and eventually fusing it back together to make an even bigger explosion.

Going back to his childhood, he was born in New York City on April 22, 1904. His dad was a wealthy German merchant, and his mother, who was Jewish but didn't take part in any religious things, was an artist. He learned and studied tirelessly in the Ethical Culture Society School. Later in 1922, he went to Harvard to become a chemist, but soon after quickly switched to physics, taking more of an interest in that. After a little bit in 1926, he went to the University of Göttingen, getting his Ph.D. already by the year of 22. In 1927, he returned to Harvard to study mathematical physics and at the start of 1928, at the California Institute of Technology.

Oppenheimer even had a movie released based on his discovery and path to fame as he worked on the bomb. The movie was titled *Oppenheimer*, and it was very popular. In addition, there were many great books written about the Manhattan project and the race against Nazi Germany. I would recommend reading the two books *Bomb: The Race To Build and Steal the World's Most Dangerous Weapon* and as a "sequel" set in the Cold War titled *Fallout: Spies, Superbombs, and the Ultimate Cold War Showdown*. These books are where I based a great load of information from this essay about, and they are very informative to great events that happened relatively recently in history.

In conclusion, J. Robert Oppenheimer was a great man who developed a very long lasting legacy, and should be regarded as one of the most brilliant minds of the twentieth century, and maybe even all of history.

Limericks

By: Diya Mittal

Poor Witch

“Double, double toil and
trouble.
Fire burn and cauldron
bubble!”
The witch chanted
The room slanted
Turning into a pile of rubble.

The cat with the mouse in my house

My cat likes to chase a
mouse.
Especially the one in the
house.
The mouse leads the cat,
And knocks over a bat,
All inside of my crazy house.

Rain in the Hall

Lightning, thunder all
around.
Soon the rain falls on the
ground.
It starts to fall
In my hall
And soon soaks the beautiful
ground.

Chained up Rain

A guy tried to stop the rain
He caught all the clouds with
a chain
But did open up the sky
And the guy yelled, “Why?”
And found all his efforts in
vain.

Canoe Eating (Yum?)

There was a young girl from
Peru,
Who dreamed she was eating
her canoe.
She awoke in the morning,
With a terrible scorning
And found that it was quite
true.

I Get Eaten by my Bathtub

There once was a girl named
Brynn
Who was so incredibly thin,
In the tub she had lain,
And pulled out the drain,
And promptly got sucked
right in.

Revenge

By: Diya Mittal

I should have paid more attention to everything. Every little thing. That may have stopped all that came after Mr. Linden left.

I live in a small town in Ohio called Granville. There is a bookstore there, where Mr. Linden used to work. He was the owner of the shop. I knew him well, and he let me borrow the books in the bookstore as long as I gave them back to him in tip-top condition. Mr. Linden made the bookstore more of a library to me, which was great, as we didn't have a library in Granville. I loved books. I could never stop reading!

But my one other hobby was exploring. I would come home from school someday, and decide to go check out the area around Granville. Or wake up some weekends with an air of adventure around me. When I came to my friends house like that, they were ready to go just about anywhere with me too.

One day, I decided to go exploring on my own. Huge mistake. BIG TIME. If I had spent two minutes to go get Ann Smith at her farm house, or even just called over to tell Lisa Davis about the whole thing, I would have had a normal, humdrum life of barely getting to the bus, eating hot lunch, and going to archery class each week. Alright, that last part isn't *really* normal, but whatever. I told my mom I'd be exploring, but they didn't seem really interested since this was something that happened every other day.

"Remember your backpack, Alora, honey," My mom called out, half heartedly. It was a normal thing for her to say that. It had almost become a reflex action, I think. "And don't go past The Crack!" Another thing that she always said.

Our town had gone through an earthquake some time ago, and there was a crack a bit outside of town. My mom told me never to go past there, and by some unspoken rule all adults decided that that was going to be the border of our town.

As I went out the door, I double checked everything. I am very, very serious about the whole exploring thing. I have been that kind of person since I was really little. I can't help it. I love nature, I love exploring, and that's the end of that.

I decided to explore on the edge of The Crack. I had always been curious and inquisitive about that area. As I walked up to the crack, I took in the scenery around me. Bright blue sky. The sun shining. Flowers blooming. Birds chirping. A perfect day. Nothing could go wrong.

When I got there, I kept to myself, looking around the edge of The Crack. But soon, I couldn't help it. I just HAD to look inside. What I saw there was a book. Just a normal book. It was so close I could reach it and feel it and grab it if I wanted to. It didn't occur to me how the book could have gotten there and remained intact. It didn't cross my mind as for how the book was just at the right spot, or how everything was just *perfect*. If I had thought about that, I might have considered not getting the book.

But I didn't. And so I reached out for the book, its binding was so clean, its cover shimmering in the light. I felt my fingers close around the book, and the back was so clean, considering it was in a crack in the caked, torrid terrain. My arm pulled up, and I hugged the book.

I sprinted the whole way back—I was so excited; I didn't notice the storm coming (literally and figuratively). Dark, dreary, dense clouds filled the once sanguine sky. The only thought that crossed my mind was to get home and open the book on my desk or cuddle up in my bed and READ. Read and read and read.

As I was darting across the cobblestone street, the storm came on, full time. I was just in front of Mr. Linden's bookstore, so I stepped inside to wait out the storm.

The sound of a bell ringing greeted me, and the familiar, dusty, book-y smell wafted over me. I looked around and saw Mr. Linden approach from his study, and gave him a wave. However, instead of replying, instead of showing any sign of recognition, he just stared. This was very weird of Mr. Linden, as he was a jolly man who always was kind and considerate to anyone, no matter who they were.

At first, I thought he was staring at me, but then I realized that he was staring a bit lower, near my hand. He was staring at what was in my hand. The book. As I lifted it and watched as Mr. Linden's gaze followed it, I saw that it had no title. However, I was not allowed to ponder on this as Mr. Linden abruptly said "Alora Miller. Where did you get this book." His voice was flat, which was something I could never have imagined before this.

I wasn't sure whether or not to reply. I didn't feel very comfortable anymore, and I didn't know what was going on. However, my voice came to life and I heard myself say "I found it in The Crack, Mr. Linden. I found it in The Crack." My voice had the same tone as his, the same flatness.

Just then, I felt as though a wave of water passed over me. Mr. Linden must have felt it too, for he looked up with a sudden fright and confusion on his face. He looked over the book. "Ahhh, yes." He said, completely normal now. "I remember this. Miss Alora, you can read this book, just remember never to place it in the moonlight." Mr. Linden looked deep in thought, and the storm had lifted, so I quickly went home.

The strange encounter kept coming back to me, but as I opened the book while walking I felt as though nothing had happened and nothing ever could. Everything was perfect. It was a large book. I went home and had a normal dinner. Then I cuddled up in bed after dinner and started reading. Despite Mr. Linden's warning, I opened my curtains to gaze at the sunset, intending to close them after. However, I got caught up in the book and read deep into the night.

I fell asleep just as the moon came up, glittering in silent beauty. As the rays of the sun, reflected off the moon, hit the book, it started moving. All by itself it flipped to page 666, and a wispy ghost came out of the book. Fragile and smokelike, but you could tell she was gaining energy by the second. In a sickly sweet voice, she said "Silly little girl. She does not know what she has gotten herself into."

The next morning I woke up. It was Saturday, and everything was normal. I looked at the book and saw that it was open on page 666. I was groggy and did not care at the moment.

I did what I normally do in the morning, and went down for breakfast. The first thing that greeted me was the delicious smell of pancakes. I sat down to eat. Then I noticed that the pancakes were not the usual type of pancakes that my mom made. The pancakes seemed more... pancakey. Pancakey in a way that the greatest chef or cook or baker couldn't make. The smell was also intoxicating. The pancakes were calling out to me, reaching for me as I had for the book, and pulling me in. I could not help but eat them. It's a bit hard to explain. Think about your top 5 favorite foods. Think about why you like them. Now imagine a food where all of those qualities are mixed in an amazing combo, where everything is delicious. It was like that, but even better.

You might be thinking "Obviously, these are pancakes that the ghost left. She's trying to control you." I would have never eaten those pancakes had I known that, but I didn't. This practically set me up for everything that happened later.

I walked down the street. I was not sure where I was going. I felt a slight tug in the direction of the Smiths' farm. I passed Ann's farmhouse. I continued without stopping. I went to the outskirts of town again, right where I had first found the book. My feet were leading me. I think something else was leading my feet which were leading me. Anyway, as I made my way to The Crack, I felt the pull growing stronger and stronger. Before we continue with the story, I'm going to tell you what happened with the ghost.

Back in 1921 when the earthquake first took place, only one person died. Her name was Aphra Vanidestine. She was a sweet young lady who loved reading books and helping others. However, one day an old, old man said that she would leave her soul in an unknown place after her death. She would come back from the dust and dirt, come out of the earth, and pose an immediate threat to all. It was said that the old, old man was Mr. Bob Linden.

When she did die, the grownups did their best to keep the prophecy and her death away from all of the children. While many shook off the whole thing as a way of calling it a childish superstition, or baby's stories, all had a dark feeling deep inside. To keep her away, they didn't recognize her in any way, they stamped out all records of her. The adults tried to rewrite history so that no one would ever find out about Aphra. She was not given a proper grave beside The Crack, nor did they even let anyone keep the last name. She would forever remain unknown. Or so they thought.

Now it was 2023, and over a century had passed. Many of the people my parents' age didn't even know that a person named Aphra existed, let alone that there was a prophecy behind her.

Now, as I found out later, I was living the prophecy, and watching it come true in a horrible, twisted way.

Back to my story: I was walking closer and closer to The Crack, the pull dragging me there going from a slight tug to a tight grip, pulling me in slowly, ever so slowly. I got close to the edge, right where I found the book, and peered in. The sight that I saw beneath me was something that I could never hope to see again.

It was like a river flowing steadily, and the silvery hue of it made you think it was a river of mist and dew, but the movements made you believe that it couldn't be something from our world, not even a concoction of mist and dew. It was the same thing the ghost that had appeared before was made of. And, right then, the ghost (or Aphra as we should now call her) came up and out of the misty river. She was stronger than the night before, and if I had a mirror, I would see that I was weaker. She seemed to be sucking power out of me, and transferring it to herself, making her up to a great, powerful demoness.

"Finally," She whispered. "You have come to visit me."

"I have waited many a year for this moment. I have waited for my revenge!" Aphra cried out. "And you will help me."

I felt confused, and very weirded out. While I had read about things like this happening in books, I never imagined that I'd live through a story like this.

"Who are you?" Was the only thing I could think of.

"They never told me about you? Not after all I did?" Aphra looked enraged. "I helped when this town was first coming too. I provided food and shelter for those who were just coming or couldn't speak English. I set up so many of the businesses that are still here today. I shaped this town into what it is! And they never, ever told you about anything I did? They never showed you the things that I created?" Alora could see why Aphra was so furious.

"I will show them that I am still here! I did something, and I will make sure that I am remembered!"

Aphra plunged back into the river, and the simmering surface overflowed with hot, angry bubbles. It was as if Aphra was the river, and the river was Aphra.

The force that had rooted me at the edge of The Crack snapped, and I was let free. I dashed through the road, lined with shops and vendors, only focussed on one goal: Mr. Linden's Bookstore. I wanted to go see him, to talk to him and show him and explain to him.

But when I got there, the lights were all out and instead of the warm, welcoming feeling that washed over me when I usually got there, the store felt empty and solitary.

I went back to Mr. Linden's study. His journal was on the floor. I picked it up and turned to the last entry. It said: *'I will never write again. This is my fate. Now the last thing I will see is the cold wall of the hospital.'*

I rushed to the hospital. It was not hard to pinpoint which one Mr. Linden went to, as we only have one hospital in Granville. When I asked for Mr. Linden, the lady behind the desk first seemed surprised that someone might ask for him, then sad and sympathetic.

"Sweetie," She looked very sorrowful that it was she who must deliver the news. "Mr. Linden left us two minutes ago."

I was devastated. I went home, my head low but my heart even lower. Mr. Linden was like a father to me after my own died. I was going to tell my mom, but something held me back. Now I was filled with an anger that I could not define. I went to The Crack, this time by my own will.

"I will help you, Aphra!" I yelled into the gap. "I will do what you ask!"

Aphra rose from the depths once more.

"You have come to me?" Aphra said this in a questioning tone, but it seemed as though she knew this would happen.

"I will help you," I repeated.

Without me knowing it, Aphra took full control over me then and there. She made my anger greater without my knowledge.

"We will begin."

She came fully out of the river for the first time and set foot on the earth. She walked beside me for a few hours, all while draining me of my strength, till she had just enough to overpower me. Then she pulled her hands out of her pockets. They were covered in fire.

Aphra then used her powers against me and rooted me next to a tree.

"You have helped me quite enough, Alora." She hissed. "I have no more use for you now."

She drew a circle of fire around me and said that the fire would only grow if I tried to fight it. Then she left me alone.

I could finally move by my own will again, and I had my thoughts to myself. I remembered the book at home and knew that the only way to get rid of Aphra would be to turn the page from 666. But how would anyone know about it? I wished I had told Lisa about the whole thing. She would have either asked to keep it or told me to leave it alone. Either way, it would be off my hands.

The only way, I concluded, was if my mom was vacuuming my room. Me and my mom both do the chores. My jobs are dusting, picking things up, and mopping. Today was the day that she would be doing my room, and she would probably close the book since I had not put a bookmark in it, and so then I would be out of this whole mess.

I sighed. I didn't want to be in this mess, but I suppose I set it up for myself. In the distance, I heard screaming. I wanted to help, but I didn't know what to do!

I got serendipitous, and a gap opened up in the fire. I barely escaped, but as Aphra said, the fire grew. It caught the tree that I was against and set it ablaze. Hot flames danced and flickered across the trunk, and licked the sky. They jumped to the next tree and the next. I had started an uncontrollable forest fire.

Trying to push down guilt and fear of the forest fire, I rushed home and got the only weapon that I knew how to use: my bow and arrow. I brought along an entire quiver full of them, just in case.

I rushed out into the flaming streets, searching for my target. I found her in the center of the town. When I saw her, all doubts of being able to shoot her left. She was nearly human now, and solid. I knocked an arrow from behind. I had been practicing for years. It was my way of self-defense. *Whizz* went a perfect shot. It hit Aphra right in the back. She gave a quick twist, looking for her attacker before she fell. I saw our house in the background, on fire. More specifically, my bedroom is on fire. Before Aphra hit the ground, she turned to dust. No doubt the book had been burnt with the rest of our house. I looked around.

Houses were burnt to the floor, and the flames stood out against the black sky, filled with smoke. The worst of the problem had been dealt with, an adventure complete.

Comics

By Nevo Bendror

nevo bendror
"click"

9 out of 10 doctors don't
recommend removing your
eyes

NO! That's
just what
we want!
We should
keep our eyes on her



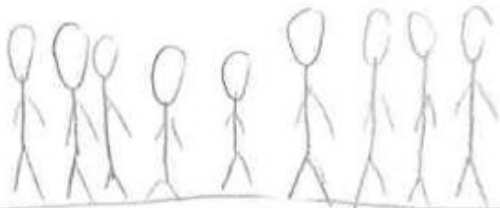
"click"
witches problems

what's the matter Agent W?
The doctor said I can't
eat allergies & I have kids
the end of the world.



"click"

MRS S gives two ten commands
Guys, look here!
Here!
Darn it.



Comics

By Nevo Bendror

"click"
When the magic sheet bus runs out of ideas



"click"
The layout of VPCOSS

The popular kids



The jocks

everybody also

The roomers

The shy kids

Comics

By Nevo Bendror

When an eraser smudges instead of erasing



"Click"
Running out of ideas

"Click"
Obi Wan Mentors Yoda Luke



2023-2024 Eagle Talons

Sponsor: Mrs.Gartland-South

Staff:

Hanaa Ahmad

Zoha Ahmad

Nevo Bendror

Eva Calcutt

Zain Divan

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