



Issue Six

From the Editor

Welcome to the first issue of Blue Marble Review! We're glad you're here and hope you enjoy the creative work found in our inaugural issue.

This issue features writers who are athletes, take photos, spend their free time drawing, and love Shakespeare. A few are studying philosophy, economics or math, and more than one mentioned a teacher who has made a difference in their lives. Some are figuring out middle school, halfway through high school or newly navigating college. All are creative.

We're lucky. With the generous help of supporters who believe in the arts, and in supporting the creativity of young writers we are able to pay our artists and writers a nominal fee for their work.

To those of you who spread the word about the journal as well as read, edited and tech-supported us on our way to publication, many thanks.

We're grateful— for the large volume of submissions we received, and the variety of voices we had to choose from when selecting work for this issue. To all of the writers and artists that sent us work: keep writing and submitting— we'd love to see what you're working on next.

Molly Hill

Editor

Poetry

The Creation Story By Beth Proctor

-

Before, was Absence:

A drowsed opiate ether,

She defied all dimension

Save expanse.

Then, came Light:

A rabble-rouser,

His tongue lacerated

The night with scalding flame.

Third, was Sound:

A harkening cry,

She spliced silence into waves

From whence melody was born.

Late, came Matter:

A narcissist,

He churned the torrents into seas

And conceived a mirror of his beauty.

Lastly, was Life:

An eternal continuation,

She birthed man and animal

As brothers.

Now, is Existence:

Malleable in the palm

Of any who hold

A pen.

Beth Proctor is a sixteen-year-old poet from Lincolnshire, England. She enjoys writing, baking and learning languages other than her own. Her work has previously been published in the Busta Rhymes anthology.

Contrapposto By Audrey Lee

I have bones to pick with existence –

who forced me to be here as a vulture,

coughing up marrow of my personality's frame?

Who poised my skeleton in material decay

to walk among the inhabitable

spaces while my hands are raised in the air

in prayer or self defense –

there's a pale girl who isn't sure which

one she should be asking more of.

There's a bird who is picking away

at the scoliosis in my spine, the serotonin

(or lack thereof) in the palpable scars

gasping across the folds of my frontal cortex, how about

my nervous system backfiring

like a space shuttle that ran out of fuel.

There's empty music from the empty room across the hall

that roars and reminds me.

I kick at a speck of dust

because it is licking at the fireplace and I watch it

burst in the heat and sink into the flames.

Audrey Lee is a current senior at The Episcopal Academy in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania and will be attending Franklin and Marshall College this coming fall. She is the winner of the 2016 DeSales University Poetry Contest and her writing has been recognized by the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards and Columbia College of Chicago. She has attended programs by the University of Virginia and Ithaca College, and edits her school literary magazine, *The Epolitan*. Her work has been featured in or is forthcoming from *The Claremont Review*, *Rookie Magazine*, *YARN: The Young Adult Review Network*, *Canvas Literary Journal*, *Moledro Magazine*, *Blue Marble Review*, *Eunoia Review*, *Half Mystic Journal*, *Paper Swans Press*, and *Teen Vogue*. This summer, Audrey will attend the University of Iowa Young Writers' Studio and intern at Apiary Magazine. Find her at audreymorganlee.weebly.com.

Douse By Jake Bowser

Douse

Old scars peeling back and
big aspirations to love you
again have kept me from
blooming and sparking into
the wildfire I've been told I
can be
but you're the one who told
me that you were water that
would inevitably douse my
flame and for some reason
I so desire that.

Jacob is a student at an arts high school in Pittsburgh PA who attends for writing all sorts of genres. His favorite, however, is poetry.

island living By Morgan Almasy

a tinsel giggle erupted from my mouth,
condensed air escaping a soda bottle

i never liked gritty sand in my toes
or crunchy peanut butter over white bread

never liked stray cats,
blood in their wake
like rainbow oil puddles

but i did like pre-storm skies
yellow-stained paper almost
brown at the edges

i liked when my shoulder blades spread,
making room for battered wings
flapping above the
metronome of an ocean
splash-hissing me to a rhythm

until

the stars grew tired,
my wings coated in salt

and

i said thanks
before dutiful slumber
until the day's discolored page
was turned.

Morgan Almasy is a sophomore creative writing major at Red Bank Regional High School in New Jersey. Last year she attended the Interlochen Center for the Arts' creative writing summer program and will be attending this upcoming summer as well. Almasy has been recognized by the national Scholastic Art and Writing competition, earning a gold key, four silver keys, and an honorable mention.

The seed in you By Isabel Leonard

Do you know about the Dahlia flower?	<i>No</i>
And how it grows back	<i>Black</i>
In the concrete, I see it tower	<i>Loud</i>
Proving nature's law wrong	<i>Human</i>
Only one seed	<i>Grows</i>
But now it starts to go	<i>Fast</i>
Now we have to show	<i>Vast</i>
That is has in fact	<i>Passed</i>
Do you know about the Dahlia flower?	<i>Me</i>
I'd know it if it wasn't in me	<i>You</i>

Isabel Leonard is a student at California State University Northridge. Originally from Portland, OR she moved to California for college. She competes on the track and field team at CSUN and studies psychology. She believes the biggest asset we have is our ability to think.

I found pictures of my loneliness while looking through the National Geographic By

Nadia Jo

I.

Like a tree triumphant in the violet cascades of death

I was alone but I had no budding flowers.

While crouched over in the confines of my 8 foot by 11 foot single

I pinched my thighs not to fall asleep

alone. Though I had three more subjects I stared at my week-old chai

ignoring the integrals and French vocab lists. The heater

broke three months ago but I wore a gray t-shirt.

I was afraid. My friend's room was dark.

I have no one to pester at this hour

or any hour. I blamed my plummeting grades on boredom,

but now I could put my finger on it—*loneliness*, it echoed.

How many more binge-eating sessions until I realize

I need more than chocolate to fill my emptiness? I am not that tree.

I may be disappearing in a black hole but I'm not trying to survive.

II.

In the heat of February I put on a suffocating winter jacket

and flip flops maybe to prove a point or

just to be an idiot. In the daylight I

slapped the sidewalk with shoes too shiny and grimaced when snow

dug in between my toes. I handed the cashier crisp

bills for a greasy grilled cheese

just to feel relevant. She was amazed. My friend kept the window open

to let in the wind and gossip as I rubbed my oily hands on

her binders and she chanted *soy, eres, es, somos*.

I realized people who hook up are all lonely.

Outside I wore an irony like that picture of a field

half green half gray with seven trees and

heaven shining above. My eyes were on gray;

I didn't recognize green. One tree is nearly on the border
between green and gray but it's still on gray. I am not that tree.
I may tread between hope and despair but I can't see hope.

III.

My mom said it was a mistake to send me to boarding school.
She asked me if I was lonely.
I think she was worried when I said it was just procrastination.
We drove back to my dorm at night but I couldn't see stars,
not even in this countryside. The last time I saw them was
summer when I still thought I was happy alone.
I still think I'm happy. I think wrong. I finally put on a hoodie
over my gray t-shirt. Suddenly I regret everything.
This picture of a cumulonimbus fills the whole screen but

I only look at the stars. The sky is a deep navy and

white dots are scattered across the blue. What am I supposed to be amazed at?

I regret not asking them to fix my heater.

How many counseling sessions does it take to give up?

I wonder where the line is between love and disappointment.

I can only see stars in the countryside and I hate that. We all need to

see stars to be fools and to hope when there's actually no hope. When is it loneliness and when is it not being strong enough?

I am not a tree, or any tree. I may be looking at the stars but I don't know why.

Nadia Jo is a student at Deerfield Academy, an independent boarding school in Massachusetts. She has published two books of poetry and short stories. Her works have been recognized by Creative Communication and the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards as well as being published in The Tavern. As a cellist, Jo has also given a solo performance at Carnegie Hall. She lives in South Korea.

Aubade By Max Saltman

I made you laugh

And something exploded,

Flew out the window

And did doughnuts in the parking lot

Before coming back in and doing it again.

You ask me how I am,

And I say “great,” and I mean it,

Not in the standard-American-answer way,

But I mean:

Your question follows me around,

Follows me home and

Dances a waltz around my head

To the best kind of music.

Max Saltman is an editor for his school's newspaper, and does stand-up comedy and writes in his free time. He hopes to continue both in college. His favorite poets are Robert Burns and Wallace Stevens, and favorite comedians are Louis CK and Sam Hyde.

Philip of Macedonia By Arah Ko



Marble curls clench, blown by an ancient wind

while blind, white eyes search skies

I've never seen.

Even in the stillness, he is beautiful.

It may be something in the noble cast of his nose,

the grace of his cheeks or the gape of his lips,

and by being just a head he is perhaps

lovelier than in life, and wiser, too, having won
empires, hearing his son called “great,”
knowing what it is to plumb time,
to die to motion, to witness five hundred
million moments and to be
only one of them.

Arah Ko is an English Major in the Chicago area. When not writing, she can be found frequenting open mic nights, explaining her name pronunciation to coffee shop baristas, and contemplating the meaning of life, other than 42.

Eve, Re-imagined By Logan February

this time I do not own
a pair of yellow shoes
so I walk up the stairs
with bare feet

gardener says to look for love
on higher ground
but there is no messiah

waiting

I made a mistake and
kissed a snake

I made
a mistake
and kissed
a snake

who had no apple to offer me

exchanged my name for a handful
of dried flowers and
wistfulness
this is not the first time

have I become
a body of antibodies?
how many doctors
or cherubim
are available
and is it still cliché'
if I am not wearing
yellow
or anything at all?

I do not know what I need
but I know that this kind of thing

should not happen

so often

Logan February is a happy-ish Nigerian owl who likes pizza & typewriters & memes. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in Vagabond City, Glass, Figroot, and more. His book, *Yellow Soul* (April Gloaming Publishing) & a currently untitled chapbook (Indolent Books) are forthcoming in 2017. Say hello on Instagram & Twitter @loganfebruary.

Facebook asked “what’s on your mind?” By Laura Enright

Once I read online
that poetry is becoming more popular
to tweet
even if you must write
in txt spk
this stanza shows you 140 characters
(it doesn’t get you very far)
the internet is bad, boys & girls

always giving you something to compare yourself to

or reminding you of what you had

or someone you wish you had back

but what seems to drive people craziest is

messenger

Seen 12.23pm

k...

idc

my friend said once that one of the toughest things

about her breakup was

having to log out of her ex-boyfriend's

Netflix account

lucky her.

thanks for sharing.

sometimes Google writes poems for me

if I type in the first few words

I wonder if

we smile in our coffins

I wonder if

anyone misses me

I wonder if

I'm wasting my time

Laura Enright is a twenty-one- year-old writer from Limerick, Ireland studying BA Creative Writing with English & Irish in NUI Galway, specialising in poetry. She was one of the first people in Ireland to receive an arts fellowship for her writing. She has won numerous national awards for her poetry. So far in 2017, her poetry has been published by Picaroon Poetry, Hidden Channel zine and The Galway Review.

Crying As A Performance Art By Logan February

it is best to practice in front of a mirror
do not clear your throat or wipe your eyes
maintain the tremor in your voice
when you say

I am here to create the ocean for you

it is best if you do not say your name
because no one will remember it
there is no use in wasting your allotted time
they came to see you crash like a wave

it is best if you crash like a wave

it is best if you refuse medicine
maintain the tremor in your voice
when you say

*I came here to show you how I play
the swallowed thing*

it is best if your audition is not about you
make it about borders or whales or climate change
anything but heartache is fine
it is best if you are fine

if you pretend to be fine
this is show business so let it all go
don't take it so personally

it is best if someone else deserves you
after you learn to part your own seas

Logan February is a happy-ish Nigerian owl who likes pizza & typewriters & memes. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in Vagabond City, Glass, Figroot, and more. His

book, *Yellow Soul* (April Gloaming Publishing) & a currently untitled chapbook (Indolent Books) are forthcoming in 2017. Say hello on Instagram & Twitter @loganfebruary.

Ahma* By Ashley Tan

You were;

An unorthodox tree of life

birthed dimly before the blizzards borne by winter

fully flourished by the first blush of spring,

the rings on your rutted stump encircling the core of heritage

You were;

A maze of the universe's deepest ambiguities

contained within the blues of your windows,

with piercing inner onyxes that mirrored the bleakest

shells of humanity raining from perdition overturned

You were;

A perfectly marred canvas of the ages

an adroit architect who'd carefully crafted,

an intrinsic labyrinth of peregrinations on your palms

which hold a century's worth of the wars of our past

You were;

A voluminous library yearning to divulge the world's secrets

yet inaccessibly barred by the barriers bred by my tongue,

failed by memory and hardened by circumstance

now a forgotten dialect left bereft and unsung

But in spirit

You are;

A fierce warrior hound braving the fleeting seasons,
ceaselessly straddling the fragile line between
impermanence and
Eternity.

**"Ahma" is Hokkien (Chinese dialect) for "grandmother".*

Ashley hails from a small sunny island proudly known as the Little Red Dot and holds an uncanny penchant for all-things pink. One day, she hopes to dominate the world in a princess dress and sparkly tiara – because who ever forbade warriors from dressing in style too?

Fiction

Logic at First Sight By Bryce Langston

Some people cry too easy. In biology class two years ago we talked about osmosis and how some membranes are passive, allowing water to come and go through them. I wonder if that's why those crying people are like that; their eyes must have passive membranes. They spend much more time crying than thinking.

Murdle was not one of those people. No, he was not. If anything, he was the polar opposite, always searching for a logical argument in that library of a brain, which must have been stuffed with every science textbook and survival guide known to mankind. I had never looked at Murdle and seen a hint of emotion. Sure, we had laughed together before, but humor does not require feeling. Humor is a logical process, just like everything else. At least, that is what Murdle would say.

On this particular day in January, Murdle and I found ourselves in the same English section, debating the concept of "love at first sight," as assigned to our class by our bubbly professor. The room had been split into halves: one side argued for the concept, the other against, and Murdle not at all, though he stood on the "against" side. I stood on the "for" side, not that I had had any experience with the subject matter, but I enjoyed a challenging argument. Also, I wanted to see Murdle lost amidst a debate of emotion. I anticipated it would be interesting. I was not wrong at all.

"So! Here is our broad question for today's debate, brought upon us by our readings of Shakespeare and Dickens: Can love be found at the first sight of someone? So! Let us begin with the defendant; Hunter, start us off!" The professor sat down in a giddy excitement, as if she had waited for this debate all semester.

I stepped forward from my group and read our opening statement, "Love is found at the searcher's own pace, so it is up to him or her whether he or she recognizes the emotion immediately, as Romeo did, or in time, as Charles Darnay did."

Trish announced the opposing side's opening statement, something about "developing emotions takes time," but I was too busy observing Murdle, his face set in the most

compact concrete contortion of blankness and vacancy I had ever seen. His arms hanging awkwardly at his side like wings on a car, he appeared to have an air of unbelonging about him. Murdle was standing amidst a foreign marketplace, people were speaking in tongues he had never heard, and the items for sale were too exotic for him to notice their usefulness and value. Every now and then, a foreigner would explain something to him and Murdle would just nod his head in feigned agreement, just wanting it all to be over and done.

His eyes said it all. He was not even present that day in class. He had retreated deep into the catacombs that lay inside his head, and the conversation happening about him slammed into a thick eardrum that was too dense to vibrate the message through to the brain; all that Murdle heard were muffled voices.

And so on went the debate. My side said something, cited something from the text, said something, ended turn. Trish's side said something, cited something from the text, said something, ended turn. After thirty minutes, the professor realized that the riveting and profound debate she had expected was not the one she observed before her. She grew tired of the long pauses between exchanges, the lack of evidence from outside sources, the slacking participation, and everything else that optimistic English professors find wrong with mediocre debates about a topic that, by God, should exhilarate everyone! Look at these sad souls, she must have thought, dragging their feet through the muck of reality, too occupied to care enough about the possibilities they debate! That's it! I am going to call on someone. Whoever's name I see first on my attendance list, that is who I will call! That is who will revive this disaster into something spectacular!

"So! It seems that we are having a little trouble here, which is fine, which is fine."

She obviously meant that it was not fine and that she had become irritated.

"So! Umm..."

The professor looked at the clipboard in her lap, cocked her head sideways in contemplation and spoke in a decisive, final manner.

“Murdle! We haven’t heard anything from you today. Tell us why you are against the idea of love at first sight.”

It was as if Murdle had just entered the classroom. He lifted his head, eyes darting to and fro in panicked ponderment. His consciousness had risen from the catacombs, his eardrums vibrated clearly, and he could just make out what was being said to him by the foreigners. Just barely.

I had stopped breathing at this point. This was exactly what I had waited for. I had no idea what to expect, no idea what to prepare for.

“Love...uh...is a chemical process in the brain,” the terrified teenager stated shakily, “but, it is not love—or what chemical reactions are defined as love—that occurs at the first sight of someone...uh...It is actually considered lust.”

“Well! That certainly is an interesting way to look at things, Murdle, but let’s think of love as a more spiritual, or emotional, reaction. What would you say then?” The professor smiled the way an old southern woman might after offering a glass of sweet tea to a guest, awaiting a specific answer, the answer she wanted: “Yes, I’d love to have some sweet tea, ma’am.”

Murdle did not smile. His lips stuck straight ahead in a required silence. He could not answer the way she wanted him to, there was no possible way. But what other way could he have answered?

Murdle then did something that I still look back on as astonishing and perplexing.

He walked out of the classroom.

With his awkward gait and cylindrical legs he escaped to the door, away from everything foreign and unknown, to a comfortable predictable world. The people in the marketplace all stared at him in confusion, as if they had expected something from his visit. But how could he have done what was expected if he did not understand what was expected?

I swear that I heard him mutter something under his breath as he left, something like, “I don’t understand, I don’t understand...”

Murdle must have withdrawn from that English section after that session; I never saw him there again.

Some people think too much.

Bryce Langston is a dual-enrolled junior high-school student in the small town of Avon Park, Florida. He enjoys composing music and short stories.

Not Your Average Fairy Tale By Maribel Pagan

“Slay the dragon, rescue the princess. Slay the dragon, rescue the princess,” she repeated to herself over and over as she stepped onto a bridge swaying over a volcanic crater. Lava bubbled beneath her, and she gulped in shock.

She was afraid of heights.

She ran across, panting, desperate to escape the threat of being consumed by molten lava. Upon reaching the end of the bridge, she collapsed onto solid ground.

She sighed, her eyes shutting in relief. “That was a close one.”

A noise burst forth. A *roar*.

Her eyes widened. She jumped to her feet. “Right! Slay the dragon, rescue the princess!” her mouth suddenly gaped in awe at the enormous castle before her, with its two towers stretching out towards the sky.

In one of those two towers lay the princess. Or so she hoped.

She rolled her shoulders, and they cracked in response. “All right. Next step.”

Another roar burst forth. Light erupted from below, and with that light she saw the enormous shadow of a dragon standing behind the castle.

She gasped, biting her nails anxiously. She quickly caught herself in the act and, accordingly, shifted her hand to her sheath instead. She yanked out her sword, miniscule in her hand compared to the threat of a gargantuan dragon.

She began to walk around the castle, sword ready.

Another roar echoed off the walls of the volcano.

She closed her eyes, sipping a deep breath in. Then rushed forward, eyes open. A roar gushed forth from her mouth.

Once she had reached the opposite side of the castle, she screeched to a sudden halt.

The dragon standing before her was barely larger than the length of her foot to her knee.

She barely contained her laughter. “I’m supposed to fight *this* thing?!”

The dragon croaked, its voice echoing against the walls of the volcano until the noise had elevated into a hunger-driven roar.

She reeled back, laughing till her sides hurt. "This is so ridiculous!"

The dragon simply croaked.

She sucked breath back into her lungs and wiped her tear-filled eyes. "Well, that was fun! But I have to get going since you're no threat. Thanks for the good laugh, though." She patted its head. The dragon quickly attempted to snap at her hand, which she avoided quite easily.

"Oops! You missed!" she laughed, strolling her way back to the entrance of the castle. She walked through its hollow, shallow entrance.

Torches lit up the hallways, always one step ahead of her. She approached the stairway to the left tower. With no railing or support, she carefully made her way upwards, daring herself not to turn her gaze down lest she plummet and have her bones splatter upon the ground.

After a very long, hasty trek upwards, she finally reached the top.

It was empty.

"Are you kidding me?!" A string of curse words spun out of her mouth as she carefully crawled back down the steps and proceeded to the next tower.

"Hope you're happy, princess!" her voice echoed down the long corridors as she trekked the lengthy distance to the second tower. "It doesn't shock me that nobody's saved you yet! Sure, I got orders from your father to save you." She began to climb the stairway to the second tower. "Or, maybe not. I didn't exactly get orders from your father to save you. Your father ordered a prince to save you, but that boy couldn't make it an inch without crying for his papa. At least I offered to do something about his problem and made it here so that a prince could have you. And I was offered a permanent home

where I can safely live in for the rest of my life, with servants and everything, if I saved you. So I took up the offer. Me: *A servant girl*. Saving a *princess*. Whew! This is... a lot of steps.” She paused, swiping her perspiring forehead with the back of her hand before continuing the long journey up the steps.

And then she reached the top.

Within the top of the tower lay a bare room, with the exception of the bed standing in the middle. She approached it, seeing it was covered in a rough cloth. She pulled away the cloth, revealing a woman with syrup-colored, wavy hair, caramel skin, shut-eyed, and wearing a dress of berry blue silk studded with diamonds.

She marveled, in awe at the sight of the beautiful woman lying before her. She cleared her throat, automatically remembering her status as peasant compared to the princess reposed before her. She pulled her own straw-like blonde hair back, and leaned forward towards the sleeping princess.

The princess’s eyes fluttered opened. “Oh! I’m—I’m saved! But... wait. You’re not a prince?”

“No,” she smiled. “I’m not.”

Maribel C. Pagan has appeared or is forthcoming in Persephone’s Daughters, Every Day Fiction, The Stray Branch, and others. She has received the Junior Reading Giants Award, has made the President’s List in Mohawk Valley Community College, and has received a number of other awards and scholarships. Additionally, she is the host of The Maddie Show on WLMU Radio, a Prose Reader for Apprehension Magazine, and a

singer and musician for The Angelic Family Choir. Visit Maribel at <http://therollinghills.wordpress.com/>.

Crossings By Zeke Gerwein

The road is straight; a long ribbon of asphalt disappearing into the basin that Liam isn't sure is named. It's hot, almost invasively so, the sun a sadistic two-year-old granted divine powers.

A pickup passes and Liam raises his thumb half-heartedly. The truck speeds on and Liam sits down again in the dirt, listening to the rumbling. Where are these cars going, these metal cages that disappear into this hellacious place. This is the road that crosses this strange anomaly in space-time between Las Vegas and Reno, the emptiness that is known as Nevada; the place people look down on from planes. The pickup truck doubles back, skids across the double yellow line and stops in a pullout not far from where Liam stands. A man, muscular, hairy and clad in plaid. "You looked like you needed a ride," the man says. "Where you headed? GORGEOUS."

The last word puts Liam on edge. "California," he says. "My name is Liam."

"Liam," the man says, as if digesting the name. "Thought you were a girl at first. California, huh?"

Liam doesn't know how to respond to this. "California. My cousin lives in Oakland."

"All you young ones are going to California," the man says. "How old are you, Liam?"

"Eighteen," Liam says, nearly spitting the word. He's annoyed at how angry this makes him.

The man snorts. "That's convenient! You know. Just became an adult. Still young enough to look convincing." The man smiles and half laughs, as if it's a joke. "Are you sure you're not a girl?"

Liam crosses his arms over his chest. "I'm sure."

They drive for a while, just drive, the highway refusing absolutely to make the slightest turn. *Highways generally appear straight on maps*, Liam thinks, picturing the maps in Kansas, maps laid out on desks in quiet corners, windows upon windows of yellow lines against white background on the blinking screen of Google Maps. "It's time to go, Leah," say his parents. He hates the bathrooms.

Does this highway look any straighter on the maps? He tries to remember this particular highway from the map. He laughs, though he's not sure yet what's funny.

"What's so funny?" the man asks.

"This place," Liam says, feeling a little more comfortable. "The emptiness of it. The brown, the purple, the jagged mountains, the absolute....." he trails off. "Zero. Lack of anything."

The man laughs for a while. He laughs to the point where Liam isn't sure whether or not he will continue holding onto the steering wheel.

"Shit, Liam," the man says. "That's what all you city folk think. There's plenty *there*. Sagebrush and water and hidden springs. We aren't stupid you know, we desert people." He narrows his eyes at Liam, moving his face between Liam's thighs and chest. "Where you from? Cal'fornia? The East Coast?"

Liam laughs, barks almost. "No. Kansas."

“Shit!” the man elongates the word, as if there are multiple shits, or perhaps one long shit that will take a very long time to finish. “Talking about nowhere and being from Kansas! We nowhere people should recognize each other, you know. We should. You hitchhiked from Kansas?”

“Yes.”

“What was that like?”

“Blurry.” Liam shrugs. He digs around his pack, holds the remains of the kefir in his palm.

“What’s that?” the man asks, blending the two words into one.

“Key-fer,” Liam says, guessing at its pronunciation. “It’s a yogurt drink. I got it in Tonopah.”

“Scolari’s?” the man asks. Liam nods. “Just got back from there. Great food. Best around. ‘Course there’s just that and the store in Benton. But tha’s over the border. Takes a while to cross.”

“Does California have a customs station?” Liam asks.

The man guffaws. “Hardly. Agricultural Inspection Station. Might as well be customs, though. Takes so long.” The man removes one hand from the wheel and takes out a bottle of some type of alcohol, beer or whiskey, perhaps vodka. “I’m thirsty. I’s a desert, anyway.”

Liam squirms a little in his seat, hoping that the man doesn’t notice. The two of them drive along US 6 alone, the road climbing toward the tops of another jagged mountain range.

“How far are you going?” Liam asks the man.

“Basalt,” the man says. He slurs the syllables together and Liam wonders if he’s drunk already. “My ranch. Y’should stay wi’me tonight, Liam. S’late.” Liam has to work hard to understand what the man is saying but his driving ability doesn’t seem to have declined.

“I can’t,” Liam says, almost impatiently. “I’m going to California.”

“California’s ‘bout four miles from Basalt,” the man says. “Been hitching nonstop from Kansas?”

Liam nods, wishing that he had lied.

“You deserve a break. Jus’ the night. Better than the side of the road.”

“There’s still all of California left,” Liam says, almost desperately. He feels a little like hyperventilating though he doesn’t know what it would accomplish. He needs to pee.

“California ain’t half as big as everybody thinks,” the man says. “Long, but ain’t but an inch wide really.” The man laughs for a long time.

“Let me out,” Liam shouts. The man stops laughing.

“Shit, Liam, I ain’t drunk. I just had a sip. You actually believe I was drunk?” And he chuckles, a wave of laughter, cascading down the mountain, evaporating in the basin below them.

“Stupid,” Liam says, thinking loudly but only muttering the words. He raises his voice without really thinking about it. “*That’s a stupid thing to do.*” His voice fills the car, surprising himself.

The man is surprised. “Well shit, I didn’t mean any harm. Pretty girl like you, you sure you’re not a girl now?”

“Reasonably sure,” Liam says dryly. He wonders if there is some exam to become a boy. What the definition is. Man, woman, boy, girl, none of the above. California, so close. SO CLOSE.

“What’s so close?” the man asks, surprised.

“California,” Liam says. “I just can’t believe that I’m almost there. It feels unreal.”

“There’s nothing really there,” the man says. “It’s all unreal. A line in the ground, that’s it. It can become a part of you, you know, these borders. The lines.”

“Thank you,” Liam says and he feels calm. “For.... what you just said.”

“No need to thank me,” the man says. “I’d love some company at my.... my place. Bar. In Basalt. Maybe a couple hours. Fill your tanks and all that.” The man sounds gruff and it makes Liam uneasy, but he remembers the borders, how it came out of the man’s mouth. Can this heteronormative, white, macho, Nevada rancher-man be simultaneously uncouth and polite? He wants to make his own words flow like the man’s but he isn’t sure what to do with his tongue.

“Alright,” he says and all of a sudden they seem to be there, crossing the road and pulling into a gravel turnout from the highway. The air is cool, brisk, and Liam wonders how high up they are. To the west the land falls away and the road makes its way down to a sagebrush-covered valley, light green. Liam walks across the parking lot, wondering why he is wasting time like this in a seedy bar, so close to California; opens the door to the clicking of dusty slot machines, whirring of neon, the clink of quarters as they disappear forever. The casino fades into a bar, the smell of cigarette smoke mingling with that of alcohol. The bartender has no teeth and smiles gummily at Liam as he sits down next to the man.

“Not from around here, are you, gorgeous?” another man calls. Liam feels on edge, as if the bar could explode at any moment.

“No,” he says simply. “From Kansas.”

“What’s your name, sweetheart?”

“Liam,” Liam says. “Where’s the bathroom.”

“Round the corner, Leah,” the bartender tells him and he sees the two wooden signs, paint chipped away, that read ‘Gentlemen’ and ‘Ladies.’ He exhales loudly, walks through the door marked gentlemen, walks into the stall, and slides the metal lock through the notch, sits down on the toilet and pees for a long time. He can hear the mumbled voices of men as they stand outside the stall. He stands next to the toilet, waiting for the men to file out.

Liam slides the metal lock away from the notch, remembering the silent glow of computer screens, the yellow roads that crossed white emptiness, a blur of numbers. The bathroom door is slightly ajar; he slides through it, back into the bar, and crinkles his nose at the cigarette smoke. Hank Williams is playing from a radio and Liam tries not to listen. He’ll leave, right now. He realizes that he’s still holding the bottle of kefir and he unzips his backpack and lets it fall with a dull clunk to the bottom, not sure why he isn’t just throwing it out. The man who called Liam gorgeous sets a glass of some sort of alcohol before Liam.

“On me, gorgeous.”

“I have to go,” Liam says, shouldering his backpack.

“You just got here,” the man insists. “Pretty girl like you shouldn’t go running into and then out of bars. Drink up! It’s good liquor.”

“Beer and liquor, never sicker,” Liam mutters under his breath, feeling faint from the smoke. He sips from the glass and winces at the bitter liquid as it slides down his throat.

“Are you going to DRINK?” the bartender asks, her voice surprisingly loud. “Or WHAT? It’s good DRINK. Siddown, you come all the way from KANSAS.” Liam takes another sip of the liquor, bracing himself for the taste.

“NOW,” the bartender says. “I was WONDERING whether you’re a BOY or a GIRL.”

“Does it matter?” Liam breathes, not sure if anyone can hear him.

“What was that?”

“I need to go,” Liam says, louder.

“Ain’t that a SHAME. Lemme get WALT. He’s sure sad to see you GO!” Liam wants to leave, to spill the liquor onto the linoleum floor and dash through the casino back into the desert mountain air, toward California. The man who drove Liam here, Walt, returns from Liam doesn’t know where.

“Walt,” the bartender says, “Is this a BOY or a GIRL?” Liam isn’t listening.

“Saiz e’s a boy. She’s a boy. He’s a girl.” Deep throaty laughter from Walt mingles with smoke.

“I’M GOING!” Liam tells them. He reaches for the glass and takes another sip of liquor, his head feeling faint.

“WAIT,” the bartender says. “Are you a BOY or a GIRL?”

Liam unzips his backpack, removes the bottle of kefir. He places the open bottle on the counter.

“What ARE you?” the bartender asks him. Liam walks out of the bar, listening to the clink of quarters in slot machines. “What IS that?” He hears Walt’s voice, the word ‘kefir’, stands on the shoulder of US 6, walks down the mountain, leaning gently on the guardrail into California. He raises his thumb and a Prius comes to a stop.

“Do you have anything to drink?” Liam asks. “I’m dying of thirst.”

The woman driving opens the glove compartment, handing him a plastic bottle. Liam unscrews the bottle and lets the kefir flow down his throat until the bottle is empty.

“I never saw anyone drink that much.”

“Yeah,” Liam says. “I’m a big drinker.” He places the bottle at his feet without talking. California blurs outside of his window.

Zeke Gerwein was raised in Berkeley, California where they started writing at the age of four when they developed a near obsession with coming up with stories. After winning honorable mention in a city wide short story contest in elementary school they have since written and edited four novels as well as countless other short fiction pieces and short plays. They also enjoy travel by bicycle and have completed two fairly well read online travel blogs from which they have completed three short creative non-fiction pieces one of which was published by Adventure Cyclist Magazine. They are currently a corresponding writer on Nomenclatter e-zine and have performed their fiction at the Oakland School for the Arts, Oakland’s Black Box Theatre, and the California College for the Arts. They currently live in the San Francisco Bay Area where they attend school.

The August heat stuck heavy to the alligator hunter's skin. The air stunk of Louisiana swamp but that's the way she liked it. Her dog and her partner perched on the edge of the flat-bottomed boat, squinting into the murky water. The sun beat down on the back of the hunter's neck, crisping it up nice and red. She drummed her fingers on the thick metal steering wheel.

"Think there'll be a bite at the next line, Minnie?" her partner, still green and wide-eyed, asked. This would be their third line today with no bites.

"Hope so," Minnie replied.

"Hope it's a big'un. A big ol' gator, all fat and pretty."

"When's s'last time you saw a fat gator?" Minnie shielded her eyes from the harsh glare of the sun and peered into the distance. The partner fell silent, staring at the water with a frown and placing a hand on the dog's back.

"I seen plenty of fat gators."

"You ain't." Minnie grunts.

"I have! Farther east, near Belle Chasse, there's gators the size of horses!" The partner snapped, defensive, fist clenched on the dog's back. He yelped and skittered to the front of the boat.

"That's a dirty lie, Addie, I been to Belle Chasse."

“You ain’t hunted there,” Addie snapped, glaring at the water now. “You ain’t hunted there.”

“S’all the same. Ain’t no gators nowhere – Not here, not Belle Chasse.”

“Y’all’s just bitter ‘cause you can’t get a bite,” Addie said, accusatory. She slapped a mosquito off her arm. Minnie looked past her, eyes forward.

“Then why’re you here if you know I ain’t got a bite?”

“‘Cause I ain’t got any either,”

“Nobody’s got any,” Minnie stared in the distance. She could see the tall rise of cypress trees out of the water like bones floating up in an old cemetery. One of them had a heavy line weighted down with waterlogged chicken, hopefully with a fat gator hooked on the end. She wasn’t close enough yet to see, but the gnawing in her gut told her that she wasn’t going to be so lucky.

Addie shut her mouth as they neared the third line so that the only noise was the thrum of the boat’s engine, the cicadas’ cries, and Addie’s own stomach. The dog—a good dog, with a smart nose and no pedigree—perked his pointy ears up and licked his chops, barking sharply. He’s probably smelling the chicken.

“Wouldja look at that!” Addie pointed to the base of a cypress tree, among the tangled roots.

“Well, damn,” Minnie wiped her brow and pulled out her shotgun from where it had been tucked against the boat’s side. She cocked it once, standing up. “Get over here, bring us in,”

Addie clambered to take the wheel, revving the engine and sidling them as close to the cypress as they could get. The gator heard them and snapped his jaws. A glittering metal hook had embedded itself in the back of the beast's throat, thick wire sprouting from it and tethering him to the thick tree trunk. He swung his tail uselessly, sending stinking droplets of water into the air.

"Shoot him!" Addie said, scrambling to grab the line and hold the gator still. "Get him!"

Minnie ignored her. She waited till the gator had closed his jaws and started a roll, thrashing in the water to break free. She fired once. The dog barked when the bullet hit the water. She cursed and aimed again at the fleshy triangle at the base of the gator's skull. A quarter-sized chink in the armor, she knew it too well. She shot again, and the gator let out a scream. It stopped thrashing in the water.

"Ha ha, yes! Nice shot!" Addie said, moving over to help haul it into the boat. The dog wagged his tail. Minnie patted him on the head and reached down, gripping the gator with thick, calloused fingers.

Once they got it on the boat, they could get a good look at him. He was scrawny and old and missing a claw. He wasn't going to fetch a good price, not enough to cover the two of them. Minnie cursed and kicked him halfheartedly with her boot.

"Hey, don't be like that," Addie said, wiping her sweat-sticky brow.

"Shut up."

"No, I mean it—" Addie tried again, arms wide, pleading.

"So help me God, if you don't shut up I'll throw you over. See if that brings 'em out. Jesus *Christ*." Minnie's words had thorns, but there wasn't anything behind them. She was too tired to put any fire in her threats.

“...Yes, ma’am.”

They spent the ride to the next line in empty silence, the sun creeping inch-by-inch overhead. Minnie took her place at the wheel again, gripping it tightly, jaw clenched.

“Aw, shoot,” Addie said.

“What?” Minnie craned her neck to look.

“Bait’s gone.”

“And no gator?”

“No gator.”

Minnie and Addie glared down at the water together, the sun beating down on them. Addie’s stomach growled again, but the cicadas drowned it out.

Cecil Starr lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and has been recently featured in Pulp literary magazine.

The Event Horizon By Selena Spier

It was a sun-strained, shallow-breathing day in the ides of August – that treacherous month, with its cornflowers and ice-cream trucks – that my sister Barbara got sucked back into the sun. I'm not just saying that. I'm not crackers or anything. I'm just telling you what she told me, because it's been bringing me comfort these past few weeks, and the time will come when it'll bring you comfort too.

As I said before, it was August, the August of the overgrown roads, that time of year the air starts to get cool but still feels dry and sandpapery on the back of your throat. Barbara had cut Sunday school and gone out into the cornfield. The other kids had been teasing her. She was seven and I was five, which is probably why I didn't notice her leaving at the time. But she left all the same. She waded through the blackberry bushes – where the gremlins live, as everybody knows – and climbed over the stone wall to the field. She went right to the middle and stood in the grass in her purple Sunday dress, motionless except for her enormous stuck-out ears. These were flapping softly in the breeze, skin so thin you could see the sun through it. Barbara stood out there for a while, blinking, and then began to run. She ran faster than any human being had ever run before, so fast that she could feel her heartbeat in her tongue, and then, all of a sudden, the wind caught her ears like a sail and she was lifted clear off the ground. She flailed around for a moment, half-surprised, before getting her bearings. Then she started flying around above the field in loops and dives and figure-eights, and all the while her ears were flapping up and down, up and down.

She circled around like that for a while, laughing in glee, until her ears got to feeling sore. She hovered in midair, then began to fall upwards into the sun. At first she was frightened, but her fear quickly subsided when she discovered that she could still somehow breathe. She closed her eyes. When she opened them again she was in a large room, with high ceilings and marble floors. All around her was a throng of people – not real people, though; as soon as you looked at one straight on it would disintegrate, the way a bubble does under its own weight. There was no god. Just the last Dalai Lama at the front desk, checking everybody in. Barbara went to him. He gave her a key and told

her she could leave her skin in the blue hamper, and that she could look out the window one last time before going into the waiting room. He told her she could wait there as long as she liked.

She peeled her face off first. It didn't hurt. Then she shimmied out of her arms and torso and stepped carefully out of her legs. For a few minutes she held on to the sound of her name, listening as it was repeated to her in many voices, over and over, last of all her mother's. Then she smiled and nodded and set it aside.

The window was hardly a window at all, just a little porthole of turquoise glass carved into the far wall. She went and pressed her nose to it. Far below was the great blue expanse of the world she'd left behind, roiling with dust and storms and people milling around the cities like ants. At first she was watching a civil war – then she got distracted by a baby being born, cute little thing, with a harelip and astigmatism. She stood, and she watched, and she thought about the day she caught mama smoking menthols in the guest-room shower. She was desperately happy; she was indescribably sad.

The waiting room wasn't a room – it was the soccer field by our elementary school, the one with the faded lines and the old bleachers that screamed when you sat on them. She stumbled down the little hill and went to lie down on the center line. She felt fine, just fine, a little overwhelmed but nothing that wouldn't dissipate with time. Everything was warm and sunny; there was nobody else around. And as far as I know she's still there, lying face-to-the-sky in the scratchy August grass, thinking about things.

Selena is a college sophomore originally hailing from Block Island, Rhode Island, where she spent the better part of her childhood catching hermit crabs and messing around in boats. She reads everything she can get her hands on, but her favorites in particular are Isabel Allende, Milan Kundera, and Louise Glück. She also spends a lot of time painting, going for runs, and thinking about aliens.

Flying By Austin Conner

When my grandpa had a seizure, he left the assisted care facility as a bird. Not one of those eagles or falcons, since his house is too small. Not a dove, either, since that's only for priests. No, he became a blue jay, the same kind that would sit in the tree outside my room and screech in the morning.

I go to watch him for the afternoon. He's tweeting to the tune of *Sweet Clementine* while he's perched on his rocking chair's armrest. The room is stuffy even though it's winter. The heater is running and its subtle *brrrrr* runs throughout the house. His Chihuahua is curled up in a ball on the couch, and he stares at the dog. Whenever he tried to flap over to her to pet her, she barked at him and ran away. He doesn't try to get near the dog anymore. He just stays in his chair.

I sit down and pull out my laptop. He's staring at me whole the time, chirping along to a commercial's jingle. He tells me that he grew up in Virginia, had to walk twenty miles to school. He tells me that again after sitting there silently for twenty minutes. I nod along, since I'm just here to give my grandma some time to go shopping.

He falls asleep. I've been here three times in the last two weeks, and he always sleeps. He squirms and shakes in his chair sometimes, his blue feathers pooling on the hardwood floor. I pick them up and toss them in the garbage can, since the vacuum cleaner will get clogged with them.

He wakes up, lifting his head up real fast. He opens his beak to take a yawn, and then he tries to get up. His wings flap, but he's not moving anywhere. I tell him to stop, but he can't hear me over the beating of his feathers. Eventually, he gets up, and he's flapping all over the house. He's on top of the TV, chirping along with a pre-recorded Jimmy Fallon. He opens the refrigerator door and comes out with cheddar cheese hooked onto his talons. I think he's smiling, but I'm not quite sure since I don't know how birds smile.

Then he perches up on the windowsill, scratches his claws against the glass, and stares up at the sun. He tells me that when he was six years old that he was a bird. A seagull, he says. That's why he went into the navy. That's why he asks for glasses of water even though he doesn't drink it. He tells me that he's going to fly to San Francisco. He's going to Fisherman's Wharf, sit on top of the old submarine exhibit there and listen to the sea lions.

I tell him that I can take him there one day when he gets better. When he's not a bird. He's quiet and says that he doesn't want to stop being a bird. He likes to fly. I nod, since even though I've never had wings, I always wondered how it must feel to be perched up on top of a power line. To be just a little bit closer to the sun.

He says he wishes he was always a bird. He likes the way wind flows into his beak. He tells me he does miss petting his dog though.

I ask him why and he says he wishes he was always a bird. He keeps chirping, repeating that wish over and over again, his voice frail and tired.

I open the window up for him. He looks at me and I tell him that a bird isn't supposed to live in a house. He nods, asks me to tell Grandma he's sorry for him, and flies off. He leaves a feather behind and I pocket it.

Each morning, I hear a blue jay outside, chirping. I know it's not my grandpa because we live too far away from the ocean. But, I still grab the feather on my nightstand and hold it

close to my chest. I try to listen to the bird, try to understand what it's trying to say, but I can't. There's something about the way wings work, about how the wind gets in their eyes and brain, that I just won't ever understand until I'm flying with them.

Austin Conner grew up in the East Bay Area near San Francisco. He started writing deep in the bowels of the Internet in a weekly flash fiction contest called 'Thunderdome' where he receives (and gives) critiques to other writers. Currently, he's studying Biology at UC Merced while also pursuing a Creative Writing Minor. He has been published previously at Vestal Review, Dualcoast Magazine, Five on the Fifth, Manawaker Studios, and Flash Frontier.

Non-Fiction

Coloring Books By Sanya Bery

In 2nd grade, I fiddled, cross-legged, as I listened to my teacher mumble about the beauty of books.

"Reading is like giving vague instructions to your mind," she whispered, "like a coloring book: you give your brain an outline and allow it to figure the rest out by itself."

I couldn't help but let her enthusiasm enter me- it was wonderful, what our brain would think, what it was taught to think, with no instruction.

Soon, the bookshelves in my room overflowed with stories I could never forget. At night, I would pray to be those characters, trapped in the confines of pages, fighting evil. I could almost envision my blue eyes twinkling in the sunlight as my blonde hair flew behind me. My long, pale legs would pump faster and faster, leaving the villain in the dust. Maybe this vision of myself was my first mistake.

My second mistake was quite similar: I always imagined myself as princess Ariel, caring and good-natured but just a tad rebellious. In elementary school, at the lunch table, my friends and I were talking about what princess we would be, and I, quite confidently, said that I was Ariel. The reaction, nervous laughter, was not what I expected.

Lyla, a girl with fair skin and dark hair, who we knew was Snow White, responded.

"No, you're not Ariel. That doesn't make any sense. *She* is."

Lyla pointed a slim finger at a shy girl sitting on the corner of our table. She had fire for hair, light eyes and even lighter skin.

"Who am I then?"

Lyla paused for a little, and looked around at everyone else. "I don't know, no one, I think. Not everyone *has* to be a princess. It's okay."

After lunch, I immediately approached the girl who was said to be Ariel. I let my mind wander about all the insane adventures we would go on together. I found out soon enough that she was timid, and deathly afraid of the sea and breaking rules. I was confused.

That night I took a good look at myself in the mirror, the conversation still echoing in my head. *No one. Not everyone has to be a princess.* I was upset, but mainly confused. I looked up to these fictional girls because I saw bits of what I was in them, and pieces of what I wanted to be. I thought that our personalities were very similar. But, everyone else seemed to be drawing comparisons on the basis of something as empty as appearance. It was then that I understood I would never be called Ariel because she was white, and I was not. There was something cynical in reading now; each marvelous heroine was just a character, a figment of my imagination, something I'd never be.

The more books I read, the more I see that authors often stick to simplicity when it comes to detail. For example, *everyone* has a nose and authors often do not include this detail in a character's profile because they know that the reader will be able to imagine it. My teacher was right- we, as readers, are able to fill in aspects even when there is no specific instruction. The author only mentions a nose in extreme cases: when he or she believes that without a proper description the character cannot be complete or fully understood (think: Voldemort). Oddly enough, I have noticed that ethnicity in literature works the same way. The standard of race has become so embedded in our head that like an ordinary nose, explaining that a character is white is a waste of words that can instead be spent on painting a better picture of the character. If there are two characters, Sasha who is white, and William who is not, the character development for Sasha is always much more in depth. The reader learns small quirks about Sasha, like how she takes her coffee. William, however, is treated like a character with an extremely unique nose, and suddenly the reader knows nothing about his personality, but rather knows too much about the exact shade of his skin.

When we read about Sasha we allow our mind to think. We know Sasha likes coffee in the morning with no sugar because she is trying to lose weight for her brother's wedding that's in two weeks. This detail sparks a flame that allows readers to relate to her. We like her, because she's like us. But when we read about William we think, "oh

that's the kid who is black," because that's the only description we have received. We don't see William away from his race as we do Sasha. We have confined him.

Don't get me wrong I believe that race is important in development of characters: fictional or realistic. However, race should help us grow, not stop us. When I was young, what I struggled with most about that lunch table conversation was realizing not that I wouldn't be seen as Ariel, but that I wouldn't be seen as *anyone*. My young mind failed to see me painted as a hero. For the longest time I thought that I was the problem. If no one wanted to write about someone who looked like me, or had parents that looked like me- isn't that an issue?

Whether we want to believe it or not, there's something in all of our brains forcing us to perceive some people differently than others due to small, and in hindsight meaningless, characteristics. These unfair stereotypes, which begin as whispers and progress into screams, build a wall that not only divides us but sometimes, in the worst cases, buries us alive.

I wonder how long it will take until we realize that maybe our instinct is not correct. Maybe, corrupt from the generations before us, our brain is begging for a change-to not only have coloring books but also to celebrate any color that appears. Maybe we need a rainbow of Ariels, and to equally accept those with tails and those with legs.

Sanya Bery lives in New Jersey and spends most of her time in the city, or the tree house she and her brother found in the woods behind a golf course (very cliché, she knows, but seriously: people underestimate the power of tree houses).

Her writing has won both a Silver and Gold key, and has been published in *Creative*

Communication, Prisms Magazine, Teen Ink, and Canvas Literary Magazine.

Her creative writing teacher is the wonderful Ms. Tess James.

Cycling Anyangcheon By Mingoo Kwon

Anyangcheon Stream lies in one of those boroughs in Seoul, just like many other rivers do. It joins the Han River to cut Seoul into two, the north and the south, much like the DMZ, except for the fact that bridges connect the two regions. Every afternoon, when I was eleven, something beautiful occurred on this stream – mallards leisurely floated by the river current, sometimes with their beaks in the water looking for small prey. Schools of carp enjoyed their spring journey, with some of the curious breaking out of the group, following humans walking around the stream, hoping that they would get some snacks.

Tracing the borderlines of Yangcheon-gu borough, the stream was a five-minute walk from my house. I left my apartment with a warning of monsters from cousins who'd rather play video games with me. I ignored them as I descended the U-shaped bike road next to the stairs. Then, I'd turn right to pass by Ginkgo trees lined up among tessellated bluish green precast pavers. I'd turn left after fifty metres to enter a small gate and cycle pass by Yang Chung Middle School; the white square-shaped pavers sometimes out of shape, without any trees, marked the transition between the two areas. I crossed the road, two lanes on one side and three lanes on the other, and there rushed the stream.

Online images of Anyangcheon Stream would always have a luxurious green color. The image of the place that I remember, however, was of humble yellow. Yellow plants, yellow soil. There wasn't that much to see. People always walked there, mainly women, jogging back and forth. Most of them wore a matching color of caps and hiking vests. The most common colors that could be found included fluorescent yellow, orange, and sometimes even purple. Men sporting polarized sunglasses cycled on their bikes. There

descended a vacuum of noise, however. The only sounds that could be heard were the barely audible conversations of women passing by, only heard clearly when I stood right next to them, or people on bikes ringing their bells for the others' safety. Sometimes birds cried from far distances. The stream was peaceful; there are no other words to describe it. I liked that humility, that quietude. I could empty my mind while I continued my journey, and nothing abrupt existed to distract me.

The part about the stream that I loved the most was the entrance to the cycle lane. I had to pull my bike up a long, quite steep slope, to reach an even longer downhill, where my bike now pulled me down in return of my hard efforts. I didn't hold on to the brakes while I entrusted my body on the bike. I lost control of myself. I wanted to lose control. I felt the breeze sweeping through my clothes, under my shirt, around the hair, the fluttering sound. I guess at that time this experience best showed the proportional relationship between hard work and high rewards, also one of the most common Korean phrases 'You reap what you sow', as emphatically stated by my grandparents every Chinese New Year as well-wishing remarks.

I would keep pedaling along the cycle lane until I encountered a field of *galdae*, tall, stalks like those of the spring onion, only thicker, with cottony flowers that resembled fern. Then, the smokestacks of factories became dauntingly close. They would start shining and bursting orange at twilight. At that point I would slow down and stop, like a soccer ball stop spinning once kicked into the goal, and gaze at the *galdae* executing simple harmonic motion – move to the left, slow down, to the right, slow down, back to the left. I wanted to jump in there, walk through them and hide myself. I was too timid to do that, too shy to express myself. I feared that someone would swiftly steal my bike while I wandered around in my own maze. I lost my first bike because of laziness that stopped me from turning the dials on my four-dial-lock by more than one number. I didn't want to risk losing my second bike because of my laziness, my instincts again.

A flat grey bridge connected the district I was living in, Yangcheon-gu, to some other district, separated from each other by the stream. To go across posed a risk for me. Despite the perfectly same scenery on the opposite side of the stream, the green grass surrounding a trail for walkers and cyclists, all under a road with parked white, grey, and black cars, I always considered that side a completely new place. Only recently did I realize that the other district was Yeongdeungpo-gu, my first real home in Korea, when I randomly searched up a map of Seoul on Google while procrastinating. Whenever I dared crossing that bridge, I always made sure that I went through the very center of the bridge, for I feared that I would fall from my bike, into the river.

A couple of days ago I saw a video of pink *galdae* swaying under an azure sky. That reminded me of Anyangcheon. But from the way the tall grass swayed, came a foreboding. One summer night on Naver, Anyangcheon Stream appeared as one of the ten highest trending search words. Out of curiosity I clicked on the link, finding articles and reviews by bloggers of the new water park opening there. It was mainly a place for children, utilizing the empty space near the parking lot to add in pools and fountains and showers. But trees were cut down. *Galdae* were weeded out. Dirt has been replaced with manufactured pieces of monotonously equal, grey rock to sustain the water in the pools. Videos showed that the humble noises of birds and bicycle bells were now non-existent, but replaced by frivolous laughter of kids and columns of water hitting the ground. Yellow was a color obviously absent, but instead a spectrum of colors, starting from bright neon green to dark black with an orange touch, from the tents and cars populating the area.

I still think of the stream at times. Sometimes I dream of an old man on a bike, whizzing past the reed that clung to the mud, followed by a small boy with a blue helmet in a blue tricycle. This is the only image of Anyangcheon I want to remember.

Mingoo Kwon is a senior student at International School Manila. He loves to play video games and listen to early 2000s music at home, or spend his time outside with his friends. He loves writing about nature, his surroundings, and relationships. His poems and writings have been recognized by Scholastic Art & Writing Awards.

On Applying To (and Subsequently Getting Rejected From) College By Courtney Felle

The college application process has been a long, grueling, and arduous one, but the singular upside is that it's given me a litany of new adjectives to add to my vocabulary list: enervating, ignominious, execrable, rebarbative, esoteric, insouciant, supercilious, doctrinaire, persnickety, facetious, pontifical, and, perhaps in the moments when my sarcastic sense of humor helped me find irony in the seemingly constant difficulty, risible.

I consider myself an intelligent person. More than just smart—smart as to be defined by good grades and external academic validation—I genuinely care about and have the capacity for learning, devouring books in my free time, reading political articles in the car to keep up-to-date, having intellectually stimulating conversations with friends and teachers about anything from metaphysics to mathematic modeling. Knowledge excites me; I'm constantly engaged in the world around me, and I subsist on taking in experience from it and contributing positive influence outward.

I've been this way for as long as I can remember; at eight years old, I owned a book set of classics, and I spent free time reading *Great Expectations*, or *Black Beauty*, or my favorite, *Oliver Twist*. I didn't understand why adults gave odd, squinted-up gazes when they saw what I was reading. I could think through complex set theory in eighth grade as part of a college-level math course I signed myself up to take outside of school. I raised my hand in all my classes to ask the most obscure of questions, seeking to elucidate more information and more analysis in every subject.

It wasn't odd in itself; it was odd because my family was not like me. My mother had read only People Magazine since my conception, and my father judged success based on financial state, not ability or intelligence. Neither came from a background of academia. My father was, and largely still is, the only person from either familial side to attend college, and it was a small, local institution nameless outside the Buffalo area. Certainly this isn't bad—it was just different, and I was the family black sheep. My mother and father were fine not knowing the answers to questions; they were fine not even asking the questions. They could blindly accept that they didn't even know what they didn't know; I never could. They wanted to please God; I wanted to be God.

Intelligence often hurt. I had few friends as a child, not because I was rude but because I engaged with different interests than almost anyone else my age I knew. I carried stress in my shoulders and it snowballed into headaches, dull aches thickening my skull with their reverberations. My parents picked fights with me when I intellectually questioned rules that didn't make sense, and I didn't understand why they'd rather leave things be, complacent, than create radical progress. The sensitivity I felt to knowledge and intellectual stimuli I also felt to daily activity and emotional stimuli, and small events wore me down. It didn't take a lot to make me cry, though I did that all at night, silent and hidden. It was a kind of shrouding.

I held tight to my intelligence with the dream that someday, it would bring me somewhere better. I would, with my own merits and efforts, find a community of like-minded scholars who could share my willingness for discussion and excitement for the world. I would travel abroad; I would visit city after city; I would soak in what the world had to offer and learn—because I knew I couldn't ever know everything—with what skills to analyze and use what I did know. I would create something meaningful: bonds with people, literary art that breathed hope and an original ideology, movement towards a better political and societal future.

College was that dream. I would find a place that fit the attributes I so wanted someone else to understand, and I'd fully use the resources there to accomplish my full potential. I'd relish in everything the school had to offer and in return, leave it better than I found it. Despite everything—poring over every small detail of essays and wondering if officers would even read them thoroughly, stressing through the long waiting periods required, deferrals, waitlists, rejections, so many no's I can't help but wonder who actually are the people they accept—I still want to believe in that dream. I don't want to give up the hope that community is out there, and out there for me to join, waiting. More than just optimistic, I want that scrap of a desire I have left to be realistic; I still want to find a place that recognizes the type of intelligence I pride myself on consciously trying to create, every day, and join a supportive, creative community of capable individuals.

Courtney Felle is a high school senior. She has been writing for the majority of her life, in most every genre. Outside of writing, she enjoys hiking, reading, and volunteering in the greater Buffalo area, particularly with kids. She was named “most likely to start an argument” in her high school yearbook, and she plans to keep starting arguments that create progress in society. For this reason, she wants to study political science in college, hoping to someday work with government in bettering the communities around her.

English Not Good By Sarah Feng

If you read that title in a mocking accent, then you may be guilty of this. Somewhere along the timeline of immigrants spilling into America, *English* became the landmark of culture and intelligence; *accent* a caricature for *heathen* and *lazy*. If you thought of that title with derision, then you might be unconsciously harboring society's draconian eye.

It seems that English has grown into a necessary component of intellect. And while I have only had fourteen years of experience with this, I know that there are thousands more who have had lifetimes.

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When I first came to America, I didn't speak English. The few words I knew—"hello," "goodbye," "sorry"—came out in chopped bits, the words lurching on my tongue like clumsy rocks.

I flushed red with embarrassment when the teacher asked me to read passages aloud. My kindergarten classmates stared and whispered. Their English was perfect: smooth *r*'s, quick *l*'s. When I sat with my friends at the round blue tables, they would ask me, "Why do you go to this school, anyway? You just came from China. English must be hard for you."

They'd laugh like it was a joke, but I could sense the question simmering beneath their smiles.

I'd tuck a hand under my uniform skirt, picking at my Lunchable, and try to laugh back.

So I worked. I borrowed novels about time travelers and fairies from the library and took them home. In my free time, I'd thumb through them until they were so full of dog-ears that the librarian told me to just keep them. I'd whisper the words to myself until they felt like smooth pebbles. At home, my Mandarin came rapid-fire.

During the summers, we visited my father's hometown in China, Zhijiang, where I had grown up, and I could be another Chinese girl picking at the roasted oranges that her aunt prepared for her. The dialect spoken there, *zhijianghua*, charged forward at twice the speed of Mandarin and rose in different cadences. I could converse freely in both Mandarin and *zhijianghua*, interchange Mandarin and *zhijianghua* in sentences, and mesh the two dialects to create a hybrid that only my relatives and I understood. I came back from China each year with a mouth full of the language.

In America, most of my closest friends were Chinese. We wore our culture with pride on the sleeves of our red silk *qi paos* and laughed while our parents fought over the bills at cheap restaurants. And at school, I had finally smoothed out my English. Nobody snickered when I read passages out loud anymore. My best friends through my early life switched from being Japanese, Vietnamese, and then Indian—but none seemed to last, because they didn't really understand. They ate their spaghetti with forks and watched football on the television.

By the end of elementary school, I had won a few small school-wide awards for my writing. My parents promptly encouraged me to apply to a private school in the area, and lo and behold, their middle school campus accepted me. But this was different from my public elementary. This school was intensive when it came to language arts; the grammar training was breakneck and ruthless, and the teachers treated essays with hawk-like, iron-fisted attention. In the first few months of school, I helplessly lagged behind. The only grammar I'd learned from my public school consisted of 'noun', 'verb', and 'pronoun.' I knew how to write with things like appositives, subordinate conjunctions, and dependent clauses, but I didn't know how to name them.

Everybody at this school was white: in my eyes, they were big smiles and confidence and American flags flashing in their eyes. Subconsciously, I pushed myself twice as hard to catch up to everybody else, and I began to float to the top of the rankings every time we had a grammar test.

As we labored away on our expository essays, my thesaurus became my Bible. I could use words like *undermine*, *insouciant*, and *apparatus*. Nevertheless, I floundered helplessly when it came to words like *dais*, *linebacker*, and *Kanye West*. I realized that if I wanted to speak—not just write—like an American, I was going to have to be friends with more Americans. I watched my first football game and started using forks to eat my spaghetti. By the end of sixth grade, I published my first novel and won my first cash award for writing.

In the summers, I still visited Beijing, my mother's hometown, and Zhi Jiang. My uncle spoke to me in *zhijianghua*. I asked him to *slow down, please*, and I forgot the taste of roasted oranges. Avoid stigma, earn respect: I traded my *qi paos* for Brandy Melville sweaters, my Chinese for my English, and it was—*is*—infinitely more painful than any cut or incision I have ever experienced. This is the price I am still paying to fit in at a white-majority school: dissect the Chinese parts of me and make them accessories rather than organs.

In eighth grade, I was awarded the prize for the best English in the grade, out of all my white classmates who were born and raised with it. People respected me—but the question was buried deep in their throats. I could feel it simmering under their skins again, even though they never spoke it out loud. There were big smiles and confidence and American flags flashing in their eyes. But they respected me, and that was all I wanted: to perfect my English so I could earn their admiration. In the summer, I visited China, and I realized that it had been years since I could understand *zhijianghua*. When I started preparing for the AP Chinese exam, I found that now the rocks wobbling in my mouth were Mandarin.

Today, I have made a sort of turbulent peace with the split inside of me. It almost never comes out anymore, but in Chinese class and in Zhi Jiang, sometimes it'll rear its ugly head.

At his farm in China, my great-uncle will ask me a question, beckon me to squat and feed the chickens in his pens, pluck the plums from the trees. My cousins with sun-hardened hands do this perfectly, and I struggle, because my fingers, suited for the cold metal of a pen, fumble with the pulpy pits of fruit.

There is always a moment of blank, white-hot panic—and shame, too.

My great-uncle will smile patiently and guide my fingers forward, but still, I would not wish this on anyone.

Now I'm a freshman at the same school, and a boy came this year. Just arrived from China. And when he introduced himself, I saw the words like heavy rocks on his tongue, lurching into each other. The class was silent, and after class, my friend snickered, "I couldn't even understand him. Could you?"

In literature class, the teacher asked him to read a passage from *The Odyssey*, and I saw his face turn red. I saw myself. Slowly, he began to read, tripping over the Greek names and Homeric terms. The class was silent.

"My English not very good," he had said afterward, face burning.

At the end of class, the girl next to him spoke.

"Hey," she asked him curiously, "why do you go to this school? Why don't you just go to a math school—or something? It would be lot easier for you."

Because this school is too hard for you, was the unspoken end.

The bell rang. His eyes dropped to the ground. He put his copy of *The Odyssey* into his backpack and laughed back, but I saw myself. I saw every child with yellow skin and brown eyes who wanted big smiles, confidence, and American flags flashing in their eyes.

The boy is a genius at math and physics, and yet all people can see is his crude English—coming out in chopped bits, the words lurching on his tongue like clumsy rocks.

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I try my best to help the boy. I cheer the loudest for him after he presents his literature project, even when the teacher sharply corrects his pronunciations of *Telemachus* and *Ithaca*. I laugh the quickest when he stumbles through a joke in English, and I always say hello to him when he walks into the classroom.

We are not close friends, and I can't be sure if he's thinking of shedding his skin or burrowing farther into it. But at a white-majority school, birds of a feather have to flock together sometimes. So when he lowers his literature book and says, "My English not good," I tell him, "No. Your English is very good."

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Please. Don't let English become a landmark of culture. I don't want the boy at my school to have to do the same thing I did.

Sarah Feng is a freshman at Pinewood School (Los Altos, CA), where she is studying the chemical composition of words. Her works have been recognized by the regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, the California Coastal Commission, the Write the World Novel Writing Prize, and more, and are published or forthcoming in TAB: A Journal of Poetry & Poetics, Moledro Magazine, and Write the World Best of 2015 Anthology, among others. She reads prose for Glass Kite Anthology and reviews for Write the World.

Make America Greta Again By Greta Jonas

I walked through the front doors of school on the first day and cringed as the smell of anxiety and B.O. smacked me right in the face. Excitement buzzed around the halls despite the odors that were drifting about. I made my way to first period, even though class started in over twenty minutes, and looked on at the groups of students huddled together. They looked as though they were eager for the new school year to begin, something I could not relate to.

I walked through the library and felt a pang of sadness when I noticed that the spot where my friends and I had once met every morning was now filled with new faces. I struggled with the thought that I no longer had a place where I fit in at school. Since my two best friends had switched schools, I felt like I was the new kid again. Still the gawky, wide-eyed seventh grader trying her best to copy down the notes on cell functions through her tears. My stomach clenched as I realized I would have to make new friends, something I was not good at. To be frank, it was something I sucked at.

As I walked into the classroom, I settled my things down in the back row. I laid my arm down on the desk and closed my eyes, pretending I was anywhere else. My eyes drifted shut and my mind wandered to things that were far more important, such as the nap I

was already planning on having during math or the tweet I planned on posting after school.

My desk suddenly shook and an image of the world cracking open and sucking me into hell appeared in my head. Unfortunately, it was just my phone buzzing against the desk.

“Don’t be so melodramatic, Greta. I will not hit you with my car just to put you out of your misery. Stop asking. I’m sure you’ll have a great day at school. Stay positive!”

I scoffed so violently at the text from my best friend, Wanda, that the teacher sitting at the front of his room was disrupted from what he was doing and stopped to look at me with eyebrows raised. I could feel warmth spread to my face and I ducked my head down into my arms. Great day at school? As if there were such a thing.

The beat of my leg tapping up and down offered me mild relief, and the sound sparked a memory from the week before.

The breeze of late summer grazed my skin and caused me to shiver. We were all gathered around the fire in the backyard of a friend of a friend’s house. A new girl, named Emily, joined us that night and the boys fawned over her long legs and sophisticated British accent. I tapped my finger on the lawn chair as my friend, Wanda, moved around greeting each person present. Her ability to easily make friends was something I had always admired and hoped to replicate. Instead, I sat in the corner twiddling my thumbs and planning world destruction. Or something along those lines. My scowl deepened as I scolded myself for not being more outgoing because, obviously,

it was my own fault that I had so few friends. *If I could be a little more normal, maybe then I'd be more approachable*, I thought to myself.

Once Wanda finally sat down, everyone quieted and a group discussion began. By group discussion, I do not mean that we chatted about the recent fall of the unemployment rate or our outrage with unpaid maternity leave the mothers in our country get, as I would have hoped. Instead, we talked about Spam sandwiches and what to put on them. Eventually, after learning a disturbing amount of Spam sandwich information, Wanda steered the conversation around to describe everyone's title within the group to clue Emily into how everyone fit in. She labeled herself as the hot one in the group, to which many of the girls in the group rolled their eyes, me included. I waited in anticipation as she made her way around the circle, wondering how I would be labeled. Juanpa fired off finger guns as he was labeled the funny one. Clementine shrugged her shoulders and smiled as Wanda tagged her as mom of the group. Julias merely laughed as he embraced his label as the token minority.

Everybody shifted my way when Wanda finally got to me. They looked surprised, as if they genuinely hadn't noticed me. The attention made me blush, and I could feel my insides shudder with anticipation.

"And that's Greta. She's the quiet one," Wanda said as she lazily pointed her hand my way.

The quiet one. The words echoed in my head and tears blurred my vision. I would've expected being described as quiet by others. I didn't expect people to know who I am or try to make an effort to get to know me. It was true that I often kept to myself when at group outings, but that's not my fault. The least they could do was be more interesting. I hung out with them solely out of loyalty to my friend, Wanda. Okay, and maybe a little bit was because my mom kept pressuring me to get out of the house instead of "sitting in my room in the dark all goddamn day." But mostly because of Wanda.

If anyone else had labeled me as quiet I would have shrugged and written it off as them not knowing me. I would've gotten into Wanda's car and complained about it, laughing and commenting on our shared hatred. To me, quiet is how you describe someone you don't really know. Like when someone asks you to sign their yearbook at the end of the year and you write "you're quiet but you seem really nice! Let's totally hang sometime! HAGS!" and then forget about them the following day. Quiet is what you wish your younger siblings would be when you're trying to binge watch shows on Netflix. But quiet isn't your best friend.

If the only thing my best friend could say about me was that I was quiet... Then maybe it was true. Maybe I just had to come to terms that I was just boring and didn't have anything important to say. I forced myself to accept that I would be doomed to silence the rest of my life but for some reason it made me feel nauseous.

I had been expecting something more along the lines: 'Greta? She's the weird one. Flat out fucking strange,' or "Greta? She's likely to become the most successful serial killer of our generation. "

What I got was the equivalent to "Greta? Greta who? "

"Greta Jones?" I sprang back into attention as the teacher droned off my name. I didn't bother correcting him, figuring that he'd forget it the next day anyway.

"Here," I replied halfheartedly. Thinking about the perspiration accumulating underneath my arms made me sweat even more. The image of the class being flooded with my sweat filled my head. I laughed as my classmates struggled to keep afloat as the salty rushing water raced through the school. "Year 3000" by the Jonas Brothers played in my head while the girl nearest me lost grip of her desk and sank beneath the sea.

"I've been to the year 3000. Not much has changed but they live under water..."

"You should really go to the doctor." The girl in front of me whisper-yelled to her friend in front of me and snapped me back to reality.

"Why? They're just going to give me medicine and I hate that syrupy stuff," the platinum blonde responded earnestly. I noted the pale greenish sheen to her skin. She was clearly ill.

"But you puked in the hall!" The girl sounded concerned, as was I. I also wondered where the pile of barf was and whether it made the halls smell even worse.

"No, it doesn't really count because I ate it."

"You what?" her friend nearly shrieked in disbelief.

"I was walking in the hall and barfed into my hand. I didn't want anybody to see so I just put it back in my mouth." Her eyes bulged from her head, afraid to hear her friend's judgment.

I tried my best to contain my disgust but couldn't help letting out an audible gasp. The two turned around and looked shocked, completely unaware of my presence. I sheepishly looked away from them and gazed out the window into the school parking lot to pretend I wasn't listening.

I remembered driving to the school parking lot the previous weekend. When I arrived I haphazardly parked and walked over to where most of the group were gathered. I stood over by Wanda and stayed quiet as the gang prattled on about this and that. I prayed my silence was more brooding than timid, because that seemed way cooler.

As I joined them, Juanpa questioned, “What should we do now?”

“Oh, oh! Can we car surf? I haven’t tried it yet!” Wanda yelled and everyone voiced their approval. Juanpa agreed to be the driver and asked if anyone else would like to go with. I raised my hand and relished in the raised eyebrows I received from the group.

I set my foot down on the back of the bright red vehicle and hoisted myself on top. Wanda grabbed my outstretched hands and I fell backwards onto the car as I pulled her up with me. Once we were both up we positioned ourselves laying belly down and gripped onto the ridges of the top.

We yelled down to Juanpa that we were ready and as the car began to move Wanda let out a squeal filled with both terror and delight. I held my middle finger out towards the school as we made it around the parking lot and gazed at the barely visible stars. I felt like I was in one of those indie teen movies, the wind in my hair and the radio creating an almost atmospheric paradise.

Then I saw the cop car.

The cop car rushed into the school parking lot, lights flashing blue and red, and I immediately jumped from the moving car and landed skillfully on my feet. There was a moment after I landed where I stood hunched down, genuinely considering making a run for it. But the cop car was approaching too quickly so I stood frozen in my tracks, waiting for my impending doom. When he finally parked next to us, he gleefully hopped out of the car and pranced over to us. He looked all too happy to bring teenage fun to an end.

The next thing I knew I was in the backseat of Juanpa’s car, shifting around uncomfortably in a car seat because it was the only available spot. I moved around the small chair, trying to find a spot where the plastic arms wouldn’t dig into my ass. Tears dripped from Wanda’s eyes as the police officer lectured us about the dangers of riding on top of a car. I may be stupid enough to ride on top of a car, but I am not too stupid to

know that it's not dangerous. I rolled my eyes and sadly fixed my attention out the window.

Finally, after waiting an hour for him to call all of our parents, listening to him rattle off all the reasons why we shouldn't have done that, and promising to never do it again, we were let free. We traipsed over to the rest of the group, who by now were very solemn, and inquired about what we'd be doing next.

Clementine shifted uncomfortably in her position on top of a car and said, "We should probably just go home now."

The rest of the group looked around for other suggestions but none came. So I spoke up.

"Well, I may have a few things in my car..." I mentioned nervously, walking over to where my car was parked and opening up the trunk. Their faces lit up with surprise as they took the large stacks of toilet paper, cartons of eggs, and boxes upon boxes of plastic forks that filled my trunk.

"Why do you keep all this stuff in your car?" Juanpa asked.

I shrugged and smiled mischievously, "Why not?"

"What are the forks for?" Wanda asked.

I laughed and walked towards my car before stopping and looking over my shoulder.

"Don't worry about it," I said coolly, slamming my trunk shut. I flipped on my shades and glided to the driver's side of my car as the camera (you know, the one in my indie teen movie) panned in on my face, then back onto the faces of my shocked acquaintances, then back onto me.

“Are you guys coming?”

They climbed into my car and my imagination took over as I drove away. My passengers gazed back at the school as I pressed a button and fire exploded from the parking lot. A kickass playlist started up in my head as we drove away to Mexico to hide from our crime.

“I never knew you were so cool, Greta,” they fawned.

It was time that I labeled myself, instead of letting what other people perceived me be what I become. I was a rebel, the troublemaker with the baby face. I wasn't two people like I had thought. The one I saw myself as: strong, mischievous with a dash of psychotic, and the one others perceived me as: a mostly unremarkable wallflower. I reveled in the knowledge that I didn't have to be stuck in the prison of who people thought I was. I could just be me, and damn to hell what everyone else thought.

“From now on, call me Yellow Belly Abacus,” I said through a smirk. I was relieved as I took control of my identity, the weight of everyone else's assumptions suddenly gone.

I came back to awareness as the bell rang with the image still lingering in my mind. I felt a surge of reassurance as I picked up my bag and slung it over my shoulder. While walking out the door, I noticed the barf-eater next to me and cringed at her ghastly appearance from close up. I saw that she was already watching me, waiting for me to say something.

“You think in the future we're going to have humans on display at the State Fair in the birthing centers too?” I watched the shock fill her eyes as she registered what I said.

Visibly relieved that I didn't bring up the barf, she guffawed and started, “What the-?”

I extended my hand for her to shake, mentally reminding myself to wash it immediately after, and smiled as I introduced myself, “Hi, I’m Greta Jonas. But you can call me Yellow Belly Abacus.”

Greta is a senior in high school and besides writing; she enjoys matcha ice cream and Netflix originals. She plans on going abroad to Germany and once she comes back she will attend Hamline University. She is also not quite sure how to write a bio that isn’t for social media; darned millennials.

Today By Christine Adamamy

“Just text him, we’re almost there”

Joy grabbed my phone and closed her passenger side window. The phone screen buzzed, 2:43 PM. Only five hours late, Queen of Egyptian timing. Everyone else from church is probably in Florida by now, an hour or two away from the retreat center. I should text one of them to save us three dinners; I’m hungry. Thank God I threw snacks into the car last night, I wouldn’t have remembered today.

My car pulls into my usual spot at Starbucks. Shoot, my headlights are still on. The front of my car scrapes against the concrete block as I shift to park. Anthony squints back at

me through the tall window, taking out his ear buds and closing tabs. Two empty coffee cups sit beside him. I wonder how long he's been here waiting. He's already up by the time I make it to the door, tripping over his Mac charger on the way over to me. Do his eyebrows always crease in the middle like that?

"Are you okay?"

The lady at the counter looks up as Anthony hugs me and out of the corner of my eye I see Joy darting into the bathroom with a bundle of clothes in her arms. Really? I'm the one who's gonna be driving. I should have gotten first dibs for the bathroom. I just want to get out of these clothes. Put something, anything, other than black on.

"Yeah, I just need to get out of these clothes. Then we'll go. Can you order my usual?"

"Okay. But listen, I'm driving"

A week's worth of arguing disappears as he finally lets me out of his hug and rubs my arm up and down. My goose bumps scratch at his hands. I'm cold?

"Fine. Wait, get it hot, not iced."

"Alright. Keys?"

I shuffle through my pile of clothes until they fall out, announcing that they have reached the tiled floors through a series of clattering sounds and stares from people behind screens. God why do they all have to be here. I just want to leave. He bends down to pick them up, kissing my forehead as he turns towards the car. A piece of my hair follows his lips. Winter always makes it staticky. As I gather it into some kind of ponytail, the bathroom door swings open. Joy comes out, transformed. Black isn't really her color, it

clashes with the brightness of her eyes. The yellow and gray sweats are a much better fit, and she snickers my way before meeting Anthony at the car.

“Dude. Mirror. You look like death”

She holds the door open for me as I gather my sweater into my arms and enter the bathroom, ready for a change of mood. Great move, Christine, wear make up to a funeral. Genius. The dampened toilet paper leaves crumbs around my eyes as I violently scrub away any evidence that I had cried. I shouldn't have. Not for her. I mean, she's the one that left us.

Someone knocks at the door.

“Ugh, someone's in here”

“Yeah I know, I forgot my pants in there can you grab them?”

Only my sister could forget her pants in a Starbucks bathroom. I grab them and leave, looking down at the bright red sweater with Georgia printed boldly across it. Much better, and comfortable enough for a road trip.

“Hey, should I move...this...or?”

Anthony is standing by the open trunk, pointing at something. Shoot, I almost forgot about that thing. I don't care what you do with it just don't make me see it again. I never want to see it again.

“I don't care. I just don't want to see it.”

I turn the corner of the car. Creepy, I could swear the portrait sized funeral picture is laughing at me, almost saying *Oh; you thought I couldn't ruin anything more for you. You*

thought your mind could leave my memories behind. Watch me. I break eye contact with it long enough to finally see the picture I avoided looking at all morning. Huh, she left her hair the same all these years? Were there any new wrinkles that my childhood hadn't memorized? No. This picture must be from before she left.

We bought a house just for her to move in with us after Grandpa passed, spending way outside our budget. She left her own daughter, my mother, to move in with an uncle who ended up dumping her into a nursing home. Why? Why. The question played on repeat in my mind for years until I answered it myself at the age of fourteen, while other kids' minds were on innocent crushes. I decided that the answer was simply "the world just does not make sense". A simple epiphany, one I still think every day. One day she was there and the next she was packing her bags because her son "needed" her in New York. I need her here. He was always her favorite, and while my mom cared for three of us and worked daily, he gambled his family away. We cared for her; I remember her stories about the nuns at the schools she attended in Egypt. How she filed her nails every day, the scent of mink coats hung up in mothball filled closets. Our family was so estranged now that I couldn't even let people know that the funeral today. If people came, they would have met my uncle, and my Mom didn't want his crazy to affect my reputation. It's over now; I never have to see him or her ever again. Couldn't she have waited until after this retreat to...

"Christine?"

My stream of consciousness ends as Joy nudges me over and grabs the picture, throwing it face down and plopping Anthony's bags over it. She is barely gentle enough to spare the stand that prods out the back. I wipe a single tear from the corner of my eye. The world just does not make sense.

Anthony doesn't open my door. Ever. We both decided years ago that it was a waste of time and I'm at least strong enough to open a door. I guess the toilet paper make up

wipes didn't work as well as I thought they did.

Today, he opens my door.

"You will arrive at your destination at 10:53 PM. Fastest Route available."

The GPS lady provides a much needed distraction from my own thoughts. We miss one lecture, dinner, and some icebreakers at the retreat. I hope no one there asks why I'm late. Please don't ask. Please don't. Not today.

"I'll play your music, no worries"

Thank God. I'm not exactly in a Bon Jovi kind of mood.

"Shoot, my coffee"

"Oh man, I completely forgot. Want me to run back in?"

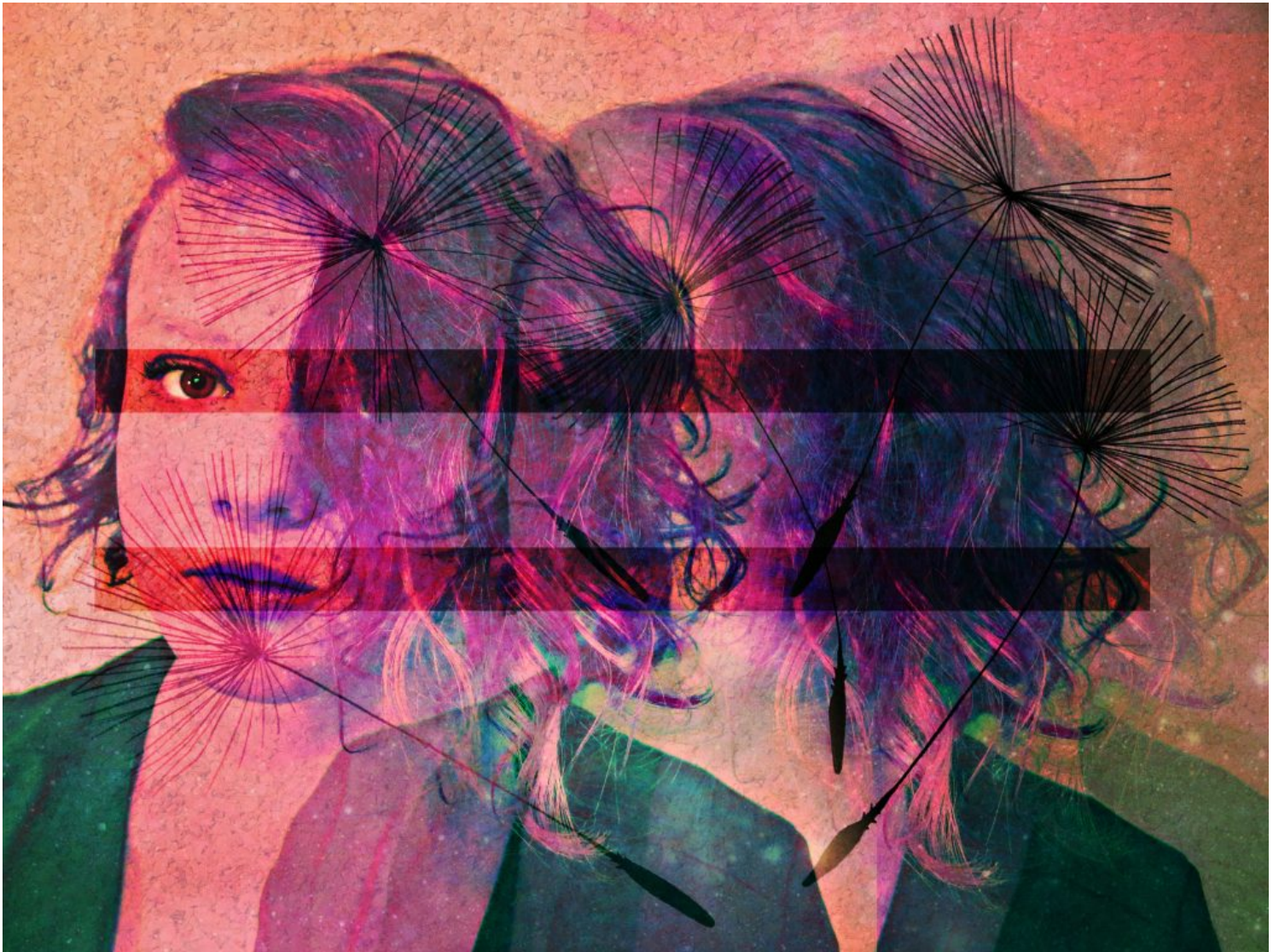
I see Joy in the rear view mirror. She is fumbling with something in the trunk as I feel my car take a slight jump. Anthony's bag is now next to her, destined to become her pillow for the next 8 hours. I hear nails on glass and the frame scratch against my trunk bed; I can see the outline of the gray hair. She drops the picture after a moment and looks back towards the front; her eyes glisten as they lock with mine. *Yeah, Joy. I miss her too.* I turn slowly towards Anthony, who has been watching Joy struggle. He doesn't say anything about his bag.

"No, let's just leave."

Christine Adamamy is a fourth year student at UGA. She hopes to be an Elementary school teacher and loves writing on the side whenever she can. Her hobbies include reading, Netflix binging, and all things dog related.

Art

Paramnesia By Noelle Hendrickson



Paramnesia

To create the photo, I first took the picture, asking a friend to model. Then I took the raw file into Photoshop CS6, and added shapes, textures, and ultimately editing the photo to convey

the title I gave it. Paramnesia is a delusion where fact and fantasy are jumbled, such as déjà vu. In the artwork I attempted to show the gap between fact and fantasy, whilst the equal sign bridges the two.

Noelle Hendrickson is an American photographer currently studying abroad in Melbourne, Australia. She combines her photography with her Photoshop Certification to create story-telling visual art. Her work has appeared in literary magazines such as The Claremont Review and The Eclectic.

Silenced; Holes By Joy Xie



Holes



Silenced

These pieces were inspired by my desire to discover more about people and wondering what we all have in common. I wanted to express the words that we don't say out loud but can be conveyed in our facial expressions. The painting titled Holes depicts a worn, old man but parts of his face are cut out to represent how life at times can tear holes through people and create scars. However, beyond the pain, there still exists happiness as shown by serene scenery past the canvas. For Silenced, I wanted to express how at times I felt like no words could express the emotions I was feeling, bound by inexplicable ropes, as some other girls may also feel. Thus, I wanted people to know that even if our words can be silenced, our art will not be.

Joy Xie is a junior at Mountain Lakes High School and lives in a small town in northern New Jersey. She enjoys painting and reading in her free time, developing a passion for these hobbies as a young girl. She has been published in *Celebrating Arts*, *Aerie International*, and *AIPF* and has received awards in Scholastic Arts and Writing.

Indian Street Entrepreneurs By Varun Tandon



Indian Street Entrepreneurs

This photo was taken as I walked from my Grandma's apartment in New Delhi to a nearby market. I saw this man selling many fruits and vegetables, all piled up and carefully balanced. He pushes his cart of produce outside each apartment complex and waits for people exiting the apartment to purchase his goods. My grandma mentioned how she often looks out over the balcony of her apartment, and when she sees this vendor or another one, she heads down to the street to buy food. I like the way this photo turned out because it shows what a typical city street in bustling New Delhi looks like. I also like the punchy colors of the oranges, bananas, and coconuts in the photo and how the photo captures the entrepreneurial spirit of many of the street vendors.

Varun Tandon is a junior at Homestead High School in Cupertino, California. He was born in California to Indian immigrant parents and has visited India annually since his youth. The influence of these annual trips can be seen in the photography he takes. A technology enthusiast, he believes that aesthetic is as important as functionality, spurring his interest in photography and graphic design. Whether he is biking with friends, eating dinner with his relatives, or running alone, Varun always carries a camera, ready to capture the moment.