



# *Lexophilia*

*Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth  
Literary and Visual Arts Journal*

**Spring 2020- Dreams**



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# How we make *Lexophilia* work!

## Our Crew

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FRONT COVER: "Dream Art" by Nicole Babizhayeva: *I love art and painting. My experiment with different types of media and love colors.*



BACK COVER: "Galaxies of Dreams" by Ellene Warner: *Clouds of powder blue and delicate smoke of pale pink, twining melodies of silver and tiny galaxies of dreams.*

## Our Mission

Whether it is art, poetry, nonfiction, or action-packed stories, *Lexophilia* has something for everyone. The collaborative process among CTY student authors and editors presents a unique and authentic vehicle for showcasing the talents of aspiring young authors and artists. By CTYers for CTYers, this journal aims to inspire young lexophiliacs all over the world to hone their craft and share their voice with our community.

## About Us

*Lexophilia* accepts writing and artwork from current Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth (CTY) students in grades 5-9 from all over the world. Students enrolled in CTY Online Programs Master Class II: Writing, Editing, and Publishing comprise the student editorial board and review committees that select a theme for the issue, then read, accept, and edit pieces for publication under the guidance of CTY instructors and staff. Student editors manage the design and layout elements of the journal. Information about each year's theme and how to submit student writing or artwork will be displayed in the CTY Online Programs website at least 30 days before the submission deadline for 2021. We hope to see your work!

<http://cty.jhu.edu/lexophilia>

# What We Dream

## Students of Master Class II

I dream of a world filled with love and joy  
I dream of a time when we can be content with what we have  
I dream to be the foundation on which new generations thrive

I dream of a world where there is no prejudice  
I dream of a world where everyone is educated  
I dream of a world that's equal

I dream of a world free from sickness  
I dream that we will conquer Covid-19 and be healthy once more  
I dream of a world that's clean

I dream of a world where shame doesn't exist  
I dream of a day we can walk the streets with our heads held high  
I dream of a world we do not fear

I dream of a world devoid of war  
I dream that one day everyone can learn to put aside their differences and work together  
I dream of a time when the Earth is at peace

I dream of études with wings to fill empty skies with melodies  
I dream of a world with seas made up of splashes of colored ink and pencil sketch mountains,  
paint splatter beaches and charcoal forests  
I dream of a world filled with limitless happiness

*Note: each student from Master Class II was asked to submit one line, beginning with "I dream." The results are this collective poem.*

# The Night I Met a Dragon

## Xochitl Avila

Dear diary, this is what happened four months ago at nearly-midnight on April 10. It only just occurred to me to write it down, so that's what I'm doing.

I sat bolt upright in bed, awoken by a sound.

I rubbed my eyes and checked my clock. 11:49.

I heard the sound again, and it piqued my curiosity.

I grabbed my fanny pack (yes, I have a fanny pack) and a flashlight from my bedside table, shrugged on a sweatshirt, and laced up my sneakers.

Call me crazy for going into the woods in the dead of night with no protection, no adult, and nobody who knew where I was, all to follow an ominous noise, but hey, that's me.

Slipping and skidding on wet leaves, I made my way, my flashlight beam cutting a path through the blackness. Soon, I started to hear heavy breathing. I s-l-o-o-o-o-w-l-y peeked over the log I was hiding behind, and...

...I got my first glimpse of *her*.

She was lying on her side in the clearing, her brilliant white scales contrasting sharply against the damp dark forest floor, like a diamond in a fireplace. Her huge shimmering wings were folded to her sides. Her enormous head was sleek and streamlined, like a rattlesnake's, but five horns the length of my leg jutted out of the back pointing toward her tail. Her glittering azure eyes were as big as my head...and they were staring straight at me.

My breath came in short gasps.

*She's a dragon. There is a dragon in the woods behind my house.*

Okay, don't ask how I knew she was female. She just seemed like a girl, I could see it in her expression or something.

My legs moved in the exact direction I didn't want them to go, straight toward the dragon. She raised her head and growled, a deep sound like thunder that made me so scared, I would have run back to the house faster than a peregrine falcon (fun fact: the peregrine falcon is the fastest animal on Earth) *if my legs would just do what I wanted them to do for once!*

Stinking legs.

The ivory-colored dragon tried to stretch her head toward me, but stopped with that screeching, horrible, agonized sound that had led me to her in the first place. It made me think of the time my cat was attacked by a Great Dane: pure, unbearable pain.

I cautiously walked toward the dragon (who I'd decided should be named Silvermoon) and stretched out my hand. Silvermoon snarled weakly, then gave up and let me stroke her nose gently. Her muscles were tense at first, but I could feel her slowly relaxing. Eventually, I moved around to her other side and saw the problem. Her front left leg was twisted under her at an alarming angle.

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At that moment, my fear was whisked away as my Wilderness First Aid training took over. I fished around in my fanny pack, and came up with a bottle of Advil. I held it up to Silvermoon.

"This'll help the pain," I said quietly. She reluctantly opened her mouth, and I emptied the pills into it, trying not to think about how she could eat me in one bite.

I waited a while for the pain meds to work, then pulled a roll of heavy duty gauze out of my trusty fanny pack.

"I'm sorry, but you need to stand up for this," I whispered. Silvermoon groaned. With a lot of whimpering and grunting, we managed to get her on her paws.

"It's okay, you're doing great," I said, binding her broken leg to her body. I couldn't reach her back, so, after a lot of convincing, I clambered up her gigantic tail and tied the makeshift gauze cast in a firm knot. Then I slid down her wing, landing lightly on the ground.

"Be careful. No running, or jumping, and you probably shouldn't fly either... and don't put any weight on the leg for at least a month just to be safe. Who knows if dragons heal as fast as humans."

Silvermoon leaned down and pressed her nose against my chest.

"Aw, you're welcome," I smiled. "Bye! It was nice meeting you!"

I woke up just as the sun rose.

*Wait, what? Wasn't I talking to someone...a dragon?*

I looked over my room. My shoes were clean, my sweatshirt folded neatly. I groaned in disappointment as I realized that the whole thing had been a dream.

*It was so realistic though...*

Struck with a sudden idea, I picked up my fanny pack and checked the bottle of Advil. It was empty.

I stared into the little plastic bottle, a grin splitting my face.

Maybe...just maybe.

So, that's what happened the night I met a dragon. Now if you'll excuse me, it's almost midnight. And Silvermoon doesn't like it when I'm late.



# Dreams and Society

## Sofia Kalmbach

A winged cat dancing on a house as it rains ice cream, a joyful happy dream that fills your mind, but what are dreams? Dreams, according to Merriam-Webster, are “a succession of images, thoughts, or emotions passing through the mind during sleep.” Or according to Disney’s Cinderella, “Dreams are a wish the heart makes.” Dreams come in many forms and are defined in many different ways. They can be the dreams we experience in our sleep, the goals that drive us, or a concept to be explored. Dreams are in all essence the core of our being as people on the planet earth.

Dreams are very symbolic within our culture and pop up everywhere. When you look up “Dreams” on Google, 4,050,000,000 search results appear. These search results range from a new game to websites on interpreting dreams. Dreams are everywhere in literature and society. Take the classic dreamcatcher, a playful trinket said to capture bad dreams. Or the common theme in books and movies: be careful what you wish for. Or the three wishes of a genie. Also, many books and movies use dreams as clever plot devices. We can see in plays like *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where the entire play is your dream, or Alice’s dream in *Alice in Wonderland*, or Harry Potter’s often prophetic dreams throughout the series. Dreams are abundant in our culture as they are abundant in our minds.

Atoms make up the human body; however, our soul and mind consist of dreams. People have dream houses, dream vacations, dream lives. These are like the perfect goals, little building blocks of our lives that make up who we are as people. Who we are is what we go to sleep thinking about, and dreaming about. And what makes dreams truly powerful is our ability as humans to make these dreams come true, to light a fire in our lives that blazes a path to happiness. Dreamers have, since the dawn of human time, used their dreams for greatness. These dreamers include Martin Luther King Jr. and his dream for equality as seen in his “I Have a Dream” speech. Our society and our souls are built of dreams. These dreams fuel our minds, souls, and society.

Dreams are so important because they go hand in hand with hope and imagination. To imagine is to dream, and to dream is to hope. Hence why dreaming is so magical. It is what has kept us afloat in the worst and best of times, giving us a life buoy to cling to. When one dreams, one imagines and hope is formed. Without hope or dreams we would live bland lives, gray without color. Our ability to dream is what sets us apart from our animal relatives. Dreams are what make us human.

Dreams, although wispy and imaginative, are hugely significant in our culture and existence as humans. Our life paths are dependent on what we dream of, and our greatest creators and leaders would be nowhere without their dreams. Dreams are the defining characteristic of our society to this day.





# Dream

Tianyi Xu

*...In a dream where nothing matters, nothing to worry about, nothing that can't be said, nothing that can't be done. The worries and tears had turned into butterflies, which would be set free far into the sky and forever.*



# A Boy from a Dream

## Sarah Park

Bree met Leonard on a chilly morning on the brink of autumn. She asked for his number the moment she saw him on the school steps, and she did it because he was a new face and she couldn't help being curious.

Soon after, she took to calling him Al because Leonard sounded "too old for his age." He still called her Bree, which she liked to think was because it just suited her that well.

By the end of the semester, Bree had concluded that her favorite things about Al were his uneven smile and the way he looked into her eyes when she spoke. But really, she liked everything about him. And come summer, it was routine for Bree to wake up and know Al would be there.

Except, that summer, Bree stopped hearing from Al.

In fact, Al had disappeared altogether.

Her afternoons turned empty and lonely, and the summer she had left blank for their story to be written was growing bleaker with each passing day.

She was still far from forgetting Al when she got a call from him in the dead of night, nine weeks he'd left. It rang too loud in her silent room, and it was still too early for the sun to shed any of its light on the world.

When she answered, he didn't say hello, or explain, or apologize. He asked to meet at a diner nearby.

She asked when they were meeting.

"In two hours."

"I'll be there in one."

And he hung up.

Four hours later, Al took the seat across from Bree at the diner, empty save for the two of them and a waitress fast asleep at a booth.

A knot formed in her stomach at the sight of him.

His clothes were soaking wet, and they stuck tightly to his shrunken frame as pools of water formed at his feet. Droplets of water dripped from his hair, streaming down his face like ugly tears.

Bree didn't need to look out the window to know that it hadn't been raining. "Hi, Al."

He glanced around the diner. "Hi, Bree."

"You're late," she said lightly.

"I lost track of time." He didn't meet her eyes.

*That's not what I asked,* Bree wanted to say, but she didn't.

She thought about lacing her fingers through his, but the thought passed when she noticed the tremor in his hands. She kept her hands in her lap. His knuckles were bruised and raw, but when she looked back up, his face was clear and unhurt.

"Where have you been?"

"I lost track of time," Al repeated, not answering her question. He caught Bree watching his hands shake and hastily hid them in his pockets.

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Bree stared at the spot on the table where his hands had been moments before. It was stained and browned with wet streaks of something that looked like dirt or old blood.

He didn't notice her staring this time. He had closed his eyes as water continued to trickle down his cheeks and neck, but he didn't make any move to wipe them away, as if he couldn't feel them at all. Bree tried to keep her head clear as she took everything in, but she couldn't make sense of anything she was seeing.

Then, out of the blue, Al whispered in the softest voice, "It's good to see you."

He didn't smile when he said it. He didn't look her in the eyes either, but she didn't care.

She reached for his hands, and he let her take them. His hands, dirty and raw, relaxed the slightest bit, familiar holding hers, until he suddenly pulled away after the shortest moment.

His phone was buzzing in his pocket. He didn't spare Bree a single glance as he pulled out his phone faster than Bree had seen him move since he sat down.

"Hello?" he stuttered.

Bree couldn't hear the voice on the other end, but it said something that made Al stand up. He whipped his head this way and that, spraying water from his hair.

"I know," he hissed into his phone. "I lost track of time." When he said those words, the sharpness in his voice evaporated. The next time he spoke, his voice was barely a whisper. "I lost track of time."

The knot in Bree's stomach writhed enough to make her flinch. She knew something was wrong, but she had no idea how to fix it.

"Al—"

He whipped towards her with the face of a scared little boy, his eyes wider than the moon. He motioned desperately for her to not speak, and she kept her lips shut, afraid to even breathe out.

"I'm alone," he said into his phone, unconvincing. Bree doubted the person on the other side of the phone believed him. "I am."

It was quiet as death for a few moments; Bree was too afraid to see the scared expression on Al's face another time, and Al was listening intently and completely still.

Finally, Al spoke: "I'll get it done. Promise."

Then, he shoved his phone back into his pocket and glanced around the diner again. "I gotta go."

Bree opened her mouth to ask, but swallowed down the questions rising in her throat.

"But you just got here."

"I need to."

"Then I'll go with you."

"No, you won't." He sat up quickly, moving away from the table.

"Al!" Bree jumped up from her seat, ready to chase him to the ends of the earth.

He looked around again and took another step back. "I'll find you tomorrow." Al lifted his lips slightly into the smallest smile that nearly made Bree's heart burst. "Promise."

Bree nodded, but the knot in her stomach became unforgivingly tight.

As he made his way to the door, she swore she heard it again: "I lost track of time."

Then, he was gone.

# The Dreamer's Cap



Maggie H.

# Dreamer's Cap

Margaret Howell

*I wanted to convey the idea of getting up and fulfilling your life's goals. I decided to draw the contrast of dreaming in bed and getting OUT of bed and reaching and achieving your dreams.*

*I also chose to do simple art because it gives you a sense of friendliness.*

# Sun Bunnies

## Sofya Donets

I inhaled a breath of warm air, feeling my lungs expand. The pleasant aroma of flowers mixed in with the summer heat surrounded me like a bubble. Small gusts of wind cooled my burning cheeks from time to time. That was my favorite weather.

The bright sun welcomed the sun bunnies, small spots of light on the walls and on the ground. They were the most lively beings, coming out during the day and disappearing at night.

"Mama, did you know that the sun is just millions of sun bunnies dancing around in one perfect circle?"

"No, no I didn't," she answered back with a smile on her face.

"They all dance together, and on sunny days, they come down and spread their light here!" I replied, puffing out my chest. Mama chuckled a bit, looking down at me.

"I'm sure they do, sweetheart."

"Today, there's more of them than usual."

"And why is that?"

"Because they all came down to see the flower carpets!" I spread my hands out, gesturing at the commotion around us.

That day, on every street in the city, people were kneeling for hours with baskets of colorful petals. Patterns, shapes, landscapes, and portraits of all colors stretched down every street. For a long time, these beautiful images confused me. Close up, I could make out every single tiny petal, every vein. When looking at them from far behind, however, the petals looked like grains of sand, creating a vast desert of patterns. It seemed like millions of tiny worlds were coming together to make a whole universe of shades and tones.

I gazed in amazement at an elderly lady sitting on the ground. Sun bunnies danced around her as she tenderly laid down rose petals to make delicate swirling patterns on the ground. I couldn't help coming closer, my hand loosening its grip on Mama's dress.

"Would you like to help out?" the woman asked, turning her head. Her eyebrows went up a little, like hairy, brown caterpillars. I nodded, eagerly, and sat down. Clumsily tucking my curls behind my ears, I reached for the petals. They were similar to little strips of silk but completely different at the same time. There was nothing else in the world that felt like flowers.

I was not aware, at that time, that some hours later, the whole population of that city would be walking on those flowers, rubbing them into the dust.

I did not understand back then, that walking on the flower carpets after they were made was just how the festival went. Desperately, I tried to stop others from ruining the delicate petals and scaring the sun bunnies, but what can a child do against a tradition, standing, unquestioned, for generations?

That day, at the age of four, I got to experience my first flower carpet festival. I would come back for many years to see this unique custom. Gradually, I stopped noticing the sun bunnies. I contentedly walked on the flower carpets, looking at their beauty but not daring to question the ancient custom. I was older then and occupied myself with other, more important matters such as schoolwork and chores.

The sun bunnies were left, forgotten, for many years. One day, however, when I visited the flower carpet festival once more, I saw a young girl hanging on to her mother's dress.

"Look, Mama, look! Sun puddles!" she shouted.

And I saw them.



# More Than Enough

## Mary Sullivan

The small rock I had tripped over crashed across the cave floor, the sound bursting through the rush of the waterfall just outside the cave entrance. The dragon I had been sent to kill stood up and shook the feathers on her tail-tip like a feather duster, the rest of her scaly body tense, the black of her scales blending in to the cave that was nearly as big inside as a house. Cursing myself- did I have to have tripped at this exact moment??—I pulled out my gladius and stood to face her, trying not to be shocked at how small she was—barely two-thirds of my height and eight feet long including the tail. Her essence might not be enough to fully please the gods, but it would make for a small offering.

*latia, one of my trainers, stood outside the doorway of the arena where I went daily for lessons. She held a golden-tinted rectangle of paper in one hand, and as I approached, she thrust it into my face. "Here you go, Xisis. Don't know why you got certified for essence collection- you have a soft heart and couldn't hit a wooden wall with a rock if it was right in front of you." You remind me on a daily basis, I thought, but returned my attention to the paper. Written on it was a bunch of legal stuff, which I ignored, and then the words "You, Xisis Fluffmuch, have been chosen to be the essence collector for Rejkila. Return it to us in 6 days or less." Rejkila was a traditional festival in our culture where we offered the essence of dragons up to the gods to please them, bring fair weather, and hide our village from invaders. And now I was chosen for the most important job.*

As the dragon stepped forward, her padded paws touching the ground with a strangely feline gracefulness, I noticed that her feathered tail was bent to the side, as if she was trying to hide something. No matter. I could investigate after I killed her.

Trembling just a little under the dragon's intense gaze, I drew my gladius and thrust it forwards, just under her nose. She jumped, ever so slightly, and her tail flicked up into the air, revealing a scooped mound of dirt a few feet deeper into the cave.

Distracted, I faltered and turned towards the earthen mound. *A nest?* The sort with- "Baby dragons!" I screamed as one poked its nose over the nest. Now there were more enemies facing me than I thought. Placing a warning stab near the side of the mother dragon, I faced the nest of babies with my gladius held out.

One of them poked its head over the edge, and I tilted my gladius towards it, but halted at the sight of its eyes, huge and orange as the freshly risen moon. A tiny egg-spike on the tip of its round nose told me it was very, very young, and it let out a terrified squeak at the sight of my gladius, frozen in place.

Hearing the baby's shrill call of distress, the mother dragon snarled and swiped at me, one scaly paw nearly landing a blow on my shoulder. Her feathered tail swept over the nest, reassuring the tiny dragons inside. The one who had poked its head out dropped back into the nest. Feeling bad about what I was going to do, I suddenly lunged towards the nest, swiping my gladius towards the mother's tail to shove it away from the babies inside. I stuck my hand in and held one up, expecting to feel its tiny teeth biting into my thick gloves at the wrist. *They are ferocious creatures... aren't they?*

Instead, the baby went limp in my hand, shaking and twitching from fear, just like I had been when facing the training dragons, or Latia and Rendow, the fierce dragon-killer trainers. I held my gladius over the baby, preparing to end its suffering quickly so I could take care of the mother dragon, but something about its huge, orange eyes stalled me. They were so very human; full of fear, full of love.

Feeling a crack in my chest somewhere around my heart, I dropped the baby back in the nest just as the mother lunged at me. She knocked me to the stone ground, warm from where she had been sitting. I dropped my gladius and held my hands up in peace. "Let me go! I dropped your baby, see? I mean no harm!" I repeated this about a thousand times, my terror slowly growing. Would she harm me? Would she? I deserved to live longer! Would she kill me? *As... just as I was going to kill her.*

I stared into her orange eyes and felt her paws on my chest for what seemed like hours. Then the pressure released. She was letting me go! Relieved, I sheathed my gladius and was about to scramble for the entrance when I remembered the essence. Would the gods be angry with me for not killing the whole dragon?

A shed scale lay on the cave floor, and I picked it up.

*Just this scale will do.*

# Firefly

## Allison Moores

Firefly outside my house walls,  
outline the world you draw for me.  
Run freely on the border of  
the dream I've yet to touch.  
I see the truth of the world,  
but I want to believe  
that I can still chase my wildest fantasies  
in a dark world dimly lit by the firefly.



# glass, roses, and You

## Yun-Fei Wang

cold air, glass heart

a starless sky  
an open window  
a bed too wide for one  
and a long night

the tick of a clock  
the still, steady rhythm  
a faint taste of roses  
bittersweet thorns  
that lingers on  
a tongueless breath

a tear-stained pillowcase  
a glass-stained mind  
headphones, chasing that high  
a sad playlist with a sadder title:  
a Stranger's name  
an escape of reality, of  
distant, faded songs and a  
distant, faded heartbeat

crimson roses, bloomed  
in a graveyard of dreams  
yet the clock ticks  
at the wrong time:  
stopped; never been so lost  
a crash in the night  
a breathless scream  
shattered  
empty bottles on the floor  
shards of glass--

red tinted glass;

that night,  
junior high classroom

i dreamed of

tables scratched with names  
smudged ink of fantasies and strangers  
secrets that faded out with time  
and hides in the depths of our memory  
a thousand stories that never got to happen  
i wonder if you'll find yours  
scratched in with fingernails  
hidden in between the rows of desks  
scratched hard and deep  
on the table i used to sit at

the chairs were dented, and the  
light tan was repainted a darker brown  
i could still see the places  
with streaks and scrapes and gashes  
they smelled of oak and heavy promises  
leather-bound books and quiet heartbreaks  
the way the seats were arranged  
remains untouched, nostalgic  
and i'll never forget the day  
when yours became an empty space

the dark green chalkboard, used to be filled with words  
that we tried to decipher, the summer of 2020  
i could almost hear the sound of chalk against wood  
that once replaced the rhythm of the clock  
which now hangs on the wall, stayed in the date of 2017  
what used to be covered in chalk now sits clean and empty  
but stained with our ghastly white fingerprints  
do you remember? that night, raining red chalk  
something changed, and i know you like to pretend  
it never happened, but i still dream about it every night

windows were opened and the silent wind  
tasted like peaches and cotton candy  
dark chocolate and cold green tea  
your favorite tastes and your favorite perfume  
we used to stare out the window  
our gazes meeting in the far horizon  
pastel sunsets, lifeless trees, worn-out buildings

## Lexophilia: Dreams | Page 15

wishing time would go by faster  
i looked through the windows one last time  
the outside world continued to stay the same  
so what changed? tell me it's my fault

in my dreams

i sat down in the seat  
that belonged to someone i  
promised i tried to forget  
but how could i, when you  
gave me so much to remember?  
so many reasons to live?  
years later  
the same classroom  
the same stories  
the same lies

i sat in your seat  
& cried and cried  
for what seemed like the first time  
ever since you left  
and i never knew how to cope  
with falling for you  
so i guess time has decided to stop  
in this one place: room 815

all i ever wanted to do was to love you  
even if you never knew  
but that one night was too long  
and a lifetime will never be enough  
in your seat  
i finally saw  
for once  
what you were seeing for years  
and i think i understand now  
why you had to leave







# City Skyline

by Samuel Thean

*What if the world ran out of fossil fuel and had no electricity to light up our city?  
Would this be the scenery that we will get to see each and every night?*

# Bridges

## Danielle Hedvig

You just don't argue with my mom. My mom is Russian, one of those Russians that look mad even when they are happy. "Mom, can I buy a new pair of boots?" "*Danochka*, when we came to this country we had nu-think! You need to learn to understand the value of the moneys, the hardships, the bridges I had to cross to get to this country!" This conversation normally ends with my phone being taken away. Again.

Fitting in is hard, but it is doubly hard when you are a child of an immigrant parent. Don't get me wrong, I love my Russian and American heritage, but sometimes I think I don't completely fit into, or identify with, either culture.

I read that Erik Erikson, a 1930's psychologist, came up with the term "identity crisis stage." This is a stage in early adolescence (basically middle school) when we become aware of competing expectations as we try to form our identity. An identity is something that allows a person to distinguish themselves from the rest. However, the dilemma is: do I retain my cultural roots, or do I immerse myself in my environment? This tends to be a mutually exclusive decision. Since fitting into American culture demands all or nothing. You cannot dip your grilled cheese in some *borscht*!

Imagine opening your lunch box in front of your seemingly non-judgemental middle-school friends to find inside... "Ew...What is THAT?" "My mom's homemade *pel-men-chi-ki*..." "Your mom's homemade....munchkin...poo?" It's just a silly joke, right? Then why do I feel my face reddening? Why do I hear myself laugh so nervously? Why do I feel so embarrassed?

Why am I so insecure about being a child of an immigrant?

Everyone talks about cultural sensitivity and accepting different cultures. However, underneath the veil of acceptance lies a darker reality. We live in a society where immigrants are judged harshly. I have been called a Russian spy more than once. And no, I am not a computer hacker, no matter what the news articles tell you.

Last year I had an assignment where I was supposed to talk about my heritage in front of the class. I was so scared that I had to call in sick. How do I talk about my Russian-born mom when most Americans are associating Russia with corruption, deception, and spies? Many of these stereotypes were developed during the Cold War and used as elements of political war against Russia. But Russians are still portrayed as "Hollywood's Favorite Movie Villains." And now, with Russian government meddling in our elections and launching a war against Ukraine, anti-Russian hysteria is back in full swing, making me feel ashamed and embarrassed, making me want to hide from the world...and from myself.


I was still struggling with these feelings when I went on my first ever trip to Russia over the summer. It was like biting into one of those impossible-to-pronounce Russian dishes my mom was always preparing: strange and interesting, but it also changed my perspective on the identity dilemma. It started when the Russian border patrol officer took my passport and made a face as if he'd just bitten into a lemon. He kept looking at me with a steely glare, mumbling indistinctly. I stood there, paralyzed with fear. A movie started playing in my head: the lemon-faced officer's computer flashes RED. Alarms BLARE. A dozen men with giant guns spring out and surround me and take aim and—!

"*Pro-hodi*," the border patrol officer muttered through a yawn as he nodded his approval, stamped my passport, and waved me on. That's when it hit me: he didn't get lemon-faced because I smelled bad, or insulted his family, or was a look-alike of a defected child spy. The reason he didn't like me was simple: to him, I was an American. That thing I always dreamed of my classmates seeing me as! Only here, being American didn't earn me acceptance; it drew as many sneers as being Russian did in America. If I'm not Russian, and I'm not American, what am I? I grumbled to myself. And that's when I finally realized it: I'm both. I'm neither. I'm me.

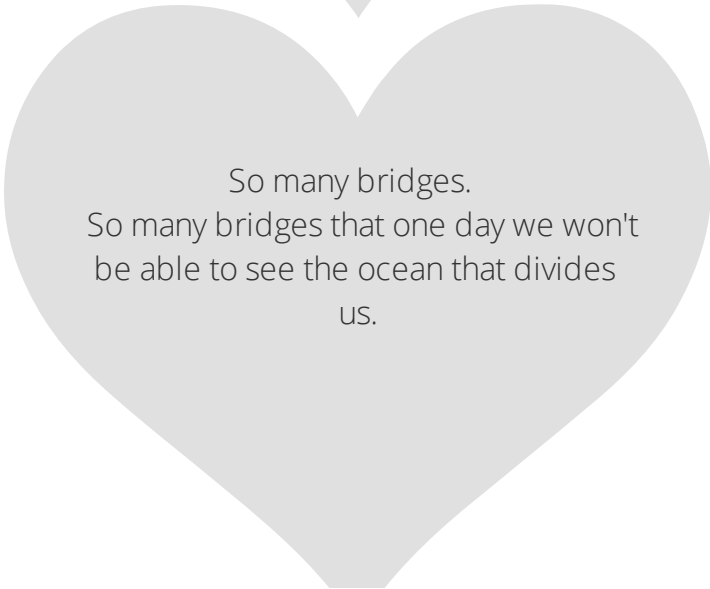
I've always wanted to please people, to make my parents proud, to receive approval from anyone and everyone—my friends, my family, my teachers, and even strangers (including border patrol officers). But now I understand that even more important than pleasing everyone is having some pride in myself. When you're always trying to fit in, you risk sanding down the corners and edges that make you unique. I'd rather be myself, and let others who'd like to try some homemade *pelmenchiki* fill the table around me (it's delicious, I swear).

As I was standing in line crossing the border back into the US, I looked around me. What is being an American? Aren't most of us just descendants of immigrants? I read somewhere that by 2023, more than half of all American children will be children of immigrants. In a way, our otherness will just make us more American. Each one of us will be a bridge, connecting America with another country. Imagine that! Imagine all the great foods we try and all the new music and literature, all the scientific discoveries. All we have to do is treat our differences as our unique abilities, not a negative, but a very positive thing about ourselves.

Being the child of an immigrant parent allows me to see and appreciate the dedication and motivation of immigrants. Yes, it also makes me confused and gives me some awkwardly hilarious experiences. But maybe that's OK. Maybe that's just a part of self-discovery. The part that is different and also the same for each one of us. All of us are unique, each one of us—a bridge. So many bridges. So many bridges that one day we won't be able to see the ocean that divides us.



I'm both. I'm  
neither. I'm  
me.



So many bridges.  
So many bridges that one day we won't  
be able to see the ocean that divides  
us.

# Once Gone Fast

## Helen Wang

A bell of scattered sunlight  
rung and swung to its echoes  
until a little girl,  
riding her heart on a golden bike,  
spilled onto the street.  
Like the crispy hill of autumn leaves  
that blush brighter than her iridescent, starry-eyed smile,  
just before they crumple, crack, and crunch underfoot.

While shadows chased her bike,  
the clouds chased the idling sun.  
When the wrinkles deepened on their puffy faces,  
quite like the gravel paths she rode through,  
the sun snoozed and the rain sang its lullaby,  
though melodies bulged to symphonies and symphonies ruptured to pouring  
screams—  
in a world where no sounds stay.

Hence the other world,  
an alarm screeched with the quality of nails scratching chalkboard,  
until a delirious girl,  
sensing a guillotine on her mangled sleep,  
ignored the morning shrill.  
Like the patterns of a kaleidoscope,  
every color of night confetto into closets and curtains,  
before she could close her eyes, replay them, and replay them forever.

"I wish I was you."  
Those words escaped her silence,  
the way fireflies flee a jar,  
who brought away any trace of innocence  
far, far away, into the canvas of time as stars.

Yet she said,  
"I once was you."





# Fish Flowing in the Water

## Harry Hongrui Lu

Many, many years ago, before I was born, there was a famine where my ancestors lived. In their area, there was no way they could farm or hunt for animals, as they lived in a place that was unsuitable for both things. It was cold, and the ground was dry and barren. However, there was a river nearby, and they lived off this river. Every day, my ancestors would fish, particularly sea bass, and if they didn't catch any, they had no food for the day. Winter was harsh, as the river would freeze, and they would have to try different ways to break the ice before the river froze up and would then fish for food. As you can see, fish were important to them, and that's where my family name comes from. In Chinese, sea bass means "Lu Yu," which corresponds to my last name, "Lu." Eventually, there was a war in China, and my family was forced to move from where they were to Hongkong. They found that there was a lot of business in the area, and they decided to begin selling fish. From previous experience, they knew where to find spots where the fish would come out, and this would help them in the winter, when it was hard to find food. They could sell a lot of fish, and this made them money. They were even dubbed "Saviors," because of their fishing tricks and skills, and swarms of people came to buy fish, like locusts swarming crops. Sadly, the industrial revolution came around, and my family found they could not compete when others had farming tools, and they had to hold a stick and wait at a river all day.

Outcompeted in the marketing business, my family settled into a small home with their remaining money and lived there until my grandfather came along. When he was young, my grandfather met my grandmother in a sort of "dating circle." My grandmother's father had some trouble choosing the best man for his daughter. So, he put a layer of fine sand on the floor of his house and would interview boys who wanted to date his daughter. Anyone who was disturbed and nervous would fidget with the sand, while anyone who was calm and confident wouldn't. My grandfather was a smart, confident man, and he was chosen to marry my grandmother.

They had a son (my dad), and my grandfather, being a teacher, pushed him to do well in his studies. Eventually, my dad met my mother in University, and they graduated, got married, and then moved to Canada after saving up enough money. I was born later, during the winter, and this is referred to in my middle name, "Hongrui." "Hong" means flood, and "rui" means luck and winter. "Hongrui" means "flood of luck in the winter," referring to my ancestors and how they were successful during the winter. I do well in school and get high marks, so I think the more successful part of my family has lived on with me. My first name was changed though, to Harry, because it was easier to remember, was pronounced mostly the same, and was close to the famous "Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex," as my parents thought of me as precious as a prince.

# Dreams

## Keshav Mohta

Pulitzer Prize winner, Carl Sandburg once said, "Nothing happens unless first we dream."

Most dreams are like little birds who flutter in and out. Some dreams, however, make their nests and have the power to change the course of mankind. If Leonardo da Vinci hadn't dreamt of flying, maybe the Wright Brothers would never have invented aeroplanes.

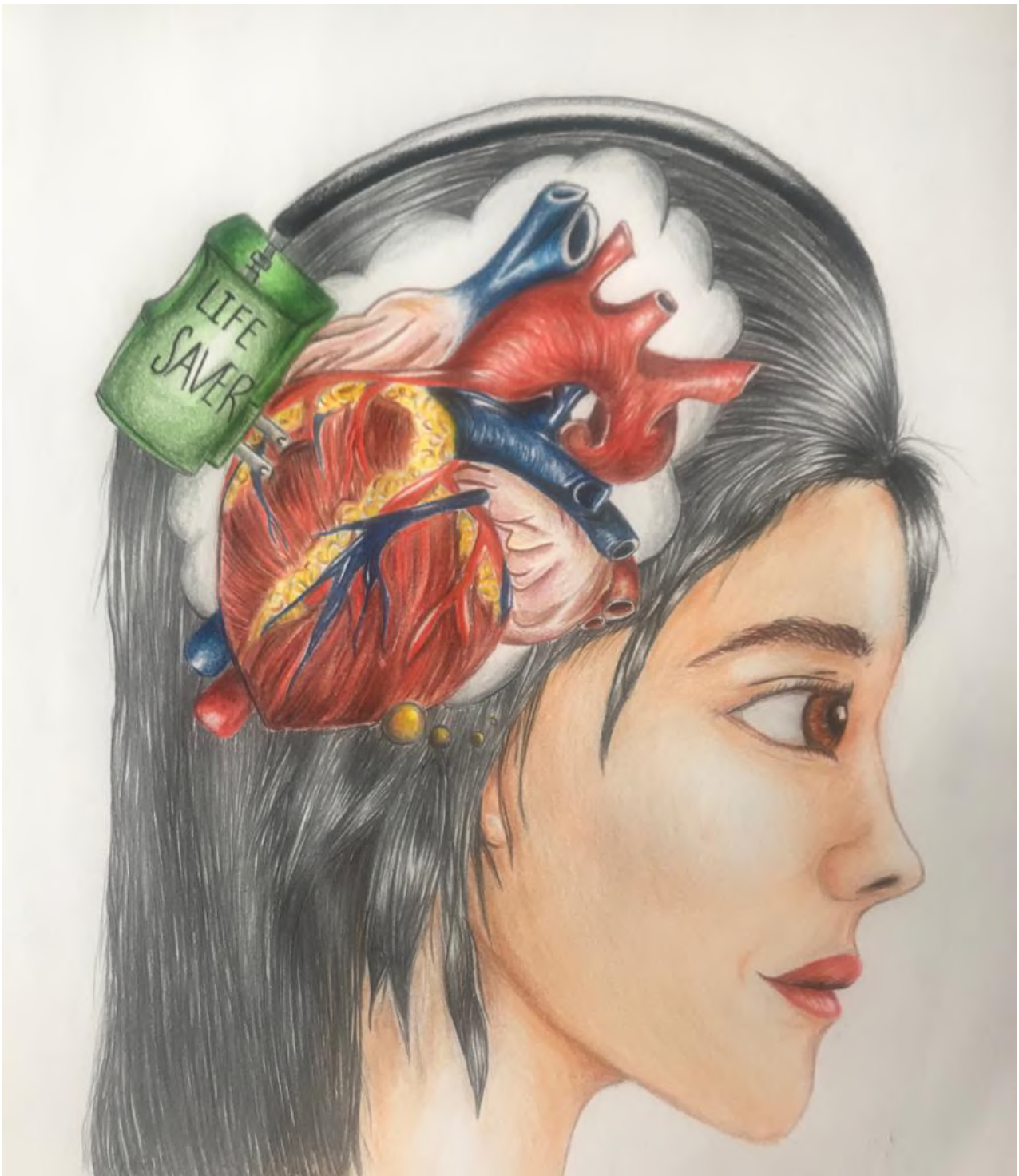
Sometimes, however, the dream of one person may be destructive or harmful for another. Take the case of Hitler. His belief in the superiority of the Aryans made him dream of a pure, Aryan world. So strong was his dream that he was able to convince the Germans to kill 6 million Jews, and 4 million other cripples, for building a pure, German fatherland. The mere reference to Auschwitz and Dachau fills our hearts with shame and horror. One man's ruthless dream led to the persecution of millions of innocent men, women and children.

Meanwhile, a large number of Jews spent the last days of their wretched and hopeless life waiting for a brutal death in the gas chambers. However, there was this Jewish teacher, in Terezin concentration camp, who wanted to fight back and give her students joy and hope. She taught them how to draw and paint and helped them draw out their dreams and aspirations. She buried these 4,500 drawings hoping to keep their dreams and aspirations alive long after their death.

When I saw some of these drawings, I was moved by the dreams and thoughts of these children. I was horrified by some of the drawings where children depicted the horror of their lives and grieved the death of their loved ones. But the ones which will stay with me forever are those where the children dreamed of freedom and drew themselves playing in an open garden or flying kites.

We all believe that the military might of the Russians, Americans and British crushed Hitler. But I believe that the hopeful dreams of such Jewish children played an important role in demolishing Hitler's monstrous dream. As it has been rightly said by Eleanor Roosevelt, "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."





# Girl's Dream

by Mridula Srinivasan

*Today the most number of deaths are because of heart diseases. Hearing this inspired me to dream of an invention that could instantly save a life by connecting the heart to some sort of charger, similar to a battery being connected to a charger when it's about to die.*

# Fog

Ellene Warner

I am a  
Girl  
Made up  
Of fog

Heavy gray  
Fog  
That tastes  
Like  
Blankness and  
Ash and  
Bleach.

I suppose  
There is more fog  
Inside me than  
Girl, or the  
Girl is hidden  
By the fog  
That clouds  
Over my eyes  
And makes  
My heart  
Feel like  
Lead  
On bad  
Days.

It was not  
Me who  
First found  
The fog.

It was  
Mom.

She was playing  
A scary  
Movie  
When I waddled  
In.

She says that I didn't jump  
Or scream  
Or cry  
Like a normal,  
Happy child  
Would have done.

But I am  
Normal.

I swear.

I did not  
See a scary movie,  
Then,  
I only saw  
Fog.

Just fog.

Taking away  
The features  
Of the actors  
On TV And the  
Monster,  
So that  
They can't  
Jump  
Or scream  
Or cry.

The fog  
Takes that  
Away from  
Them,  
So as  
The faceless  
Monster  
Emerges  
On screen,  
The actors



Cannot  
Do anything  
But  
Go into  
The corner  
Of their  
Room,  
And hug their  
Knees,  
And sit  
Until Mom  
Comes and  
Picks me  
Up and  
Whispers  
That  
"It will  
Be  
Alright".

The fog doesn't  
Take away  
The warmth  
Of Mom's arms  
Even if it  
Does make  
The tears in  
The corners of  
Her eyes  
Disappear,  
Right  
Next to  
Those little  
Crinkles, like  
Aluminum foil skin.

Sometimes the fog  
Is my friend.

I know I am an  
Imperfection  
In Mom's  
Life.  
I don't  
Understand

Why she keeps  
Me  
Even after she  
Has to  
Give up  
Having a  
Normal, Happy  
Life  
With a Normal,  
Happy  
Child  
Who doesn't  
Scream in  
Their sleep  
Because they're  
Faceless and  
Everyone is  
Faceless  
And they  
Melt into  
An endless,  
Faceless,  
Mass  
Of  
Life.

I carve away  
The imperfections.

If I were  
Mom,  
I would  
Carve away  
Me.

Sometimes I  
Think about it  
Late at night,  
Curled up In bed,  
The windows left  
Wide open because  
Mom won't let  
Me leave the  
Light on.

## Lexophilia: Dreams | Page 25

That moment,  
At night,  
I feel that  
The fog  
Is the closest  
To fading  
Away.

That scares me.

I like that when  
I think that  
Mom would be  
Better off  
Without  
Me,  
No feelings  
Punctuate  
The hard  
Words,  
No emotion  
Brings my  
Heart down.

I do not  
Feel the  
Sting  
Of Dad's words  
When he begs  
Me to feel,  
To do,  
*Anything.*

I know Mom,  
Although she doesn't  
Say it,  
Agrees with  
Him.

I know I  
Should side  
With Mom,  
Who's there  
When the fog  
Gets big and  
Scary and  
Mean,

But I'm not  
Sure if  
I want  
To change.

Not sure if  
I really dislike  
The way  
Things just happen.

That is  
Comforting,  
Sometimes.

Things just happen.

I am safe,  
I swear.

I am protected,  
I swear.

I am safe and happy and safe and the fog isn't bad I swear it just seems really mean sometimes and it just kind of makes Mom cry and it makes Dad scared but it's not bad it's just a part of me.

I am a  
Girl  
Made up  
Of fog.



# Starry Nights

## Charlotte Stewart

Starry nights, sunny mornings. I would like to think I rise with the sun, but I don't. I rise with the inescapable cacophony of the alarm clock, like a million bells ringing at once, the sounds of the world packed together into one tiny box. I would like to think I rise with gusto, but I rise like a sloth. Even the windows groggily open their blinds, revealing the vibrant gold rays of light that don't wait for anyone. And neither does the day. It whirls past me like the fastest runner in a race. Struggling to keep up, to at least get second place, is draining. By the end of the day, at the darkest, darkest time, it is just me and the stars.

The lights shine so bright, almost as bright as the sun, that to look up is to be blinded. The light burns my retinas until my eyes must look down to survive. The screen shining in front of me isn't much better either. Fainter than the sun, but still a star. Books and knick-knacks littering the dining room table draw my attention, almost as dense as stars in the sky. The windows, covered by the curtains, obscure the dark void outside. But just lift up the curtain, and the murky, muddy green-brown of the brush, the animated, electrifying purple of the flowers, are not quite gone, but barely, barely visible, for the night is like that. Everything else is gone, disguised, except me and the stars.

We march together throughout the cosmos of my drifting mind, slipping away with exhaustion every passing second of the night. My thoughts flit about like the moths attracted to the light, the single light in the darkness. The computer in front of me should be my main worry, my main consideration, but it is far from it. My attention is diverted away to the starry night lingering in front of me. Thoughts and memories of the day behind me flicker by in my head. From the sunny morning, to the eternal race that is the day, to the starry night. I think of anything but my work, staring at the objects surrounding me. But my attention is always brought back to the uncovered window, to the starry night, and everything else disappears. Just me and the stars.

My day has flown by so fast, a blur of images, thoughts, and memories, but the starry nights are my endings, my conclusions, my bow on the final present. The day of brilliant, dazzling color ends in the dark, dark, night, a fitting conclusion. It is the action, the suspense, the activity, ending in a night of darkness and thought. The day in total is insignificant compared to these moments, these starry nights alone with only the stars for company. My worries drift away, riding on the currents of the air, in those precious moments. And tonight, tonight is a starry night, with just me and the stars.



# The Dream to Read

## Chatanya Sarin

Do societies succeed when their populations dare to dream, read, and inspire their imagination? I often think a small habit such as reading could have a much greater impact on society and go beyond just being a hobby.

In countries such as Tanzania and Kenya, schools lack the funding to give each student what we in America take for granted—books. Due to a lack of books, children in schools are not able to receive the type of education that we in America receive. Moreover, many children are unable to go to school as they have to either provide for their families, or the nearest school is as much as 20 miles away. My father grew up in Tanzania and would regale my sister and me with stories of his childhood, more specifically, how tough it was to receive a decent education. That just didn't seem fair to me.

Tanzania's adult literacy rate in 2015 was approximately 77 percent, having improved from around 40 percent a decade ago, according to data compiled by UNESCO. While primary school enrollment remains high, it drops significantly in secondary school. Even those who make it to secondary school experience a lack of educational materials, as described by my father. I remember him once stating that he and his sister would have to reread the same books over and over as libraries were few and far between. Through perseverance and the occasional help from well-wishers, he was able to earn a first-class education and make his way to America. But not everyone is that lucky. They lack the educational materials and the guidance to earn a respectable education. How can we help? I believe the answer is simple: fortunate people from countries like America can donate old books in the form of Kindles; these Kindles can then be uploaded with educational material, biographies, textbooks, and even materials for vocational training.

Why Kindles? Because they are easier to ship, are less bulky, and can be reused many times more than textbooks. They also weather repeated use a lot better. Availability of electricity could have been an issue but is not as much these days, even in small towns and villages in much of Africa.

Last year I took it upon myself and set out to fulfill the dream of others—the dream to read. To do so, my process was simple: 1) create a detailed poster outlining my objective and put it up on buildings and poles in my neighborhood, and solicit local homes around my neighborhood for old and used Kindles; 2) load the Kindles with books; 3) organize with Plan International, an international charity, to find a school in Tanzania, and finally; 4) donate the Kindles loaded with e-books to a school. I planned the process meticulously by putting up posters on my project, set up a Google Voice number and a Kindle Donation Gmail address for people to reach me. I was aware of personal privacy, so these techniques allowed voice messages and emails to be forwarded to my personal account. I suspected that many Kindles were not being used and were probably destined to be e-waste. I started knocking door-to-door to ask for old, used Kindles; however, I quickly found that most people were unwilling to part with them.

Knocking on strangers' doors and hoping they would compassionately listen to me without immediately dismissing me was a profoundly humbling experience. It was difficult at first; the

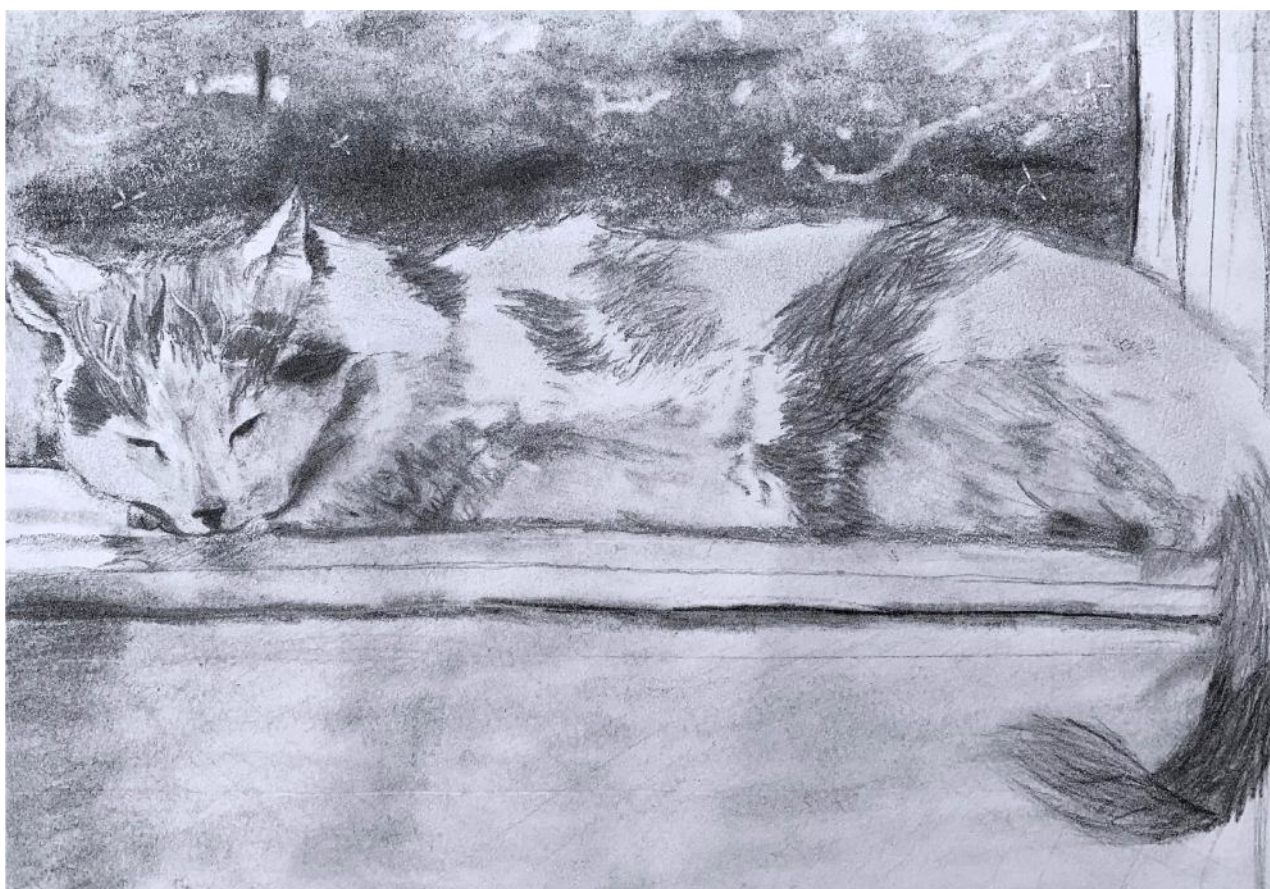


blunt and sometimes rude responses caught me off guard. Regardless of the response, I utilized part of my weekends to reach out to people, hang posters, and knock on more doors in the neighboring communities. It was during these moments of dejection that my family's belief in me and my cause made me try harder.

I am amazed by how far I have come to date. There were many times during the project when it all seemed futile and I wanted to give up. But my parents kept encouraging me, and I was elated when I got my first Kindle. I now have ten Kindles and plan to keep working on my project throughout the school year until I have at least 50 Kindles.

What seemed to be a daunting challenge at first now seems within reach! I still have to load all the educational material and figure out packaging and shipping logistics, but it seems doable. I look forward to sending these Kindles to Tanzania and also hope to visit and spend time with kids there to experience their sense of joy firsthand. By not giving up in the face of what seemed like great odds, I have developed self confidence and hopefully will have made a small positive impact on the world.

*If you would like more information about the Kindle donation project, or have a used Kindle to donate, please email [tanzaniakindledonations@gmail.com](mailto:tanzaniakindledonations@gmail.com).*



# Dreaming Kitty

**Lena Mouradi**

*Graphite drawing of my best friend napping on the windowsill, undoubtedly dreaming of chasing chipmunks and finding the next great cardboard box to explore.*

# Morning Alarm

## Shaan Udani

I was exactly 12 years, 50 days and who knows how many hours old when it happened. You may think it was something that happened in middle school, because doesn't everything happen in middle school? But, no. This was much bigger than the schoolyard. It happened at right about midnight, although I didn't know that until much later. It was a humid and clear night in Mumbai, India. We were visiting our extended family after four years. The last time we were in India, we had all trekked the mountains of Palitana for a religious pilgrimage. This time, it was restaurants, movies, and fun. My parents were out having dinner on the other side of the city while my younger brother and I were at home with cousins and our grandmother. At around 10:30pm, I had decided, along with all of our other family members, to get some rest. The night had suddenly turned cold and chilly, and the clouds started to form in the sky as it often does during a Mumbai winter night. Now all of a sudden it was 2:30am, and I hear talking outside—or maybe it's a dream? I get up out of my sleeping position (on my side, curled up like a baby) and I see a couple of people talking with each other. I also see two people wearing long gowns.

Zombies? I went promptly back to sleep.

When the clock turned 9:00am, I remember hearing the kettle and the doorbell. There are always doorbells first thing in Mumbai—the milk delivery guy, the driver, yesterday's laundry delivery. The ringing in my ears jolts me awake and I make my way outside the bedroom. All of a sudden, I turn the corner and see my dad, and his hands are wrapped in a cast-like material. I look at him and I say, "What happened?" He says, "We'll be just fine." Now I start to worry and get curious about what happened. I make my way into my cousin's bedroom. As soon as I walk in, I see my mom. I look at the TV that was playing and I read the breaking story—"Blazing fire breaks out at Kamala Mills rooftop restaurant."

At this point in my story, most people immediately Google it. The Kamala Mills fire made international news—even on my mother's beloved CNN. This was no ordinary fire, as if fires are ordinary, I suppose. This was a blaze that tore through a high-end restaurant in a big city and killed 14 people. My parents were lucky. They escaped in the last elevator down from the rooftop. It would be many days in a Mumbai hospital and many more days at a burn unit in New Jersey for my mother before her injuries healed. Well, at least her physical injuries. Her emotional injuries are still healing as I write this.

You may ask how I felt about this tragic accident and what came out of it. What can I say? I was too young. At the time, I did not really understand the gravity of the situation. In 2017, when the accident happened, the fatality rate of fires was approximately 11.2 percent [1]. My parents fell into the other 89.8 percent of people who survive fires. But, just because it was not a fatal accident for them physically, the emotional toll was something different. That percentage is unknown. When the accident happened, I was not able to verbalize my feelings. But the world changed for my family that day. They say scars tell the story of someone's life. But my parent's scars tell the story of MY life too.

[1] [usfa.fema.gov](https://www.usfa.fema.gov)

# If You Are Not from California...

Priscilla L. Ho

Poetry

If you are not from California,  
you might think it's all one big Universal Studios ride,  
magical, exciting, and colorful like Haight-Ashbury's tie-dye.

If you are not from California,  
you might think it's always so "Hollywood,"  
glittering like diamonds on an Oscar night dress  
and shiny like a movie star's white teeth.

But if you look deeper into California's past,  
you will realize that it's more like the streetlight  
outside my house,  
which sometimes needs fixing  
because it flickers and goes dark,  
shrouding the neighborhood in darkness.

If you are not from California,  
you might not know much about the Chumash,  
who built gorgeous grass mat houses and made clothing out of tulle and animal skin,  
until they were kicked off their land by Spaniards, Mexicans, and Americans,  
starved,  
flogged,  
and enslaved.

If you are not from California,  
you might not know about the Chinese workers  
who built much of the Transcontinental Railroad,  
which allowed Americans to  
send mail and travel from north to south and west to east and back.

If you are not from California,  
you might not know that the Chinese,  
instead of getting paid,  
suffered  
discrimination,  
death threats,  
and massacres.

The environment also went through hell,  
when people from around the world  
mined California for gold, silver, and lead,  
and then dumped mercury, arsenic, and other toxins  
into rivers and lakes.

But it's not all doom and gloom in California,  
because its people are resilient and not afraid to  
acknowledge its dark past and make things better.

Surviving members of the Chumash Tribe  
have been given compensation which they used to  
build successful businesses.

Chinese immigrants survived the anti-Chinese tide,  
saw the repeal of anti-Chinese laws,  
and built vibrant communities.

Californians also worked hard to  
clean up their environment,  
preserved nature by establishing national parks,  
created government agencies to protect the coastline,  
and passed the strongest environmental laws in the country.

Thus, even though the light goes out  
in California every once in a while,  
it still sets a great example for people around the world,  
because it's not afraid to confront the darkness  
and fix itself.





# Endangered Species

## Brooke Nelson

Imagine pointing out a picture of a tiger in a children's book and telling your future child, "These were alive when I was your age." Imagine having to only be able to see pictures of some of nature's most beautiful and elusive creatures and knowing that there is no chance of ever seeing them in person. This is the reality currently facing us. Populations of many iconic animals and their subspecies are declining rapidly, and deforestation is stealing many animals' homes. The dream of a planet teeming with life and creatures of all varieties is creeping farther away from view. Who is to blame for this shocking fall? Us, humans are to blame for creatures going extinct. We are the ones who hunt, who cut down forests; no animal is as destructive as we are. We have taken over our planet. Many groups have recognized the shocking decline and are trying desperately to help stop or slow the decline of endangered species. The best way for us to help them fight against extinction is to spread awareness. If we're lucky and we all play our parts, these amazing species will survive for the next generation, and many generations after them, to enjoy.

Various species have declined to almost shocking numbers. The Amur leopard has only about 84 leopards left. And Sunda tigers, one of the remaining subspecies of tiger, are down to less than 400. And it continues: of the smallest species of rhino, the Sumatran, there are only 80 still alive. The porpoise-like Vaquita, the world's rarest marine animal, is down to only ten individuals. This decline is shocking. Poaching, deforestation and pollution are all contributors to the decline of hundreds of species all over the world. There are so many wonderful animals that have already met their end. Clouded leopards, an eastern subspecies of mountain lion, some subspecies of rhino, the baiji dolphin, and many more amazing creatures have already lost in this fight. All these species have gone extinct in the 21st century, so that's not counting the many species that came, and went, before. For most of us, seeing the animals on the world's endangerment list is only a dream, and the ones that are already gone? Those all of us can only imagine.

So, if all these awful losses are happening, who's trying to help? One of the most prominent players in this fight, and one of the most widespread, is the World Wildlife Fund, or WWF. Other organizations include: Project AWARE foundation, a group focused on marine protection, Panthera, focused on wildcats, WCS, a.k.a. the Wildlife Conservation Society, and plenty more. These organizations are composed of people who recognize the need for change and are willing to fight for it. We all can join them, helping in whatever way we can to make their dreams of a healthier world a reality. Many of these organizations are nonprofit, and by donating you can put your little bit in, and subtly join the fight to save our planet.

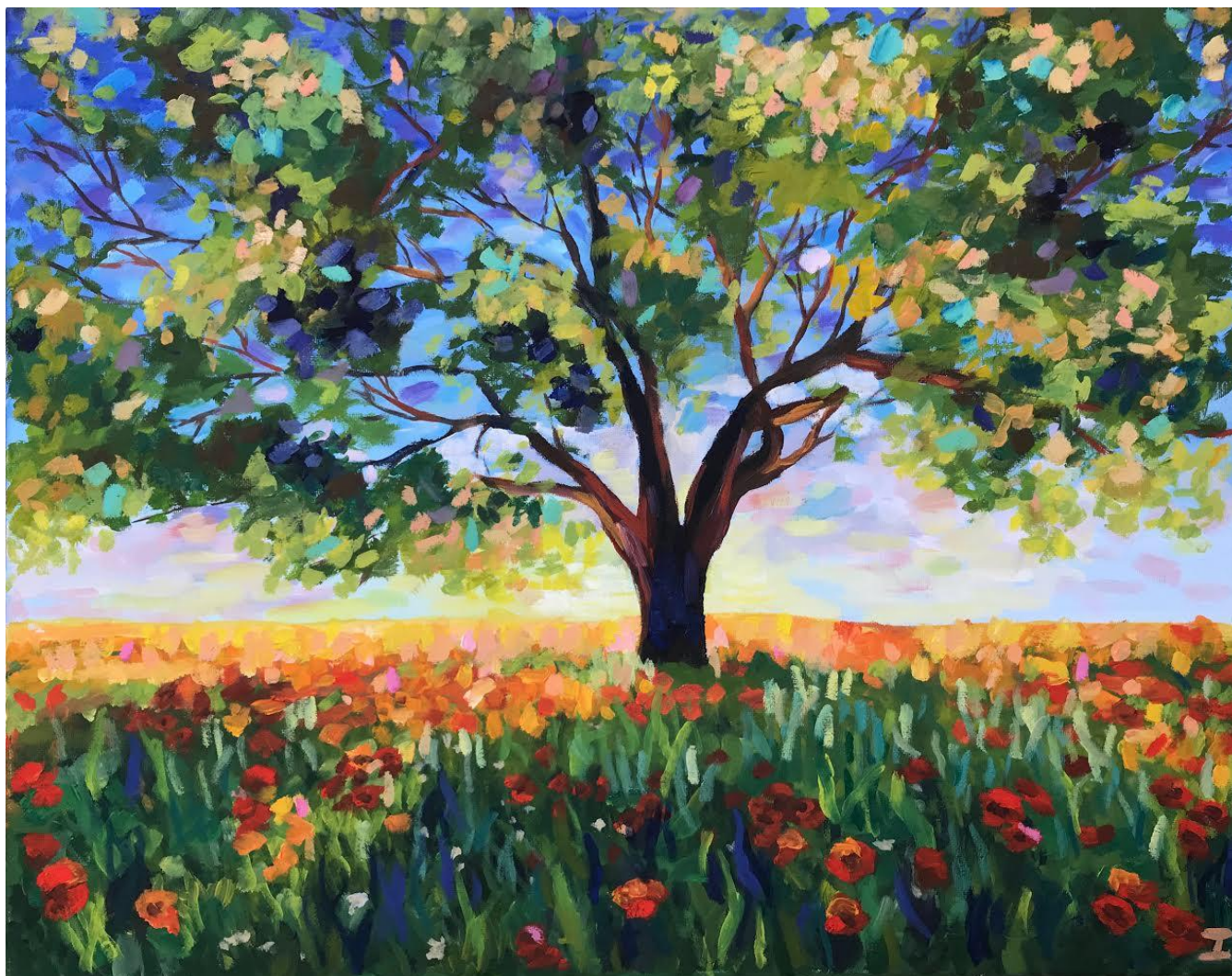
Earth is a unique and special place, and we all need to do our little piece to protect it, whether that be donating time, or money, or just being a supportive voice. We all have our own ways that we can help, and in order to save the thousands of animals that are struggling to survive, we all must do our part. One of the best ways to start helping this battle is to visit the websites of one or more of the organizations listed above. They all have a section for donations, or for other ways you can help. This is a great way to start extending a helping hand. There are tons of different ways to help, whether it be fundraising, donating, or even helping

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fight for changes through protest. If every single one of us decides that we are going to reach out and help, then we can make a difference. One ant cannot move a boulder, but when it joins with its brothers, that rock will start to move, and its dream will come to life. This is what we need to move the pressure of extinction off the creatures of our earth.

Animals are dying every day, and their numbers are creeping closer and closer to extinction. If we want to keep these animals around for our children to admire, we need to do something, and do it now. The clock ticking down to these animal's extinction is running out, and we need to act now if we have any hope of keeping these creatures alive. We are the reason that these creatures are struggling, and we are going to be the ones that fix it. If humanity bands together, and we all pitch in, then we can save these animals and be able to all watch together as their numbers flourish.

*Sources: [www.worldwildlife.org](http://www.worldwildlife.org), [www.csmonitor.com](http://www.csmonitor.com), and [www.medium.com](http://www.medium.com).*



# Dream World

**Isabella White**

*This painting is a tree from a dream world. The colors and fanciful feeling of the piece remind me of a happy, somewhat hazy dream that you remember on a Saturday morning when you wake up.*

# The Caliginous Abyss

## Mei Macintyre

Creatures lurk in the deep,  
Waiting for a sun that never comes.

They illuminate the darkness,  
Blinking lights in busy conversation.

Stars of plankton emerge from inky blackness  
And trace the movements of a Goblin shark,  
He of the ancient Mitsukurina,  
One of many primordial nomads seeking prey.

Further below, a saucer orb of a giant cephalopod stares at the universe.  
She passes through seas silently, like a grain of sand falling to the ocean floor.  
Two tentacular clubs grope at a celestial cloud of frightened mackerel,  
Past three beating hearts a sharp black beak waits in anticipation.

Nearby, Halitrephes explodes with color, magenta, indigo, amethyst, and gold.  
A gyrating wheel pulsates hypnotically.  
The fireworks are soon extinguished,  
As a flash of a bluntnose sixgill cut through the chromatic mass,

And Riftia pachyptila, the ivory and blood-red sentinel,  
Anchored to a smoking bottom,  
Stands witness  
To the birth of time.



# An Elegant Place for Tea

## Vita Huang

Fiction

Fig gradually slowed to a walk as we neared the tunnel. He crouched down, muscles stiff and I hopped off, still holding my china set and teapot full of hot water. Step by step, with small rocks tumbling down, we slowly went down the earthly tunnel that always smelled like worms. I squinted my eyes and felt for the walls around me, looking for a faint source of any light. Finally, as we rounded a corner, still going down, there was a faint trickle of light. We burst out of the tunnel, shaking off dirt. I got on Fig's back again and thud, thud, thud, went Fig's hooves as he walked along the beaten path that we always took.

As he walked along, I stretched out my lips into my best smile, and said, "Look what I have Fig! I brought mint tea powder this time! This is your favorite, remember?" I held it in front of his eyes so that he could see it better. We stopped as he continued to stare at it, so intensely that the package was possibly in danger of burning.

"Yes, and I appreciate your kindness in thinking of me. Now let me ask you. Who did you steal that powder from this time?" Fig rumbled.

"Fiddle dee dee. I didn't steal it from anyone. I truly earned it this time."

"Then why is there a label that says that it is to be saved for later?"

"Oh! I must have forgotten to take it off! I'm sorry, but I will return it after, like I always. I promise that I won't steal again. And plus, my mother won't even notice that it's gone! She never cares about anything!"

"You'll put it back!" Fig laughed, "Like the time when you told me the same thing, and a month later, I find the box of powder in your pocket?"

I felt my face go into a pout. "I will this time. I promise. Now, let's get on with the party!"

I took out my tea, and poured us two cups. Blue tinted, it had the most wonderful aroma, and it smelled like a Summer's day.

I hopped onto Fig's back, bringing my tea set with me, arranging it perfectly on Fig's back. "I have to tell you something." Fig said. "Something that you ought to know before I go." he turned his big head around to look at me with his big, brown eyes.

"Wha- What is it, Fig?"

"You see, I, um, am not a normal stag, as you can see, because I talk and all of that. I'm, um, actually from somewhere else. Centuries ago, my kind thrived on this land, and we would gather once in a month in this exact place for- for, a meeting of a kind. We would gather around this chandelier, for it was our symbol of light in all the darkness, and we would share stories, and talk under the big oak. But then, one day, fewer and fewer started showing up, and..." he turned his head away, and his body shook.

"It's okay, go on!" I patted him on the neck as a comfort to him.

"And reports would come in about how stags and deer kept disappearing. We were all afraid, and months dragged on, until there was only our eldest and me left. Then, after some years, he slowly faded away, and left me alone as the last of our kind. After I die, this place will die with me. I feared that I wasn't going to make it to this month, but it turns out I did, which I am grateful for. This will likely be our last time together. Remember, I will always be with you in spirit, even after my body is gone."



"Oh, Fig. Don't say that. You are going to live another year, and we are going to have the grandest time together."

"Whatever you say."

Leaning over his neck, I whispered in his ear. "Even if you are going to, you-know-what, just remember these words. I will always dream of you in my sleep, and hope that you are with me. You are my greatest companion, and better than all those other little children, and I will always dream for you, and pray for you too. In my dreams, you are the joy and reprieve from all the darkness. I will miss you."

On the way back, we were both confined to our own thoughts, enjoying each other's company, and as my mansion came into view, I slipped off, and went in front of Fig.

"I will miss you so. See you next time. Maybe next month, same date?"

"You can bet that I will come. Until then, goodbye!"

"Bye!" I cried as I buried my face into his hair. I hugged him tight, clinging on and smelling his pine scent.

I waved as I saw him goodbye, and watched until he completely faded out of view.

The next month, and countless months after, I waited, but he never came.

That was our last tea party, and from then on, I never saw him again.

# The Last Minutes

## Alice Fan

Fiction

Ten minutes, then nine, then eight, then seven, then six. And then, finally, there were only five minutes left.

Five minutes. Five minutes was all that was suppressing me from sprinting out of math class to winter break like a hungry cheetah chasing a gazelle. It was short, yet it felt long. The red hand of the clock on the wall went *tick, tick, tick*, as each second went by, taunting me. I started counting down the seconds, daydreaming about the delicious homemade chocolate chip cookies and the large pack of M&Ms that were at home waiting for me to devour them. I let out a sigh, forcing myself to refrain from becoming a child on a sugar high.

Four minutes. I only had to wait another four minutes to escape out of this sleep-inducing classroom, with cloudy grey walls that looked like the sky on a rainy day, a slate grey sofa that the teaching assistant, Ms. Spiker, occupied at the back of the room, mousy grey tables that rocked back and forth every time we moved, and a large blackboard at the front that was filled with so much chalk that you couldn't discern what was what. Needless to say, the entire room's monochromatic dreadfulness did not do much to liven my mood. It felt more like a giant soulless abomination that sucked all of your happiness out within the first few minutes of class.

A strong smell of sherry from the corner of her room invaded my nose with every breath I took and prompted a herd of rhinoceroses to stampede in my head ten minutes into class, which only expanded in size as class went on. It didn't make any sense to me why the school would allow alcohol in a teacher's room, but, regardless, we had to suffer the smell during class.

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My only relief was that I sat next to the half-open door, which provided me with a breath of fresh air merely occasionally. I snuck another glance at the clock, careful to avoid Ms. Spiker's hawk eyes that were surveying the room.

Three minutes. Three minutes until I could get out of this uncomfortable metal chair towards my comfy sofa and watch Thor try to escape from Sakaar, eating, of course, the aforementioned M&Ms. The teacher, Ms. Sponge, was droning on and on and on about substitution as I sat back in my seat, eyes straining to keep open. Suddenly, her voice pierced through the haze that had covered my mind.

"*Hem, hem*, Matilda, I'm sorry. Is this class not good enough for you? For the last time, what's the answer to number 7?"

I looked up, confused and embarrassed. My cheeks burning, I flipped back to the second-to-last page. After struggling to locate my answer through the crammed graphite marks that filled the page, I finally discovered it at the top of the page (which was nowhere near the actual question).

"I-Uhh-I...x equals 23." Ms. Sponge narrowed her eyes in distaste before turning to another victim. I glared at the clock, willing it to go faster.

Two minutes. Some of my fellow seventh graders have already left because their teachers weren't being scrooges and let them out early. I waved towards one of my friends who was coming over to my house afterwards and mouthed at her to bring some popcorn. She nodded in understanding when Ms. Spiker squawked, "*Don't talk, Matilda.*" I looked back at Ms. Spiker, and, if eyes could kill, she would have been dead. I turned back towards my friend and continued to talk, glancing back at Ms. Spiker with the fakest apologetic eyes I could muster.

One minute. Everyone in my class was eyeing Ms. Sponge, waiting for her to dismiss us. Ms. Spiker was digging her long fake nails into the couch as she glared at us for not listening to Ms. Sponge. Ms. Sponge continued to leer at us as she talked as slowly as a sloth. The entire class was getting jittery and fidgety as we were all inadvertently trying to hurry the teacher and trying not to ask any questions and trying not to get held back and trying to get away from this vile classroom; far away. We simultaneously glanced at the clock.

Thirty seconds. We all frantically packed our materials and stuffed our papers into crammed folders and readied ourselves to dart out of there after dismissal as we saw Ms. Sponge sneer at us. *No...You are not going to keep me away from Loki and Thor any longer.* No. I death-glared at her as she started to open her mouth. We shared glances with each other as it dawned upon my classmates what she was about to do. Wide-eyed, we stared at the clock, ten seconds left, we held our breath; "*Hem*, alright, class, you will be staying for three more—" finally zero! Before she could get the last word out, we dashed out of the room, amid shouts for us to get back to our seats. A nail found its way near my sleeve and I ducked, finally escaping from the nightmarish room.



# Two Worlds, Two Lives

## Samiksha Prabhu

Black skies,  
Bright stars,  
All in a whirlpool of  
Revival,  
Thought,  
And memory.

Soon,  
The curtains of  
This otherworldly blend of wishes,  
Hopes,  
And imagination  
Are drawn closed,  
Vanishing with the darkness of the  
Night,  
Leaving all eyes bare to the  
Rays of sun,  
Striking at the same speed,  
Intensity,  
And rhythm  
At which  
Reality returns,  
Filled with the purpose to distinguish between  
A dream and  
A dream-come-true.



# Magical Dream

## Alea Nakhleh

Pearl-pale periwinkle clouds race above my head,  
Now laced  
With winter-bare branches.  
An abandoned barn  
Of Ivy and Magpies  
Twittering away,  
Supported by the other.  
White-freckle stars against a night-black pelt  
Sitting on the shore of a river  
Snaking through the forest.  
The gold-black rosettes of a maybe leopard,  
Seen only perhaps by the leaves  
Twisting through the gnarled branches  
Of an ancient oak  
Surrounded by swirling snowflakes  
And feathers twirling away.  
Desperation.  
A prismatic void of colors,  
Shattered glass spinning with  
Beyond the rainbow  
And worlds beyond understanding.  
White, black,  
A summer breeze.





# Dreams.

## Tanisi Mohanty

*Dreams (noun) - Indulgences in daydreams or fantasies about something greatly desired.*

### **What are dreams?**

Dreams simply are the ideas you think of pursuing later in your life. They are the key to the locked door into making the world a better place. Dreams urge you to persevere to make it happen. With so much suffering and pain happening around the world now, dreaming is for the better. If you are dreaming for the good, you will find a way for your cherished wish to come true.

### **Why do we have them?**

You have dreams. Everyone has them. The world's not perfect; neither is anyone in it. Humans continue to evolve and can't stand the imperfections of their doing. So we want to change it. This is where the dream evolves. You want to change something. And you persuade yourself to do it. This is what having a dream is and why we have them.

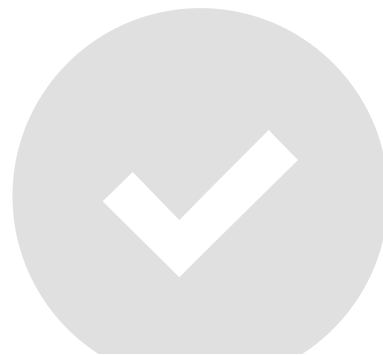
If we have them, when will we pursue it?

If you are dreaming for the good, of course you will pursue your dream. It may take some time: it might happen the day after, or it might happen twenty years from now. It depends from dream to dream. For example, if you dream that your lost puppy will come home someday, there's a good chance that it will the next day or so. Now if you wanted climate change to stop completely, that will take some time. Multiple years of course! These are one of the challenges you have to face having a dream.

### **What if we don't succeed?**

Dreaming is important if you want to succeed in dreaming about success, but the challenge lies in having to work for that success. And, those who take up this challenge head-on are the ones who are able to succeed. Everyday you take a step to realize the dream. If you want to dream, you can dream, but to make it true, you need to take action. Let's take that example where you wanted to get rid of climate change. You could dream about a world where there is no climate change for the rest of your life, but will that change anything? Only if you put those dreams into action, then your dream will come true. Otherwise, it just stays as a dream.

Dream. Take Action. Make the World Better.



# Inside Ourselves

## Aidan Hunt

Ah, dreams. The only place we know of where you can turn into Godzilla riding a motorcycle on Mars. Where the laws of physics are more like suggestions, and you can bend objects with your mind. This mysterious place is different for everyone, and we have little control over it. But what are dreams? Do other species experience this phenomenon? Is there a way to stop or start them? And, most intriguing of all, what are they able to tell us?

A dream is defined on Wikipedia as “A series of images, ideas, emotions and sensations that usually occur involuntarily in the mind during certain stages of sleep.” As you can see, while dreams can be defined, the act of dreaming can be difficult to describe. The unusual nature of dreams has provoked a lot of philosophical discourse, religious content, and superstition.

While scientists are “in the dark” about how responsible REM sleep is for our dreams, we know that most of them happen during REM sleep. REM sleep is rapid-eye-movement sleep, when the brain is at its most active. It happens every few hours, in 20-30 minute periods, or lasting for only a few moments. The brain is acting similarly to when we are awake, theoretically causing us to enter the dream state. It is thought that dreams could possibly have to do with the memory sorting/disposal process, which is possibly why “sleeping on it” is helpful. It is also known that while fish and insects do not have REM sleep, some birds and all mammals do, and possibly reptiles. A lot of mammals experience the same sleep states that humans do, and they do dream. Pets may dream about their owners, and some animals recall the entire day in their sleep, which possibly has something to do with the memory process. From personal experience, I have noticed my dog growling and huffing in her sleep.

There is a huge amount of philosophy and religious context surrounding dreams. After all, for a long time there was literally no scientific explanation for seeing people or places in your sleep. Religiously, dreams were generally thought to have some kind of prophetic or hidden meaning. An example of dream-based philosophy, dream skepticism is a form of argument that dreams prove that sensory-based information is not entirely reliable.

Here is a pair of popular (and freaky!) examples of dream-based philosophy. The first is that Aristotle said that dreams are not supernatural but have to do with “the human spirit.” The other is that Descartes’ full dream skepticism argument is that if we can interact with something using our senses, we consider it real. If that is so, then we can see that there is no reason that anything in dreams should be false, even though they can be. So if that is true, then regular life could also be false, proving sensory data is unreliable (think of the Matrix movie).

Religiously, dreams are just as important. It is thought in (some forms) of Christianity that dreams have guiding or spiritual value. Commonly in Eastern forms of Buddhism, a kind of “sleepless dreams” are theorized about when achieving a certain level of calm or “mental state.” Also, the traditional Native American religion capitalizes on dreams similarly to Buddhism, believing they can be fully interactable.

Superstitions about dreams have been around as long as anyone can remember, since dreams are understandably unexplainable without science. A few fun (and definitely not proven) ones

are snakes are associated with deception, running is associated with guilt or change, gloves are associated with work, valuables or rainbows mean luck.

Dreams are overall a really cool phenomenon that almost everyone has or will experience. From pretty normal to odd to flying turtles, they create all kinds of scenes in your head that can make you ponder what's going on in there. Since you are technically the one creating them, you can think hard about what influences them. They are interesting, and they are mysterious, but most importantly, dreams can be fun, and give us great experiences, thoughts and emotions we never knew about inside ourselves.



# Dreaming of Equality

**Sabine Fuchs**

*I love painting women of all ethnicities and was inspired by the freedom of butterflies and the dream of equality by minorities. I wanted to paint something embodying a dream-like state with raw emotions and symbolic meanings.*



# Drift

Laila Copeland

We all have dreams  
Big  
Small  
Or just right

In those dreams  
We  
Play  
Sing  
Dance  
Learn  
Love  
Or maybe even  
Fly

Dreams are  
An outlet of our imagination  
A figment of our mind  
Transcribed

But

What happens to those who do not dream  
Whose minds are barren and cold as a desert night  
Who are unable to envision anything beyond reality?

Do they lie in a fog of sleep itself as their minds rest,  
Absorbing a permanent fade to black?  
Do they sit in darkness as if someone has forgotten to turn on  
The lights

Or do they simply lie in bed  
Recharging for the next day  
And let themselves

Drift







# Waterside

by Keira Zhang

*I want the world to be a better place where nature, people and animals live harmoniously.*

# Our Image

## Tristan Christopher Sperl Erckert

*Inspired by Kehinde Wiley's Conspicuous Fraud Series #1 (Eminence)*

Never resting or lingering  
Always pushing powerfully down on us  
Falling like bricks from bombed chapels.  
As the suffering, our kind endured.  
The growing discomfort of inky streams,

which forever pour from our follicles.  
The locks count the human lives,  
who perish before us, standing as  
one. Even now, nothing ever changes.  
Dread is around every corner, waiting.

Always molding us to someone else's  
expectations. Never letting us break free.  
They try to penetrate the impenetrable  
but none have yet shaped me  
I'm standing immovable, my hair unstoppable as it grows.

Though many have attempted, the truth  
still lies within, never to be.  
I am a people, immune,  
to the past, present, and future of humankind  
never resting, always frowning, always free.



# To Combat the Universe

## Maegha Goel

*'Dreams'--the jar was labelled. The fine print beneath it read 'the greatest power.' It frightened the universe, so it altered the print to read 'weakness' instead. The trick was clever, and it worked on quite a few as it has been said that humans are not the brightest. However, it was only a trick, and so, some saw through.*

Every morning, the woman swept away the threads. Of memory that never seemed to leave her. She would find golden fibers hidden in her hair come dawn. One time, she forgot to brush them out, and her mirror showed her raw beauty. She found it repulsive.

So, she hid them away. The woman worked hard, wasting away her days. She pushed away the wisps of romance when they tried to follow her. To brighten up her eyes which had long lost their shine.

Yet, sometimes, on the darkest of days, they managed to slip inside of her. When she was too tired to protest. Her eyes did not regain their light. Her smile never returned to her face. But perhaps, one wrinkle disappeared into her brow on occasion.

Her soul was hurting, but the woman would not listen. The only time it had to speak was when her mind was quiet. Then, and only then, could it express itself.

She tried to banish herself. Confine herself to the very corners of her mind. Keep it empty and not cultivate anything which might land there. Yet echoes of her true self haunted the woman.

Chased her through the day, so that they could dance come night.

Like faeries, they twirled. They laughed and rejoiced in their short-lived freedom. Like changelings, they wailed. They sobbed and declared their passion. Innocent of the confinement that would follow.

Deep inside of her. The voice of a broken little girl was buried. She rarely spoke.

Until she did.

She opened her mouth and unleashed a string of passion and emotion that the woman had been trying to discourage for so long. She could not keep silent any longer.

The woman froze, but those around her did not notice. She took a breath and tried to suppress it, but the voice inside of her could not be quieted any longer.

The woman was no longer in charge. The little girl was tired of being told to hide her hopes and sorrows. Her pains, her story.

And she took control.

She told the world what she had been whispering to the woman at night. She filled her words with an honesty and truth that it had not expected.

The world had expected the woman to quell the girl's cries. The world had expected the woman to stay silent.

But the woman's voice joined the girl's. They blended into one until a singular voice was screaming with fervor for someone to hear it.

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And the world was surprised. It stopped turning away and listened.

And the woman began to sob. Because she had lived all her life for somebody else. She had protected others from harshness and held them when sorrow overwhelmed them, but no one had ever done the same for her. Nobody had stopped to care. No one had waited for her to speak. So, she never had. She broke down, yelling until she was hoarse.

And then, she fell asleep, and the world cradled her as it had neglected to do before. As she slept, the little girl was healed.

Tears of joy rolled down the child's cheeks which were now pink with laughter. As they always should have been.

When the woman woke up, she did not remove the golden whispers from her hair. Nor did she try to tuck away her soul. Instead, she let it fill her up until she was bursting with feeling.

There she stood, cradled in the palm of the world. She looked up and stared straight on through it. Through its deceptions and grievances. She saw its flaws and its beauties and accepted them. Her only question was why.

The world was not sorry. How could it be? It was the world to be molded and shaped by those in it.

Her piercing eyes were fixed on it with a focus of an unmatched intensity. But the world could not answer her question. It only shrugged down at her before bringing her back to those who had purposely ignored her pleas for help.

And she was left. Once again. Alone.

But she wasn't alone anymore. The little girl inside her was no longer so broken, and she had risen up to fill the woman with something she hadn't had before. Now, she had hope.

And a mission.

To bring back the light in her eyes and the eyes of those around her. The world had placed her in an impossible situation, but it had given her something to combat that impossibility. It had unlocked something inside of her.

Her eyes still were lackluster, but now, she had dreams to combat the dark.





# Is Our Language the Language

## Laurel Aronian

We think that our language is the language,  
When we watch the crow on the wire.  
His shrill voice we cannot hear;  
Pleading for needs identical to ours.  
That we choose to ignore,  
As we care more about ourselves than the crow's carrion  
And the crow pities his cousin the turkey  
For with November's chill and a shot he'll be gone.

We think that our language is the language,  
When we water the plant on our sill.  
It never complains if you shut it in the dark.  
Stretching for the light through the cabinet door.  
We forget in time that it is there.  
As we care more about ourselves than its own need for light  
And the plant pities the crops of wheat.  
For why grow if you are destined for a pound of powder?

We think that our language is the language,  
When we witness others in pain.  
They never did anything to earn any of this,  
That we didn't do unattended.  
Yet we never act upon their suffering,  
As we care more about ourselves than their plea for help.  
And the pained pities the one to live with guilt.  
For their pain is temporary, but the guilt is permanent.



# Love, Mommy

## Kate Phillips

My dearest,

How are you doing? I hope you're enjoying your time, wherever you are. I think of you always, especially whenever I'm

...filling this flower vase with water

I remember you with me on a milky summer evening in the garden picking flowers. I told you not to pick too fast, choose the ones with the healthy petals, pick if you get the root. Why didn't you? I made my bouquet before the sun went down and you finished yours before the sun started blushing. Do you remember this vase? You put your flowers in it and the next day they were dead. You're Dead.

*My son why didn't you choose them correctly why didn't you choose them slowly did the scents even stay in your head lilac rose lavender as they stay in mine slow down slow down pull the flowers from the earth gentle and slow.*

...pouring tea out of this teapot

I remember you when you were older and your jaw was sharper in my palm as I kissed your forehead good morning. I looked at the blue under your eyes and told you you needed caffeine hot and strong. Be Strong.

*Why didn't you let it steep it long enough here in this teapot you said it tasted like water and you didn't let it grow stronger and you still couldn't stop and smell flowers and you should've let it rest slow down slow down wait for it to get dark and strong.*

...using this brand of toothpaste

I remember you brushing your teeth and rushing in the morning and how the bristles rubbed against your gums and made them bleed. I told you to do it gently but you had places to be besides your bathroom and you spit the blood back into the sink and you said two words that blended in one and lost their meaning, goodbye. Say Goodbye.

*Why didn't you brush lightly you had such a beautiful smile why didn't you clean slowly why didn't you move your beautiful hand steadily why didn't you wash the blood out in the sink it only takes a few seconds instead of leaving it for your mother to look at why didn't you slow down slow down.*

...zipping up this old jacket

I remember you going out at night and it was cold outside and you left with a thin shirt and no jacket and when you came back the cold had bitten into your skin and you were too rushed to warm up so I hugged you good night and I had to shiver against your skin it was cold.

Life's Cold.

*Why didn't you leave time to get your nice jacket from the closet why didn't you zipper it tightly and perhaps get some gloves why did you always rush out in the winter you could've stayed home a while why didn't you block the wind and the cold and slow down slow down slow down.*

Do you remember these things? Of course you do.

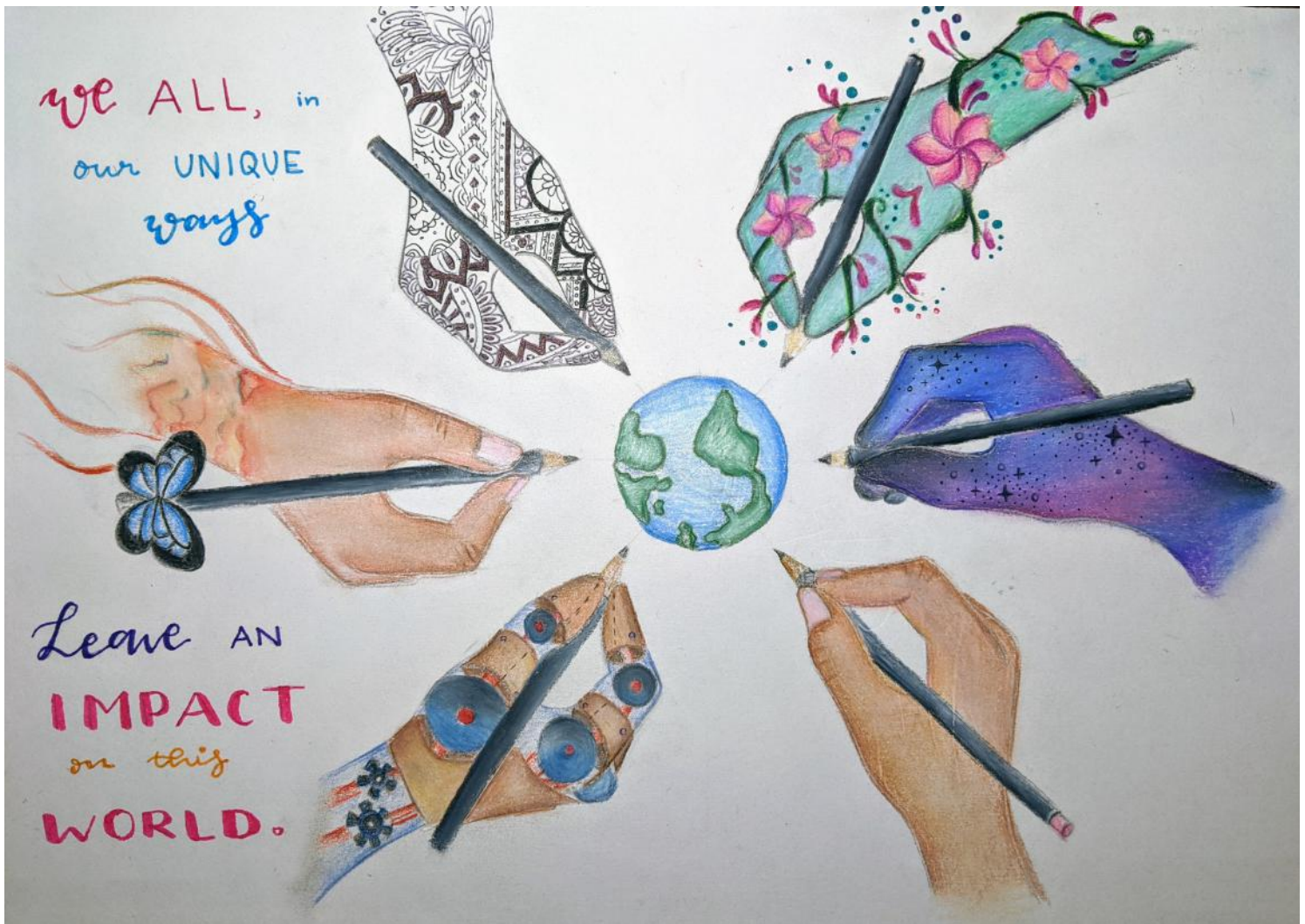
Lots of love,  
Mommy

P.S.  
...hearing a car speeding down the road

I don't remember you leaving that day.  
How fast were you gone?  
How fast were you going?

*I was always slow I took my time why didn't you slow down slow down slow down you were too fast and I love you but you should have slowed down why didn't you slow down slow down I love you so much but why didn't you just slow down slow down go slow slow slow slow slow slow*

# Slow



# Impact

Anwasha Ghosh

*This piece, "Impact," shows the world turned upside down, especially at a time like this, with the current pandemic. Each of the hands represents someone in our community making an impact on our lives. The hand with gears represents the engineers working hard to fix and make ventilators. The hand holding the pencil with a butterfly represents a biologist/scientist, continuously researching to jump forward in human evolution. The hand with zen patterns represent the hand of a counsellor, nurses, social workers, and senior care workers. The hand with flowers represents the artists around the world, trying to bring us joy with the art of color. The hand with a simple black pencil shows us the purity of education, a gift from the hands of our educational workers, our teachers. The hand with stars and galaxies shows the dreamers, always working for a better world, and giving us hope. Hope, something we all need to remember.*



# A Child's Haven

## Lilly Leonhardt

The wind blew through my hair as I clumsily ran on the wet pavement. Car horns honked and people screamed at each other in rushed, heated dialect to move the hell out of their way in the traffic-filled street. Despite the pouring rain, you could vaguely see the sun setting above the beautiful skyline. A pastel painting was back there, with cut-outs of tall black buildings slapped onto the perfect tie-dye combination of hues. As the night got darker, all the Halaal Brothers, Nuts 4 Nuts, and hot dog carts closed their signs, and the smells of the greasy, yet delicious delicacies faded away into the darkness. Restaurants began to turn their lights on, and delightful Friday night chatter was heard as people got out of work and went on their fancy dates, a glass of wine and a candle warming them from the cold rain outside. I crossed underneath a highway underpass, where a man was playing the saxophone, with his case open. I listened earnestly, but passed quickly, as I sprinted into the apartment building and up the stairs, to look out the window on the first landing of an infinite staircase. I paused for the first time in forever. The rain was slowly stopping, as the sunset was audibly fading into a rich blue-purple, with stars dotting the black silhouette of a skyline, with white and yellow windows illuminating the scene.

This normal sight in my growing-up has changed me profoundly, into what I daresay is a more sophisticated and cultured version of myself. From living most of the year in something close to a suburb outside of Los Angeles, and also spending the summertime in my grandmother's apartment in New York City, differences in how I act, my family's behaviors, and the actions of all other New Yorkers around us is undeniably different. As we would return home every year, my family and I would be astronomically more confident, overall happier, and more prepared for the new independence we receive at the beginning of each new school year. Everchanging adjustability for the elderly and younger kids, the surplus of options, and plenty of activities can make a seemingly dangerous city a positive haven for developing children.

The world as we once knew it is changing, and in our most populated areas, we are now seeing a refreshing change in focus to the ones needing the most support, the young and the elderly. Cities are now changing, to make safer places for kids who need it. According to "How to Design Cities for Children," there is now more interest and investment in giving kids more freedom, such as in the ability to walk around places and enjoy their communities to the fullest. This theory of "Everyday Freedoms" could make it possible to develop more ways for kids to independently live in cities, through being able to travel places, on foot or with a bike, and being able to go to places like local parks and museums. This is very important in the development of kids since it gives them a sense of independence. This benefits their parents, too, because then they don't have to pay as laboriously for child care, or take off work for their kids, giving their children a better and more profitable future.

Cities also have many more options for the kids that live in them, despite their notoriety for not being child-friendly. A much larger variety of schools, both public and private, pediatric offices, stores, emergency hospitals, and so much more. The population of New York City, compared to Westchester, New York, is approximately 8 times larger (8.623 million compared to 980,224 in 2017). In New York City, there are approximately 700 public elementary schools alone. In Westchester County, there are 252 public schools altogether, so you see that the ratio of elementary schools is not 8:1 like it should be, but closer to 9:1.

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This proves that in larger cities there are more options and a larger variety. It isn't even debatable that the ratio changes wherever you're living, because the population to school comparison doesn't stay the same. There are so many small towns whose numbers are even less than Westchester's, so you can see that urbanized areas would have an even larger effect mathematically on the demographics of small towns. This can help give children the best opportunities when they're growing up, because they have more options, and their parents can easily pick what's best for them.

Kids are often better off living in urban areas because of the larger amount of activities they can partake in. From museums to parks, playgrounds, and so much more, you can find a lot more of these activities in populated cities. For enriching extracurriculars, you are likely to find plenty of options, because there is a larger variety of kids partaking in them. For example, in a town outside of a city, they might only offer softball and soccer as sports for the kids. But, in the city, there could be an exponentially greater amount of children, so they have to adjust. They may still have softball and soccer, but also have many other sports, for every kid to enjoy.

Living in a larger community, such as an urban, populated area, can be beneficial to children, despite past conjectures. Every time a city's delights engulf me, I feel changed for the better. Staying in a city makes me feel better, and makes me comfortable with the world around me, opposed to the bleak suburbs. From new, neverending activities, the developing adjustability for kids, that wasn't there when I was little, and the increasing options, cities are the highlight of my year, whether I spend a month in one, or a few hours. And you can predict that they will influence the children living in them for the better.

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# The Power of Words

## Sabrina Guo

As a child, I loved the smell of libraries. I would flip through the pages of books and take a good, long sniff. My favorite scent was sweet—a bit of lemon and coffee, mixed with paper, of course. Funnily enough, at the same time, I hated books. I respected them and liked their smells, yes, but I absolutely loathed words themselves. While other kids talked about their new favorite books, I was the wallflower, standing away from the crowd and nibbling on my sandwich. And although I had eagerly attempted to delve into books, I sometimes grew overwhelmed, postponing my reading in frustration.

Although I may have had a complicated relationship with books, I did love writing song lyrics. And from those humble lyrics, I took my first real step into writing poetry, which inevitably led to my experimentation with reading again. I borrowed many types of library books, but it was fantasy that finally hooked me. Fantasy made me feel like I was soaring above moonlit clouds, plucking shimmering stars from the sky and collecting them inside my heart.

After a while, my interests expanded to other genres. I even started to read some news articles, which had previously intimidated me so much.

This new fascination developed into my father and me regularly following current events together. Eventually, I discovered the child migration crisis and of the deceptively difficult immigration process in the U.S.. Even after seven years of working to reach here, refugees can still face economic and emotional difficulties, along with discrimination. After learning about this situation, I decided to use the words I had come to love to write a related blog post and poem in the children's magazine, *Stone Soup*. Writing the poem enabled me to think more deeply about what a child refugee might experience, and challenged me to think outside of my own life and circumstances.

Around that time, *Stone Soup* announced initiating a platform showcasing refugee children's art, and I immediately volunteered to help, researching organizations, photographers, and artists working with refugee children. I soon discovered Another Kind of Girl Collective (AKGC), an organization that holds arts workshops for Syrian refugee girls living in Jordan, providing them with a platform to share their own stories. These girls upend negative media portrayals and prove themselves as hardworking and motivated visionaries of their generation.

In my correspondence with AKGC, I eventually interviewed its founder, along with two affiliated young female Syrian filmmakers. And while initially apprehensive in the interview because of our differences, through speaking with them about their lives and work, I began to see the importance of storytelling as a way of connecting to and forming bonds with others, something that is especially important and relevant in today's world. We all share the same desire: to be heard. And through hearing their words and stories, I became aware of the many obstacles these Syrian women overcame to achieve their goals.

I knew I had to spread the word about my new friends and their vital work, so I posted a blog about AKGC on the *Stone Soup* website, coinciding with the announcement of its new refugee issue. I am proud that my words contributed to something larger than myself, and so happy that this important information will be shared with a larger audience of kids my age. Strange how words, the very things that once kept me mute, have now helped me both find my voice and give voice to many others around the globe.

Invigorated by AKGC's work and eager to make an impact in my own school and community, I joined my school district's Women's Leadership Committee. Our goal is to find role models and empower young girls early on. With my newfound strength in words, I wrote a letter to Michelle Obama, acknowledging her role in inspiring myself and others in the committee to be strong and capable young women. To my excitement, she thanked me in a reply and provided our committee tickets to a talk about her new book, *Becoming*. We learned so much listening to her talk about her life, and it was such a motivational and energizing experience for all of us. When reflecting on how I got there, I was deeply grateful for the invention of writing and for my journey towards embracing it.

It took time for me to welcome words into my life. But, after I stepped out of my comfort zone by beginning to write lyrics and poems, it wasn't long until I was avidly reading books, and even finally conquering my fear of newspapers. Words became an essential part of my life, and they not only fueled in me a certain creativity, but they also empowered me to connect with others, catalyzing leadership opportunities and creating platforms for greater change. The interconnectedness of our age is possible because of the powerful words that carry our stories, and through overcoming my fear of writing and eventually embracing it, I found that the world came to embrace me.

# Dreams

## Anika Thomas

To me, dreams can be anything. A midnight blue sky, with white stars scattered above the horizon line and nothing else in sight. They're wild and unrestrained, just like the endless sky, free to hold both the possible and the impossible. Dreams are clouds, soft, yet thick and dense. Close enough to notice and observe, but impossible to reach out and grasp. They are freedom and adventure and peace. Dreams are nighttime, at the height of vulnerability. A time when we aren't conscious of what's going on outside of our mind. Dreams are floating, the feeling of weightlessness and leaving everything tying you down behind.

When I think of dreams, I think of fantasy. Fantasy because anything can happen in dreams. Dreams are where we can surpass the limits put on reality, where we can escape to another world without even being conscious of it. The beauty of dreams is the lack of control we have over them. It's the only time when we let go of everything, put down our guards, let go of our worries, and just experience. When we dream, we surrender to our imagination; we let it run free and take over, painting a captivating image of whatever it is that we desire.

Dreams take us everywhere and anywhere. One minute we're in our beds at night, the next we're flying to magical lands and other planets. They come to us serenely in the darkness of night, creeping up on us, blissfully taking control of our mind before fading away, leaving us with only a taste, leaving us yearning for more.



# Free

## Angela Zeng

One more day of the exhaustion of video lessons and schoolwork at home... I swung open the screen door and stepped outside to the backyard—I couldn't wait to go outside and breathe the fresh air.

"Don't go too far," my mother called from the kitchen. "You shouldn't stay out too long."

"I know," I replied with a sigh. "I'll only be a minute."

I slumped onto the porch bench, resting my head on my fist.

Sunlight dappled the ground, warm rays filtering through the leafy canopy of oaks and maples on the outskirts of the yard. The gnarled trees flashed green and yellow, shifting and swaying in the wind. Songbirds trilled their cheerful serenades, twittering and flapping without a care in the world. Squirrels darted about, flouncing their bristling tails and leaping nimbly from tree to tree. The carpet of lush grass rippled like water across the ground. I wanted to sink my toes into the feathery blades, and to pretend I could fly and touch the clouds like the birds soaring above me.

*I wish I could see my friends,* I thought. *How has life been to them? What have they been doing?* My mind wandered to my teachers and their families. *Have they been doing well?*

A flash of bright blue caught my eye. I sat up, excited for something to distract me and to bring me joy, and was pleasantly surprised by the sight of a lovely butterfly springing and prancing in the warm, bright sunlight. I dashed after the butterfly, and before long, it alighted on a daisy leaf, wings spread. I snatched at it, but it darted away just in time. I raced after it, arms reaching out. It landed on another sweet bloom. I swiftly leaped and cupped my hands over it.

I grinned. I held it up to the sun. "You're going to be my new pet," I giggled, as I watched the sunlight glint off of its iridescent blue wings. "You'll keep me company when I feel lonely at home." I continued to coo as the butterfly flew in a crazed frenzy in my hands. Its desperate wings tickled my skin.

"I'll make you a little wire cage, and—"

Cage. Was it fair to imprison the tiny creature in a *cage* when it had a *home*? It started to grow tired as it fought. The butterfly poked its head between my fingers, antennae waving frantically, but there was no way for it to squeeze out. I could almost feel its sorrow as I came to understand its hopeless state.

I looked down at my hands. The butterfly had its head between two of my fingers, peering out through the fleshy bars of its prison, but I had the feeling it wasn't trying to escape anymore; no, it almost seemed to have given up. It stopped moving and crept forlornly around its small, dark chamber. The butterfly seemed to be staring at me, thousands of eye lenses pleading for freedom. I frowned. "You want to be free?" I whispered. Slowly, I opened my hands, letting sunlight flood the butterfly's senses. Carefully, the butterfly ambled to my fingertips and paused to spread its wings before taking off. Its papery wings glinted in the sunlight. I watched it flit off towards the woods, free...

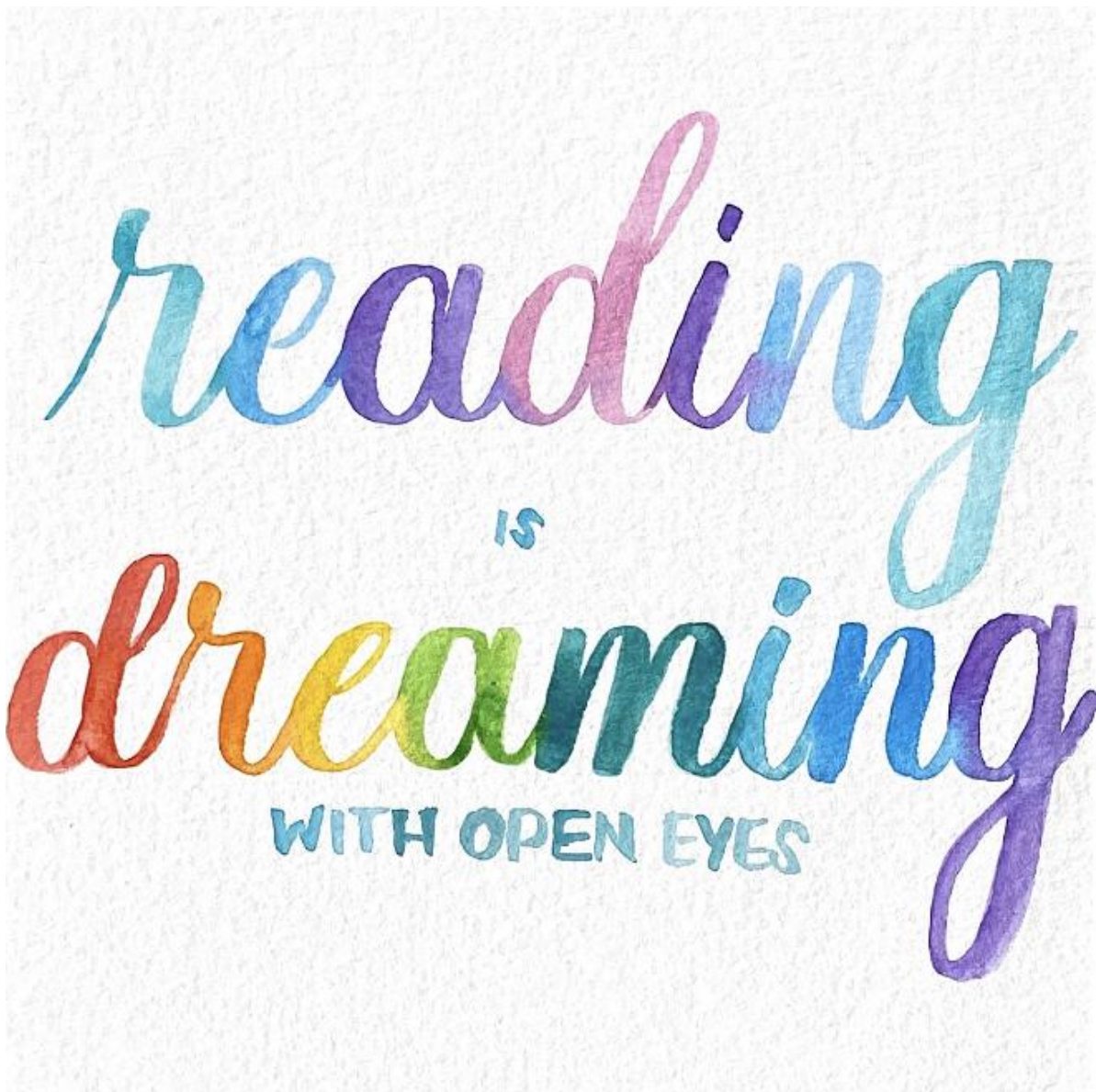
"Goodbye." I'd never felt so joyful to let something go. For the first time in a while, I genuinely smiled. Joy filled my heart as I watched it ride high with the breeze, flapping its delicate wings. I laughed, clapping for the small creature that was free once more.

There was something about freedom that made it useless unless everyone and everything had it. I felt so satisfied that I had done something to make a difference in the world.

In our world right now, it's easy to feel alone. It's easy to feel trapped and helpless during these trying times when we can seem separated by a never-ending chasm of darkness and disconnect.

It's easy to feel like a tiny insect unable to escape the confines of its cage. In our world right now, we are all being caged, held to our homes.

But we are not alone. We are not afraid. I dream of a world where we all work together to support and comfort each other in our fight against the spread of Coronavirus. I dream of a world where those who are caged will finally be set free!



# Reading is Dreaming

**Sarah Tanuyanti**

*Having a love for watercolour calligraphy and reading, I wanted to blend these two things into my artwork. When I saw this quote, I immediately knew that it was perfect, as it allowed me to express the dreamy aura of reading through calligraphy.*

# Dream-Not-A-Dream

## Aerin Bernstein

In boatloads of books or movies, everything awesome is always a dream.  
Take *Alice In Wonderland*.

I had never watched or read *Alice In Wonderland* before, so I was super excited when it was going to be the school play. The play was funny and the plot was great—but, in the end, it turned out the whole thing was a dream.

Ugh.

Countless other adventures have been ruined, too. Well, not *ruined*, but...spoiled. The plot is still cool, but when it turns out the whole thing is a dream...It's really disappointing.

Also annoying. *Very* annoying.

I never thought I'd *want* for an adventure to end up being a dream.

That was before stuff went weird.

One night, I was settling into the top bunk of the bed I shared with my sister, lyla. I snuggled into my blankets and closed my eyes.

Just a couple seconds later, I heard weird—*scratchy*— sounds. Like...claws against wood.

It's *nothing*, I thought. 43 times, actually.

It didn't help. I couldn't trick myself that it was nothing.

As the night wore on, I tossed. Turned. The claws-against-wood sound continued.

Finally, it stopped. I relaxed, closed my eyes again, and was just nodding off to sleep when a sudden sound woke me.

*CLUUUUUUUUCK-SA-SQUAWK!!!*

I bolted upright.

What was *that*?

"lyla?" I whispered. Nothing. "lyla?"

After more CLUUUUUUUK-SA-SQUAAAAAWKS, I peeked my head into the lower bunk.

My sister...wasn't *there*.

I started freaking out. My sister was the soundest sleeper ever. She wouldn't get out of bed for anything—not for water, or bathroom breaks (9-YEAR-OLDS SHOULDN'T WET THE BED THIS MUCH)—certainly not weird sounds. She didn't sleep walk, so...where was she?

I got out of bed, and went in the bathroom. Nothing. She wasn't in the hallway, either. I had just started creeping down the stairs when I heard a *CLUUUUUUK* from behind me.

Nearly frozen with fear, I turned around, and saw...

A turkey?

Yeah, a turkey. With a HOT PINK snood.

Huh?

The turkey started advancing towards me. My heart rate was back to normal, now that I knew there wasn't a murderer walking around my house. Just a turkey.

I jumped with shock. "Are you talking?"

"Duh."

"Okay...*why* are you talking?"

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“Cuz meowing is boring, and barking hurts my throat, and—WHY DO YOU THINK I’M TALKING? I need to communicate SOMEHOW. What, can turkeys not talk now or something?”

I was slightly offended by how sassy the turkey’s tone was, and was about to respond, but the turkey (whom I had decided to call Snood) plowed on. “As for where I’m from, I come from Whoville. I’m pretty good friends with the Grinch, mind you. Anyways, I’m here to take over Virginia.”

“Ha.” I snorted. “Yeah right.”

“Yes, right!” Snood exclaimed. “I’m taking over Virginia *right now*. I have an army of Killer Turtles with daggers in the backyard, and there ain’t nothing you can do to stop us.”

I paled at the thought of an army of killer turtles with daggers. What if Snood wasn’t lying? What if Virginia was going to get a new ruler (hint, hint, one with a hot pink snood)?

“You’re bluffing,” I said calmly. “First...*no*. Second, I’m *totally* dreaming.”

How could I have missed it? I awoke with my sister missing, which *never* happens. A turkey with a hot pink snood was the one who woke me—and he could talk. Plus, supposedly, he came from Whoville and was friends with the Grinch, who only existed in Dr. Seuss’s imagination. Lastly, the turkey claimed he was here (California) to take over Virginia with an army of armed killer turtles that were hiding in my backyard.

Suuuuuure.

I pinched myself. Hard. Twice. I expected to awaken for REAL screaming in pain, then laugh over ever thinking this craziness was reality.

Instead, I found myself screaming in pain *still standing up*, with Snood in front of me, and still in this dream-not-a-dream.

And, for once, I wished, wished, WISHED that this night would end with me realizing it WAS a dream. A dream that I could feel pain, talk, and scream in. And feel VERY terrified in.

Just then, lyla came running up the stairs. “Aerin? I heard you—screaming. What’s going on?” She saw Snood, and I explained a quick recap of what had happened in the last 15 minutes.

“So...what now?” lyla asked.

“Fight?” I suggested.

“Sure.”

lyla charged at Snood, trying to grab him. Snood jumped to the side...where I was. I caught the struggling evil turkey in my arms, and said, “Explain.”

“I LIED!” Snood confessed. “There aren’t killer turtles with daggers in the backyard—there’s killer elephants with bombs. Instead of Virginia, I want to take over the world. And I don’t actually like pink!” He seemed ashamed of the last fact.

What happened next was technically blackmail, but sometimes the world is worth more than the rights of a turkey. “If you don’t call off the attacks, I’ll tell everyone you don’t like pink!”

“Okay, okay!” Snood agreed. He hopped out of my arms, jumped out the window, and we never saw him again. Plus, the world wasn’t taken over, so...yay!

The next morning, I went to the bathroom to brush my teeth. lyla was already there.

“I had the weirdest dream last night,” I said as lyla brushed her teeth. She finished, then started walking towards the door—then stopped. “Did it involve rude turkeys with snoods?”

Speechless, I nodded. My dream-not-a-dream was *REAL*?

lyla winked and walked down the stairs.

Wow. That was a lot to think about. Animals could talk. I saved the world. And not all adventures are dreams.

Some are real.

And awesome!





# Dirty Dishes Demolish Dreams

## Asaph Zion King

Poetry

Dishes quickly fill up the sink...  
In just a wink and just a blink

I wash and scrub until they're done...  
Dream and scheme for upcoming fun

I turn to leave without delay...  
More dishes blow my dreams away!



My "Not The Dishes Again!" art is an acrylic painting on 8"x10" stretched canvas is of a tween boy, but it is not a self-portrait. The shape of the eyes were actually a mistake, as they make the character look so irritated and discouraged. This reminded me of when I was a tween and my facial expression would droop when my dreams were demolished by the dreaded request, "Please wash the dishes."



# Rain on My Brain

**Alexandra Zak**

*I think that the subject of this drawing is choosing to trust something from the outside world even if you do not completely understand it, and believe that some part of it is meant to be.*

*I just think of this as "rain on my brain" :)*

# Locker 89

Shelley L.

The grasshopper is a strange insect. I poked at one on the outside of the glass window. For one, I'd always thought they were green, but this one was a bright shade of red. This particular grasshopper decided not to follow the rules and ended up hopping on the bus taking us to the dance, instead of hopping back into the grass.

"Hey, hey, are you even listening to me?" asked Lucia as she tapped me on the shoulder.

"Uh, what were you saying again?" I questioned while picking a hair off my purple party dress. The grasshopper had distracted me.

"Reiiiiii," she groaned. "I was saying, doesn't that girl over there look a little weird?" I glanced where my best friend, Lucia, was pointing. A small, skinny girl was sitting alone on the bus seat across from us. Her long dark hair cascaded over her shoulders, complimenting her light blue dress. Her face seemed a little too pale and her eyes wore a shocked, but dull expression.

I turned back to Lucia. "What about her?"

Lucia looked at her then whispered to me, "People say that she went to the border between the human world and the afterlife, and when she came out, she turned half ghost."

I gave her an incredulous look. "Surely you don't believe that stuff. It's probably just a rumor. There's no such thing as the afterlife, and if there was, it's impossible to go there."

Lucia shook her head. "It's true. Someone told me they saw her by her locker, number 89, and then suddenly she was gone."

I leaned back on my chair and stared at the girl again. She did resemble a ghost a little, with her pale skin and bony body. Yet, what Lucia was saying was impossible. Many rumors circled around our small school, and most of them ended up being false. Unfortunately, this supposed "rumor" was probably aimed at making fun of the poor girl for her appearance.

"I don't really think we should be focused on some rumor right now," I told Lucia, who was picking at her neatly painted nails. "I'd rather talk about the dance tonight."

Lucia sat up straight and listened as soon as I uttered the word "dance". "Oh yes! Did you know that I..." Lucia trailed on. As I continued to stare out the window again, thinking about the "ghost girl", I realized that the grasshopper from before had disappeared.

A few minutes later, the bus had arrived at school. We were making our way towards the gym after leaving the bus, with Lucia still chatting on endlessly about the dance, and how she had perfectly planned everything out for the night. I, however, couldn't feel the same way. My heels had started to rub against the back of my feet, sending a wave of pain everytime I took a step. I was almost positive a rock was stuck in my left heel, and I also really needed to use the restroom. I quickly excused myself as Lucia strolled into the hectic dance, and I stumbled off to the nearby restrooms.

After washing my hands, I felt a chill as I stepped out of the restroom. The shadows were creeping closer, shrouding my surroundings in an ominous gloom. I didn't expect it to turn dark so quickly. I hurried off towards the dance following the sound of booming music flowing from the gym. The heavy, wooden doors were beginning to close, signaling it would be time to start the formal dancing. I had promised Lucia to record her asking her crush to dance. I pulled out my phone from my jeweled purse and quickened my pace.

The doors were more than half closed. I ran towards the light emitting from the gym, but it was swallowed too soon by the darkness. I fumbled with my phone, trying to turn on my flashlight, when I slammed headfirst into a set of lockers by the gym. The doors shut with a loud clang, but I managed to turn my flashlight on.

I shone it down onto the paved concrete and on the lockers that I had run into to see if I had caused any damage. The flashlight gave out a beam of light resting on the faded locker number written in black. Number 89. And it was open. I swiftly peeked inside and saw nothing, which meant that the girl's locker wasn't a pathway to the afterlife, and the rumor was officially false. I swiped to take a picture, when I saw a reflection on my screen of someone behind me. I turned around. It was the girl from the rumor standing there in her short dress.

"Oh, h-hey," I stammered. "I was just taking a picture of your locker to show everyone that the rumor was fake...you know?"

"Thanks," she said softly. "Thanks... no one's done that for me in a long time." She pulled out a small, leather notebook from her shoulder purse. A neat pentagram design was printed on the front cover. The girl jotted something down in the notebook, then slammed it shut.

"Ah... what's that for?" I asked.

She glanced sideways. "Nothing."

How strange, I thought as I began to head back towards the dance.

"Wait!" The girl called. I spun around. "Do you think you could look inside my locker again? There's something red inside..."

"Um...ok?" I didn't want to seem rude, so I took a brief scan inside. There was something red.

"Do you know what it is?" The girl's voice echoed from behind. "I'm not sure," I replied. I inched closer inside and peered at the foreign object.

It was a red grasshopper. I was fully inside the locker now. Her locker wasn't decorated much except for what seemed to be an electronic timer hung on the back wall. I glanced at the bright red letters, then froze.

**Number taken: 88**

**Number left: 1**

**Time remaining: 00d:41m:23s**

In the corner of the timer was a small image of the exact same pentagram I saw printed on the girl's notebook. I whipped around to come face to face with her standing outside the locker, head tilted to the side, with a smile that seemed off.

If I could have described what she looked like at that brief moment, she looked like the devil who had just collected another soul. Of course, I had no idea at the time, that was exactly what she had done.

"Number 89, check!" She laughed and slammed the locker door shut. "Have a safe trip."  
The floor dropped underneath me.

The last thing I recall seeing is the words "Soul: 89" in neon red flash on my face, and the grasshopper staring at me blankly.

89



# Dreamcatcher

## Geneva Dandel

The dreamcatcher doesn't want to hurt them. Why would she? They are a part of her; in soul, in the very threads of her weaving, even her name belongs to them. All she wants to do is gather them up tight and hold them. She wants to wrap their velvet sheen around her. She wants to sing them to sleep; bathe in their smoky scent. She sighs as she holds their shimmering misty tendrils, delicately, as one might hold a child. The dreams are her children. Holding a dream is a wonderful thing, and she aches when she has to let one go. When she reaches out and snags a dark one, the kind the humans fear, she exalts. When she grabs one of *those*, she shouts happily to the windchime, to the lamp, even to the macramé wall hanging (although her sister is such a brat). She loves the dark dreams. With their heavy, shadowy darkness, she gets to hug them tight and not let go. At least, not for a long, long time. When that day comes, when their fire turns to embers, and she's transformed their hatred into airy strands of light, she knows what she has to do. There will be others, she knows. There will be light blue dreams, dreams of molten silver, dreams with amber sparks, and dreams of glowing gold. She will love all of them, all her children, and her heart will break every time, but she will let them go. She will give them happiness and comfort on their journey, and she will cherish them. She will let them go, but that doesn't mean it doesn't hurt.

The bedpost watches. He knows he shouldn't. He knows that it is not quite polite to watch a mother with her child. He knows this, and once he would have cared, back when he stood a bit stiffer, when he felt fewer creaks in his joints, but it has been so long since he has seen a child, and so, he watches. He admires her fortitude, her strength. He doesn't quite understand why she keeps catching the dreams, those poor lost children, and how she has the strength to continue after they leave, but he understands she must be strong. He knows strength. His brothers don't know it. Or, they don't know her brand of it. They don't know much, he thinks. They don't understand. The three of them, they don't understand him. They don't understand why he watches, why he considers her strong. He doesn't understand why he watches either. Once, when he was younger, newer, his wood shiny and strong, he wouldn't have bothered watching her. He was a fool, he thinks. He is still proud, and he still shines, and now, he watches.

He watches as she plucks a new dream out of the air. It's darker, this time. The human she is protecting, it shudders when one of these comes near. He wonders why. He doesn't understand why the troublemakers are her favorite. Wouldn't you want a sweet child? He doesn't quite understand that a mother can't have a favorite child, but he thinks he understands enough. He knows she is happy when she meets her new children. She calls out to her friends, the lamp and the macramé and the windchime. She never calls out to him. She doesn't wax poetic to him about how dark the coat of her new child shines. She doesn't excitedly tell him about the misbehavior of her child. She doesn't confess to him about not wanting to let her baby go. She never calls out to him.

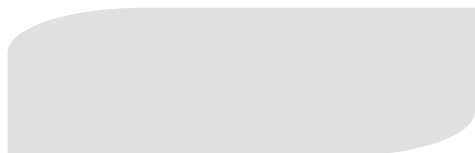
If he could just work up the courage to talk to her--maybe she could teach him. Teach him about love. About family. About dreams.

# The Night the Universe Spoke

## Aiden James Ward

The universe can speak  
In whispers heard on the wind far after anyone is  
Awake to hear them.  
She is kind, I assure you.  
The universe knows you like I do, better even,  
And she will bring you the things you need that I cannot.  
The universe is apathetic.  
She knows I deserve nothing special  
So I am given great things but only for moments  
And then they're gone again.  
She decides,  
Gavel in hand what you need  
And I'm so sorry,  
But the universe often only brings pain.  
I have spent many empty nights  
Consuming starlight  
And bargaining my fate with her,  
Pleading that her unyielding hand  
Remove me from her domain.  
The universe always listened,  
And she told me that I was nothing special,  
That I wasn't worth removing.  
The universe told me to stay on the ground  
Because I wasn't important enough to fly.  
She'll do the same for you if she needs to,  
Tell you whatever you need to hear,  
Every lie she can craft  
To keep you on the path the universe has made for you.  
I thought she was lying.  
I spoke to the universe and she told me all the things I already thought.  
The universe spat at me the very same things I throw at myself,  
I never wanted to hear them out loud again.  
The universe burdened me with the knowledge  
That there is nothing in this world that can make me happy.  
Lightning struck outside my window one night.  
She was calling me again.  
I refused,  
I told the universe she could no longer force me  
To stay here  
When there was no one else who wanted me to.

I stood defiant in the night  
Until I could no longer stand  
And I crumpled beneath the gaze of the universe  
And the early morning sun.  
She stopped speaking to me.  
The universe stopped listening to my sorrows  
But she always kept a watchful eye  
During the night,  
Hoping not to see me try again.  
The universe spoke to me recently,  
Wanting to find someone different  
Than who she had left,  
And the universe found a new being  
One who learned from losing the stars.  
The universe asked me my name  
But she only heard a scream  
And the universe crafted for me a tomorrow  
That would love me as I loved it.  
She brought me to you  
So that every tomorrow could be as beautiful  
As the night sky of  
All of my most glorious memories.  
The universe apologizes in favors  
For when she deserted me  
And I showed the universe defiance  
In the most beautiful way.  
The universe told me everything I need is within me,  
And the universe said I love you  
And she told me everything happens for a reason  
And the universe told me my time will come.  
I learned grace from the stars,  
Humanity from the universe,  
And love from you.



# The Stars in the Sky

## Brooke Massey

Once there were no stars. The sky was like a blank blue sheet of paper that changed to a collage of pink, orange, and red in the start of the day and end of the day. The sailors were lost wandering the seas at night. They would end up making negative progress, over the night, to their destination. Everyone's fish was a week or two late, all because there were no stars. Soon the sailors stopped sailing all together. They say they were lost at sea 24/7, not knowing where they were or where the nearest land was. They say they went in circles just to be right back where they started. They also say that the people complained too much about how late their fish was, not knowing what the sailors went through every night. The sailors never got paid enough for their fish, at least that's what the sailors say. And that's all because there were no stars.

Then one night the ex-sailors were having one of their parties with lots of people and all the food one could ask for. There were lamb chops and steaks to pasta and fried chicken. But there was no fish, crab, or any other food that came from the sea. Some complained that there were no fish, but the sailors liked that. They could never eat fish, for it would remind them about how disgusting it was to prepare the fish for eating and how the fish would stink up their just-cleaned boats. They had no regret not going sailing anymore. Of course, no one else new started to sail, for they thought it was fit for the sailors to sail and not them.

But soon the sailors started to lose money and they had nothing to replenish that loss. Their wives could do nothing but pray for money. And me, well I was sent to work. I was the son of a sailor that gave up on his job. I was no one important because my dad was an ex-sailor. People started calling my dad and other sailors, "One of the loathed people" or, "Ex-sailor" because he was a loathed person that used to sail but now doesn't. I was considered the son of an ex-sailor. No one used my name because they didn't need to. I already had the title that my dad had earned for our whole family.

Now, I was not happy that our dad gave my family one of the worst names in the entire town, but I still had to work. I worked at the local store that barely got any customers. Ever since some old person, that is long dead, invented the idea of a mini fresh store at home, also known as a garden that I can never keep alive, no one goes to this store. Now since no one goes to the store, I have to entertain myself with something. So, I started thinking, what if there was a way to tell where you are on the sea. Like, something bright so you could see it.

That night when I went home I brought with me a box of colored explosives. The box was covered in words saying, "DO NOT LET KIDS HAVE THIS. DANGER!!!" So, I got a feeling that my parents might not want to know about this. I hid it under my dresser. Not under my bed, but my dresser, because it's less obvious. Then in the morning I got up like normal and headed to my super-duper boring workplace. I turned right back around when I was half way there to get the dangerous explosives. Of course, I was late to work and my boss didn't care because like I said, we get no customers. Whenever I had time during work (the whole day at work), I lit the explosives. They shot straight up into the sky and burst into bright colors. I thought if you launched enough of the explosives at one time, you could probably see around you when it was dark. I felt so brilliant, the lightbulb inside my head had just turned on for the first time. It felt so good. I had just made a way for sailors to see during the night!



That night I brought a ton of explosives to the old dock that hadn't been cleaned, used or even touched ever since the sailors quit their jobs. I put one foot into the boat and it wobbled wildly as if it wasn't used to weight anymore. I slowly descended all the way into the boat and I brought all the explosives in one by one with me. I sailed out just a bit from the dock. It was a struggle to harness the wind to take me the right way. But eventually I sat in the boat, somewhat still near the dock. I lit all the colored explosives at once. The scene they made was beautiful. There were all the colors you could imagine in the sky all at once. The colors slowly faded away, but they left white dots of different sizes all over the sky. They shined bright and did not fade away. They made shapes and stories in the sky. Now the sailors could see where they were going. I rushed to the dock to see my dad standing on the shore staring straight up at the sky.

"It's so beautiful," uttered my dad in the softest and most peaceful voice I had ever heard. And from then on, I was known as, "The lighter of the sky!"

# The Infinite

## Cynthia Zhang

Poetry

I am a deceptively innocent fruit on the Manchineel tree  
I am a breeze that whispers to the leaves  
I am a fork of lightning in the thunderstorm  
I am the jagged outline of trees against the mellow sky  
I am an owl perched silently on a swaying tree bough  
I am the sun in the palette of the sunset atmosphere  
I am a loyal wolf in my pack  
I am "tua umbra," the insecurities hidden behind a smile  
I am a green leaf in the middle of winter  
I am the possibilities waiting to be spilled by a pen  
I stand in good relation to traditional Chinese customs  
I stand in good relation to the way the Yangtze River flows

Who is the force that binds all beings to the ground?  
Who is it who knows when the stars were born?  
Who roams a world where knowledge is infinite?  
(If not I?)

# Monochrome

## Anika Iyer

If you dare venture into the World of Dreams  
Know that there is no return from what you will see  
The disillusioned fantasies you possess will turn against you  
And all that you love will turn to glass  
Shattering beneath the dancer's swift footing  
Leaving nothing in their wake, only a feather  
Until you are nothing more than a glossy-eyed doll  
Waiting to awaken once more

--The Gates of Grey City

### **Nameless:**

As the Weaver of Worlds slept, she could sail the infinite sea of dreams. Her chains to mortality were briefly unlocked, allowing the slight freedoms that came with the night. When she rose from sleep's gentle embrace, it was always with disappointment that she recalled her own humanity.

When the people of the worlds slept, she danced through their thoughts, befriending certain dreamers, falling in love with others, eternally content until morning. And throughout the reign of daylight, she was hardly alive, wandering through their life in a trance, awaiting the moon's turn to hold the sky's throne.

Reality was an agony that had to be endured in order for her to dream.

Her first dreamer had been so long ago, to the point of which she could hardly remember when it had been.

He was long dead now, but she would never forget him. She had no love for him, not in the way humans loved and bound themselves to another until death. Rather, she wanted him to stay by her side forever, almost like what humanity called a "brother."

Still, she was fated to be alone, her lovers possessing lifespans of such brevity that it seemed almost nothing to her. Nonetheless, she refused to forget.

There was a strange comfort in the dreamers who loved her, someone who acknowledged her, even if it barely lasted. She felt tethered to existence, unable to fade away from the dreams she loved and treasured so deeply.

If she had a name originally, it had long been forgotten.

She was the Weaver of Worlds, Seamstress of Souls — she possessed no mortal attachment to her sense of self. But some years ago, she had found a dreamer almost like herself. Unnamed, unknown, unseen. She had called the dreamer *kirakira*, a collection of syllables she remembered from another dream.

And the dreamer had named her. Truly named her, not the insignificant, meaningless names that some dreamers gave her for their convenience. A name that suited her.

*Ayako.*

What it meant, neither knew, but as they held each other close while morning's hours threatened to separate them, something felt *right*. *Ayako*. The Weaver of Worlds. *Ayako*. The Seamstress of Souls.

*Ayako.*

The Girl Who Dreamed.

*Whatever the version, only one truth was certain:*

*The woman in grey had somehow been involved in Rook's disappearance.*

### **Dreamscape:**

How long had it been since she was permitted to make a mistake? Too long. When had she taken on this name? It seemed she couldn't recall. For millennia, Mirako had led the Children throughout humanity's dreams, bringing joy to all.

In life, she had been revered as Miyako, the child of Night, bringer of kind dreams and eternal pleasures.

*And then?*

*I do not know. I cannot recall anything between my death and becoming the first of the Children.*

*Then continue your tale, child of Night.*

A pause, then a frown, as if some distant truth was inches away from her fingertips, just out of reach. Then, a leap, grasping the faint memory.

*All I can remember is that I was made to change a small portion of my name.*

*Why? Miyako and Mirako are hardly any different, only Mirako is meaningless.*

*Precisely. I am meaningless, retaining most of myself, yet different. In life, I was close to bearing no meaning. That is the lesson of the names. In death, you are meaningless, nothing more than stitched together—*

She stops her explanation, the words stolen from her lips, only the slight wisps of breath remaining. Her thoughts — lost? — or merely misplaced?

*What is it?*

*I cannot.*

*Why?*

*I'm not sure.*

A moment to contemplate, gazing intently at the face that was all too familiar. It wasn't quite right, nor would it ever be. Only the real one could've conjured such a perfect illusion, beyond the talent of Mirako herself. Then a flash of anger, defensiveness. She would not admit the other's strength over her.

*Leave me, spirit. I cannot look upon your mask any longer. Remove it.*

*As you wish, Mistress.*

A dark, humorless laugh emerges from her lips.

*Rook would never say that.*

*I am not them.*

Then the spirit is nothing more than a fading mist, dissipating into the nonexistent wind.

*Nor will you ever be.*

And then, a hollow laugh, like bone chimes shifting in the breeze as the spirit is gone.

*I haven't been for a long time, have I, Mirako?*

Her eyes widen — is it shock? Or something darker? — and she falls to the ground, raven hair splayed out on the dream-made grass. It disappears in a flurry of unseen wings, and everything, everything, turns to grey.

The other children see her falling, but do not move to help, assuming this was part of her conjured dream.

*Help me!*

She screams, in a tongue foreign to all of the children, so mortal, so human, so real. They cannot understand Mirako's words as she falls, down into the endless grey spiral of the dream.

And as soon as it had began, it was over. Had it happened? No one was certain. Mirako had returned to her field of dreams, the children to their own play. Her fall didn't matter anymore, just another slight mishap in the world of dreams. But the Children didn't understand.

In the world of dreams, there were no mishaps.



# Dream Bubbles

**Siwei Sun**

*Dreams are like bubbles, colorful but breakable .  
Be brave to hold it within your hands.  
May all your dreams come true.*



# Excerpt from *Life From Afar*

## Olivia Vance

In the past 24 hours, Benny had learned 3 things.

First, never second guess the power of the internet.

Second, even the nicest people have a nasty side.

Third, jail is cold, dark, and lonely. And not a place where anyone would want to be.

In the past 12 hours, Benny had watched as the government raided his home, shoved his notebooks into the back of a large black Mercedes Sprinter, and driven away into the black nothingness. Fifteen minutes later, another van, this one much smaller, escorted him to the nearby jail center.

He was surrounded by empty cells: being considered a “special case,” he had been taken to a separate wing of the center. He had passed the minutes staring into the blank nothingness, watching for the return of the stoic guard.

Soon enough, the guard returned, but this time he didn’t come alone.

In fact, Benny knew who his companion was.

Benny had known him since the beginning of his time in office.

But Benny didn’t know the man’s young acquaintance, a boy of about 13 with a certain gleam in his eye, one that reminded Benny a lot of himself at that physical age.

Benny wasn’t prepared for visitors: his hair was disheveled, he certainly hadn’t showered, and of course, he hadn’t changed his clothes. But he accepted them nonetheless, with what he hoped was a warm smile.

“Hello, Mr. President. It’s nice to see you again.”

The President smiled grimly. “Hello, Benny. It appears you are in a bit of a fix.”

Benny shrugged the comment off. “I could be better,” Benny laughed rather forcedly. “But life happens.”

The President smiled. “Well, I’m on a bit of a time crunch, so I’ll get right down to business.” He gestured to the young boy at his side. “This is Walter. He’s from Seattle, Washington, not too far away from here. And he’s come with a proposal.”

Benny raised his eyebrows questionably. He wasn’t exactly in the mood to talk. He would much rather they just leave him alone, maybe allow him some peace so he could rest.

The boy stepped forward. “I have heard of your intriguing job.” He smiled. “The president told me. I apologize, along with the rest of the government, for intruding upon your privacy. You have lived in peace for so long, with no one questioning you. I was the same way, for a while. I grew up in the forest, away from civilization. The first five years of my life were delightful. I could do whatever I wanted, whenever I wanted. Life was exciting.

“But then school came along, and suddenly I was never alone: I was followed by counselors and psychologists, all of them trying to discover my origin. And then, one day, I was visiting Los Angeles when I noticed you, sitting up in a tall building, staring out the window with stacks of notebooks surrounding you. And that began my watching: I watched you, every day, whenever I could. I moved to California with my foster family, skipped school, and sat in the coffee shop across the street, just so I could watch you with your interesting job.

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“Except one day, I was followed by a schoolmate to your street. And I was reported, and soon the government got involved. And my case got so important that soon the President found out, and he took a specific liking to my task. He told me more about you, and I became so much more intrigued. I decided I wanted to be like you, do what you do, every day, for as long as I lived.

“But that was what provided a problem. I needed immortality, like you, to fulfill your role. That’s why you were raided last night: we need your secret, your DNA, something. But even more than that, we need your approval.”

“He wants to have your job.” The President finished. “It’s his passion, Benny. But you must give up your immortality willingly. Just think about the life you could be going into: one with friends and family and children. You could be normal, Benny. Isn’t that what you’ve always wanted?”

Benny stared blankly. “I--I don’t know. Is he ready? Is he up for the task?”

The President smiled. “Benny, in all my years of searching for someone to replace you, I have never found someone as dedicated as he is. With a little training, he may just be as good as you.

“But that’s not the question, Benny. The real question is: are you ready?”

Benny smiled—this time, not as forcedly as before. “Yes, I think so. But only with a few exceptions.”

### 10 Years Later

It had been a long time since Benny had last seen all the government officials together. Over the years, he had seen them in snippets: once, when the King of Britain married him and his wife, a few years later, when Benny had invited a few of them to the baptism of his twin daughters, and then 6 months ago when he had officially given over his power as World Observer and Storyteller (WOS) to Walter, who was now at the mental age of 23, although—just like Benny had gotten used to, in his first 1,552 years of life—he looked no older than 13. Now, they were all gathered again—but the occasion, this time, was not one of business. Instead, it was one of celebration. Today was the official WOS awards ceremony, and Benny was hosting the event at his Californian home. Everyone had gathered in the living room, where Benny had stoked a cold fire to reduce the humid pouring in through the open windows. Benny, seeing everyone entertained, slowly slipped out of the room and walked down the long hallway towards the wide window.

Although he had grown to be almost unrecognizable since his last visit 10 years ago, the notebooks—which, after Benny had been released from the jail center, had been restored to their proper place—smiled simultaneously, as if they had expected him to come to visit them. Benny returned the smile and took a seat at the window, staring out into the fading night, watching the cars and buses drive by. He leaned back and let his head drop onto the chair. Grabbing the nearest notebook, he flipped to the first blank page and clicked the end of his ballpoint pen.

And, with his pen poised directly above his notebook, and his eyes focused on the city scene laid out before him, Benny observed for the last time. The moment was bittersweet; but when Benny laid down his pen an hour later and left the room, a feeling of satisfaction took its place at the wide window and filled in the holes where Benny had once been.



# Dreams

## Eleanor Giuffrida

You stare at the paper, reading the words that march across its face: *State one thing that at least you and another person have in common.*

"That's easy," you murmur to yourself. "So easy."

All humans, including you, dream.

You write, feeling the simplicity and truth of the answer. All humans (including you!) dream. True!

Suddenly, voices echo through your head, and you gasp.

"Show, not tell," a teacher that you had long ago--what was her name?--says.

"Be specific," says another person. Then, another voice cuts through your mind. Your voice.

"Express. Show. Imagine..." You gasp. Suddenly, you know what to write. You know how to be more specific, to show your emotions and opinions in a way that can be understood. So, you write.

You know what it is like to lie on a narrow strip of beach, the inky, dark-blue sky outlined around the vast, roaring ocean around you. You know the shiver of fear that sprints up your spine quickly; how it accompanies the feeling of not-knowing that encompasses your mind during these long nights. You know what it is like to watch the sky for hours, noticing how it turns from the inky blue to dark purple, and finally to the whitish-gray of the morning fog. You wait on the beach, hoping that the fog will break, until finally it does: A sudden light strikes you, and you smile as the sand warms, a welcome break from the damp, dismal, and cold night. The light encompasses the entire beach as you realize that its golden glow is finally coming from a discernible source: the Sun.

You look up at the sun and see that it appears to be huge, almost nothing else visible in this haunted sky. Its buttery-yellow color is hypnotizing, and you leap in its glare. It grows closer, larger as you fly through the air, and everything around you begins to glow.

It doesn't last, though; suddenly everything turns black. No stars, no light, nothing. You watch, shivering as the cold returns, for light, but nothing happens.

Clink! Suddenly a tiny light blinks through the darkness. More and more begin to glow, and suddenly you are surrounded by stars. Your heart leaps, and your body with it: You begin to swoop among the stars. Your laugh seems to make the stars twinkle even brighter, and your body seems to dance to its own, beautiful rhythm as it soars.

Finally, the stars disappear, and, much too soon, the landscape of the sky is gone. All that is left of this wonderful place is the slight memory of flight, of swooping through the stars, breathless with excitement. Of whooping, exhilarated, as you nearly fall before rising again. Of a cool fog, of a burning-hot sun, and of twinkling stars. Of a dream.

That is what you know, what you have in common with all others.

You *dream*.



# Shards of Me

by Kiran Shere-Wolfe

*This piece is abstract self-portrait executed in oils on canvas called "Shards of Me." Inspired by Picasso, it attempts to capture elements of fragmentation and abstraction, which is in keeping with the "Dreams" theme of the Lexophilia issue. This piece was executed as part of a High School Portfolio Preparation class at the Maryland Institute College of Art under the supervision of Anne Cremeans.*



# A Vicious Cycle

## Karen Wu

The first thing I saw was Casey's face. Then, I sat up to observe our surroundings.

The cave was humid and dark. The scent of algae permeated throughout the opening and water splashing in the background brought a false sense of peace. In the middle of the floor was the only way in or out. The water gleamed and moved playfully as if to say, come in, I'm harmless, but we knew better. With enough acidity to burn us alive in three seconds, there was no way anyone would dip one foot into that death pool. At the bottom, we could clearly see dead carcasses of unfortunate marine life. There was a human body as well: the person who tried to save us. Light reflected onto the cave's rough, mineral crusted walls, casting an eerie glow. It danced around, mocking us. We dreamed about death, knowing it would be more merciful than insanity.

"Casey, do you think we'll be stuck here for the rest of our lives?" I moan.

"Probably, unless you want to speed up that process and die a painful death of burning alive," he replies grimly.

This cave had a different entrance beside the opening in the middle of the floor. Casey and I had been trekking around in the forest for a long time when we decided to take a break and investigate an interesting hole in the ground. After some poking and prodding around, I managed to widen the hole's entrance enough that I could stick my head and shoulders in without getting cramped. I had just turned around to call Casey over when the ground beneath me collapsed. I was sent tumbling down the tunnel with Casey hot on my heels. When we finally landed at the bottom our first reaction was to try and get back out again, except we couldn't. Our fall had not only led us into the cave but also caused the tunnel to collapse behind us. Yep, we were stuck. Now, fast forward several days later and you have our current situation. Cold, hungry, unable to see, and on the verge of giving up.

There had been a recreational diver who came to save us when he heard us yelling. Unfortunately, he burned to death in the acidic water. Before that incident, we had no idea that the water was so dangerous. Well, now we know.

I'm not sure what makes the water so acidic. Besides this cave, all the water outside seems fine. I mean, the diver was fine until he tried to reach us. Thankfully, back then we hadn't tried to drink the water yet. Now, we might be desperate enough to forget that the water could kill us.

"Casey, I'm so thirsty," I croaked out.

"I know Arden, I am too."

I crawl over to his side of the cave and hug his bony shoulders. He lifts his face. Dull blue eyes meet mine as my gaze travels down his frame. Tear-stained cheeks, stringy brown hair, and bony shoulders.

"Okay, let's just try and get some sleep," he says.

That night I can't seem to sleep. I toss and turn, uncomfortable in every position. Casey's soft snores remind me that at least I'm not alone.

Suddenly, the water from the pool starts to bubble and rise. I stare in shock as it flows over the edge of the rocks surrounding it. The water is forming a barrier between Casey and me.

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I can't reach him unless I want to risk getting my feet burned.

"CASEY, GET UP, PLEASE!!!" I managed to scream out.

He doesn't move. By now my throat is constricting and tears blur my vision.

"GET UP!! YOU'LL BURN TO DEATH IF YOU DON'T!" I sob.

He lies as still as a rock. I watch in horror as the water seeps toward him like a snake ready to make a killing blow. I can smell and hear the hissing sound as it meets his skin. No movement is made. He continues to sleep, and I wonder if he was really sleeping, or if he died of hunger and dehydration overnight. I faint at the sight of bone being revealed.

I can't breathe. Panic consumes me as I realize that I'm alone. I fumble around in the dim light, looking for something, anything, to distract myself with. That's when I notice a slip of paper peeking out from under a rock. I inspect it and realize that there is writing on it, Casey's writing. Grief hits like a blow to the stomach as the reality of his death sinks in. Through blurry eyes, I start to read.

*Dear Arden,*

*I'll bet five packs of Cheetos that you're furious with me for leaving you right now, but I have to tell you something really important: you're stuck in a dream.*

*I've known that we've been stuck in a dream ever since we were about to get rescued. Do you want to know how I know? Well, it's because when he was surfacing, I saw a logo on his diving suit. It had the outline of a circle and in the middle, something that looked like Batman's Batarang, but more abstract. Then there was a bird that looked like it was bursting out the top of the symbol. Its wings were spread out and its body pointed upwards. Seeing that symbol triggered a rush of memories. Glimpses of cold metal walls and LED lights, the feeling of being poked and prodded with needles, getting shoved into a dream capsule, etc.*

*Do you remember the NDC? Well, that's their logo. We were kidnapped by them at the age of 9 when we were walking home from school. They took us to a remote facility where we were constantly getting put to sleep and being forced into different dreams. This dream is the 11th one we've been in.*

*You probably don't remember most of this because they wipe out our memories each time. I was lucky enough to remember when I saw the NDC logo on the diver who came to save us. NDC has that logo in at least one place on every single one of the dreams they create. It could be extremely noticeable, or so minuscule someone could spend a lifetime trying to find it.*

*The reason I killed myself was because I wanted to see what would happen if someone died in a dream. Would they wake up back in real life or would they die for real? As of now, I don't know the answer, but if you're reading this letter then that means I've already completed my plan. If I live, I'll find a way to contact you and get you out. If I don't, then don't follow my example. Stay in the dream until they pull you out. Oh, one more thing. Since you're in a dream the hunger, thirst, etc. that you feel is all fake. I'm sorry for not telling you this in person, but we both know you would have stopped me.*

*Love your best friend,*

*Casey*

I let all this information soak into my head before I try to move. Shock sweeps over me like a tidal wave. Questions fill my head, yet my body remains frozen. After a lot of struggling, I stand up slowly on shaky legs. I ignore the hunger and drowsiness I feel and instead start pacing around. Step. Breathe. Step. Breathe. Step. Breathe. I fall into a rhythm. Finally, I allow myself to sit down again now that my mind is cleared. When Casey was still here, he and I had tried to dig

ourselves out, so there is already an indent in the cave's wall. I work nonstop, grabbing handfuls of dirt and rock. My nails are bleeding, but I keep going relentlessly. I don't know how long it's been when I see a sliver of light. It could've been days and I wouldn't know. Dehydration and hunger consume me as I drag myself up. Dirt has made itself into every opening on my face, eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. Each movement has my vision swimming in darkness. Finally, I stick my head out of the musty cave and into the open air.

Except outside the cave, everything is in chaos. There are multiple fires around me and I can hear screaming even though I don't see anyone.

"Help," I croak. I haven't used my voice in so long it feels like I'm talking with a pile of rocks in my throat. Fatigue weighs heavily and drowns out any curiosity.

Smoke permeates through the air and fills my lungs. I can barely make out the figure of someone running out of the forest on fire. The air is humid and dark. Fire licks at my skin, mocking my exhausted state. Tired and giving up, sleep welcomes me with open arms.

The last thing I see is Casey's face.

# Cold Dreams

## Robyn Davies

Fiction

*Running. Running like I never have before, running like I never will again. Maybe I won't. I drag Linnie's hand as we throw ourselves into the bomb shelter. The blackness engulfs like fire, burning everything in its path until all that's left behind are ashes. I shield my younger sister beneath me as explosions threaten to pull us into an unknown abyss. She might be all I have left; I don't know where our parents are. It doesn't matter how many oceans I fill with my tears, or the holes being left in our houses and hearts. It doesn't matter that the stars are collapsing inwards.*

I jolt awake with cold tears streaked on my face, catching my breath. I have to be strong for Linnie. Inhaling deeply, I collapse back into my bed with a thud, willing myself back to sleep. It's just a dream. I stare out the window restlessly watching cars fly by. Numbly, I gaze at the same city streets I had once meandered, her hand in mine, counting the stars in tandem. We would lay in the grass finding shapes in the clouds, playing games with our hands. She would smile like nothing else mattered. She almost had me believing it too... but the Linnie I once knew is gone. It's jarring how even a brief week of living in fear can change a seven-year-old. The jubilant positivity that once reigned her face has been traded for a melancholy gloom that haunts me constantly. I would give anything to see her smile again.

"Linnie," I call, gently at first but louder when she doesn't respond. "Linnie!" I regret it immediately, hearing the husky sleep in her voice. She lumbers down the stairs momentarily, tumbling into my arms. Ever since our parents disappeared, I've tried my hardest to take care of her.

"Good morning, Adelaide," she mumbles into my neck. In my arms, her little body feels warm but her eyes are an icy stoic. I bustle around, slapping a hot omelet onto her plate quickly. When Linnie closes her eyes she says the missiles are all that she sees, taking the things she loves the most. I long dearly to scrub away her bad dreams the way I do the grease off my apron each morning. She only smiles at me gently with wide eyes. I take the television remote and President Kennedy's voice blares into the room.

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"Good Evening, My Fellow Citizens: This government, as promised, has maintained the closest surveillance of the Soviet military buildup on the island of Cuba. The purpose of these bases can be none other than to provide a nuclear strike capability against the Western Hemisphere." Linnie is young, and a single silent tear of fear trickles down her face. President Kennedy's face flickers and I whip off my apron to sink tiredly into the couch. The world fades away as I fall into my dreams.

*I am welcomed by sunlight shining through a window, prickling my skin and lighting me alive. We're all eating dinner together; me, Linnie, Mom, and Dad. We laugh and banter, and tease each other. My gaze shifts behind them, to the map across the wall. That's when I notice, Cuba is missing, completely obliterated. As much as I adore being together, there's an uneasy silence that coats the room.*

*"Dinner's delicious, Rosemary," I look to the nanny I have known my whole life, but it's not her.*

*"Adelaide," frowns my father, "Rosemary is... gone now. We do not speak of her. She has betrayed our country." My parents were spies during the Cold War, and their attitude is merciless. Rosemary is Cuban and fights for their resistance. Of course. I remember things I never knew as the room ices over. Is this the reality I dream of? A world torn apart, but my family reunited? I try to enjoy myself, but I can't stop the sinking in the pit of my stomach from swallowing me whole. But isn't this better than Linnie and I being in danger? Without real parents to raise her? Running for our lives? Maybe I can live with the rock in my stomach...*

*"You must go." sounds a voice. Its echo surrounds me, but I fail to understand.*

*Why? I question, Why would I want to--*

*"Go!" It cries, but I stand my ground. Linnie is smiling. I have my parents back! Why--*

*What happens next is a blur. They've come to avenge themselves, to protest their fallen country. Rebel soldiers in the street. War cries. Screams for help. Linnie smiles at our parents. I am ready to stay, but the voice is right. I must leave. The time has come to awaken to and to face the real future. Suddenly, a gust of wind pushes me forward, and I feel myself jerked away. "Don't take me--" I cry, but I'm already gone.*

I awaken to Linnie shaking my shoulder. "Adelaide!" She cries, tears falling from her face. But they're not sad. They're happy. She's happy. "Adelaide!" I turn over onto my side to face her, so she knows I'm listening. She drops down to her knees by my bed so our faces are level, and breathes into my ear, "They're gone, Adelaide. The man on TV says they took away the missiles!" Russia withdrew the missiles. Our parents can come home. I look over my shoulder and there's a mysterious note that was pushed under the door, "Coming home," typed neatly on it. Soon, I'm crying happy tears too.

It's late tonight, but I have one last thing to do before falling into a hopefully dreamless rest. I open the window. "Thank you," I whisper into the warm breeze, to no one and to everyone at the same time. How dreams do tempt, and how I would have sacrificed so much to have my family back. It's a good thing that it wasn't my choice. "I'm sorry," I whisper a little louder into the world.





# Zentangle Tiger

**Adelina Vierra**

*I enjoy reading about cats, and drawings various types of cats, including tigers. I started with a tiger as the focal point for this work of art and then created various shapes to fill in the rest of the page.*





# Twilight Tonight

**Yuzhe Mo**

*My artwork was inspired by space, because I have always been fascinated by the unknown parts of our universe (which is a lot). I believe that in space there will be different dimensions and strange forces that even science cannot explain. So in my artwork, I expressed my feelings about space.*

# The Opera

## Olivia Chung

Davey woke up on a bed of cotton candy.

He blinked a few times, letting his eyes adjust to the ethereal landscape around him. A perfectly white sky surrounded him on all sides. Streaks of color hung in the air like mist, tinted every shade of blue and purple and pink. When he reached out and touched one of them, droplets of colored fog clung to his fingers.

Tentatively, he licked the mist off his fingers. It was cold and crisp, with a vaguely sweet taste he couldn't quite identify.

"Hey there, stranger!"

The cloud Davey was reclining on swiveled around, breaking its shape and pooling around his feet to lift him into a standing position. It drifted lower until he was at eye level with the speaker, a very small girl with apple-red cheeks and pigtails the color of grape candy.

The girl beamed up at him. "I'm REMI. What's your name?"

"Dave Liu," he said, still looking around in awe. The man in the white coat had called this a dreamscape: a virtual reality of sorts that worked while you were sleeping. But his surroundings, the way the clouds swirled gently underfoot, felt anything but virtual.

REMI's cherubic face lit up. "Hi, Dave! Thanks for signing up to test out our prototype!"

"I'm just doing this for the money," he admitted. "I'm trying to write an opera." He'd been so busy recently, trying to make ends meet, and this month-long research job might be the break he needed. The ad had read, *For people who like to dream*. Davey hoped that included him.

"So, what do you think about your dream?" REMI asked.

It took him a moment to realize she was talking about the dreamscape. "It's incredible. How...?"

"So glad you asked!" The little girl leaped up, seemingly weightless, and somersaulted twice in the air. When she touched back down, he realized that there was nothing supporting her; she stood in midair on an invisible platform.

"Welcome to Dreamcloud 1.0!" REMI said, spreading her arms wide. "Our mission: to create the most advanced virtual reality experience in the world. Look around you. Less than half of this is programmed; your brain is filling in the rest. Would you believe that?"

Davey drank in the sight for a third time. The wispy, shifting clouds. The streaks of pink and blue painted thickly across the sky. His brain had invented all this? "I just might," he said, and it seemed to make REMI pleased.

REMI made a grand gesture, and the surrounding clouds swirled together into the bust of a man. He wore rectangular glasses, with ruffled hair and a lab coat over a shirt with the top hanging open. "The Dreamcloud was invented by Dr. Hugo Marseille, a neural engineer at École Polytechnique in Palaiseau, France. He came up with the idea when he was an undergraduate in their Polytechnique Engineer program. Dr. Marseille has since expanded to occupy one of the laboratories at Polytechnique, where his dream is finally becoming a reality!"

Dr. Hugo Marseille. He didn't look like a very powerful man. But the brain concealed by his slightly-too-big forehead had somehow dreamt up this outlandishness in a college dorm.

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Davey's opera had been dreamt up in a college dorm, the scent of it festering among deodorant and two-week-old pizza. With the money from this research job, he'd finally have the time to work on it again. "Ready to keep going?" REMI asked.

Davey returned his attention to the little AI. "Ready," he confirmed.

REMI did another midair somersault. "Follow me!"

She zipped off in a zigzag pattern, descending steadily through the dreamscape. Davey's cloud automatically followed, creating the sensation of riding on an electric skateboard, perfectly balanced. A pleasant wind ruffled his hair, although his face felt only the slightest breeze.

Gliding on REMI's heels, he watched the landscape around him gradually shift. The streaks of color in the sky slowly faded to white, while the once-blank background turned a light blue. By the time they reached the plane of clouds that cut an infinite line through the atmosphere, Davey's surroundings looked almost like the sky he knew while he was awake.

Something urged Davey to take a step, so he extended a timid toe forward. The clouds parted like a curtain before his foot, forming a narrow path. To his surprise, there was solid ground just a few inches below the layer of clouds, so perfectly white that he could hardly tell where it ended and the clouds began.

He knew REMI was watching him, but the man in the white coat had assured him she was programmed not to judge.

Slowly, Davey set his foot down on the path. It was firm. He took another step, then another. As he walked, his steps grew more assured, until he found himself running, taking no heed of the changing environment around him. REMI flipped and leaped along, giggling, until an alarm went off in Davey's brain and he stumbled to a halt.

He straightened and looked up. Gone were the blue sky and the billowing clouds. The world was white, white, white, a blank page with Davey standing wonderstruck in the center.

"What do I do now?" he asked REMI.

She shrugged. "Whatever you can dream of."

Davey imagined himself walking onto the stage at a concert hall. Applause sounded, real applause, and it startled him until he remembered he was dreaming. He took a deep breath. Whatever you can dream of.

Lines formed in his head, snippets of melody he'd come up with over the years that extended into pieces that were entirely new. As the music played inside his head, it began to scrawl across the blankness of the sky. He fixed a chord with a single thought.

Davey crooked his fingers, and this time he could actually hear the orchestra playing while a new measure inked itself in. Above the grand, sweeping chords, someone started to sing.







# Octopus Dream

by Jonah Schumeister

*The inspiration for my glasswork was the East Pacific Octopus. I liked the tentacle texture when I drew it out and I used a Swedish glassblowing technique known as Glasrikt. The concept of a glass with tentacles is pretty and unique. The vessel has a dreamy and fluid quality as my dreams do.*

# Dreamcatcher Girl

## Maggie Lancaster

Moonlight is beautiful. It casts an ethereal glow over everything. I've always thought that everything is prettier at night, but that's more than likely a good thing considering my profession.

I'm the invisible girl who creeps into your room at night to help chase the nightmares away. I'm the dreamcatcher girl.

It's not common knowledge, but dreamcatchers must be emptied once a year. Long ago, the maidens of night discovered this while watching their precious humans sleep. Seeing as I was the youngest, I was chosen for the tedious job of creeping into houses and unwinding dreamcatchers. I must face the treacherous beasties in your dreams and rewind your dreamcatcher before anything bad happens to you.

At first, I despised my job, but later on, I grew to love it. While humans may not think so, they're beautiful when sleeping. The moonlight illuminates their features in such a way they appear almost angelic. With the prettiest of them all, sometimes I wonder if I have seen one of our own who has fallen.

However, my job came with three rules. Number one was to never let yourself be seen. The next was to never awaken the humans. The last seemed to be easiest of all, but later proved to be my downfall: don't fall in love. I wish to tell you of the night I broke all three.

There was this human boy... He couldn't have been older than sixteen, his age low in comparison to my thousands of years, but he was the most beautiful creature I had ever seen. His golden locks framed his face in a way that was just so beautiful...

When I spotted the dreamcatcher, it was as if fate was working against me. It rested on his wall, just above his bed. In order to reach it, I'd have to lean over his body and carefully pluck it off the wall.

Dreamcatcher in my clutch, my nimble fingers began to unwind the strings. This one was carefully made of beautiful wood, and the finest of strings and feathers. I hadn't seen a dreamcatcher of this high quality in years. Therefore, I was unprepared when a splinter wedged itself in the pad of my thumb. I cried out in pain.

And then the beautiful boy was awake. He was even more stunning in this state, the blankets just barely covering his bare chest.

"Who are you?" he whispered. "Do I need to call the police?"

It was only at that point I realized I'd forgotten to glamour myself that night. I knew I would be in trouble as soon as I returned home. I had unknowingly broken all three of the rules I held sacred.

I put my finger up to my lips. All I could do now was hope and pray to the goddesses above that this gorgeous boy would remain silent.

He nodded. "You're not human, are you?"

My voice broke as I choked out, "I can't say."

I rewound his dreamcatcher and left in a hurry, tears rolling down my face. What had I done?

As I had predicted, I was in quite a lot of trouble when I returned. The maidens put me on stable duty as well as my normal responsibilities for a couple of years. They never let me return to his home. Another one of the maidens took over just at his house.

From that point on, I never emptied my own dreamcatcher, for within it were memories of that beautiful boy whom I was destined to remain apart from forever. The only place I saw him from that point forward was within my dreams.

# A Midsemester Night's Dream

## Lena Mouradi

Bobbi was stumped. She had resolved to spend the rest of the night working on her novel, locking down the Providence Athenaeum a bit early for some peace and quiet. The books and architecture of the old library usually gave her ideas, but not today. The only words she managed to type were, "Svetlana sighed in despair. How could she ever do this? Dimitri was so difficult!"

A Brown University English major, Bobbi struggled to balance a job at the Athenaeum with her schoolwork, often staying after-hours to work on her novel, an obtuse sixteen-hundred-page historical fiction about the Russian Revolution. Dimitri, one of the main characters in Bobbi's book, was convinced his new comrade, Svetlana, was actually her own evil twin, and Svetlana's very life depended on her proving otherwise. Bobbi had no idea how to word this effectively. She had to come up with a plausible reason for Dimitri to change his mind.

But Dimitri and Svetlana had to wait—it was getting late and the caffeine was beginning to wear off. Well past midnight, Bobbi finally fell asleep. She awoke to angry voices but kept her head on the desk. *Ugh. Are my roommates fighting again? Wait... I'm not home! Who opened the library?*

"Bruh! I toldja! You're trash! My bottle flips are way lit!" said one voice.

"Oh. Em. Gee, sis! I literally only failed 'cause you, like, jostled the table!" replied another shrill voice.

"Cause I'm savage, bro!"

"Well, if you're so, like... beast, *lead on*, MacDuff!"

Bobbi couldn't help herself. She pushed her chair out with a squeal and stomped to the disgraceful offenders.

"It's *lay on!* You idiots! Haven't you ever read Shakespeare?" To Bobbi's surprise, there was nobody there, except for a couple of bronze busts—one of Shakespeare and another of H.P. Lovecraft.

"Of course I have, breh! I am Shakespeare!"

Bobbi spun, but no one was there.

"Over *here*, idiot," said the bust of Shakespeare.

"Oh, my gosh. William Frickin' Shakespeare?"

"Bill, bruh! Call me Bill."

"Why are you speaking like that? Aren't you supposed to be articulate? And Elizabethan?" Bobbi asked, more confused about his slang than the fact that the bust of Shakespeare was actually speaking.

"Isn't this how modern peeps talk? Been listening, brah!" Shakespeare replied.

The bust of Lovecraft must have been the one who failed bottle flipping because it was rolling its eyes.

Bobbi was struck with the realization that the two busts were bottle flipping with no arms, not to mention no life. "Guys! How can you bottle flip without arms? And that's pretty 2016 for 'modern peeps' like you."



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Lovecraft turned to Bobbi. "'Guys.' That's, like, a new one! Also, check out this coolness, *guuuuuuuys!*" he drawled. He clamped his teeth over the neck of the bottle and sharply snapped his jaw, sending the bottle flying. "Ugh, like, not another one! Can you go grab that? Sorry, I'm just so, like, extra today, I swear!"

Wait a minute... *They are both illustrious writers!* Bobbi thought. *There is no way I'm competent enough to work out Svetlana's explanation by myself... but maybe I don't have to.* "Swearing is bad," she said. "Also, since you're here, why don't we talk literature?"

Shakespeare nodded. "Sure, broski!" He turned to Lovecraft. "Hey, why you so racist, bruh? I bet this chick don't dig you!"

"You're one to talk! *Taming of the Shrew*, you sexist pig?"

The two promptly started squabbling about who was a worse person.

"Since you guys are both famous authors," Bobbi interjected, "could you give me a hand with my nov--?"

"You obviously need, like, a sea monster!" Lovecraft interrupted.

"Balderdash! A king goes nutso—now *that's* a story!" Shakespeare retorted.

The two bickered about who was the better author, ultimately deciding to settle it with another bottle flipping competition.

*Wow... some people, or... I guess, busts?* Bobbi had to get away—these two and their atrocious slang were driving her mad! She used her extensive, yet annoyingly useless, knowledge of literature to shake off Shakespeare and lose Lovecraft. "Look, look! A mouse!" Bobbi quoted Mad King Lear.

"Peace, peace! This piece of tasty cheese will do it," Shakespeare misquoted himself.

"Toasted!" Bobbi corrected.

It was then, escaping two legendary buffoons, their own words lost in translation, that Bobbi had a "lightbulb moment." Svetlana would soon discover the reason behind Dimitri's insane belief: Svetlana's Northern Russian slang did not translate well into Dimitri's Central Russian dialect, and her attempt at communicating in his language made her sound like her twin who studied in Moscow. The plot twist finally made sense! Bobbi had it in her the whole time, and she didn't need Lovecraft's sea monster or Shakespeare's mad king!

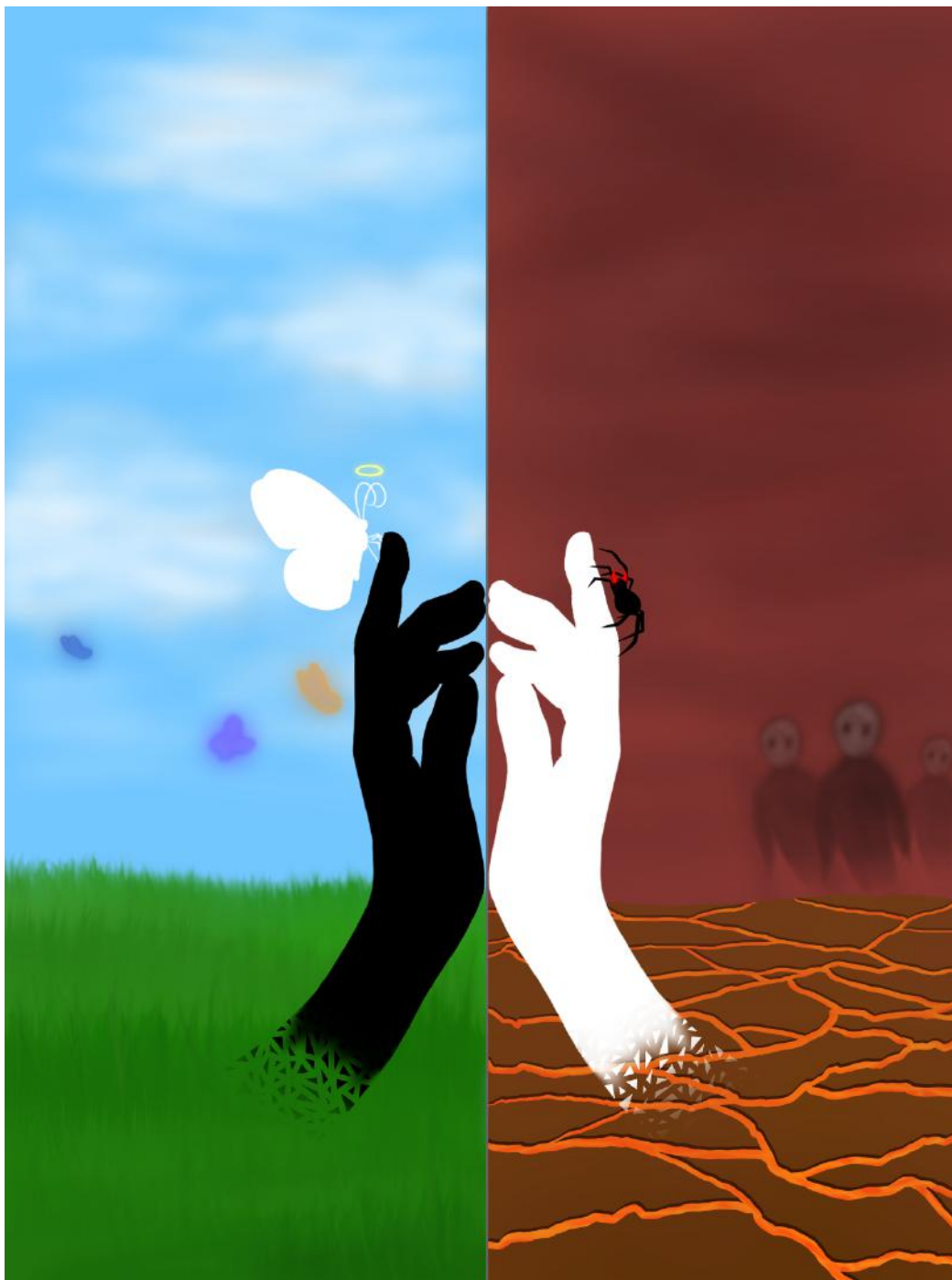
She returned to her desk and fell asleep once more, eager to pick up the ol' laptop the next morning and dive back into the world of Svetlana and Dimitri.

*What an absurd dream*, she thought when she awoke a short while later, still feeling confident in her work. As she left the library, the first pale tendrils of light straining through the crusty skylight, she glanced back at the bust of Shakespeare.

It winked.

*Author's Note: This story was inspired by theater classes the author attended called "Shakespeare in the Stacks," which were held at the Providence Athenaeum and taught by Trinity Repertory education staff. The author played the title role in a class production of King Lear. A Bronze bust of H.P. Lovecraft is on display at the Athenaeum.*





# Reflection

**Erika Wang**

*I wanted to have contrast, and since the theme is dreams, I thought of dreams and nightmares. I wanted to try drawing some sort of a reflection for more contrast with a dream on one side and a nightmare on the other, so I did.*

# The Bubble

## Sofia Susal

Emma slipped across the dirty streets of Manhattan. Tucking her blonde hair behind her ears, she bolted down the gloomy alley. She had never thought that her best friend would turn on her so quickly. She didn't know where she should go. If only that bubble was gone.

Ever since the first breakout of Pyroflu in late 2099, the city of Manhattan had been a disaster. Pyroflu made its victims do horrible things while in a dream-like trance, things that would make them die of guilt the next day. Under its effects, family members turned against each other, best friends became enemies, and once unbreakable bonds disintegrated in minutes.

On November 7th, 2100, the Bubble was established. Made from the coveted element synthesium, the Bubble was impenetrable. Synthesium was extremely rare, known for its ability to be both unpierceable and translucent. Once the rich had used the world's supply of synthesium to erect the Bubble, the last shards were crafted into a single opulent necklace for the governor upon his daughter's birth.

Since the outbreak, the rich had more money than ever before, while the poor suffered on the streets. The Bubble was a way for the rich to escape from Pyroflu, but even more, a way to escape the people who suffered from the plague. Armed turrets protected the boundaries, ensuring the Bubble's security and preservation.

*The world inside the Bubble bustled with mechanical servants. Today was the governor's birthday, and preparations were underway. Kalani, the governor's daughter, sat in her bedroom looking over the city, comparing the clean blocks within the Bubble to the torn buildings outside the thin, powerful shield. Kalani had always wondered what it would be like if she were born out there, outside the Bubble, where everything seemed so real. Since birth, all she'd known was this artificial place. The white walls and fake wood that surrounded her felt like they would collapse on her, making the big room feel claustrophobic. Over the years, a growing sadness had built up in her mind, guilt of knowing that the very beings who she lived with had turned against their fellow citizens, leaving them to die.*

Hiding in a trash can wasn't ideal, but it was Emma's only hope of survival. She always ended up like this, one way or another. The stench of waste and half-rotted rations filled the foggy air around her. Emma rummaged through the trash, trying to find something that resembled a pillow. Although it was more secure at night, nothing was guaranteed. Ironically, she found comfort in knowing that she would die one way or another. Right?

*As the sunlight faded across the city, the governor's party began. Kalani stepped into her customized gown, embroidered with little pink flowers. It fit perfectly. For this special occasion, the final touch was to don her extraordinary synthesium necklace. She looked back at the train of fabric that followed her: a fortune's worth of material that could have been used to fight Pyroflu in the city. The thought of going downstairs and seeing the people who created the barrier that restricted her freedom made her feel nauseous.*

*How could they live happily, knowing that they were responsible for the deaths of so many? She was aware that many would kill to have her sheltered life, clean and surrounded by the elite. She just wasn't one of them.*

*In Kalani's head, her sadness grew while the room continued to shrink. All at once, she knew what she needed to do. She unzipped her gown and changed into cashmere sweatpants and a sweatshirt (the least fancy clothes that she owned). The sound of glasses clinking downstairs reminded her that she didn't have much time. Kalani dashed straight for the window, fear filling her mind. Before she had time to doubt herself, she jumped out. Escape felt good, until she crumpled in a pile on the balcony below. Partygoers turned their heads, trying to catch a glimpse of the mysterious sight, but were left without answers. Kalani had already descended to the street.*

Emma had always envied people inside the Bubble. Their storybook lifestyle provided fantasy and entertainment to those on the streets. That could explain why the border was Emma's favorite place. To her, it was the closest she would get to having a better life. The streets were getting worse every week, the disease spreading more each day. This was one of the places where she felt safe. No one else came here out of fear of being shot by the turrets, but Emma found a blind spot where they would not notice her as long as she was quiet.

*Kalani ran further than her legs wanted. In an attempt to escape her sheltered and synthetic life, she wove down side streets and alleys toward the border. She always cherished time spent alone at the barrier, looking out into the seemingly endless city. Every time she arrived, it felt like home.*

*Suddenly, Kalani saw her reflection in the Bubble. Looking more closely, she realized that her reflection was in fact a girl, staring longingly from the other side. She looked about Kalani's age, but with hollow cheeks and bigger eyes. Kalani moved forward to get a closer look. As she did, she felt a strange warmth from her synthesium necklace and saw the Bubble flicker and crackle violently nearby. Alerted, the local turrets turned toward the girl on the outside. Kalani stared at the girl, their gaze seeming to convey so many identical emotions—fear, anger, disappointment, hope. She scanned the floor for something heavy like a rock to throw. As the turrets prepared to shoot, she reached for the only heavy object she had: her necklace. Kalani hurled it across the dark sky, toward the Bubble and the girl on the other side.*

*With a flash and a loud pop, Kalani's vision and mind went black. Minutes later, Kalani saw a pair of eyes, Emma's eyes, staring back at her.*







# Moonlight

Scarlett Shepard

*I thought of The Princess Bride and wanted to create a medieval fairy tale.*



# Portrait of Hope with Fish and White Dress

Sabrina Guo

Poetry

I.

Hope woke to a mote  
of golden pollen

tickling her nose, glowing  
like a firefly

under the radiant, pure light  
that seeped through

the cherry blossoms. She was  
lying on the forest floor

and clusters of the dust floated  
above her still, as if stuck in honey.

II.

The peachy-pink cherry blossoms  
fell around her, swishing left

and swishing right. The stars twinkled  
like beacons of hope guiding souls

to the afterlife, trails of diamond dust  
across the skies. The girl

watched a young squirrel peek out  
from a tree trunk, trying to claw open

a nut, then curiously cocking its head. She laughed  
as she took the nut and opened it for the creature. She could've sworn

she heard a whispered *thank you*.

III.

As the squirrel scampered into its little home, she gazed  
at the tranquil river: a-glow, shadows glinting, shimmering. The waters

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rushing over the glimmering rocks, flashes of fish  
kicking tails upstream, performing

their acrobatics, then  
landing in the water, each showing  
a unique performance. She knew

she could wake up in the real world any second. Please,  
let me stay. Some fish did

backflips, as others swish-swished, then ended  
with a roll and twist. The moon cast

a spotlight across her white dress.

IV.  
A light breeze blew by—her silky hair flew,  
her dress rippled. She wandered

into the horizon as the moon slowly set.



  
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**CREATE**

# Master Class II Snippets

The 21 Master Class II students are the core developers of *Lexophilia*. In addition to completing 15 weeks of writing lessons, they organized and evaluated nearly 500 submissions. They assembled acceptance lists, and designed and proofread the journal. To celebrate each student, the instructors selected snippets from their work during the course to publish.

**Alice Fan:** The pinkish-purple sky became dark within hours, and the children oohed and ahed over the green and purple streaks of light that took over the sky. Stars provided a scenic backdrop for these lights, and the snowy mountain caps glowed. Nothing seemed to be able to disrupt this scenic picture.

**Dave Nguyen:** I am like water, always flowing, and never staying in one place for long. I am still trying to find my place in the writing world.

**Isabelle Shie:** Seeing Antelope Canyon was amazing. The yellow light crept through the cracks, shining down upon grainy orange sand. My fingers brushed against the smooth concave wall, abstract like a child's molding clay. A vivid orange surrounded me, swept with shadows and light. A mellow scent of salt drifted around me and tingled my nostrils.

**Lena Mouradi:** My eyes glisten with reflected stage light, wooden boards creak beneath my feet, and the smell of dust permeates the air. I deliver the final line, and the curtains close, before reopening for the bows. I can't wipe the dopey smile off my face. This is theater.

**Sarah Park:** The air is damp as I make my way home, heavy with the scent of rain covering the tang of rusted metal. The streets reflect the soft glow of lights through shuttered windows and the clouds tangled together in the sky. A word is written in paint on a barren wall: Lily.

**Shelley L.:** The grasshopper is a strange insect. I poked at one on the outside of the glass window. For one, I'd always thought they were green, but this one was a bright shade of red.

**Eugenie Cha:** The thick mist settled on the great tower looming ominously above me. As I ran across the marshy path across the pavilion, I felt droplets of rain soiling on my vibrant, yellow boots. My short evening frock and a rain jacket were drenched and my strands of hair fell in front of my face. I tried not to look down to my arms carrying a heavy package. It menacingly stared me in the face and growled.

**Ayma Fawad:** However, when I saw the dim lights contrasting from the rest of the building and the portraits seeming as though they were staring into my soul, I became slightly hesitant to go down. Still, I really wanted to check out a new book, so I overcame this fear and kept walking. It's just a library, I thought. What's the worst that can happen?

**Mahika Kumar:** The towering trees shimmered in the fading sun. She flashed me a smile. A smile so white, I swear she could have been in a Colgate commercial. Her long red hair complimented her blue eyes, bordered with thick black eyeliner. She wore a white flowy dress. A white lily was tucked behind her ear. The sun cast a glowing halo above her head as the trees rustled in the breeze.

"Mom?" I asked.

**Lilly Leonhardt:** Car horns honked and people screamed at each other in rushed, heated dialect to move the hell out of their way in the traffic-filled street. Despite the pouring rain, you could vaguely see the sun setting above the beautiful skyline. A pastel painting was back there, with cut-outs of tall black buildings slapped onto the perfect tie-dye combination of hues.

**Maggie Lancaster:**

A twisted stone path,  
A welcoming glow  
And a misleading aura...

This had led  
Into the forest...

The forest where you are now,  
Where hoots and howls resound,  
Where slime slithers and  
Feathers fly unbound...

Glowing eyes lurk  
In the darkness around,  
The only light  
Where dark abounds.

**Erika Wang:**

Light filters through  
the closed window.  
Once a beautiful day,  
now ruined.  
She raises her hand  
and glares daggers  
that pierce my heart.  
I brace myself  
for the shock  
that's now  
no longer a shock.

**Elle Warner:**

Holding her hand,  
Rough and calloused  
From years  
And years  
Of hard work,

Golden afternoon  
Light pouring  
In through  
The open window.

Back in the real world,  
I look back  
Towards the  
Office window.  
The clouds are  
Gone.

*I can see the stars.*

**Chris Liu:** The sun struggled to penetrate the hazy yellow mist. I took a step forward and the ground crackled under my feet. In the distance, there was the metal skeleton of what may have been a great shining city. I think it might have been called Knew Yourk.

**Stephanie Wang:** As we passed aisles and aisles of bright and patterned clothing, mother would point out many particularly colorful and obnoxious shirts and skirts for me to wear. It was only when we got to the very back of the mall, I enjoyed the clothing. I grinned when I touched the soft, velvety black shirt darker than the night sky.

**Alex Chrostowski:** The soft calls of crows ringing through my ears drew my vision upward. When I looked up, majestic birds were flying overhead with the silver sky. From the dark thestrals to bright red phoenixes soaring across the sky, there was no lack of color in the tornado of animals.

**Brooke Nelson:** The sun set, streaking the sky with the colors of its blood. I sit on the beach, curled into a tiny ball watching the waves pound the sand with reckless abandon. As I wait, a hawk dips and grabs a squirming fish in its talons. The fish frantically squirms, its scales flashing in the fading light as it tries in vain to escape.

**Karen Wu:** I can't breathe. Panic consumes me as I realize that I'm alone. I fumble around in the dim light, looking for something, anything, to distract myself with. That's when I notice a slip of paper peeking out from under a rock. Curiosity has my hand reaching to pull it out. When it is free, I inspect it and realize that there is writing on it, Casey's writing. Grief hits like a blow to the stomach as the reality of his death sinks in. Through blurry eyes, I start to read.

**Mary Sullivan:** One of them poked its head over the edge, and I tilted my gladius towards it, but halted at the sight of its eyes, huge and orange as the freshly risen moon. A tiny egg-spike on the tip of its round nose told me it was very, very young, and it let out a terrified squeak at the sight of my gladius, frozen in place.

**Vita Huang:** The sounds of my shipmates working alongside me doing different jobs to keep the ship going was comforting, as I had gotten used to it. There were sounds of ropes creaking, brushes squeaking and footfalls stomping around. I was working at my post, which was tightening and checking the ropes, when the captain marched up to me, with his two cronies trailing behind him.

"You! Landlubber!" he slurred. "What is this?"

**Olivia Vance:** Benny was an almost ordinary 17-year-old. Every day at 5:30 AM, he rolled out of bed and took his place at the wide window, situated just high enough to see everything in his sight, but low enough that, if any one person happened to peer up into his third story window, they would see nothing except a dank room inhabited only by stack upon stack of thick, white notebooks.



# Contributors

**Laurel Aronian** is a 7th grader living in North Salem, NY. Laurel Aronian is all about the arts: writing, illustrating, painting, knitting, acting, singing and guitar. Laurel loves nature, travel and languages, competitive chess play, cooking, and spending time with her friends, family, and animals.

**Xochitl Avila** lives in Concord, California and loves dragons A LOT. She just published her first novel, *Worth Fighting For*.

**Nicole Babizhayeva** is in 7th grade at the Brooklyn School of Inquiry in Brooklyn, New York. She loves soccer, art, and gymnastics.

**Aerin Bernstein** is a 5th grader in Arlington, Virginia. She loves reading, writing, and—when not stuck in quarantine—playing GaGa ball with her friends.

**Olivia Chung** is in 9th grade at Harvard Westlake in Los Angeles, CA. In their spare time, they enjoy composing music, translating Latin texts, and making tiny origami.

**Laila Copeland** lives in NYC with her brother, parents, and dog. She enjoys music, volleyball, and traveling.

**Geneva Dandel** is in the 9th Grade at Holy Names Academy in Seattle, WA, USA. She enjoys cooking, sports, choir, and playing with her dog.

**Robyn Davies** is a 6th grade student born in Toronto, Canada. She's lived all over the world as an expat, including Missouri, Connecticut, and Shanghai.

**Sofya Donets** is an aspiring young writer currently attending 8th grade in Washington, DC.

Born in Guatemala, **Tristan Erckert** is a poet who enjoys writing about the experiences he has encountered. Tristan currently resides in Maryland, where he collects sticks and eats Nerds.

**Alice Fan** is an 8th grader residing in Chicago, Illinois. She enjoys writing short stories, science fiction, and personal narratives, though she may also be caught obsessing over Harry Potter and solving math problems in her spare time.

**Sabine Fuchs** resides in Marin County where she enjoys sailing, drawing, and painting, as well as reading one of her many books.

**Anwasha Ghosh** is an 8th grader from Dublin, CA. She has been competing in Destination Imagination for five years, and cybersecurity/computer science competitions for three years. She would love to find more ways to combine engineering with art.

**Eleanor Giuffrida** is a 5th grade student in Washington, D.C. She enjoys reading, writing, playing the violin, and reviewing books for a friend who works as a book buyer at an independent bookstore in town.

**Maegha Goel**, a 7th grader, lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

**Sabrina Guo** is a freshman at Syosset High in NY. She's received five National Gold Medals (Poetry, Critical Essay, Journalism) from the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, and Scholastic's Civic Expressions Award. She's been recognized by the Academy of American Poets, Hippocrates Young Poets Prize, Interlochen's Virginia B. Ball Creative Writing Competition, 1455, and more. Her work is featured in Best Teen Writing 2019, the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers, Canvas Literary Journal, The Phoenix, among others.

**Danielle Hedvig** is a freshman at the Academy of the Canyons in Valencia, California.

**Priscilla L. Ho** is a fifth grader at Chandler School in Pasadena, California. She aspires to be a journalist and is currently a staff reporter for Time for Kids. Priscilla is also interested in politics. In 2019, she won the President's Volunteer Service Gold Award for her work with Civikids, a nonprofit organization that provides workshops on voting rights to elementary and middle school students.

**Margaret Howell** is a 5th grader in Maryland, USA. When she is not reading, she likes to draw for herself and also for other people.

**Anika Iyer** is passionate about mathematics, robotics, and creative writing. She has excelled in various math and robotics tournaments, and her short stories have won Scholastic Writing awards.

**Sofia Kalmbach** is in the 9th Grade at University High School in Fresno, CA. Her interests include speech and debate, drama, Dungeons and Dragons, writing, and reading.

For **Asaph Zion King**, playing violin with the Richmond Symphony Orchestra and 600 community musicians during their Come and Play Concert was intimidating at first. The experience became enjoyable once he heard how his part contributed to the beautiful melodies. Playing with unresponsive yoyos, Rubik's Cubes, silly siblings and rollerblading friends balances Asaph's time spent doing algebra, biology, violin, piano, chores and washing dishes.

**Shelley L.** is a 7th grader that lives in Los Angeles, California.

**Maggie Lancaster** is a seventh grader in the state of Virginia. She loves riding horses, reading, writing, playing basketball and volleyball, and spending time with her friends.

**Lilly Leonhardt** is from Los Angeles, California. She is in the 8th grade at Hesby Oaks Leadership Charter, and loves anything related to reading or writing.

**Harry Lu** is a student in the 7th grade. He likes reading and playing videogames, as well as playing music.

**Mei Macintyre** is a 6th grader in Connecticut.

**Brooke Massey** is an 11 year old, 6th grade girl. In the Destination Imagination STEM competition, her team was awarded first place in the regional division and placed in the top 11 globally. Brooke's team received the Renaissance Award and the da Vinci Award in two separate years of DI. She has also traveled the world, and started a successful, profitable business with her brother, and then sold it. That business was StapleFUN, a coupon book for all of Stapleton!

**Yuzhe Mo** attends the Vanke Bilingual School in Shanghai, China. She loves art, writing, and sports.

**Tanisi Mohanty** lives in River Vale, New Jersey. She attends Woodside Elementary school and is in the 5th grade. Her hobbies include reading, learning music, and exploring the world.

**Keshav Mohta** just finished 7th grade. He lives in Mumbai, India. He enjoys robotics and coding, and is an avid reader.

**Allison Moores** is a 6th-grader in San Diego, CA. Allison is an avid reader and writer, and hosts a blog about immunology and prevention of infectious diseases.

**Lena Mouradi** is a 7th grader from Rhode Island, USA. She has a passion for writing and science as well as the arts.

**Alea Nakhleh** is a 7th grader who lives in Collegeville, Pennsylvania and loves reading, writing, and drawing, both digitally and by pencil and paper. She is currently writing a novel.

**Sarah Park** is a freshman studying in Manila, Philippines. In her free time, she enjoys reading novels and watching old movies.

**Kate Phillips** is a 9th grader from Pennsylvania. She enjoys writing and piano, and is on the school newspaper.

**Samiksha Prabhu** enjoys writing, reading, and drawing. She also enjoys exploring her style through different forms of expression, multiple genres, and many composition techniques.

**Chatanya Sarin** is an 8th grader in Los Altos, CA. He has been associated with CTY for the last 3 years (since 5th grade) having taken online classes, as well as a summer camp. He has an interest in the Constitution, particularly concerning legal issues facing society today. He is also interested in Political Science and Economics along with being an avid reader.

**Jonah Schumeister** is a 15 year-old, New York City teenager. He loves to cook, blow glass, travel, and play guitar.

**Scarlett Renee Shepard** is an 8th grader in Brooklyn, New York. She will be attending LaGuardia High School for fine art.

**Kiran Shere-Wolfe** is a 9th grade student in the Visual Art magnet program at the G.W. Center for Arts and Engineering in Towson, Maryland. Kiran is passionate about both art and engineering. He has been studying art for over a decade at the Maryland Institute College of Art, and his artistic interests include oil painting, film, digital art, glass, metal, ceramics, sculpture, and digital fabrication. He has won several local and national awards for his work.

**Mridula Srinivasan** is interested in paintings and drawings. She also paints acrylic and oil paintings. She is in 8th grade at Lawson middle school in Cupertino, CA.

**Charlotte Stewart** is a 7th grader from the San Francisco Bay Area who enjoys writing, reading, and swimming.

**Mary Sullivan** is a young writer (and graphic designer for Lexophilia!) hailing from MA, USA. Her favorite genre is fiction because she doesn't have to adhere to the laws of the universe.

**Siwei Sun** is a teenage girl in the 8th grade with a great interest in art and philosophy. She likes to listen to songs when she paints.

**Sofia Susal** is a 6th grade student at Katherine Delmar Burke School in San Francisco. In her free time, Sofia enjoys gymnastics, traveling, and spending time with friends.

**Sarah Tanuyanti** is an aspiring writer from Jakarta, Indonesia and is currently in 7th grade. In 2017, she co-published her first book, Bull Shark in the River & other stories. Aside from writing, you can find her reading mysteries, doing calligraphy, watercolour painting, and listening to K-pop in her spare time.

**Samuel Thean** is in 5th grade and lives in Singapore. He loves animals, drawing insects and marine animals, and photography.

**Anika Thomas** is a 9th grader in Seattle, WA. She enjoys reading and playing guitar, in addition to being part of her school's rowing and swim teams.

**Shaan Udani** is an 8th grader at Briarcliff Middle School in Mt. Lakes, NJ. His interests include creative writing and sports.

**Olivia Vance** is a CTY student in 6th grade from Grand Blanc, Michigan, USA. Throughout her career as an author, she has maintained a successful literary blog and a corresponding literary journal.

**Adelina Vierra** is in the 8th grade and lives near Seattle, WA. She has a passion for art and has been creating art for many years in various forms. It took her many hours and several days to create "Zentangle Tiger." Once she created it, she colored it in. She won a first place award from her school for this piece of artwork.

**Erika Wang** is a sixth grader who lives in San Jose. She enjoys crocheting, playing video games, and drawing.

**Helen Wang** was raised in the bustling, swarming city of Beijing, China. She's currently in the 8th grade at an IB international school. She is a passionate and thoughtful reader/writer.

As someone who never really had a chance to study poetic literature in-depth, **Yun-Fei Wang** has a passionate interest in poetry and writing. She is influenced by her home country, Taiwan, and her interest in reading.

Aiden Ward, an 8th grade student in Baltimore, finds inspiration in his friends and writes when classes go too slow.

**Ellene "Elle" Warner** is 12 years old and in the 6th grade at a school in North Carolina. She has won state level for poetry for three years in a row, and she enjoys playing the oboe, writing, drawing, piano, math, and coding.

**Isabella White** is an 8th grade student artist in Pittsburgh, PA. She loves to run, draw, paint, participate in debate club, and spend time outside. She has received multiple awards for her artwork from the Scholastic Art Competition.

**Karen Wu** is a 7th grader currently residing in Las Vegas, Nevada. She loves to write because it gives her an outlet to pour all her emotions into.

**Tianyi Xu** is an 8th grader in Dulwich College Beijing in China. She likes to draw, read, and write.

**Alexandra Zak** is in 9th grade at The Branson School in Ross, California. She has loved drawing since she could hold a pencil.

**Angela Zeng** is a 7th grader in New York City. She loves writing, and her poems and essays have won writing awards, and have been published.

**Cynthia Zhang** is an 8th grader at Acadia Middle School in Clifton Park, NY, where she participates in Odyssey of the Mind and competes in Math Counts. One of her favorite hobbies is figure skating, a sport she began seven years ago and continues to enjoy today.

**Keira Zhang** is an advanced CTY Level 6th grader hailing from California. She loves science, art and can play hours (and hours) of video games!



**Aronian**

**Avila**

**Babizhayeva**

**Bernstein**

**Chung**

**Copeland**

**Dandel**

**Davies**

**Donets**

**Erckert**

**Fan**

**Fuchs**

**Ghosh**

**Giuffrida**

**Goel**

**Guo**

**Hedvig**

**Ho**

**Howell**

**Huang**

**Hunt**

**Iyer**

**Kalmbach**

**King**

**Lancaster**

**Leonhardt**

**Lu**

**Macintyre**

**Massey**

**Mo**

**Mohanty**

**Mohta**

**Moores**

**Mouradi**

**Nakhleh**

**Park**

**Phillips**

**Prabhu**

**Sarin**

**Schumeister**

**Shepard**

**Shere-Wolfe**

**Srinivasan**

**Stewart**

**Sullivan**

**Sun**

**Susal**

**Tanuyanti**

**Thean**

**Thomas**

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