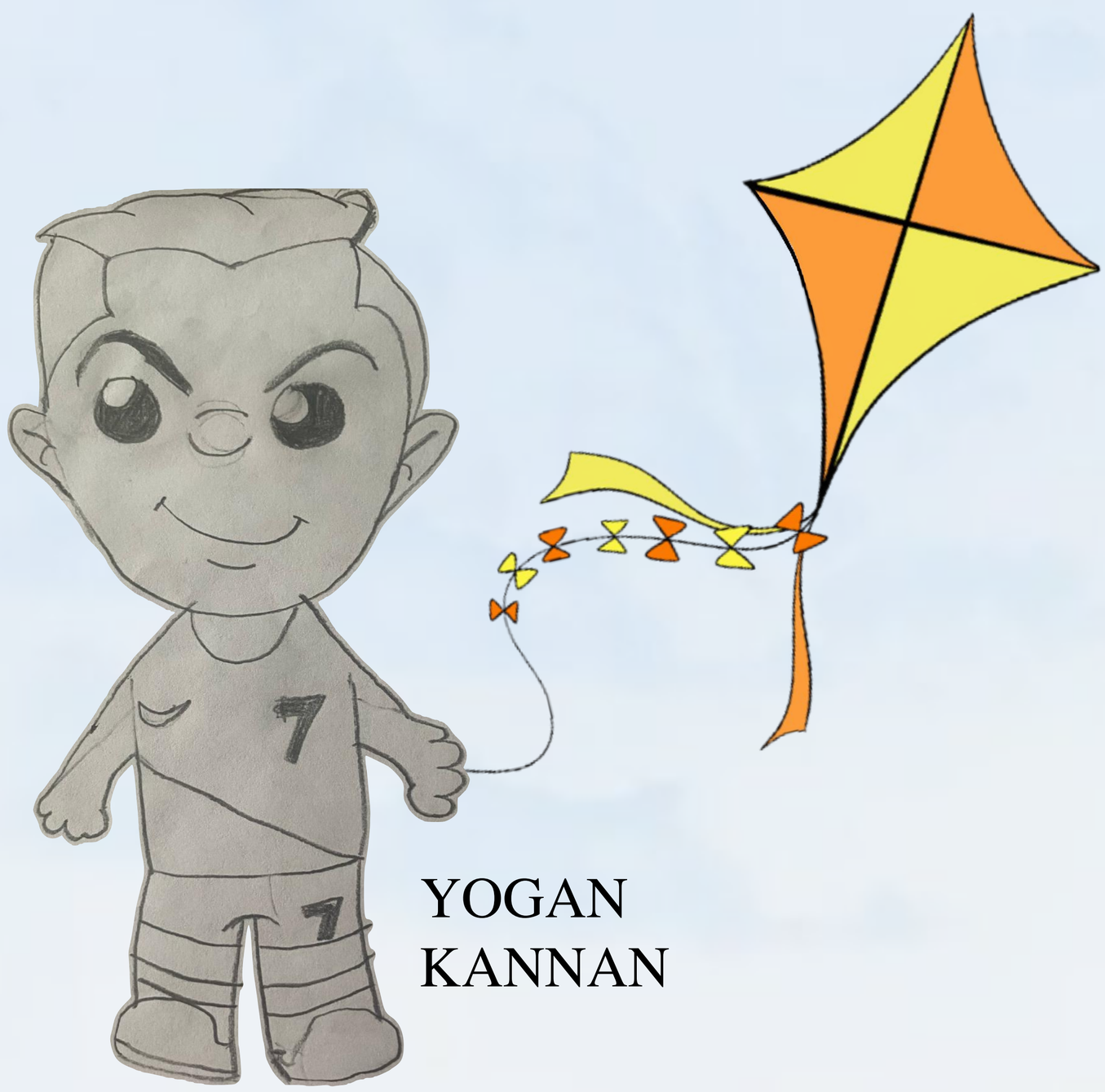
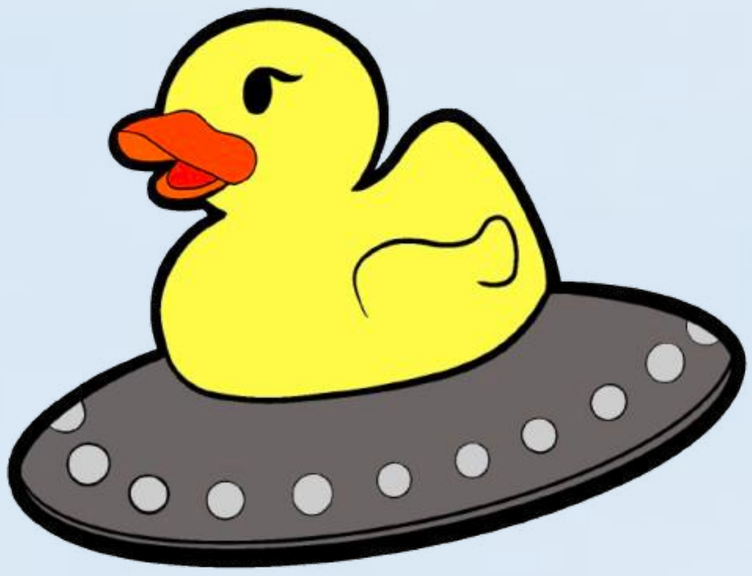
Out
of the
Blue
HP 06074

Look up into the sky.
Do you see something new? Something random?
You may not know what it is.
But if you squint your eyes and look closely, you will start to understand.
Give ideas a chance… even if they are out of the blue.



YOGAN
KANNAN



Out of the Blue

South Windsor Public Schools

Timothy Edwards Middle School

100 Arnold Way

South Windsor, CT 06074

May 2025

Staff Cover Letter

Welcome to the fourteenth edition of Timothy Edwards Middle School's literary magazine Out of the Blue! We are so excited to have celebrated the work of TE students and staff for fourteen years now!

Our magazine is produced by a club open to all TEMS students and we are proud to publish and celebrate the different works of all in our school community. There is so much talent in TE! Out of the Blue is proud to grow and expand each year as we publish the creative efforts of Timothy Edwards' students, staff, and alumni.

Last year, thanks to our wonderful editor-in-chief Ishanvi Mohapatra, we made a fabulous website. This year, we expanded our technological endeavors and made a PDF with a common theme. Thanks to the genius of Ishanvi Mohapatra we developed the theme of "In the Sky" which is where ideas can come to us from Out of the Blue! Each idea is unique and sometimes random so we wanted to incorporate all of them into the magazine.

The Out of the Blue staff would like to thank the many people who make this magazine possible. First, we would like to thank Ms. Olsen for her time and effort towards producing the magazine and facilitating our club meetings. We always have fun! We love the ice breakers she uses each club meeting to make us laugh and get to know each other better. But most importantly, we love how she is always willing to help us grow as artists, writers, and students. Ms. Olsen reminds us that we are all special and our ideas matter… even if they are *Out of the Blue*. We would also like to thank Dr. Carter for her ongoing support of our magazine. Further thanks goes to our building administrators: Mrs. Irwin, Mr. Leòn, Mrs. Mafe, and Mr. Clifton. More thanks go out to the many teachers who encourage their students to contribute to the magazine such as Mrs. Goodale, to Mr. Goric who always supports us on the fabulous TETV News, and Mr. Rescsanski for contributing a fabulous performance from our Orchestra!

Finally, we would also like to acknowledge and thank the PTO for supporting our magazine each and every year. We could not make our magazine as beautiful and successful as it is without their generosity and support!

Finally, Ms. Olsen and the entire crew would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to our editor-in-chief Ishanvi Mohapatra. We are so excited for all that you will do in the future and you have left an indelible mark on Out of the Blue. Our magazine is better because of you and you helped us dream things we never thought possible. So as you go off into Out of the Blue, always remember how amazing you are!

Most importantly, thank YOU for submitting to and/or reading Out of the Blue!

All pieces included in the magazine are original student and staff work. Please understand that everything in this magazine was proofread and carefully looked over when it came to art. While every attempt has been made to edit for mechanical and grammatical errors, we acknowledge that some issues may have been overlooked before publishing. Additionally, some of the written and artistic pieces in this year's magazine have been inspired by other works. We hope you enjoy this year's issue of Out of the Blue and the tremendous effort we all put in.

Letter From the Editor

Dear Reader,

I've had the privilege of serving as the Editor-in-Chief of *Out of the Blue* for the past two years. During this time, I've worked with a wonderful group of peers to gather, create, and curate all of the submissions. I believe it's important for you to know a bit more about our journey over these last two years.

Our creative team loves to do things differently. In 2024, we embraced a new format to give a better digital experience to our readers and launched our 13th edition as a vibrant website. We worked tirelessly to present each submission in a way that truly made it shine and were thrilled to see hundreds of students and faculty members reading our magazine. This year, we experimented again with a different digital format, a flip book, featuring a completely new design and fresh look. This edition isn't just a collection of writing, artwork, photography, music and games; it tells the story of our resilience and dedication to improving with every edition.

However, this magazine is not just the story of the *Out of the Blue* club members. It is the story of all of the students. We've included all the submissions we've received in the magazine because we deeply value the time and effort behind each piece and believe that every student deserves to have their voice heard. We prioritize diversity and recognition for our students over selective curation.

In *Out of the Blue*, students in grades 6–8 and even some staff members have shared their emotions, observations, questions and creativity. They've used a wide range of literary devices, music genres, art mediums and styles to express themselves in powerful ways.

I am incredibly proud of this magazine and of the dedication everyone has shown. As I prepare to leave Timothy Edwards Middle School, I do so with full confidence that all the students will continue to amaze the world with what they can do. I have no doubt that you will love what you're about to see.

But more than anything, I want to thank Ms. Olsen for making this possible and helping the voices of the students be heard. Therefore, our back cover is dedicated to her. Thank you Ms. Olsen for everything you have done for me and all of the other students.

Sincerely,
Ishanvi Mohapatra
Editor-in-Chief

Staff

Staff Advisor
Corianne Olsen

Editor-in-Chief and Layout Editor
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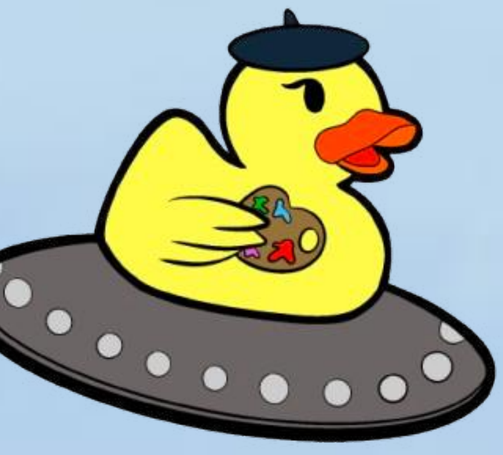

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What Can I Submit?

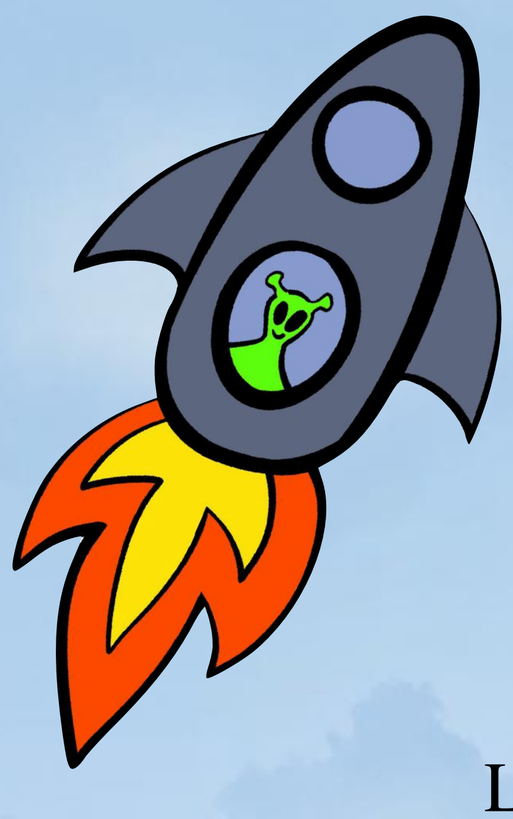
MS. CORIANNE OLSEN

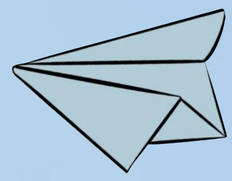
I want to submit to Out of the Blue
But I really don't know what to do
I thought I could try to write a poem
But I got distracted by my phone
I do not know how to draw
Trust me, you'd shudder if you saw
I cannot sing or hold a tune
My brother said I sound like a goon.
I do not play an instrument
It would not be time well spent
I have no clue how to code
For me that just would not bode
So what can I do
What can I include

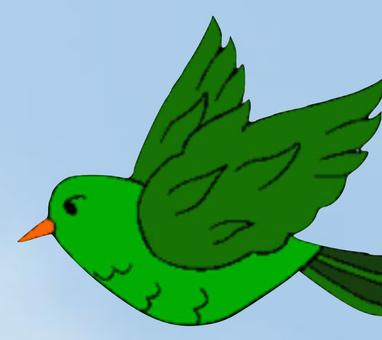
Well…

When I think of TE
It comes to me suddenly
I think of support
And my hesitance has no further retort
I think of kindness that makes me happy
So even if my poem is a little silly
I will still include it
And know that it will fit

Anyone can submit anything to Out of the Blue!
Even YOU!







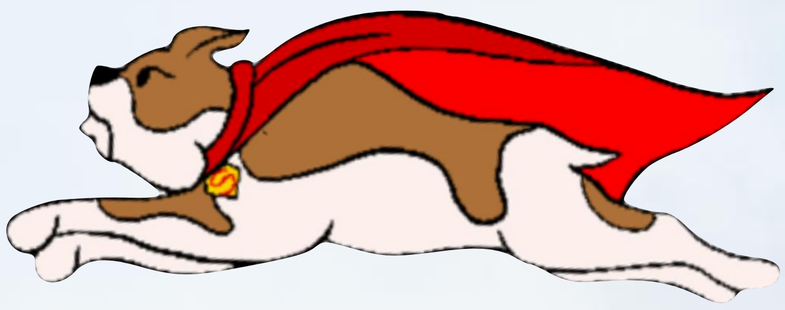
Randomness

KESA VISWADA BODDAPATI

Luke, a diligent inventor, has always been productive by planning the arrangements of the precise gears in his machines to the routines of the day. However, there was one thing that always bothered him, randomness. He couldn't understand how things in the world like nature could behave so fitfully. One day, out of the blue, Luke noticed something unusual. As he walked through the forest for wood, a flow of air blew through the trees, sprinkling the leaves in every direction. Some people twirled in spiral while others hovered in chaotic patterns. "Why can't leaves fall in a straight line?" he wondered, disappointed by the randomness of it all. Determined to control this unpredictability, Luke set to work building a device that could predict how things would move, just like the leaves. Hours turned into weeks and he constructed gears, levers and wires. But, out of the blue, the machine didn't work. The leaves it predicted fell in a completely different pattern than what he had expected. However, no matter how many adjustments he made, the randomness always found a way to sneak through.

Eventually, Luke got very exhausted and sat back. But suddenly it hit him - randomness wasn't something to predict. It was part of the world's charm. The leaves didn't need to fall in a straight line. It was their whimsicality that made them beautiful. Luke realized that, just like life, some things were better left to unfold on their own, out of the blue.

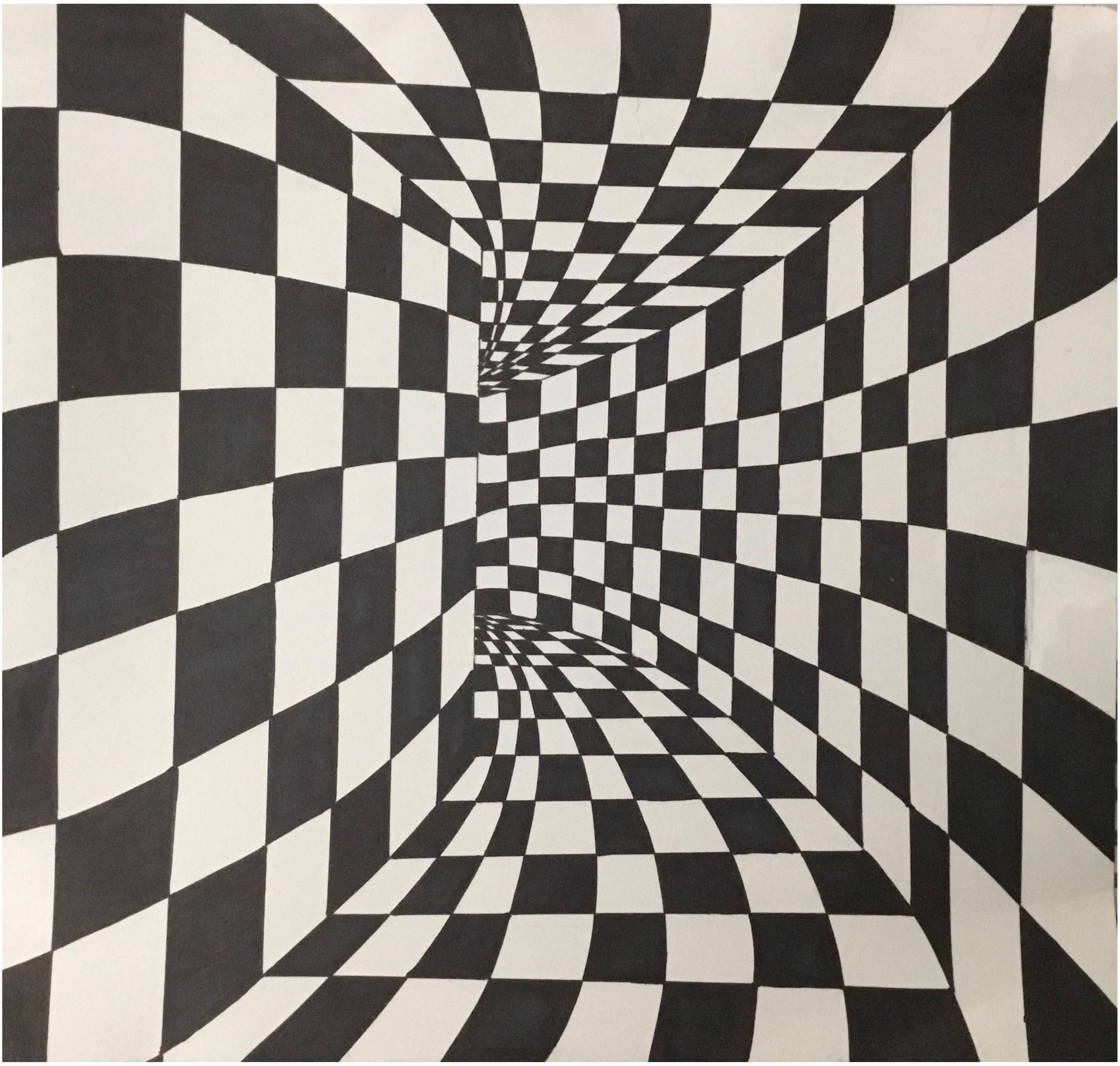
I hope you liked our 'Out of the Blue randomness story'. This is a story that gives a heads up on what our 2024-2025 issue is going to look like. Everything is random which makes it unique and we embrace it.



Diversity

KESA VISWADA BODDAPATI

Diversity is the celebration of differences, cherishing a wide range of backgrounds, perspectives and experiences. It encloses various dimensions, such as race, culture, gender, age, abilities and more underlining the uniqueness of each individual. In a diverse society, people from different walks of life come together to give their distinctive viewpoints, capturing creativity and understanding. Cherishing diversity allows communities and organizations to thrive, creating environments where everyone feels respected. It also encourages empathy and the ability to see the world through the eyes of others, enhancing our collective human experience. Finally, diversity strengthens relationships, drives progress and builds more fair societies.



PRATYAKSHA YADAV

Out of the Blue

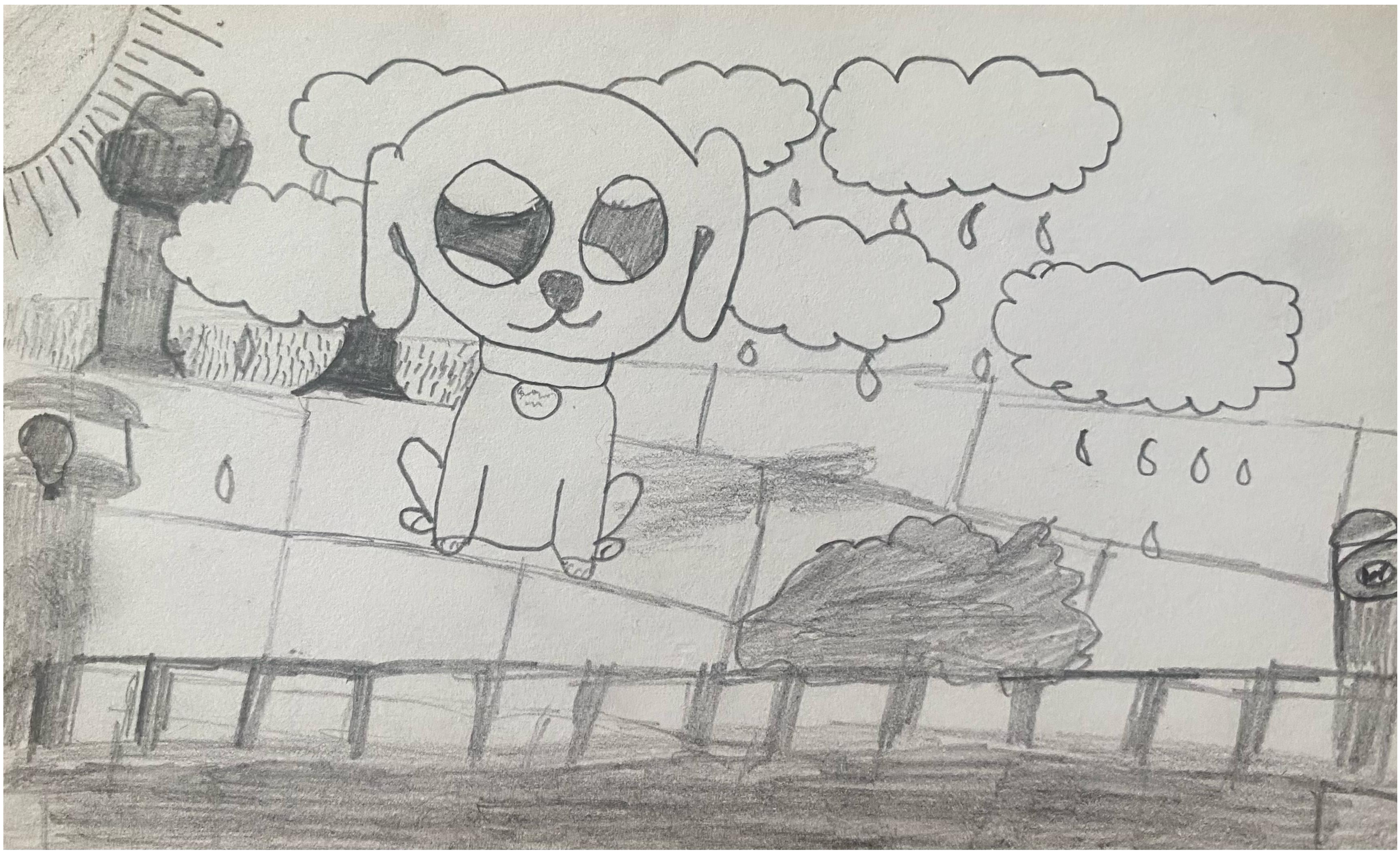
DIYA KRISHNA

An extension of poems from previous years
The grass grazes against my ankles, making it tingle
I quickly sit up and brush off the specks of dirt on my skirt
Pluto, my fluffy and carefree dog, quickly bounds up
I stride through a small patch of flowers towards the dock
The dock
My happy place
All to myself
Well technically, our happy place, if you count Pluto
I gently pat his fur and bound to the pavement, my quick strides soon enough leading me to where I belong

My legs dangle over the edge and I can almost feel the water
My precious dog's head is on my knee and I gently stroke his luxurious, brown fur
I stare towards the horizon, thinking of all that could be beyond it
"Sissy!"
I turn my head
My little sister, the second piece of my heart, my #1 supporter
I get up and Pluto get's up, trotting next to me
I swoop my other half into my arms and she giggles her cute giggle
"I miss you, sissy!"
I smile and kiss her cheek to say I miss her too

This feeling…
Is it the sea that's making me feel this way?
Is the curiosity I have of the horizon?
Is it my generous dog Pluto?
Is it my other half of my heart, my little sister?
This feeling…
It feels so…

Out of the Blue



ETHAN IVES

This or That?

DIYA KRISHNA

PROMPT

With a few clicks on the school's website, I find what I am looking for- the dates for the volleyball tryouts. Nothing makes me happier than that sport. Whether I am casually bumping the ball with friends in the backyard or spiking one into the opposition's court with laser accuracy, I feel completely alive. Even though the official tryouts are a few weeks away, I have been practicing relentlessly when the gymnasium is open to students.

My excitement leads me to call my best friend Katelyn. As soon as I hear the line ringing, a thought occurs to me and makes my heart flutter. The first day of tryouts is the same date as Katelyn's dance recital! She is depending on my moral support. When Katelyn's chipper voice answers, a sudden paralysis takes over my mind and body. Eventually I mumble, "Hey Katelyn...hang on a second...uh, let me call you back."

CONTINUATION

I put my phone in my pocket and quickly head on over to the bathroom as Mom starts running up the stairs with a heap of laundry.

"Honey, are you ok?" she carefully asks. I can tell she's lingering by the door, waiting for me to give a response.

"U-uh, yeah, I'm fine, Mom…" *I'm not fine,* I think.

"Alright, then, just don't stay in there for too long," she says before walking away from the door.

I panic, my heart beating fast, unsure of what to do. Ideas start flowing through but they're nothing related to my situation. *Think, think, think!*

And then, a question that I have dreaded crossed my mind. What is more important? Volleyball tryouts or supporting your friend Katlyn? The answer to the question is a solid 'I have no clue.' Both are important. I love volleyball, which is why I want to tryout but I also love my friend, Katlyn, who is counting on me supporting her during her dance recital.

I pace back and forth in the space between the toilet and bathtub, scratching my head, thinking of a way to solve the problem. Time ticks by and my face starts to get hot, sweaty and my hands are shaky, cold…like ice. And then it hits me.

I stop pacing and face the bathroom mirror. I take my phone and dial Katlyn's number. The line rings once and then I hear her voice. "Hey? Katlyn? Yeah, sorry about before! My mom called me to help her with something, sorry…"

"No, it's ok! I understand," she says cheerfully. "So what's up?"

"Um," I hesitate before taking a deep breath. *I have to do this*. *I have to do this*. "So there are volleyball tryouts next week on Tuesday and…" My hands start to shake but I quickly stiffen up in order to avoid it.

"And…?"

"I don't think I can make it to your recital…" There was a beat in the air. The atmosphere suddenly felt damp. My neck hair stands up and I start biting my nails, unsure of what Katlyn might say.

"Oh…why did you just tell me?"

"Because…" I trial off, unsure of what to say.

"You do realize I only asked you to come because I thought there weren't tryouts, right?"

My heart stops. *Say what now?*

"R-really? Oh…" I stammer. "I-I didn't know that-"

"Girl, calm down. You're good! Besides, no one is better at volleyball than you and if you want to try out, then do it! I know you'll get in!"

"O-Ok! Thanks Katlyn!"

"Of course, no problem," she says. There was some background noise on the line. *Must be her brother.* "Hey, I gotta go, Jason wants me to help him with the grill. I'll talk to you tomorrow?"

"Uh, yeah, sure!"

"Ok, cya!"

"Bye!" I cut the call and butterflies filled my stomach. The good kind of butterflies. I suddenly feel the change in atmosphere, calm, and relaxing. *Glad I got that off my chest*. Suddenly, there was a knock on the door.

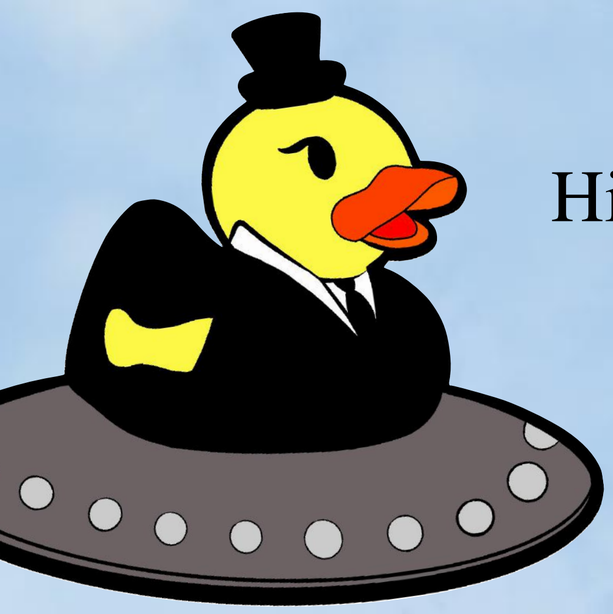
"Hon, get out of there! You've been in there for half an hour!" *Oops*.

"Coming!" I quickly put my phone in my pocket and went towards the door. I open the knob and I feel a smile crawl on my face and I suddenly realize something. The good people in your life always let you go sometimes, even if they feel guilty of what is to come. I feel honored to have someone like Katlyn as my friend. And I always will.

A Duck on a UFO

MS. CORIANNE OLSEN

I think there was a duck on a UFO
Ishanvi told me so
How does a duck get on the UFO?

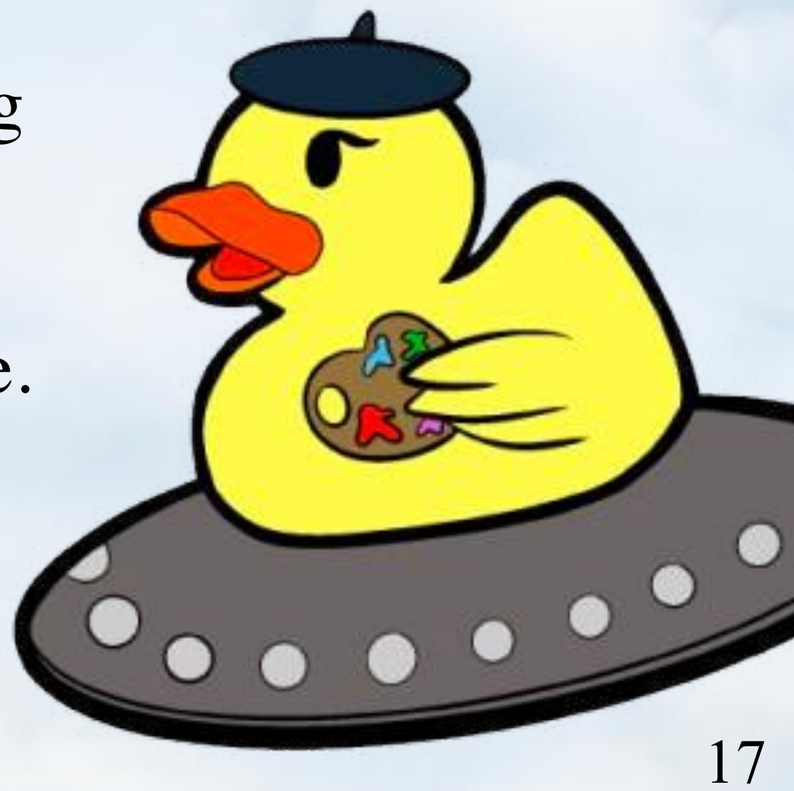


Was he abducted and taken against his will?
His home pond just left there waiting with time to kill?
Perhaps he came from a lake
Maybe his abduction was a fake
Did he send a signal to the aliens
Give a hint that he wanted to be friends?

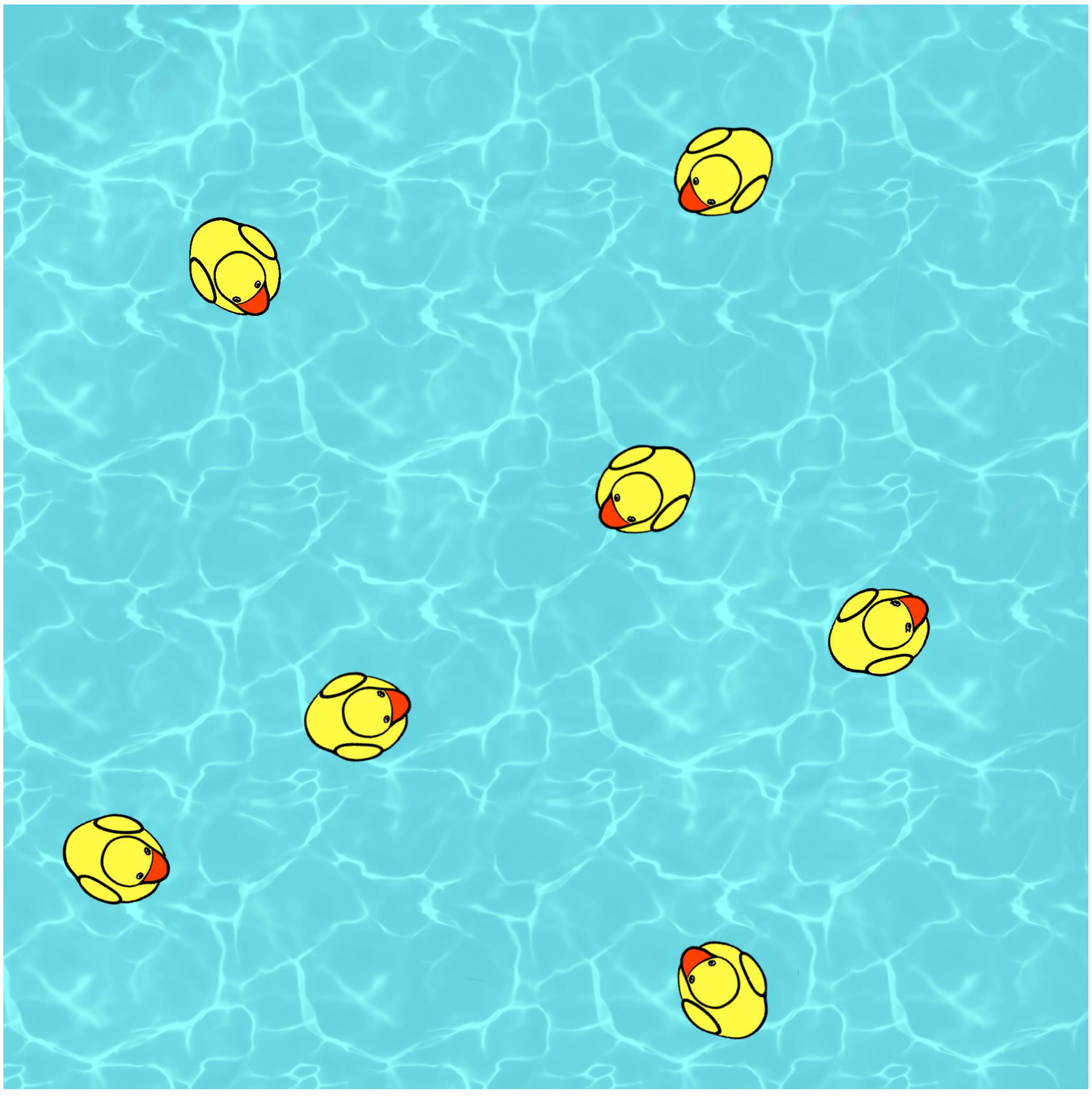
Why was he riding on top?
Did he try to get inside and they told him to stop?
He could have just wanted to go on a journey
Taken a break from his daily responsibility
Or perchance it is all pretend
A duck starting a whole new trend
For what is out of the blue
If not random, unexpected, a big “who knew”

A cow with wings
A dog with a cape
A cat with balloons
A couplet poem that stops rhyming

Out of the Blue is ours
It can be whatever we want it to be.



ANIKA BANSAL



RUBBER DUCKIES
ISHANVI MOHAPATRA

Violin & Viola

ANIRUDH SANAKKAYALA

2 siblings, bond on a string. Both on separate paths.
1 melodious, 1 horrific.
1 elegant and beautiful, 1 screechy and squeaky.
1 unknown, 1 the cause of a global crisis called "overplayed"
I think you obviously know which one's better

"It's obviously the violin"
"The violin is always better"
This is the stereotype.
The wrongful stereotype.
Give time to realize the true masterpiece of the orchestra, the viola.
The viola emits its glorious sounds
You can only hear squeaks from the violin.
When accompanied by the cello . . .

Nor violin or viola, the cello always stands on top.
Its bass-y and low melody is truly the cornerstone of the orchestra.
It gives a base that we egoistic higher strings take.
In the end, the violin always gets the popularity.
We all need to learn a lesson.
The essence of the cello makes it the best instrument in the orchestra.

"*What about me?*" the bass asks...

The Race

Yeshe Tripathi

Original Piece

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VzIjx-NlTOM8Q88kZivzCrHhYHxrjAyd/view

Clementi: Sonata in C Major, Op. 36, No. 3 (Movement 1)

Sanaa Ward

Composed by Muzio Clementi

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1J-KtVyAbwTF9PvWllHA7YU38h3uHXMoh/view?usp=sharing

How Far I'll Go

Timothy Edwards Middle School Chamber Orchestra

Music & Lyrics Lin-Manuel Miranda, Arranged by James Kazik

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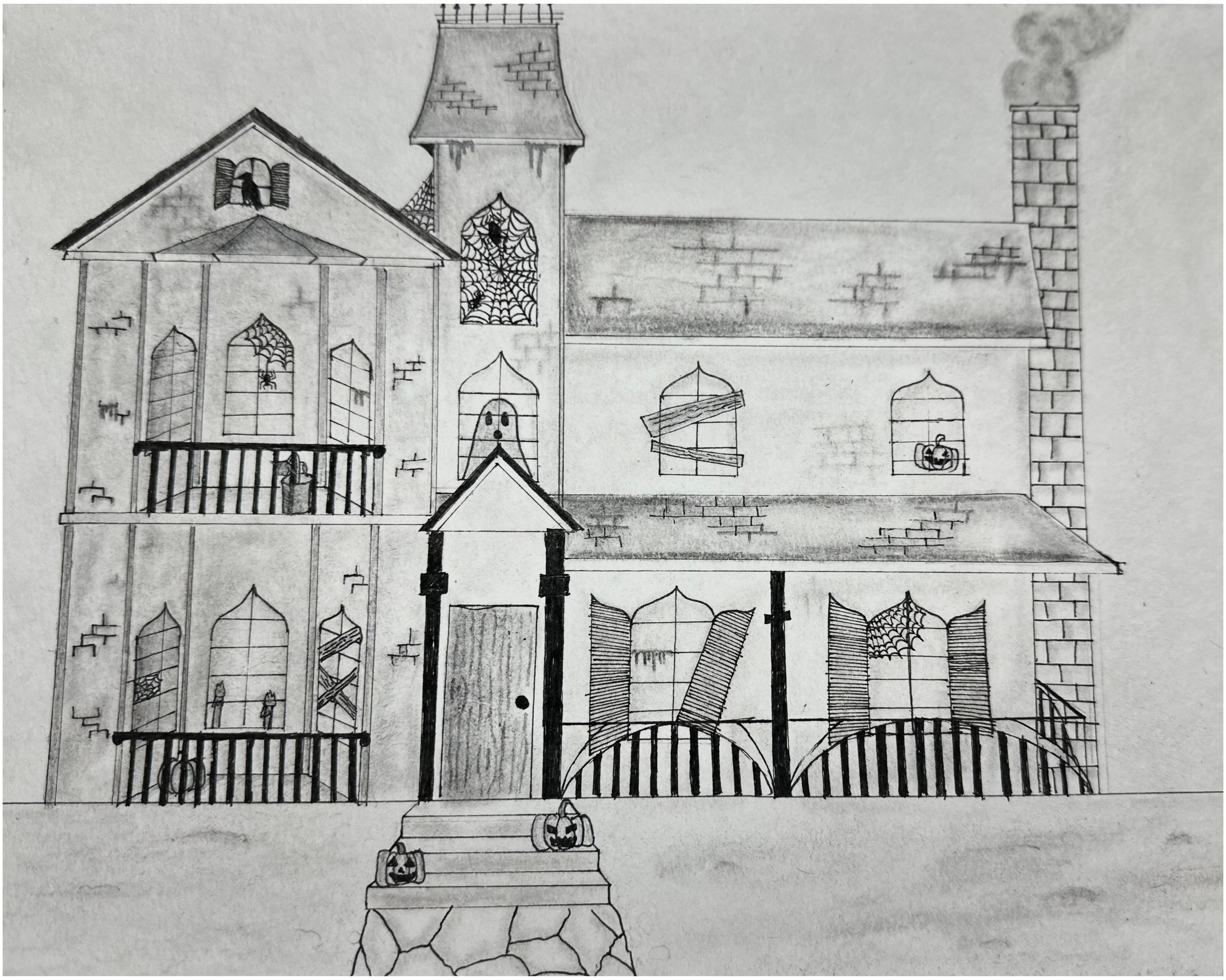


AARNA GUPTA

The deep mahogany wood eerily creaks as I walk up the dark and solitary stairs. The horizon turns into the hazy color of jack o' lanterns as if a colossal pumpkin is staring at me from the sky. The crisp smell of ozone stuffs up my nose as if lightning is about to strike and set the entire place ablaze. As I reach out to hit the doorbell, a cohesive pale gray cobweb catches my hand like a booby trap. The sudden contact sends a jolt of fear through my bones. As I reach for the doorbell again, a plume of fine gray dust smears on my hand. The moon shines ominously bright as a scraggly barren tree blocks parts of the silvery moonlight. "HAPPY HALLOWEEN," shrieks a screeching crackly voice as the door juts open. A woman in a witch costume holds out a vibrant round orange bowl of candy. Inside are all kinds of sugary mouth-watering treats. As I accept a glimmering gold bar of Twix, I stroll away from the deep mahogany house and I can't help but notice the haunting patterns that the grimy moss makes on the cracked dark tombstones and the way that the moon illuminates the rocky path behind me. I look behind me at the house as the pastel blue flickering lights go out. As I walk on the gravelly rough sidewalk. I pop a Twix in my mouth and sweet and slightly tangy goodness fills my mouth as I walk home alone along the path as my shimmering white and green shoes make an ear-piercing "SCREE-" across the gravel.

ALTAAF MUSA

Thanksgiving was just around the corner and everybody was getting ready. It was like chaos. The stores were packed and crowded full of families and relatives buying gifts. I was outside with all the buildings. The chilly and frosty weather shooed everyone else away. However, I actually enjoyed the rain. As I walked down the soaked street, the smooth drops eased my brain. The wet drizzle pitter-pattered against me, and the rain glowed with glory, whispering it's secret. Its unscented, weak, plain smell strolled with me as I kept going. Its bland flavor, yet refreshing feel made it the best day ever. My fingers ran across the brick wall next to me. The water flowed down the wall and onto my hand, as the silky drops were like butter. Though, the sad clouds looked down on me, as they wept away. The land was free now that everyone had left. Its vast environment pleasantly surprised me, like a song that I'd never heard.

HANNAH VARGHESE

As I exit the glimmering navy blue 2024 Kia Telluride the fumes of the ozone in the mist afoot slips comfortably into my nose. I have a sigh of relief. I am finally at the lake house. The slightly burnt pine logs that make up the house make me feel a tremendous calming sensation. Like a bird flying to its nest, I enter the large house and hear the chatter of relatives young and old and the clanging of planks. “Cut me the turkey thigh” someone calls. I am greeted by loving grandparents, annoying cousins, caring aunts, and drunk uncles all ready for a feast. As I gather my food, I feel as if the food is calling out, “Pick Me! Pick Me! I Want To Be Eaten!” As I sit down at the children’s table in the other room I look down at my plate and am mesmerized. A sea of mashed potatoes with gravy on the top, a chunk of turkey and some jam. As I take an exaggerated chomp into the turkey I feel the cold trickle of the fork almost as a protection for the cooked bird but that does not stop me. I take a bite and I practically ascend to Heaven. The juice of the glistering, steaming dark brown not-so-exotic bird causes my stomach to practically explode with joy. The turkey's meat is so chewy and has such an exquisite taste I don't even want to swallow it. The rough skin was countered by the chewy inside. The turkey taste was both so sweet and so salty and savory it felt like an ice cream sundae, hot dog, chicken conglomerate which does not sound good at all but you know what I mean. While the children around me eat, my brother has the smart idea to pick up all of his mashed potatoes on one fork and as he does so it falls apart and onto the floor making a bone trickling splat. As I devoured the rest of my plate I look afar out the window of the deck and saw brightly colored feathered birds with some of the most piercing beaks in all of nature (Loons) doing the same as what I am, devouring another creature so I thought to myself “We shall invite the beautiful fearsome bird into our living quarters.” So I did.

JAMES SLOGESKY

JULIA MARVIN

The Magic of Christmas

DIVINA SARAH DOULAGAR

Oh, Christmas is here,
What a wonderful time of year,
Cheers ring out all throughout the night,
Millions of voices set off in flight,
And, suddenly, treetops are laced with white.

Snowflakes are pouring down from the clouds,
Them beaming, almost as if they are proud,
The strong, dark trunks of gorgeous trees,
The dark green hue of their precious leaves,
This is magic,
I believe.

Layers of snow come pouring down,
Coating many trees,
Like a shimmering gown.
Yes, not one single person has on a frown.

Oh, Christmas is here,
What a wonderful time of year,
Cheers ring out all throughout the night,
Millions of voices set off in flight,
And, suddenly, treetops are laced with white.

Snowflakes are pouring down from the clouds,
Them beaming, almost as if they are proud,
You can see the strong, dark trunks of gorgeous trees,
The dark green hue of their precious leaves,
It's magic,
I believe.

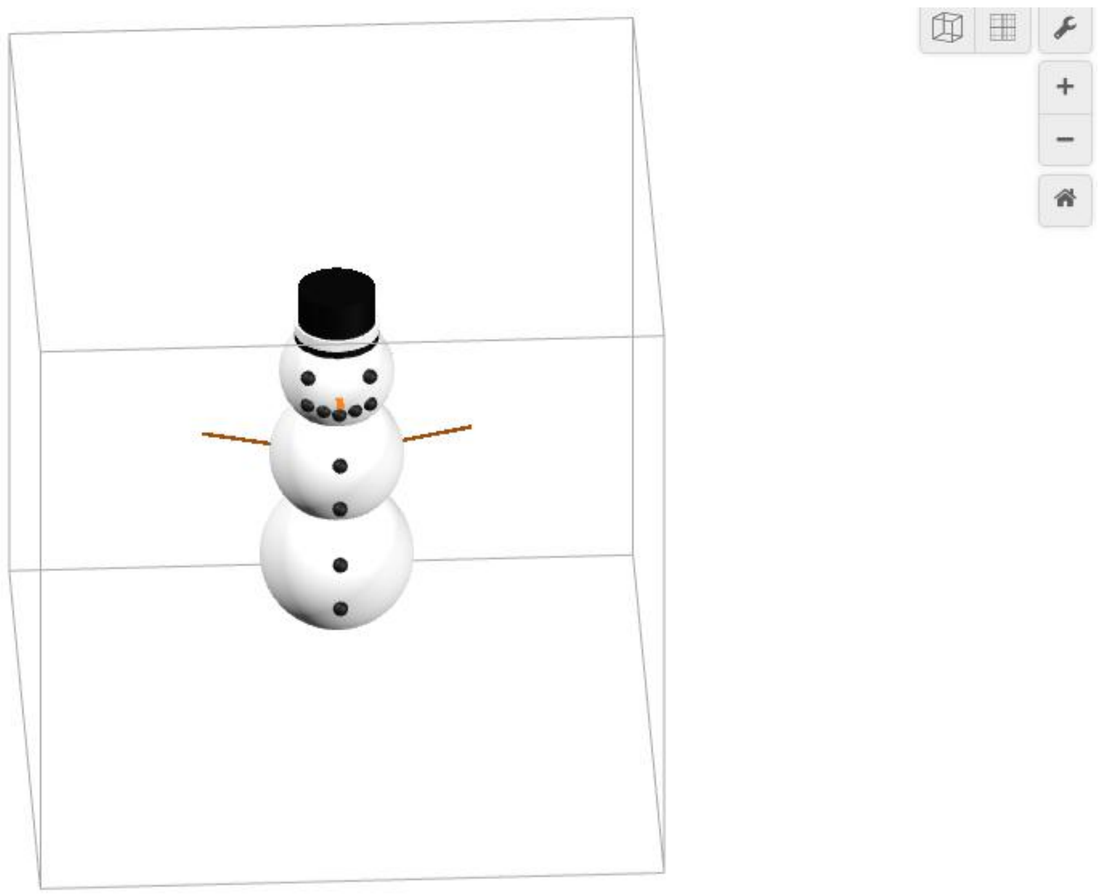
Layers of snow come pouring down,
Coating many trees,
Like a shimmering gown.
Yes, not one single person has on a frown.

The beautiful trees will always be the best part of Christmas.
Maybe even,
The <u>true</u> magic of Christmas.

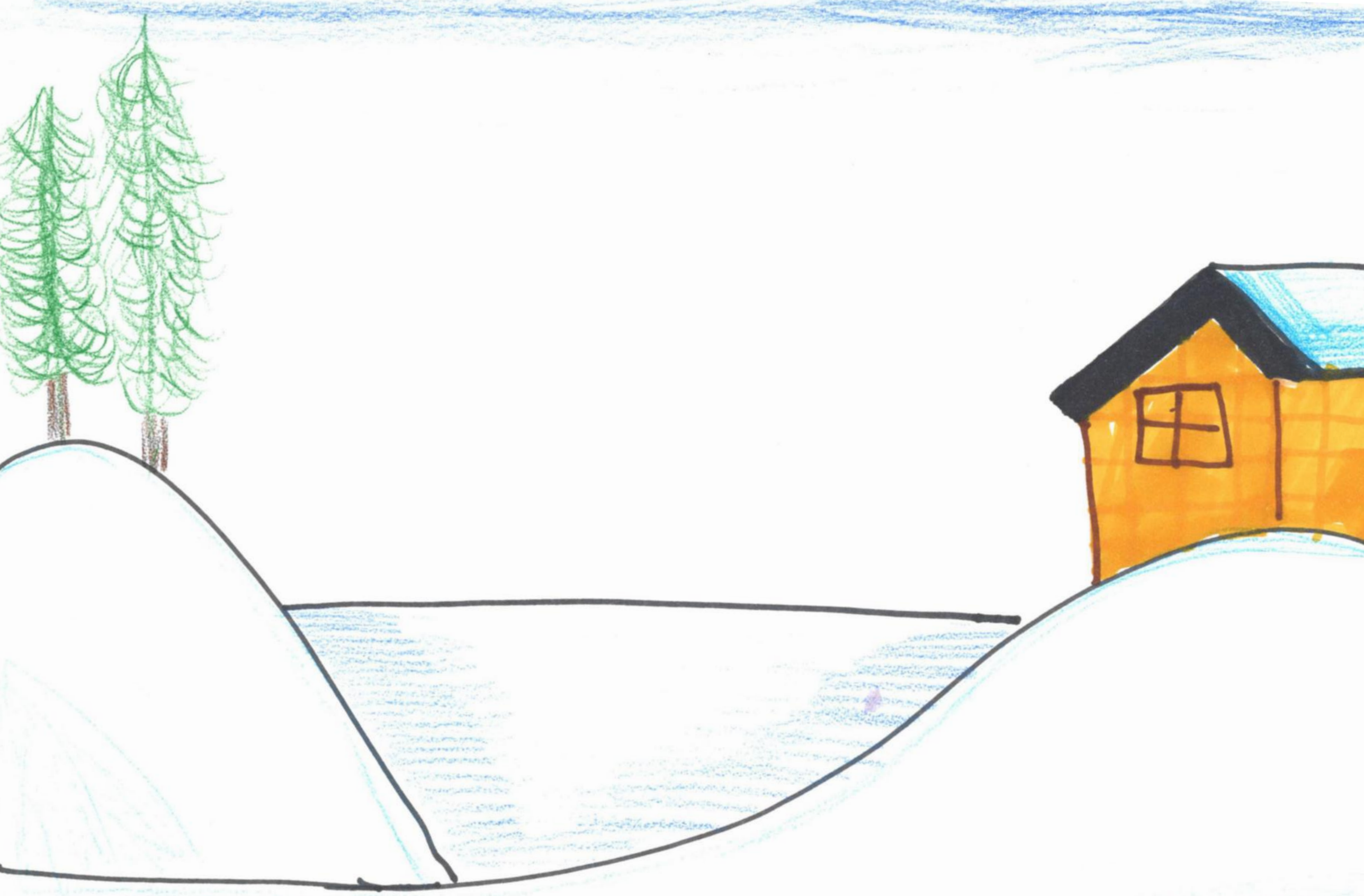
PRATYAKSHA YADAV

As I wake on Christmas morning I feel a warm cozy draft of air from the heating system and cuddle in my soft and fuzzy bed and wait for what feels like hours for my parents to get up. First, I sprint down the stairs with my two brothers hearing the air around me swoosh next to my ears and head form the neon red stockings hung above the rough fireplace where the charred embers from the fire the night before waft up my nose. Then the booming stomps of my over-tired parents followed right behind us. Then I finally get to pick up my bumpy stocking where I pour all everything inside of it onto the cool leathery couch right next to me. As I rummage through the stocking I remember the cookies I made from the night before for the guests at my house. So I head to the surprisingly clean kitchen where I open the lid of the container and the lid just pops off. So I pop the chocolate cookie into my mouth. The cookie was so soft and sweet with the bitter dark chocolate melting in my mouth and the edges were so crunchy. Then I rushed to the brittle forest green Christmas tree where I saw the lights glow like fireflies in the moonlight. Then the wrapped so smoothly caught my eyes with their glittery gold ribbons. First I crawled under the tree, gathered all my gifts and put them in a neat organised pile. Then my brother screamed like he was getting murdered right next to my ear in excitement while I suffered the consequence of throbbing pain. Then I opened my first gift: a velvety soft blanket with the darkest black and brightest red buffalo plaid I have ever seen. and as I kept going I heard the satisfying rips of the wrapping paper. Finally, after I finished opening my gifts I made hot chocolate with a candy cane on the side. At first, the plastic of the kettle's handle attacked my nose but then sweetness overpowered the plastic. In my first sip, the peppermint was almost spicy but then the chocolate soothed it out with the sweet creamy taste and I held it up to myself to warm me up. And then I thought this was the perfect Christmas. Then my mom called me in to take a family photo. So we all sat down and the blinding white flash of the camera made my eyes burn. Finally, after all of those events, I go to my Grandma's house for a Christmas day dinner in my Christmas PJs and get my last presents of the day.

ALEX STEAD



Snowman desmos made by Adam Bardsley ©2025



The Beauty of Winter

MYSHA HUSAIN (ARTIST & WRITER)

I walked down the winding trail,
The grass packed with clumps of snow and hail,
The snow shined a blinding white,
Basking in the sun's golden light,

Trees stood with their branches bare and raw,
Winter had stripped them of the leaves I used to gaze at in awe,
A withering flower drooped with a burden of heft,
The cold had robbed it of life-withering petals were all that were left,

A rabbit skitters by, shivering in its dust-brown fur,
It wishes to be free of the cold, of this I'm sure,
It scurries behind a great red-wood oak tree,
Where it will wait for winter to end, to be set free,

Winter is a cruel thing, is it not?
The cold is a battle we have all fought,
It takes away all warmth, leaving only despair,
No liveliness remains-as we have none to spare,

These thoughts raced through my mind as I continued to walk,
The voices in my head bantering through their ongoing talk,
All of a sudden I feel my throat seize, and dry up,
I craved a nice glass of water, if only a cup,

My thirst sprouted a thought, that one vast source of water is winter itself, I begin to recall,
The sudden realization hit me harder than the rough wind as I clutched my shawl,
Once all of the pure snow melts, it will begin to fill our rivers,
Which will then fill our cups-maybe winter is worth the shivers,

The realization flooded my mind-when I hear a loud noise, my thoughts now left alone,
I look to see a little girl rolling through the snow, her shrieks of joy making her happiness known,
I watch as she frolics through the wintry delight,
A smile curling on my lips as I gazed at the sweet sight,

All of a sudden I spotted my house, the whirling trail coming to a stop,
I noticed a sheet of ice on the concrete, slowly melting to a sun-softened glop,
I sighed a frosty breath as I made my ascent up my sleek black driveway,
I noticed a blanket of snow sprinkled where my chalk drawings usually lay,

I now sat inside the house, noticing at the paint on the wall that had now began to pill,
With my arms tucked in my lap, I gazed outside the window sill,
Snowflakes fell from the sky, each shard of ice a masterpiece worthy of art,
Icicles dropped from where they had sat frozen on the roof, their impact hitting like a dart,

Stretched outside was a beautiful valley, coated in a sparkling sheet of snow,
Winter might not be so bad, I slowly came to know,
It was magnificent experience after all,
Laying down at night, hearing the owls echo each other's call,

During winter small animals, which usually could never survive,
Would now be given a chance to thrive,
Because now as they scurry to gather their food,
The winter snow shields them from predators, the snow acting as a hood,

My mind had most definitely undergo a large change,
The thought of winter being cruel seemed to be strange,
All plants will eventually grow,
But for now, I decided to enjoy the snow,

Winter is a wonder,
Viewing this frosty season as cruel was simply a plunder,
So for now all I really knew,
Was that some time playing in the snow was long overdue.

As I walked through the glorious town covered in a large fluffy blanket of snow, I thought to myself about all of the wondrous memories I've had here on this very street. I remembered the one time when my younger sister and I strode up to the large Jolly Santa Claus to be able to share our vast wishes with this strange old man sitting in a big luxurious sleigh, with huge astonishing reindeer attached to the front. Many more memories occurred to me after I had recalled that moment, but I continued walking down the narrow path with the freezing, bitter snow up to the top of my strong black boots. I passed numerous stores overflowing with loads of crazy, exciting gadgets filled with many people taking off their large heavy coats and relaxing by the warm crackling fire. I almost walked into a small stand run by a young girl bundled up into loads of heavy clothing,with big red flushed cheeks. Bubbling steam was coming out from the top of the stand, giving the sky a cozy, homely coat to tide it over. You could smell the sweet-smelling milk boiling over the stove with the powder of the chocolate that you could smell so clearly it almost seemed like you had just walked into a chocolate factory. "Hot chocolate," I thought to myself. I ordered a small cup of the boiling chocolaty goodness and walked away to find a seat on one of the chilly seats. I took my first sip and burnt my tongue on the flaming liquid, but still got the taste of the creamy, rich chocolate that left a smooth feeling on the roof of my mouth from the milk. I closed my eyes and blew warm air into the icy sky. I continued walking with the hot chocolate in my hands and saw a snowflake fall onto a nearby bench layered with a pile of pure white snow. Another snowflake came down right onto my hand which sent a shiver down my spine. The freezing flake had melted leaving a clear red spot on my hand. Many snowflakes had fallen down to add to the fluffy white blanket covering the ground, I walked down further and saw the big jolly old Santa Claus again, still sitting in his large brown sleigh with all of the reindeer attached to the front. He winked at me and I smiled back, a big beaming smile.

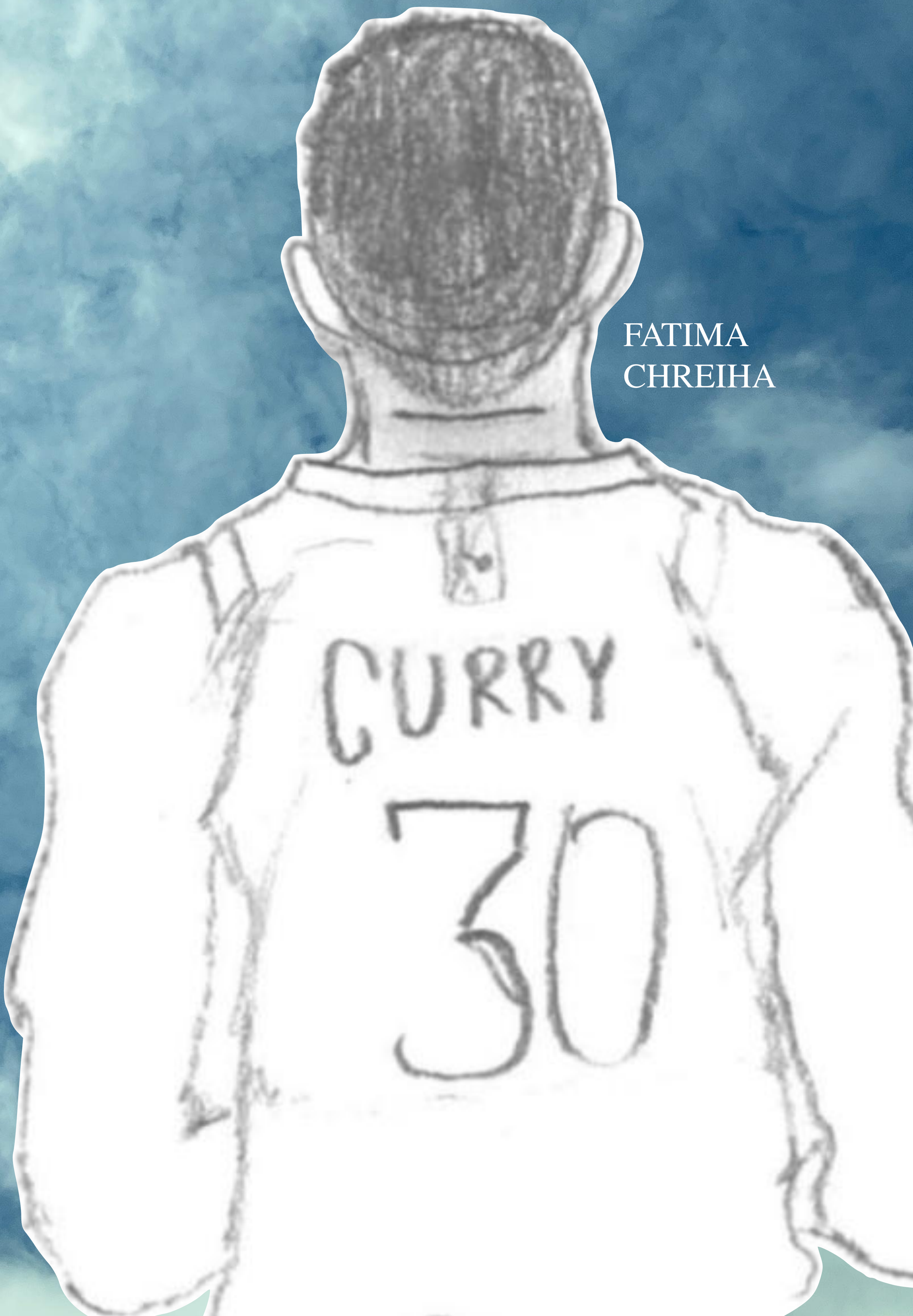
KATELYN EICHLER

I sigh after a long day at work and force my boots off my feet. I shake the clumped snow off the soles of my shoes and the snow melts onto my welcoming mat. I pick up my boots and bring them towards the ablaze of lights coming from the warm fire that fills my apartment with happiness. I sit by the illuminated fire that rises and falls and peer at the fluorescent lights on the Christmas tree. I look at the bright flames of the fire that reflects off the vibrant ruby red ornaments. The rich fragrance coming from the spiky pine of the decorated Christmas tree spread through my apartment like a frosted forest candle. I slip on my fuzzy slippers and take a soft melted cookie from the table. The chewy cookie's chocolate chips ooze in my mouth. I smile as I look outside my large picture window and watch as flurries of snow fly over New York. The bright city lights outside glimmer through the crystal clear glass of my apartment window. The crackling of the fire rings in my ear like a calming singing bird. I listen as the bell strikes midnight outside in the frosty bone-chilling weather. DING DONG DING DONG! I sit up on the couch and grab the handle of my steaming mug of hot chocolate, as I pour the piping hot chocolate liquid into my mouth, it burns my tongue. A marshmallow falls pleasantly onto my tongue and I chew the gooey marshmallow, the perfect combination of fluffy and warmth I mutter to myself. I jump up from the soft sofa and the springs make a SQUEAK. I set down the warm, smooth hot cocoa mug onto the cold glass table and glance up to see a red radiant glow coming from under the decorated pine tree. As I look closer I see that the mysterious glow is coming from inside the crystal blue striped present. I step out of my cozy slippers onto the soft rug and walk towards the unusual gift. The red glow beams up at my face and makes me intrigued. I bend down onto the fluffy patterned rug and squint at the sparkling milky-white tag of the present and it reads, From Santa Claus.

GABRIEL ROSARIO

Sports

COLLECTION



FATIMA
CHREIHA

AAROHI
MUDAKATTE

Nike Socks: A Horror Story

AARNA JAGGI

They're everywhere. On every single foot, seen right above every single shoe. Mostly white, but with a curve of black. Always there to haunt me forever.

Nike socks.

***

"50 jumping jacks! *Now!*" Mr. Fitzgerald, our gym teacher, yells. I can't lie, he's pretty intimidating. I quickly finish my jumping jacks before letting out a long breath.

"Now that we're done with our warm-up, I'd like to announce our new unit," he says. We all look over to a screen where a slideshow is being projected.

"Ooooohhhhh….new unit!" everyone exclaims. It sounds like an echo.

"Let me present to you…tumbling!" Mr. Fitzgerald hops in front of the board, and to demonstrate, does a double backflip! Everyone oohs and ahhs as he bows.

He explains what tumbling is very thoroughly. It's basically gymnastics but it's composed mostly of rolls and is on this colored mat. Throughout the unit, we're going to work with a group of at least 4 people. Well, I guess we're starting with rolls today, which is kind of boring, but whatever.

Before we go off, he yells, "Hey guys, *make sure you take off your shoes!"* Everyone walks over to the side and kicks off their shoes.

And that's when I see a line of white feet, but with a splotch of black. I almost pass out at the sight of them.

"Nike socks…" I murmur to myself. An immediate desire for them sparks in my brain, but here I am with these bear socks off of Temu. Hey, at least one of my friends didn't have Nike socks.

"Bella, over here!" I called her over, waving my hand vigorously. She's my best friend ever, and she has matching bear socks with me! I'm so happy that there's someone who can bear the sadness of not having Nike socks with me.

Bella runs over to me and squeezes me, whispering, “I haven’t seen you at all today, Emma!”

Of course, we decide to work together, and begin practicing the rolls that Mr. F taught us. That’s when the popular kids, Chloe and Sophie walk up to us.

“Look, it’s the non-Nike sock losers,” Chloe laughs menacingly.

“Come on, you can’t do a roll? Just do it; oh, I forgot, you can’t, because you don’t have Nike socks,” Sophie added on, making Bella look like she wants to cry.

All of a sudden, I take off my bear socks and fling one of them at Chloe, and then the next one even harder at Sophie. They let out scaredy-cat squeals, making me grin.

Bella looks at me and gives me a small smile. “Thanks for sticking up for me just now, but…I can’t take this anymore. I *need* Nike socks.”

“Come on, it’s not that bad without them! Our bear socks are cuter anyway!” I retrieve my bear socks from the floor and showcase them to Bella, but she just shakes her head. I feel bad for her and we silently go back to rolling. There’s no talking, no laughing, none of that.

After gym class ends, the whole 7th grade is called over to the auditorium for a special assembly. I don’t really care much about it anyway; assemblies are always kind of boring.

While we walk down the hallway to get to the auditorium, I see Bella and run up to her. She looks really excited, so I ask her why.

“Apparently, Nike is hosting the assembly! Since Nike socks are so popular, they are doing a raffle for them!” she exclaims. Wow, I’ve never seen her so happy.

Once we’re in the auditorium, a man walks onto stage. Both his sweatshirt and joggers are from Nike. Then I see them, as if I’m destined to spot them everywhere I go.

Nike socks.

“Hello, everyone, my name is Mr. Hill,” he smiles widely at us. “And I’m the C.E.O. of Nike!”

Everyone looks down at their feet, realizing that their socks came from this man, and then they burst into applause.

“Well, I’m also Sophie’s dad,” he points over at Sophie, who rolls her eyes. What a spoiled *and rich* brat.

“Anyway, we want to talk a little bit about our business, considering a lot of you guys love our company. But before that, we want to host our raffle for Nike socks! All of your names have been put into this hat! Let me just pick a name…..” He starts to fish through the hat. I close my eyes and pray to God that he says my name, but I know someone else who wants this a lot more than me.

“And the winner is…Bella Moskowitz!” Bella screams of joy and runs as fast as she can up to the front of the auditorium, claims her Nike socks, and runs back. I clap, happy for her.

All of a sudden, a rush of sadness hits me.

Am I the *only* non-Nike sock loser?

***

It’s Friday night, so Bella and I are having a sleepover, which I’m really excited for! I bike over to her house as quickly as I can and ring the doorbell. Bella opens the door, a grin plastered onto her face, and I see that her Nike socks are on. I almost fall back as I react to them; it’s like an image of them is engraved in my brain. I expect to see them everywhere.

“Come in, come in,” she gestures to me to come inside and we head upstairs to her room. Honestly, the whole sleepover after that is kind of boring. We spend the whole time just talking about brands that she wants to buy from, and I really don’t care. Finally, we go to sleep. I tuck myself under the covers, and she said she was going to go inside and change. I try to wait for her, but my sleepiness wins, and I fall into a dreamless sleep.

***

I wake up to a scream. Bella’s mom has barged into our room, wondering what on Earth is going on.

“Was that you, Emma?” she asks, scanning the room. I shake my head, and look next to me. Bella isn’t there. In her place, there’s a pair of Nike socks. I get up, and realize that there’s a trail consisting of 4 more pairs, all leading to the bathroom.

“What the…..” I mutter to myself. She just got her Nike socks; why would she ruin them so quickly? I knock on the bathroom door, but there’s no reply. Bella’s mom sighs and walks up to the bathroom door and opens it so quickly I can’t tell what’s going on. All of a sudden, I’m pushed in, and the door locks behind me.

There's a gigantic pair of Nike socks floating above me, as tall as Bella originally was, and there's blood leaking from the top.

"Dri……fit……." I hear quiet chants. "Dri…..fit……." They keep getting louder, until they're almost screaming.

"DRI…….FIT……..!!!!!!" My ears are almost broken, until I feel the floor open below me, and I fall into a void.

"Dri…..fit……" A voice murmurs. I recognize it very well.

"Bella?" I ask, but then I hit the ground with a thud.

The last thing I see is a blank sky, completely white, with an all-too-familiar logo perfectly in the center of it all.

Then everything goes black.

***

"I need your help, Caroti. I've almost possessed all of these teens-starting with that Bella girl-and shredded them into pieces. But, I want to go even farther than that, and I need you for that."

"And what's in it for me, Hill?"

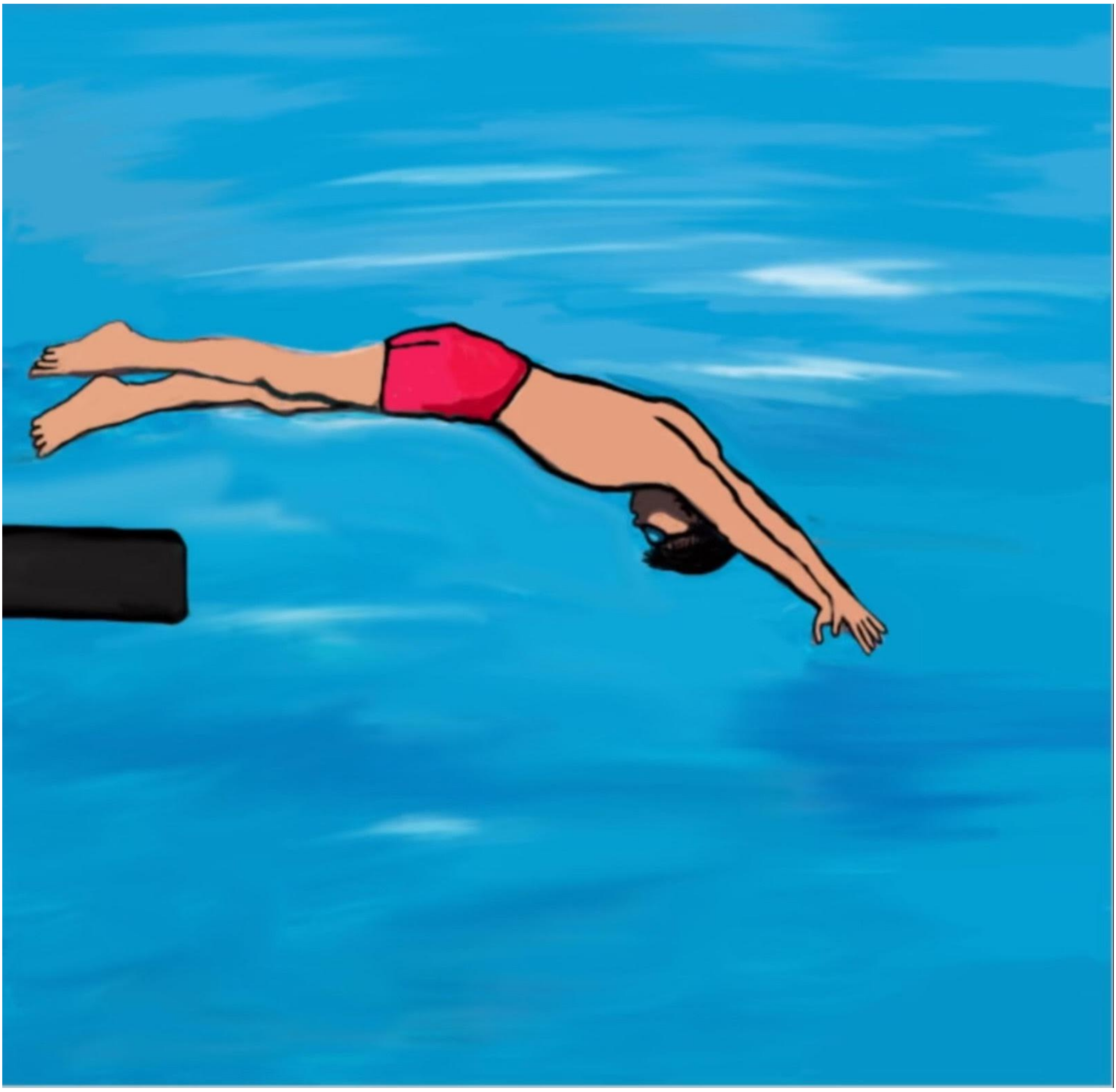
"Use these kids to help your company gain power, Caroti, even though I know it already has a lot. You can use their bodies too for your…..boots, slippers, I don't know."

"Fine, Hill, fine. Whatever you say. But I expect a lot of…erm…benefits from this."

"Oh, don't you worry about benefits, Caroti. You'll get a lot of them. So do we have a deal?"

"Yes, Hill. UGG is in."

The End: Sequel Coming Next Year



YAHVI BHANDARI

Waking up to the screeching alarm clock near my bed, I was blind as a bat. I hastily got ready for a nerve-wracking swim meet. As I got out of the warm and cozy car the harsh cold hit me. I slowly pried open the swimming pool door as I walked in. I could feel the small colorful tiles on the concrete ground as I walked in. I could hear the booming sound of the microphone telling everyone to get ready. I slid my goggles and swim cap on and it went on like butter. I could hear my coach yelling like a banshee. I got into the frigid water and started the tiring warm up set. I could feel the cold water splashing against my body like waves crashing against the shore. Suddenly, I heard the most blood curdling sound possible. My swim cap started to tear away like two friends leaving after an argument. I felt relieved that I had a handful more in my backpack and asked my coach to go get one for myself. As I jumped out of the pool I could smell the pleasant smell of chlorine water. I could smell the mouth-watering aroma of the baked goods in the concessions. I went to my drenched chair and put my swim cap back on. As I went over to the rigid and bumpy blocks (a thing you dive off of), I could hear the ear piercing sound of the referee telling us to get on the block. I hopped onto the block and got ready to “fly off” like a falcon. As I heard the loud beep, I jumped off and dove in. I could hear my heart racing as I dove off. I was worried like a child getting lost. When I popped up I was panting like a cheetah after running fast. I could see the tiled wall up ahead and did an awe-inspiring flip turn. I felt like the wind. I quickly took a breath and accidentally swallowed a mouthful of lightly salted choline water. As I started my next tedious stroke and my worst stroke, backstroke. I could feel the wind against my hand as it when out of the water. I hastily finished that lap and started in my favorite stroke. I glided like a swordfish. I did my final stroke and swam my hardest. I could see my name and lane in first place as I celebrated.

ASHWIN RAJASEKAR

This was the Hockey game we needed to win to advance to the championship round of this tournament. As we got closer to the rink, the intensity increased and my heart must have been going 1000 miles an hour as everyone sat in the locker room. Some of us were dead silent and we knew that we needed to win this game. As we hit the ice I looked over and saw the other team zooming in warm ups and buzz the clock hit 0:0. It was time to start the game. I felt the intensity the other team brought to the game and we were a bit slow which led to the other team scoring. My team was mad but I tried to tell my team it was all good, but still we needed something to happen now. All I could hear was the roaring crowd and all I could taste and smell was my own sweat and Gatorade. Then I got on the ice zooming. The crunch in the ice was all I could hear as I accelerated up the ice and the crowd was something I forgot was even there. I got the puck and skated it up ice around one player and then another then the big boy was waiting for me. I was pushing him with my body to get to the net then it happened I shot the puck and scored it was like everything was in slow motion my team was roaring and so was the crowd. I skated to the bench and my coach said, “That’s what I'm talking about! The game is not over!” With 3:34 ish minutes on the clock we scored again and then that feeling came in. It felt like time slowed down. We felt even better than we did in the beginning. With still three minutes on the clock the other team’s coach was mad; he was yelling and then they nearly scored but our goalie made a great save 5…4…3…2…1 buzzzzzz!! The crowd of all our parents was ecstatic and you could clearly see. We advanced to the championship!

MASON LOPEZ

The basketball game was electric, buzzing with excitement like a beehive. As I stepped into the arena, my eyes were drawn to the USA team, their jerseys gleaming under the bright, spotlighted lights. The lights felt like stars shining directly at me, igniting a sense of wonder. Suddenly, the sound of the crowd hit me with a wild roar, like waves crashing against the shore filled with fans shouting and cheering as if they were supporting a gladiator in the arena. As I approached my seat, I could smell the buttery popcorn and hot dogs wafting through the air, mixing with a hint of sweat from all the players, which made my stomach rumble. My mouth watered at the thought of tasting those crispy chicken nuggets my brother was munching on, their crunch echoing in my ears like firecrackers popping. Just as I began to focus on the game, I watched in amazement as Steph Curry launched a three-pointer that soared through the air like a bird on a mission. In my excitement, I accidentally nudged my brother, causing him to spill a handful of Skittles, which scattered across the floor like colorful confetti at a parade. I picked some up and they were covered in a lot of dust so I threw them back down on the ground. Since the Skittles fell I didn't get to experience when they melted in my mouth. The sweet smell of the candy mixed with the saltiness of my popcorn filled my senses, creating a perfect moment of chaos and joy in that unforgettable game. In that instant, surrounded by the thrill and energy, I felt like I was part of something much bigger than myself, lost in the magic of sports and family.

DEEKSHA REDDY

The gym buzzes with energy, the squeak of sneakers slicing through the rhythmic thud of the volleyball. My palms are damp, and I wipe them on my jersey, trying to steady the racing of my heart as it matches the ball's bounce. The whistle pierces the air, sharp and commanding, and I watch as the ball arcs high toward our side, spinning like it's alive. The setter's hands meet it perfectly, sending it sailing my way. I leap, my muscles coiled and ready, and my fingers graze the rough leather before I slam it down with all my strength. The crack echoes like a gunshot as the ball strikes the polished wood, and the gym erupts in cheers. My hand stings from the hit, but the thrill made up for it—I can feel the game pulsing in my veins.

CHARLOTTE VASSEUR

AARNA GUPTA

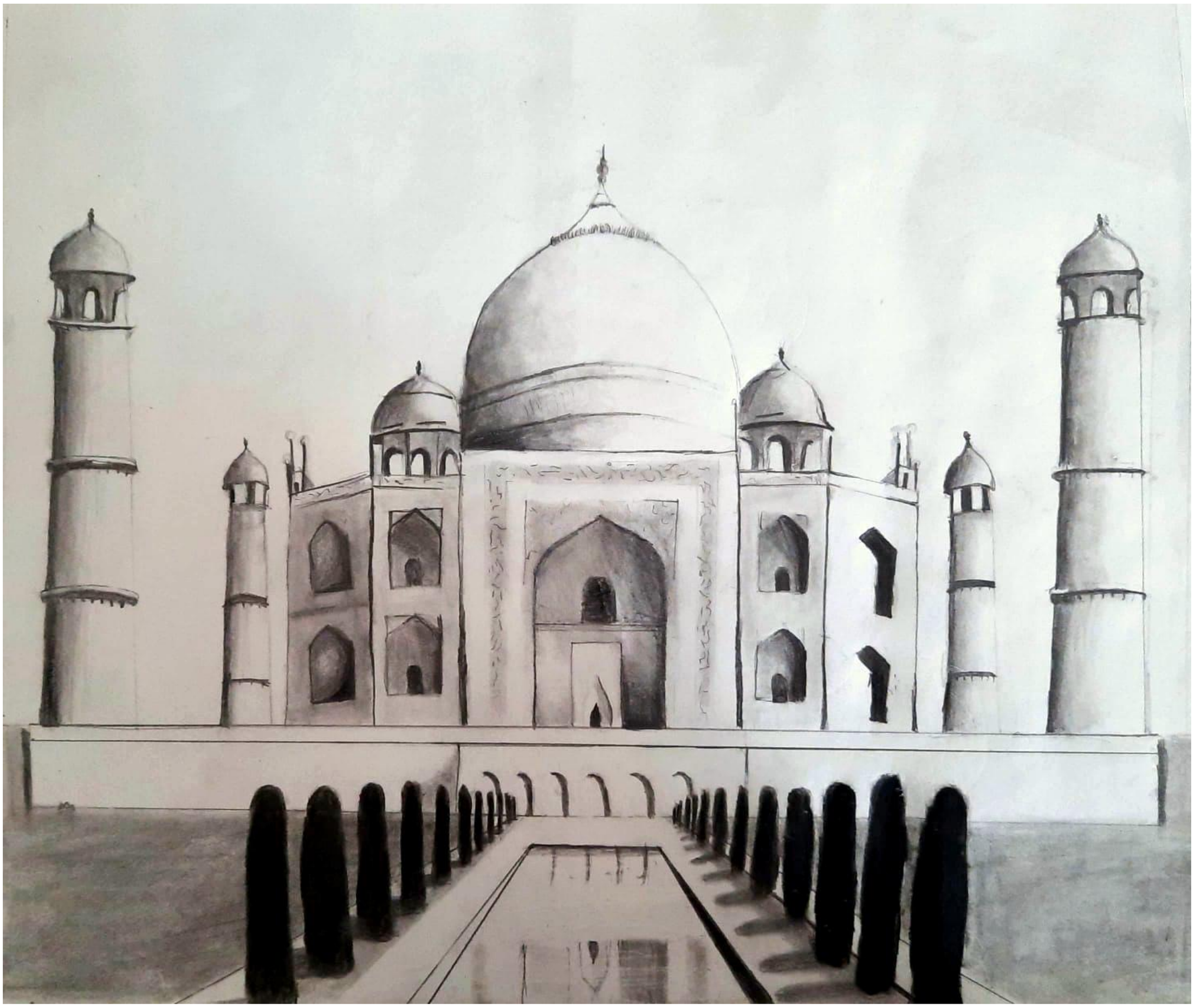
Colosseum

GOPICHANDANA TATIGUNTLA

In the heart of Rome stands a crumbling colosseum
Its arches nearly broken, its beams split apart,
In every crack, rays of sunlight seep through.

Stone and marble, worn and faded by the passing years,
Carved arches, once stood tall,
But now empty shadows fall
Faint echoes of the history of forgotten cheers,
When silver armored gladiators are in duels.
Falling and leaning pillars, history stays.

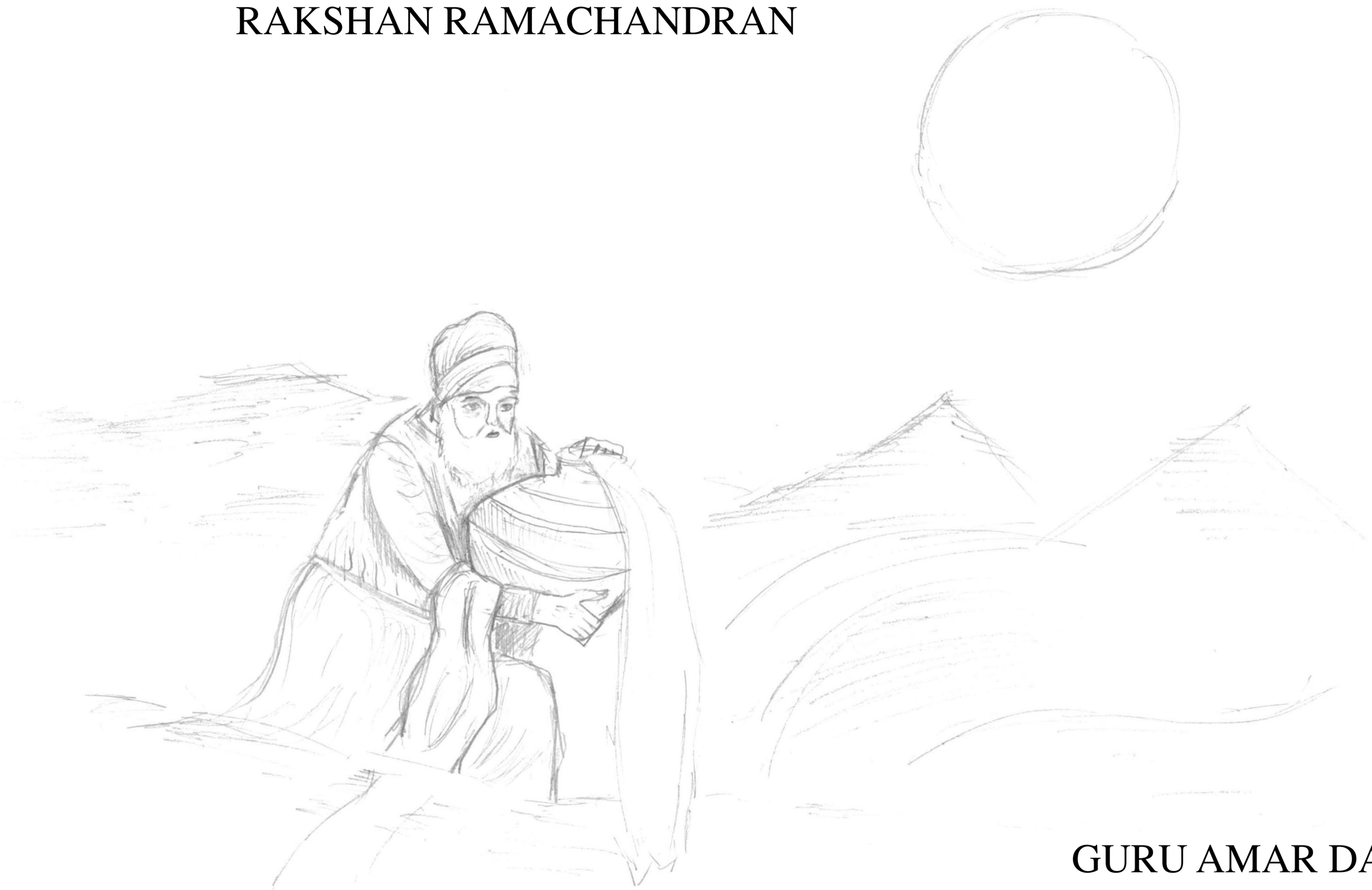
Through the ruins, you see nearly collapsed monument
Where once mighty columns stood in their place.
A spirit of power and beauty remains,
In the architecture that time can't erase.



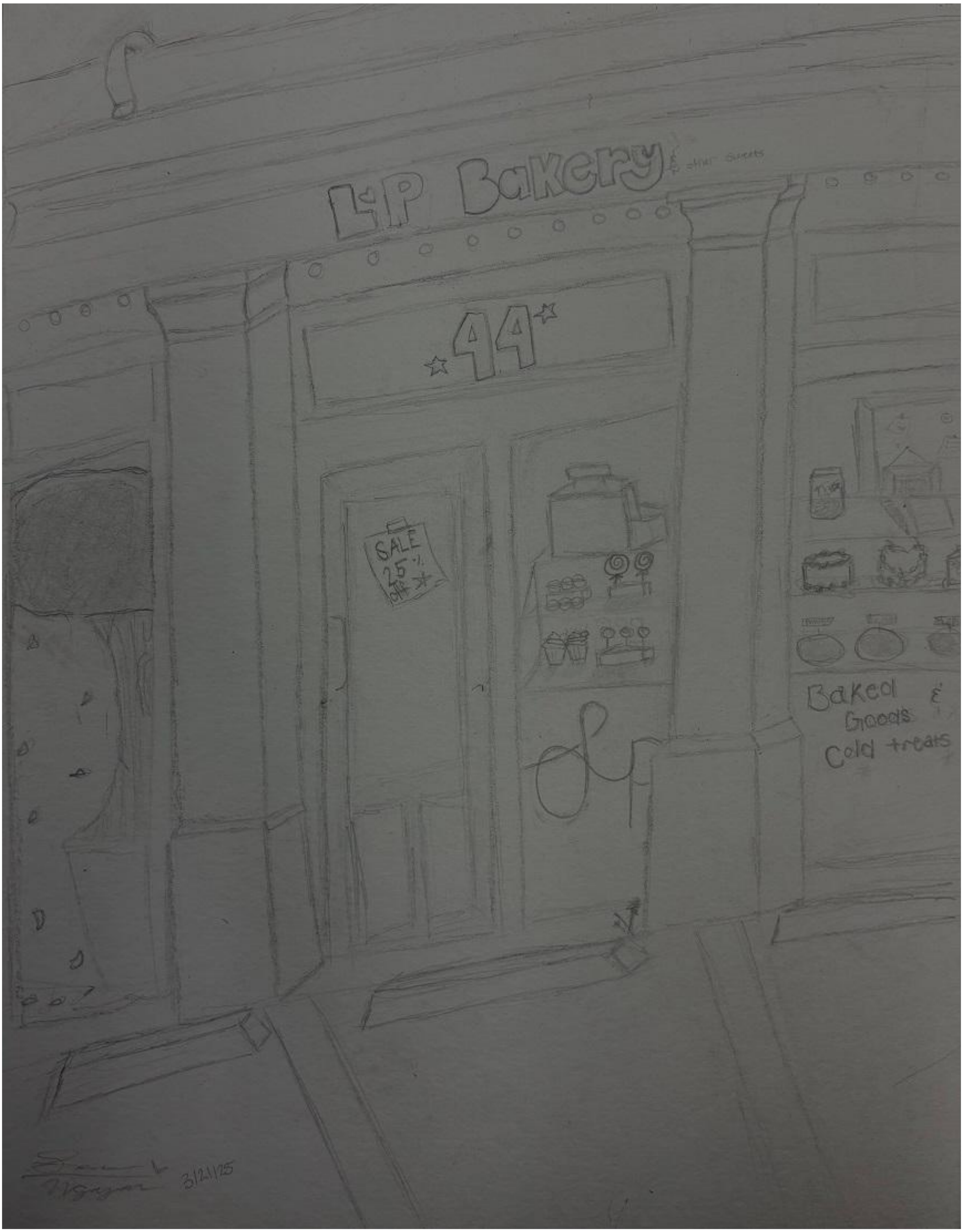
AARNA GUPTA

I woke up feeling a surge of joy today, knowing it was Diwali, the Festival of Lights. I got dressed in my new fluffy kurta (traditional Indian outfit) and could feel smooth as silk fabric felt pleasant against my skin. The anticipation of celebrating with family and friends filled me with joy. As I sprinted down the street, I was captivated by the bright, vibrant lights hanging from each house. The handmade, neon-colored rangolis brought the roads to life with a burst of color. The warmth of the diyas (candles) felt like a tender embrace that melted away the chilly night. As the aromatic smell of my mom's cooking drifted through the air, I dashed into the house to be greeted by a glossy plate piled high with Indian sweets. Taking a bite, I was met with a delightful mix of rich and savory flavors. Then when I and my parents were walking to go to a dance festival we saw a line of Indian street food vendors with such a delicious smell of various flavors.. I immediately went to the chips vendor and took a bite of the hot, spicy murukku. Then, when we arrived at the dance festival we were welcomed by a thunderous, marching sound of people dancing to music. Moments later, I grabbed a large fireworks pack and lit several. I watched in amazement as they burst up and illuminated the sky, making a crackling sound that echoed like a gunfire.

RAKSHAN RAMACHANDRAN



GURU AMAR DAS
VISMAAD SINGH



LANA NGUYEN

LANA NGUYEN

The Conundrum of the Vanishing Vault

KARTHIK JAYAKANTH

In the heart of the old town stood an ancient mansion, shrouded in legends and secrets. Its owner, Mr. Henry Caldwell, a wealthy eccentric, had disappeared without a trace five years ago. The mansion had remained vacant until his grandnephew, Ethan Caldwell, inherited it on his thirteenth birthday. As he explored the dusty halls, he stumbled upon a hidden door in the basement.

The door led to a secret vault, filled with old maps, ancient artifacts, and a mysterious journal. The journal belonged to Mr. Caldwell, and it detailed his quest to find the legendary "Phoenix Medallion," said to grant eternal life to its possessor. The last entry hinted that he was close to discovering its location.

Ethan's curiosity was piqued, and he decided to follow his great uncle's trail. With his best friend, Lila, they deciphered cryptic clues hidden throughout the mansion. Each clue led them deeper into the labyrinth of the town's history, uncovering long-forgotten secrets and rivalries.

One stormy night, the final clue led them to the town's abandoned clock tower. As they climbed to the top, the old clock began to chime midnight, and the walls started to tremble. A hidden compartment opened, revealing a small, ornate box. Inside was the Phoenix Medallion, glowing with an ethereal light.

Before Ethan and Lila could examine it further, a shadowy figure appeared. It was Mr. Caldwell, looking exactly as he did five years ago. "You've done well, Ethan," he said, his voice echoing through the tower. "But this is only the beginning."

With a flash of light, Mr. Caldwell and the medallion vanished, leaving Ethan and Lila bewildered. They glanced at each other, realizing that their adventure had only just begun. What other secrets did the mansion and the medallion hold? And who was Mr. Caldwell really?

The answers lay in the depths of the mansion's hidden vaults, waiting to be discovered.

Ethan and Lila returned to the mansion, determined to uncover more secrets. They retraced their steps to the basement, where they noticed a peculiar symbol etched into the stone floor. It matched a symbol they had seen in Mr. Caldwell's journal, marking the beginning of a secret passage.

With some effort, they pried open a hidden trapdoor, revealing a dark, winding staircase. As they descended, the air grew colder, and the walls narrowed. Their flashlights flickered, casting eerie shadows on the ancient stone. At the bottom of the stairs, they found a hidden chamber filled with dusty tomes and more artifacts.

Among the relics was a large, ornate chest. When they opened it, they discovered a map, marked with strange symbols and unfamiliar locations. Ethan recognized one of the symbols—it was the same one Mr. Caldwell had been obsessively researching in his journal. This map could be the key to finding out what really happened to his granduncle.

As they examined the map, a loud crash echoed from above. Startled, they quickly hid behind a large statue, their hearts pounding. Footsteps approached, and they heard muffled voices. It seemed someone else was searching for the medallion—and they were getting closer.

Ethan and Lila held their breath as the intruders rifled through the chamber. Suddenly, the statue they were hiding behind began to move, revealing another hidden passage. They took a deep breath and slipped inside, hoping to evade the mysterious visitors.

The new passage led to a hidden grotto, where an underground river flowed. In the dim light, they could make out ancient carvings on the walls, depicting scenes of a great battle. At the far end of the grotto, a small, unassuming door stood ajar, hinting at yet another layer of secrets waiting to be uncovered.

GABRIEL
ROSARIO

Dec 28th
2024
13 yrs old

SQUID
GAME2

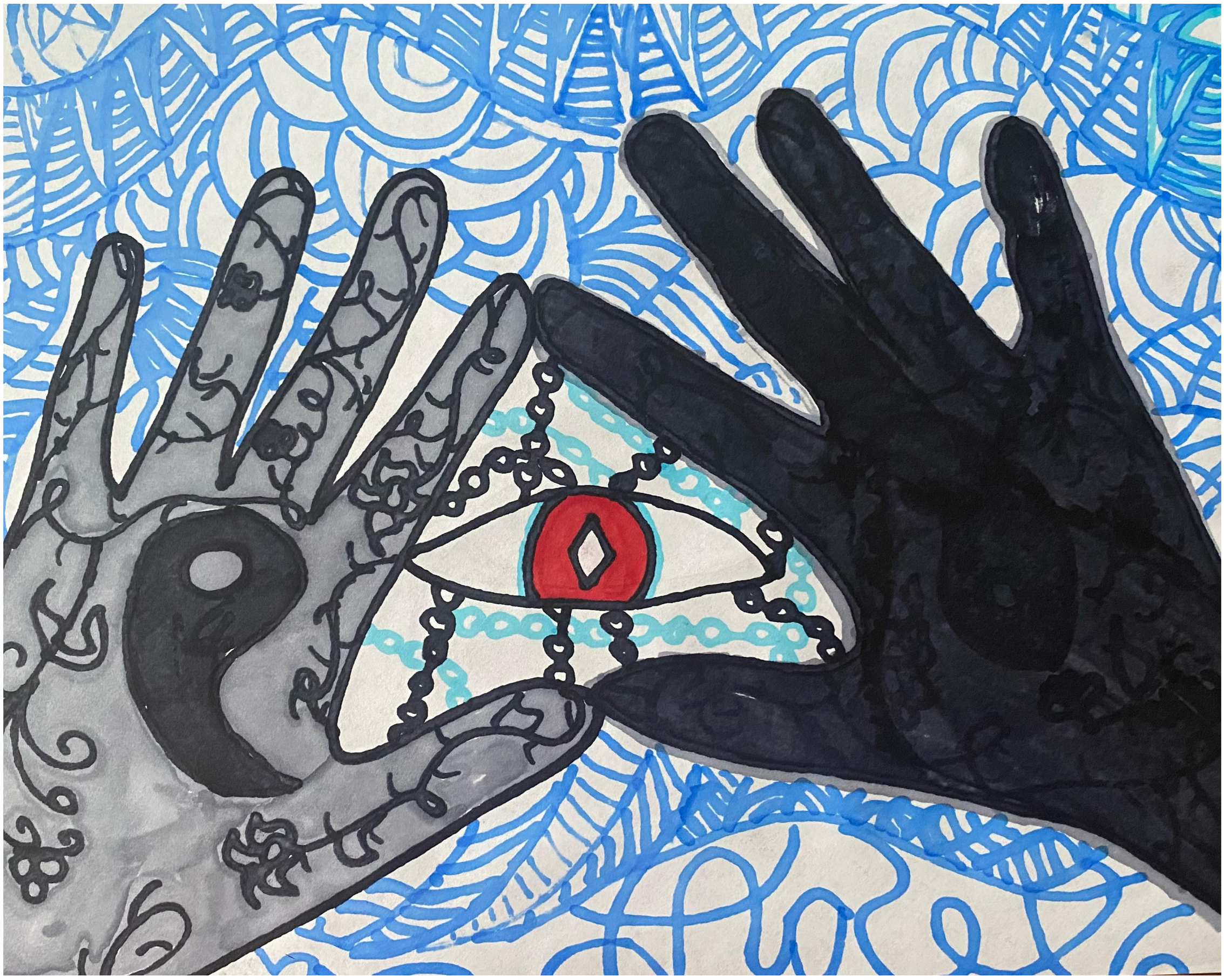
Dog-lo Picasso

DIYA
ARUNPRASATH

My name is Dog-lo Picasso. Some people call me ripoff Pablo Picasso. And they're right. I got my inspiration from him. But that's not who I am. Sure my style is similar and I adopted a name similar to his. That's not who I am. I didn't even know what art was. I was a wee lad when I was orphaned. Didn't know much except eating and sleeping. For a hobby I would drag stuff around. This eventually turned into my art. As a stray pup I walked into the local diner looking for my usual caretaker Anne. She slips me the leftovers. There's usually a piece of paper underneath because she needs the plate back. Usually it's a boring newspaper that I don't care to read. But today it's me. Well a painting of a dog that looks like me. I eat my food and flip the paper over. It goes "Pablo Picasso's new masterpiece- come see it now at Museu Picasso in Barcelona." Huh. What if I did go see it? From outside of course. I walked to the nearby museum the next day and gazed up at the painting until the night shift guard beat me with a stick. What if I made something like that? The next day I made it. Picasso recreated. Dog-lo had just begun. Who let the dogs out? Seriously, who? Because I sure have to thank them for what I made in the park today. A full time career impressing other dogs.

GABRIEL
ROSARIO

EVA SCHMIDT



EVA SCHMIDT

ANAYO
UWAOMA

ALLISON HIGGINS

VISMAAD SINGH

The Eraser's Wisdom

SHREENIKA PATIL

Start out fresh,
Pure and sharp,
No ridges or bumps,
No smudges or marks.

Soon I am used
To rub out mistakes,
But why must only you choose
What I get to erase?

Every time a flaw disappears
With a stroke or a swish,
A mark appears on me—
I slowly start to diminish.

But why must it be this way,
That I rub out your mistakes,
And lose a part of me each time,
As I get a scar with every take?

Yet this scar can never be healed,
Even time can't undo this unfair assault.
Only I fix your blemishes,
But who erases my faults?

It may sound miserable,
Maybe even depressing,
But instead of a curse,
I think of it as a blessing.

It may seem like suffering,
Or even an awful pain,
But at least I am fully utilized—
My existence doesn't go in vain.

That's what I have learned
From all my ancestors:
An eraser's life is fully lived
When you selflessly serve others.

A life filled with contentment and purpose
Is a life where compassion is what you give.
And knowing your life was of great help to others
Is a life well lived.

Rapid

SHREENIKA PATIL

It was like a movie.

The strong yet calming gusts of wind.

It made my eyes burn and my hair dance, but I got used to it.

I felt more alive than I've ever been.

My motorcycle soon crossed the speed limit.

But it didn't matter…nothing held me back. I had no limit.

It was cold and dark and I was alone. But that's the way I liked it.

Suddenly my eyes started watering,

But I blamed it on the fierce winds.

The tears didn't fall down my cheek,

They trickled their way to my ears and flew in the wind behind me.

I shut my eyelids.

I felt free.

I was free.

Frightful Forest

AKSHARA ARUN & GABRIEL ROSARIO

This writing and the connected artwork were inspired by the horrible fires in Los Angeles.

I arrived at the destination and glanced at the ablaze of colors
rising and falling in the open grasslands.
The glare of the rising fire.
I stood there alone, helpless.
How will I fight these rising flames?
I watched as the flames consumed everything in its path, the flames
licking all that came near, like a grand feast.
There was no sign of any wildlife, as the flames took over becoming
too powerful for one person to eliminate.
Reds, oranges, and yellows, sweeping away and taking everything
from everybody.
How am I supposed to help?
I felt desperate.
Suddenly, a group of brave fire fighters arrived and stood next to me.
I felt a boost of confidence and I was ready to eliminate the vibrant
flames that took over the forest.
I took a step forward, ready to face the bright flames that towered over
me.
The firefighters gathered water and it was the beginning of bringing
LA back to life.
The blue water and the illuminated flames clashed together, as if in a
fierce war, as I stood back and watched.
The abstract of different colors battled for hours.
We cheered, the defeat of the wildfires

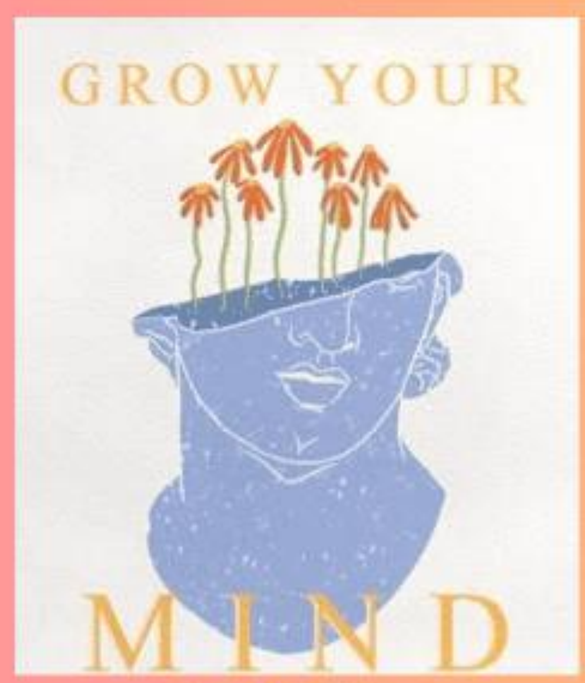
GABRIEL ROSARIO

Growth Mindset

By : Diya Arunprasath & Quinn Babowicz

A growth mindset is the ALPHA mindset

"Stay afraid, but do it anyway. What's important is the action. You don't have to wait to be confident. Just do it and eventually the confidence will follow." - Carrie Fisher



"It is hard to fail, but it is worse never to have tried to succeed" -Theodore Roosevelt

Fixed Mindset :

Fixed mindsets don't have any room for change. They are always negative and that is not good. People with fixed mindsets can have problems with creative thinking and creativity.

Growth mindset :

Growth mindsets are able to grow and learn from their mistakes. This helps them have a more positive attitude on life. People like this are more open to new ideas and do better things.

FIXED

How to have a growth mindset:

-Pursue Challenges:

Look at challenges and failure as a way to learn and grow. Failure isn't the end, it's the beginning.

-Set goals to help yourself improve:

Figure out strategies to help yourself get a growth mindset. Set goals to achieve tasks.

-The power of "yet"

If you can't do something always say "yet" because one day you will accomplish it.

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Just Some Metal

ISHANVI MOHAPATRA

Tell everyone else to
Hold their heads up high
Keep at it next year
Even when they want to cry,
Reminding them that they tried.

Tell everyone else to
Never say goodbye
To thoughts that come at night
Because even dreams
Will one day come alive.

Tell everyone else
That it's just a part of life.

But we forget to tell ourselves
That we must not sharpen our own knives
Pointing them at others
When we just need to tell ourselves
"It's fine."

I forget to tell myself
"It's quite all right"
It's just some metal
That doesn't define me, myself, and I
I have so much more time
So I will make my way out of the dirt
Stand tall
And with all my might
I will fight.

ARNAV MALPURE

Be a leader, stand up tall,
Responsible, kind, do it all.
Be creative, just be you,
Stay determined, you'll push through.
Be visible be present, let yourself be heard,
Let creativity exude from you, let your thoughts be stirred.
Be honest, helpful, silly too,
The world is a better place when you're you.

You Are Enough

MS. CORIANNE OLSEN

You may not get exactly what you want
It may not happen on the first try
There may be setbacks
Tears
Mistakes along the way
Not all the mistakes will be yours
Though you may still feel the weight of them

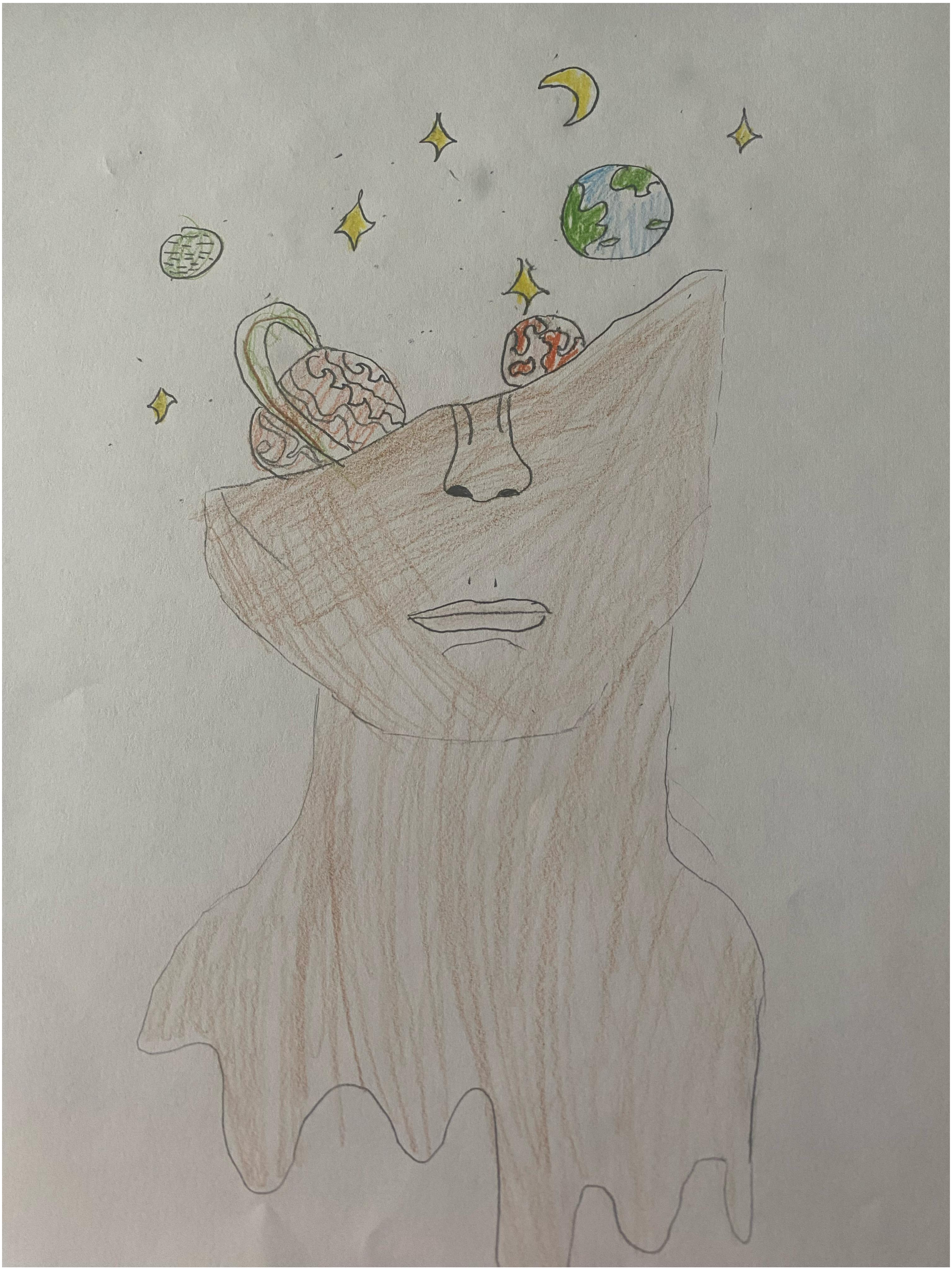
There will be friends
Antagonists
Chapters that are short
Chapters that are long
Paragraphs you never want to read again
Pages with their corners folded down
The page turned back to so many times
Again and again

There will be
Those who cheer you
And those who jeer you
Teachers who love you
And those who just tolerate you
But you will find **your way**

You may not come in first
But a place does not matter
When you have only just started on your path

SRUTHIKA DWARAPUDI

AKSHITHA AJAY



SYDNEY MILLER

Shadows

SKANDA KOTLA

From shadows deep, the black drips down,
A liquid night, a silent crown.
In the hand, the story flows,
A dance of dark where light once glowed.

In shadows deep, where secrets lie,
A hand holds fate, both low and high.
Eight legs that move with an eerie grace,
A haunting presence in this space.

ENCLOSED BY DARKNESS
ISHANVI MOHAPATRA

THE SPIDER
AADYA YADAV

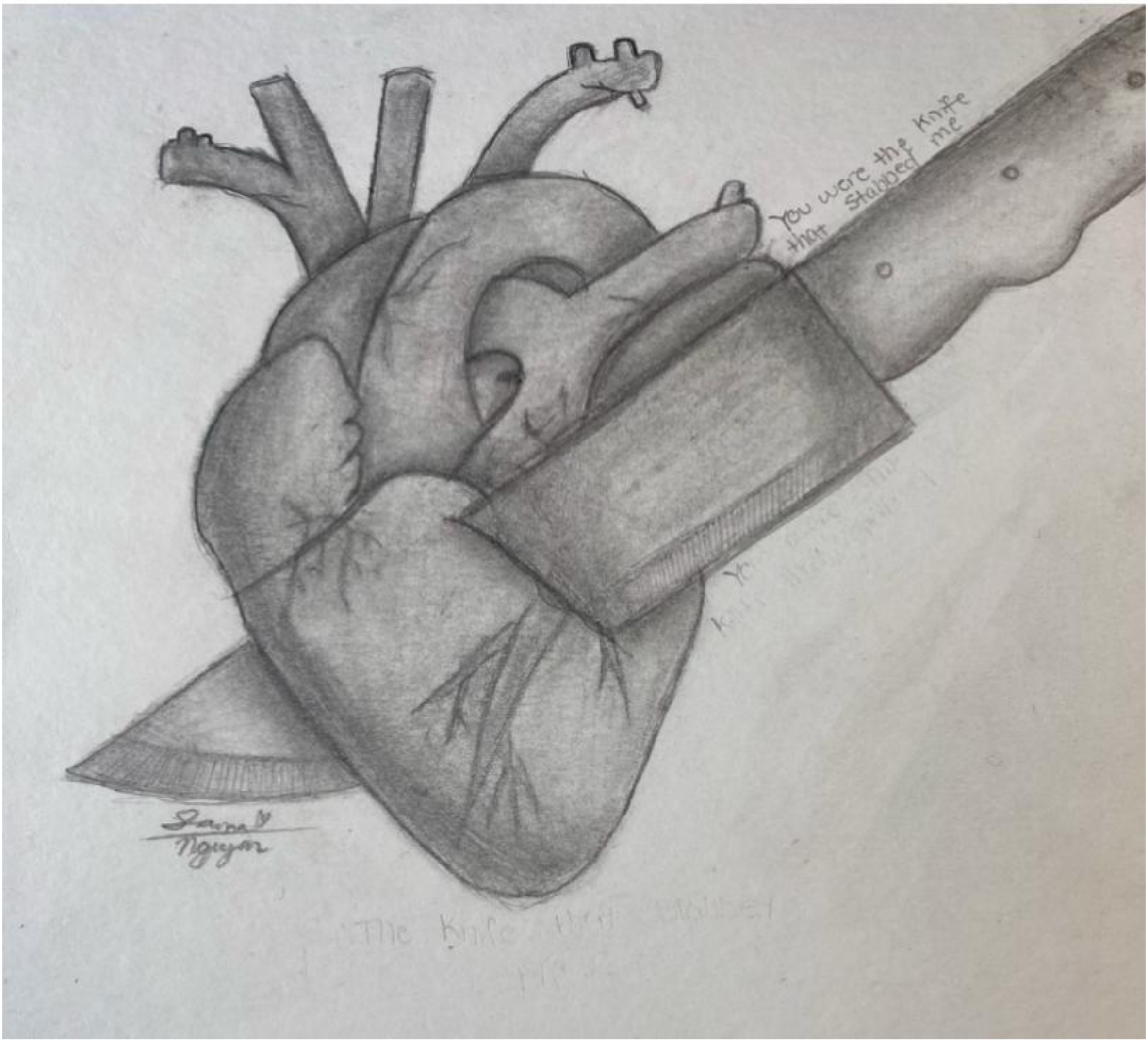
Headspace

AAROHAN PARIDA

All the fears lurk my headspace,
My times of joy are spent alone.
Monsters haunt me in any place,
Darkness encloses every bone.

The splatters of blood on the floor,
Fears have set hope in a high place.
Around me, Rain begins to pour,
All the fears lurk my headspace.

BRODEN CHAPA



LANA NGUYEN

You Were the Knife That Stabbed Me

AADYA TADIKONDA

You told me that you loved me
I told you that so did I.
For that was the blue canvas
Of a forget - me - not sky.

Tried so hard to be everything you like,
I guess you're not the same.
I miss yet hate you
I wish I didn't feel ashamed.

You liked someone more,
And took off with my love.
Here, I thought we were perfect,
We fit like a glove.

You held my hand that day
You lied for my love.
I hate the way I felt,
Flying up, high and above.

I'm sick of the way you acted
Tired of your lies.
You were the knife that stabbed me
And left me out to die.

You were a gift, at least I thought you were
Your acting was amazing, perfect and more.
You should win an Oscar
You'd get a perfect score.

You spoke in a way,
I still miss it.
But the way you hurt me?
It was a bullseye, a spot - on hit.

You were the knife that stabbed me
So go on, do it again!
Cause' even though I hate you,
I want you to break my heart
again.

I know how you took your coffee
And your favorite movie and color.
I thought our love was true
But now, I feel dumber.

Stupid, emotional, obsessive little
me
Just give me my broken heart
back, please.
Cuz' I love you, it's true,
But you broke my heart and now
I'm on my knees.

From guilty eyes, and little white
lies
I played dumb but I always knew.
I know if it were true-
There's no other way that you
could fall in love that quickly.

I thought I was enough
Didn't think about others, just you.

You left me on the floor, crying
saying ‘That’s where you belong,’
You took off with my life and
Now, you’re long gone.

You told me that ‘I was your one’
I held your hand and fell into your
plan.
Now, I feel stupid,
About your fake love and my
unknowing hand.

You told me ‘it was me’
I thought you were true.
But then, you took off running,
I died and I hate you.

I feel betrayed, anxious and hateful
I thought you were the best thing that
happened to me.
Now, I never want to see you again,
Now, I finally saw how dumb I could
really be.

You were the knife that stabbed me
So please just come back
I love you, I miss you
Because I want my heart back.

Dear, Beloved Angel

AAROHI MUDAKATTE & AADYA TADIKONDA

Prologue:

It was a stormy night.. The wind was howling as I entered T. Jefferson High School. It was pitch black. I couldn't see anything. I look for the switch and turn on the lights. It was empty: no students, no teachers, no janitor, NOBODY. It was really creepy.. I keep on telling myself stuff like 'It's nothing!' and 'You'll live!'. Sadly, I don't feel that way. A rumble of thunder occurs as I reach my hand to turn on the light. But as I do, I thought I saw someone. She looked a lot like MY sister?! I screamed-

Whoa, whoa, whoa. We're absolutely not going to start a story like that! I should probably introduce myself. My name's Emma Brown and my sister's name's Evelyn. I'm a junior and my sister's a senior. Great, huh? I have a handful of friends while my sister's the talk of the town. Beautiful hair, perfect life, best college and my crush, Jaxon Barlowe as a boyfriend. Wait- you want to see mine and my sister's life? Not if I can help it. Wait - you'll give me 4 PACKS OF GUM? Fine but make it quick. Go ahead…

Chapter 1: Emma Jessica Brown

My parents just ADORE her and get her the best things meanwhile… I? Nope. Zero. Nada. Once, a man tried to kidnap her but I held onto her.

"Let go, kid. I'll give ya 50 bucks, just LET go."

"NO! Someone help!" I screamed. The man left when he heard the police sirens and ran. She hugged me and whispered she would always do the same to me.

She must have forgotten.

" Can you wash your hands? They look VERY dirty." Mom asks me, snapping my thoughts in half. I'm sitting in my kitchen, blinking away the thoughts.

"Actually, can I have another waffle?" I asked, finishing my last bite.

Mom turned around, " Honey, couldn't you be a little more skinny - er like Evelyn?" she says "I mean look at her!"

"Mom? Can I eat?" Evelyn asked, as she walked/floated like an ANGEL down the stairs.

Mom's face lightens with excitement. "Of course, my dear baby!!"

Evelyn' s room is way bigger and her room is luxurious and mine isn't the best, more like the size of a janitor's closet.

I sigh in disappointment. I obviously expected this from my mom.

She sat down and smiled her hundred-watt smile at me.

I forcefully smiled back and then looked down at my empty plate. I then glanced at Evelyn's plate, it was full to the brim with chocolate chip waffles and maple syrup. I sigh. Mom stared at her like she's the sun. She caressed her brown velvety chocolate hair and sighed. I grumbled. Mom's face changed at the speed of light as she whipped around to see me. She frowned..

"Are you ok, hon- NO!" She screamed as I whipped around to see Eve going to drink a glass of water. Mom slapped the glass to the floor which shattered into pieces immediately.

"Mom!" Eve cried, as mom stood up, and handed me the broom.

"I didn't want to ruin your make-up, dear.. Also Emma, could you clean up this mess." Mom replied, as Eve sighed as she took out her shimmery lip gloss and dabbed it on at the reflection of a spoon.

I groan. I do NOT want to clean up. I shouldered the broom and stalked off to the mess, the curse words on my tongue BURN.

Chapter 2: Evelyn Sophina Brown

I looked in the mirror and slathered on some Shimmery Shine lip gloss, picked up my English book from my locker and turned to find the usual 10 boys panting after me. I try to avoid them because it's REALLY annoying how they always follow wherever I go.. Literally. The girls started to swoon, and I sighed. People seem to think I'm a real - life Barbie. Just then I finally saw my boyfriend, Jaxon Barlowe walk right towards me.

"Hey, E." He whispered, his breath tickling my ear.

"Hey Jax." I replied, my face turning tomato-red and I felt like a show dog being put in its paces. He held my hand and it was very sweet. I LOVED IT! Somehow I felt all of my worries go away, like a runaway cloud in the middle of the sky.

"Let's go to homeroom.." he suggested, but just then, my little sister suddenly goes over to Jaxon.

"Wait, I need my Calculus 2 textbook," I lied, turning and putting my key in so he won't see my face. Emma stuttered a hello to Jax.

Where did she come from? And anyway this is supposed to be the SENIOR'S hallway, not the juniors.

"W-wait. Jaxon. D-don't g-go." she stutters and her face is bright red.

"Emms, you are supposed to be in the juniors hallway, not over here!" I told her, opening my locker.

"UGH!! You are so ANNOYING! First mom, and then you.. Everybody is against me!" she storms off before I could even say anything.

"Are you okay?" I ask Jaxon.

"Yeah, I'm fine.. Just a little bit tired." Jaxon replies.

"I'm really sorry… You know, about my sister. " I apologize, ruffling his brown hair.

He nods gratefully, and hand in hand, we head to homeroom. I can feel the glares of jealousy by so many girls. I sigh. I wish I wasn't perfect… literally everybody is jealous of me. For example, Emma and literally every single girl in HIGH SCHOOL glares at me every single day! My mom literally wants me to be the perfect child I am. The only person I love is my boyfriend, Jaxon. He is always there for me, and ALWAYS cheers me up.

We reach the homeroom and I sit right next to Jaxon. I see the teacher writing something on the board. I strain my neck to see it , and in big bold letters it says:

''The future belongs to people who believe in the beauty of their dreams.' BY ELEANOR ROOSEVELT'. I sigh and Jax says he's really sorry but he has to go to the library. I nod and when I turn to say good morning to Mrs. Klatolowski, I see Emma standing in the shadows, glaring at me. I feel a shiver running down my spine and I turn, knowing I'm not the only one with secrets.

Chapter 3: Emma

After school, me and Evelyn have a club. It's an art club and art is my thing. I'm painting with an idea running through my head. Evelyn is talking with Minna and painting a picture of roses. UGH! Just look at her ponytail, swinging! And her roses! They were blood red and beautiful and my daisies couldn't compete. My bestie, Willow Beareguarde was sketching a beach scene and she kept looking at me suspiciously. I whispered I'd be right back.

"Where're you going?" Willow asked, erasing something, absentmindedly bored.

"Just the bathroom," I whispered back, running out.

"Wait! You have to tell-" Willow's voice faded out as I ran out of the room, pulled out my phone and typed-

Hey could you come 2 the bathroom?

OK.

I grinned when I read it. I ran to the nearest bathroom and hid in the shadows. 2 minutes later, Evelyn came running in, her hair askew and her cute glasses crooked.

"Emma?" Eve called. Emma, Emma, Emma, Emma, it echoed. The light flickered.

"Emma, where are you? I swear, if you're playing-" Eve started and she whipped around to see me with a KNIFE. I advanced while Eve backed up.

"Emma?! This is some joke, right? RIGHT?!? EMMA, STOP!"

My face was transformed.. Thunder boomed. I stepped from the shadows. I had stolen the knife from Mom's kitchen. I walked forwards, my blood boiling. Eve was sobbing and her back hit the wall. Her eyes screwed shut.

Before I could ask her anything else, she gave me a peck on the cheek and ran off, giggling.

I brushed the spot where she kissed me and shook my head-

Snap out of it, Jax! You can't forget about Eve!!!! Hurry UP!

I have no choice but to go to the girls bathroom. I quickly go and check each one of the stalls until I see something unexpected…..

I see a dead body in one of the bathroom stalls. I screamed but as I looked closer and realized that it's Evelyn!!! Wait… what??? How is she dead? She can't be dead, she was my only friend… and now she is GONE!! She's slumped against the wall, with blood streaming down like a waterfall and a *knife* in her. I huddled onto the floor and frantically checked if she was breathing and if she had a pulse. Both of them were no.

"I will avenge you Evelyn. You can always count on me," I say, tears streaming down my face. I scooped down and picked her up. I pulled out the knife and a splatter of blood blew up. I cried as I ran to someone, *anyone*, to help.

I ran, tears spilling on her body as I rushed to the office, carrying Evelyn. A security guard questioned me and asked me a BUNCH of questions like, 'what happened?' and 'did you kill her?' LIKE NO-! Seriously, *why* would I kill my own girlfriend?

I explained everything but then an ambulance came, and took Evelyn away. I cried in despair, but just then Emma and her parents came. Her mom was crying hysterically, her dad was beyond grief and Emma? Emma looked depressed, she was shaking with shock and I reached my hand out to steady her, she grabbed my arm and sobbed.

"Thank you…" She whispered. I patted her arm and I hugged her. And she looks down at spots of blood dotted across her uniform. I hang my head. She gives me a light kiss but it looks as if she's whispering something in my ear. She huddles against me, eyes blanking. Her parents aren't listening.

"W-what? H-how?? What happened to her?" Emma's mom asked, wiping her tears from her eyes.

"I don't know, " My words hang in the air.

Then, her dad steps up and looks me in the eye. I pause and meet his broken-with-grief glare.

"If you killed Evelyn, you WILL pay! " her dad says, looking ANGRY.

"Dad! Why would Eve's boyfriend KILL her?!" Emma groans, covering her face. Not a good look but she was standing up for *me.* My affection for her grew and expanded two times. It was pretty high already, from that glance we had before Eve's death. I seriously wished Emma would be ok with me dating her sister but-

"She's correct, dear. Why would he kill her?" Mrs. Brown stuttered, putting an arm onto Mr. Brown. He takes a few seconds, shutters and extends a hand to gruffly hug me. I link arms with Emma and we walk, as she's excused to "take a breather".

"I'm sorry about your sister," I whisper.

"It's not your fault, Jax," she whispered back.

I stop and so does she. We lean towards each other but I halt. *Eve JUST died. Am I willing to kiss her sister and live her legacy?* I shudder. She leans out, watching me. She places a comforting arm on my shoulder. *Yes. Yes, I am. Better now than ever. It's Emma, the same blood. Even though Eve will hate me, I don't care. Well, I do care- but… Emma is her sister. It's Emma, not Eve, who was my true love. It took me so long to see it. It's time. I love her.*

We lean in and lock lips. I don't care anymore about Eve. I have Emma, and that's all I need. I've been missing out on so much and I finally noticed, thanks to Emma. We stop. And we interlock fingers.

• - - - - - -

"You're- you're right, dear, I'm sorry to doubt you, Jaxon," Mr. Brown blinked when we re - enter. Emma's eyes were raw… wait… is that a glint in her eye? But she blinked and I think it was a trick of the light. I shook my head. Why would I have ANY reason to kill my own ex - girlfriend? I mean, that's just CRAZY. She was my favorite person in the WHOLE world, no cap. But not anymore.

Emma steps out from the line of fire, looks straight at me and says,

"I will avenge you, Evelyn Sophina Brown," and looks at me and for some reason I get chills. But I ignore it, because Emma's everlasting kiss is locked and loaded on repeat in my brain. And we were excused again to call a "police officer" again, and we did it again. Except we don't stop. At all.

•1 year later -

"Hey Jax," I called on my phone, fixing up my makeup and pulling my satiny midnight blue prom dress in my dressing room. A knock at the door, and Minna, Zora and Willow walked in, gawking at my dress. I stood up.

"How do I look?" My dress was beautiful, with blue satin and silver tulle at the bottom and a bun with strands curled. Daddy took me to a nail salon to get matching nails and makeup.

"Whoa," Minna gawped. I smiled. *Knock, knock.*

"Hey- whoa, Emi-" Jax called, his head stuck out the door.

"How do I look?" I asked, facing Jax.

"You look… AMAZING!" He exclaimed, walking towards me.

I blush, and play with my hair. He also blushes as he looks at me.

"Well, are you ready? We should probably get going!" Jaxon said, turning around and flashing his best smile in the mirror. I gripped at his arm.

"Ready?" I asked, pulling my best smile on from my brain. He nodded. We walked out backstage.

"Everyone, welcome to PROM! Now, we have our PROM KING AND QUEEN!" called out the DJ.

“AND… it’s Emma Brown and Jaxon Barlowe! Give them a big hand, ladies and gentlemen! And now, we dedicate a song to Emma!” My favorite song starts playing as we walk onto stage.

“It’s by Evelyn Sophina B!” The DJ calls as he plays it and everyone gathers around.

I snap. *What, wait? Evelyn Sophina B? It can’t be my sister, could it? It couldn’t… She’s literally DEAD!*

“Hello? Earth to Emi!” Jax called.

“Yeah?” I asked, snapping out of it.

“It’s our favorite song! Don't you want to dance?”

I nod, and then take his hand. Then I held his hand tightly, as I danced. I blushed…. He is the cutest. But as I stared into his eyes,I swear I could see something in the corner of my eyes. It wasn’t…, it couldn’t… A shadow who looked just like my sister. It darts away.

I then remembered Evelyn, and how she was Jax’s first love. How I only got his attention by KILLING her and working at least 1 year to get him secured. Not that I didn’t love him… I just… I needed him for my popularity to be sky - rocketing. He rested his forehead on mine.

“Are you okay?” I ask Jax.

The sad glint in his eyes fades, and he looks back up at me, smiling. Like always. I smiled back,warmly.

“Remember your sister?” He asks.

“Please don’t remind me of that night.” I close my eyes. He sighs, and smiles. If he can, so can I. The ghost of our first kiss is floating between us but there were good things about that night because we were officially dating.

I then lean slowly towards him, our eyes locked. Then,we snap out of it and then, we face the crowd, with warm smiles planted on our faces.

Just then: “Hey, let’s escape this party,” Jax whispered into my ear. It might have looked like a kiss on my cheek. But it wasn’t. He gripped my hand and waved out as we left to backstage. I pondered it. *This was my big chance of being popular even though I already was. Prom. But Jax was calling for me and I would be* EVEN *cooler if I ditched Prom and left with my boyfriend.* SUCH *a huge commotion. People would beg in front of me asking what we did and I would say, “And* why *should I tell you?!” They would sputter lots of reasons and I would dismiss them saying, “I have classes, maybe later…” And during lunch-*

“Ok,” I said, when we were safely behind the velvet curtains. I gave him a kiss and giggled. He was starstruck. He reached down with his warm hands on the bottom of my chin and gently pulled my face upwards. We were so close, I could practically feel his lips- BANG!

“Oh, sorry,” Minna replied, holding a black velvet pillow. The pillow held two crowns. One, tall, proud and glittering with fake rubies. The other? Wow. Slim, yet beautiful.

It had a headband but with gold filigree and the jewels were amethyst and emerald. My favorite. I gravitate towards it, all thoughts lost. Minna grins. She hands one to me and another to Jax. I smile, the crown compliments my outfit. I spun and I swear, Jax's jaw dropped. He came closer to plant a kiss on my-
"AND NOW, LET'S INVITE OUR PROM KING AND QUEEN ONE LAST TIME!!!"
We walk out again and bow or curtsy in my case. Applause fills the audience with joy. I wave and everyone curtseys or waves back. I smile and my strands that are curled frames my face. Love and power is never logical but I *felt* like a queen. Love isn't logical but as I snuggled my head on Jax's shoulder, it felt like 2+2=5 and I was the love of *his* life, not Eve. Even if the rain doesn't pour and the sun doesn't shine. Or the grass is blue and the sky is red, he would keep loving me. As I smiled down to the audience, I saw someone next to a person who looked *exactly* like Eve. I frowned, my heels click-clacking. Jax noticed the emotion change and waved as he tugged at my arm to follow him backstage. I left him and whispered to the DJ to cut Prom because I felt uneasy like something was going to happen. Jax was dumbfounded. He grabbed me and pulled me away. My mind was spinning and Eve's death was on fast replay, like a loop as I allowed to be pulled away.
"Are you OK?" He whispered to me.
"No, I'm fine, darling. I just have… a headache. The bright lights, you know." I say, back.
I didn't feel fine. I wanted to scream and run from Eve's shadow. Call the police, maybe? I killed her, she's *supposed* to be dead. Her bloody knife swam in my head before everything went black.

Chapter 5: Jaxon

"HELP! My GIRLFRIEND! She-she fainted!" I yelled on stage. The DJ was cursing under his breath while he fished for his phone and couldn't find it. Everyone was yelling.

"Call her parents!" Someone yelled. I found the DJ's phone and punched in 911. In 10 minutes, a woman and her driver appeared in an ambulance.

"Step aside, step aside, she needs to breathe," The woman (who looked strangely like Evelyn) said.

"Hi ma'am, can you save her?" I whispered, grasping Emma's hand. She nodded.

"No pulse," She mumbled, her nimble fingers jangling on her keys and tools. She checked her pulse.

"Weird, it's suddenly here," I whispered, as I checked her pulse.

The woman gives me a sharp look.

"You a doctor?" She replied, checking her pulse again.

"Studying to be one, she's into law," I mumble back.

She nods. She frowns and presses her fingers against her forehead.

"No temperature,"

"She's ok. Just wait, she'll wake up," she whispered.

"Ohhhhhhhhhh, Ja-a-a-x. I miss you, honey," She leaned in and planted a kiss on my cheek. I pushed her away.

"No way! I'm a boyfriend to her, and why do you sound so-"

"You're in love? With who…?" She asked.

"Emma…! Now, leave me alone!" I screamed into the room. Everyone was quiet.

"...Eve…?" I asked. I face-plant forwards and fall.

I landed in our 3rd grade classroom. I hide away, and watch a boy (littler me?) stare at Eve and blush every time she flipped her hair. After 2 years, she came up to me and said,"Hey Jaxon, I like you. Do you?"

This was in 5th grade. She was wearing her cropped t-shirt and flare jeans. I nodded so hard, I thought my face would fall off. She grasped my hand and gave me a kiss on the cheek. She giggled and left. At recess, I would watch her play with her friends and smiling, she would blushingly-wave to me. One day, I had enough. I cornered her and gave her a hug and a kiss. She ran with me, holding my hand. I smiled at the memory but then I noticed something. Emma, her sister, would always stare at me during recess behind the slides. She would bite her lip so hard everytime Eve talked to me. She would have a fit every time Eve gave me a hug. Emma, who I loved so much now, was *jealous* of her. I mean, c'mon, who wouldn't be? With a sister like that? I never stopped to wonder if, *Is this the end? Will she get over it? And if she doesn't, what would have happened?*

Chapter 6: Emma

I had passed out. I was swimming in a pool and I was enjoying splashing my friends and giggling. With Jax being the lifeguard and he'd given me a wink. Blushing, I'd turned and saw my friends wave from the deep end. I swam towards them, before they started to scream.

"HELP!!" They cried, as I swam as fast as I could to them, trying, *trying* to save them. I whipped my arms as fast as I could before they… drowned. I screamed for help, begging someone to save me or them… Jaxon was suddenly gone, like an illusion. Like he didn't exist. I heard thunder and I was soaked. In rain- no, no, *no*, blood. The water turned bright red in seconds and I was drowning. In *her* blood. I heard screaming and a knife being jabbed into someone and splatters of blood fly in the air. I heard Eve's last words.

"Emma, please, please," And I was hyperventilating. It felt like I was reliving her death as a kid. I felt something on my hands and lifted it from the clutches of the pool's red water. They were bright red with blood on the fingertips. I gasped in pain.

My hands had a mind of their own, they grabbed my abdomen, to staunch the flow of- Blood. I screamed into the air. Eve's voice filled the air-

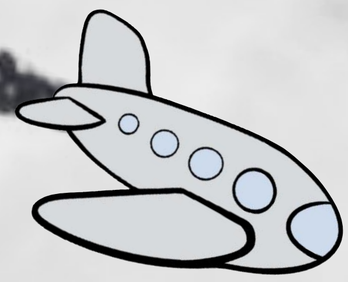
I woke up with a start.
"Doctor, is she OK?" Jax asked a nurse and a doctor conversing about something written on a paper. Jax was still in his Prom clothes, now with a worried look planted on his face. He glanced at me.

AADYA YADAV

IC814

The Kandahar Hijack

KARTHIK JAYAKANTH



In December 1999, an Indian Airlines flight, IC814, was hijacked in a dramatic and terrifying ordeal that left a significant mark on history. The flight was traveling from Kathmandu, Nepal, to Delhi, India, when five men armed with weapons seized control of the aircraft shortly after takeoff. These hijackers, known by code names such as Chief, Doctor, Burger, Bhola, and Shankar, belonged to a militant group with a clear objective: to force the Indian government to release certain prisoners.

The hijackers diverted the plane to several different locations before ultimately landing in Kandahar, Afghanistan. It was there that they issued their ultimatum to the Indian government: the safe release of all passengers and crew in exchange for the release of three prisoners. With 155 people on board, the situation was dire, and fear was palpable among those held hostage.

Faced with an incredibly tough decision, the Indian government had to weigh the potential risks and benefits of various options. They could negotiate with the hijackers and meet their demands, or they could attempt a risky rescue mission that might endanger the hostages' lives. After several days of intense and high-stakes negotiations, the government decided to comply with the hijackers' demands and release the prisoners to secure the hostages' safety.

Thankfully, no one was physically harmed during the ordeal, but the psychological trauma experienced by the passengers and their families was profound. This event underscored the urgent need for improved airport security measures, leading the Indian government to implement new rules and adopt advanced technology to prevent such incidents in the future.

The IC814 hijacking also had broader geopolitical implications, particularly straining the already tense relationship between India and Pakistan.

The incident highlighted the complexities of dealing with terrorism and underscored the importance of robust security measures to protect innocent lives.

Today, the IC814 hijacking remains a significant historical event, serving as a reminder of the challenges posed by terrorism and the necessity of strong security protocols.

It continues to influence how governments and aviation authorities approach security and counter-terrorism efforts, ensuring that lessons learned from this harrowing experience help to prevent future tragedies. This event taught us not only about the tactical aspects of security but also about the profound and lasting impact such incidents can have on the lives of those involved.

The hijacking of Indian Airlines Flight IC814 in December 1999 was a dramatic and terrifying event that left an indelible mark on the history of aviation security and international relations. This incident, which took place against the backdrop of geopolitical tensions and evolving security threats, serves as a sobering reminder of the lengths to which militant groups can go to achieve their objectives.

Enslaved Individuals Taking Agency over Their Lives

ARNAV MALPURE

Enslaved people constantly persevered, trying to take agency over their lives. The 16th, 17th, and 18th century were the most impactful centuries in the history of the United States because of one reason. Enslavement. Enslavement was not just an issue in the United States, it was international. It was rigorous to be an enslaved individual. They weren't allowed to read or write, leaving them illiterate. They wouldn't be able to quit either, depriving them of their liberty resulting in dehumanizing them.

The conditions for enslaved people were extremely horrendous. According to the Smithsonian Channel, "They were property." Human beings, no matter what race or gender were all created equal. It says so in our own Constitution. It hadn't even been a century and the Constitution was already being defied. Enslaved individuals were denied many of their rights. They weren't given the chance to learn or to speak their own language either. They were basically robots controlled by their so called 'owners.' In addition, property is something that you own like land or goods. You cannot own a human being. They were born as a free individual, not as a servant. Their skin is just a different color than everybody else. This has no logic behind it. Another horrifying condition was their physical well-being. According to Jack Daw Photo Collection, a former enslaved human's back is shown. In fact History.com describes "the keloid scars he suffered from his beating." Back then whipping was the number one punishment given to enslaved people. The shocking thing about this is that they would get punished for small things like missing a corner while cleaning or trying to speak. On top of that they didn't get paid for what they put their everything into. After seeing the former enslaved human's back, everybody was shocked. The sad thing is that it took hundreds of beatings for people to start noticing. If they noticed earlier and took action, so many more people would have been saved from their rigorous punishments. Lastly, according to the Smithsonian Channel, "Think about what it would have been like to be shackled, to walk from plantation to plantation." The fact that enslaved people were forced to wear shackles and other devices like slave collars. They were literally treated like animals. These devices were used to ensure that they couldn't run away while they were going to be sold. This led back to dehumanizing them. In fact, when they would be sold, they didn't have any guarantee of whether or not they would stay with their families. Most times, only younger men were chosen because they were more productive. But what about their families? They might have kids or parents who need to be taken care of. Nobody cared about that which was atrocious. Even the idea of just being sold was crazy. You cannot sell human beings to other human beings. It's just wrong. In conclusion, the conditions were terrible for enslaved people, from getting whipped to being put in shackles.

However, despite these awful conditions, enslaved people constantly fought to try to take some sort of agency over their lives. According to the Museum of the American Revolution, “some Africans attempted to jump overboard or find other ways to die by suicide, either during their passage across the ocean or once they had reached American shores.” Given that they were forced to save themselves from the misery by committing suicide conveys that their experience must have been horrible on their trip to America. They took agency over their lives by giving up their lives to save them from the torture they would have to face. Since the merciless people only saw them as ‘things’ they needed them to stay alive, or they wouldn’t get anything out of it. Seeing this, if the enslaved people decided to give up their lives, it meant that they also wanted the people who captured them to face some sort of loss. They knew that their lives were more precious than a couple of dollars. However, they still committed suicide. This all contributed to conveying a message to the cruel people who captured them. Another way they took agency was by not obeying their ‘owners’. According to the Museum of the American Revolution, “Some people worked slowly when their owners weren’t looking.” This conveyed agency because they did what they wanted. They could have gone faster, but they didn’t want to do more work for the people that they despised. This made them feel more like human beings because they could do what they wanted. This still wasn’t enough to convey dominance or equality, but it was a step towards freedom. Also, they gave their least amount of effort until they were punished. From that they only gave them a little bit more effort every day. Putting in less effort, meant that they chose the quality of their work, again conveying agency. Lastly, according to the book NightJohn, “ but we call him dog droppings and pig slop and worse things yet when he ain’t listening nor close.”(Paulsen 14). In this novel, Sarny and other enslaved people chose to badmouth their supervisor. This also conveyed agency because they were taking back their freedom of speech. If their supervisor was nearby, they wouldn’t be able to say it. They took the chance that they got and expressed their true hatred for him. If the supervisor had heard, they would all be punished severely. Knowing the risk of being punished, they still spoke out, proving that they weren’t afraid anymore. This conveyed a message to prove that enslaved humans have to start fighting back for their equality and freedom. In conclusion, enslaved people fought back by trying to take agency in countless ways.

There are many additional and inspiring ways enslaved individuals took agency over their lives. One way was by running away, breaking one of the ‘rules.’ According to National Park Service.gov, “Thousands of slaves fled bondage each year in the decades before the Civil War.” Running away was a great sign of agency. However, it came with a huge risk. If they were caught and sent back to their ‘owner’, they would be punished in ways we can’t even imagine. They could have even been killed. Keeping this in mind, if they still decided to run away, they were very courageous. One exemplary person who portrayed agency in this way was the infamous enslaved individual, Harriet Tubman. She didn’t just run away herself. She helped 300 people get to freedom knowing that she could have been killed or returned back to her ‘owner’. It is clear that she wanted to end slavery for everybody, not just herself, otherwise she wouldn’t go back and save hundreds of other people. This sent a message to their supervisors saying that they are going to fight back.

Another way enslaved people took agency over their lives was by trying to learn. In the book NightJohn it says, “It said: 100 lbs. I wrote them down in the dirt with a stick,” (Paulsen 35). Sarny was a very curious person. Being a kid, she was interested in everything. When she decided to write the numbers in the dirt, she took a big risk. If her supervisor thought that she could write, then he could have assumed that she would be literate, breaking the ‘rules’. Sarny would get severely punished for being literate because it was a type of threat to their supervisor. If she knew how to read and write, she could have started teaching other people or started writing her own stories that people would read and be influenced by. Also, that would mean that they would be the same level educationally. This would start making the supervisor question their superiority. This conveyed a message to all supervisors, that other enslaved individuals could also educate themselves and rise against them. Lastly, enslaved people took agency by continuing to work for freedom after they escaped. According to Smithsonian Channel Civil War 360, “They provided Butler with key intelligence.” Even after they ran away, they were still taking agency for other helpless enslaved people in the south. Helping the Union could have gone both ways. They could have gotten rejected because racism was everywhere, not just in the south. They could have been sent back to their ‘owners’. However, they risked their lives to help the Union. Most of them even fought in the wars. Since they were of color, if they got captured they would straight up get killed. Other people that got caught that were white were held as captives. This was because the Confederates knew that the Union wouldn’t care if they came back or not. They also got paid less than other soldiers in the Union. Despite these horrible conditions, they still fought for the people that didn’t respect them enough to end slavery. In conclusion, enslaved people took agency over their own lives to shape their futures, the way they wanted it to be.

To sum it all up, the idea of slavery was harsh for all enslaved people. The conditions that they faced were unacceptable and unbearable leading to many deaths. However, these conditions are the things that led enslaved humans to take agency over their lives. They took agency in many ways from cursing at a supervisor to fighting them in war. Small or big, any step towards gaining agency was a step towards being free. In retrospect, the abolishment of slavery has shaped our country in endless ways today.

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Where I

ANIRUDH SANAKKAYALA

O lord,
Please bless me with this opportunity to survive.
In this world that thrives in horror and disgust
Where I can’t eat a good meal
and stay separated from my family.
Where I live with no pennies
and the fear of being captured.
Where I think I’m safe in the north
but still as vulnerable as when I was in the south.
Where I think I lose all hope
but the flicker of light shines upon me.
Where I am a threat
but still accepted by other people
Where I am in a better place
than I was yesterday.
Where I improve.

Inspired by the novel Lyddie by Katherine Paterson
and studies on the Fugitive Slave Acts

I pray this letter reaches you, though I know it is dangerous to send word. I write with trembling hands but a hopeful heart, for I am free—for now. Not long ago, I found myself hiding in a tavern near the mountains of Vermont. Cold and weary, I slipped into the cellar seeking refuge. That's where I met a young white girl named Lyddie Worthen, who works as a servant there. She discovered me in the darkness, but instead of turning me in, she offered kindness—and something more precious: freedom. She gave me her own spare money, over $15, to help me get to Canada. Said she had been saving it to go home, but she handed it to me without a moment's pause. I'll never forget the way she looked at me—not with fear or suspicion, but like I was a man, not a runaway. She risked much. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 allows any white man to claim a Black person as a runaway, with little to no proof. And worse still, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, though new and not yet fully enforced where I was, threatens heavy penalties—$1,000 fines or jail time—for anyone aiding an escaped slave. Lyddie could have lost everything for helping me, but she did it anyway. Now, I follow the road north with others who travel the Underground Railroad, a secret path lit by brave souls like her. Each night, we move under the stars, guided by whispers and faith. I hope one day to see Canada and truly breathe free air. Hold tight to hope, and pray for the day when none of us must run.

With love and longing,
Ezekial

SRUTHIKA DWARAPUDI

Inspired by the novel Lyddie by Katherine Paterson and studies on the Fugitive Slave Acts

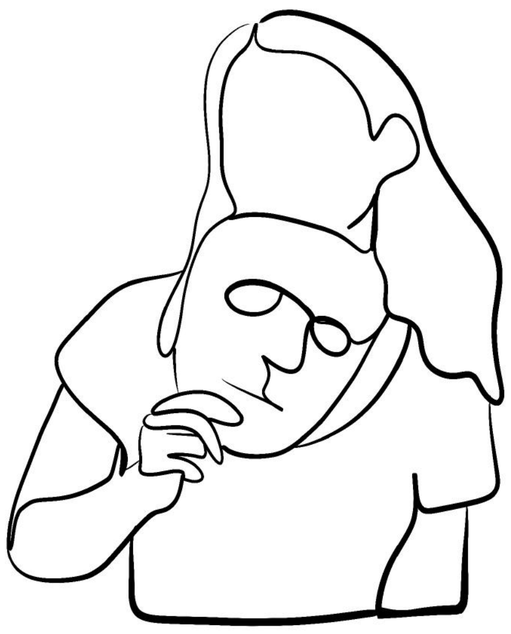
Ezekial's Journey

RISHITA PILALAMARRI

I walked for miles with aching feet,
Through fields and woods, in cold and heat.
A runaway, but not a thief.
Only a man who longed for peace.
I ran away to find my freedom,
Even though it was hard.
I walked for days with little food,
Always hiding, always scared.
I hid by day, I moved by night,
Afraid to speak, afraid of light.
I lost my wife, I lost my son,
But I didn't lose hope.
Lyddie gave me kindness and bread—
That's something I won't forget.
I just want to live free.
That's all I ever wanted.

Inspired by the novel Lyddie by Katherine Paterson
and studies on the Fugitive Slave Acts

IN THE DARKNESS THERE IS LIGHT
ISHANVI MOHAPATRA



The Mask She Wears

NISHKA SINGH

The mask she wears is the polar opposite of herself
The mask she wears is not her true self
The mask is full of life
Smart, funny and always right
This mask lies many friends
Kind, compassionate friends unlike herself
However, this mask is a complete lie
To cover the owner who hides inside
Who struggles to stay alive
She just wants to escape from her mind
She's drowning in thoughts she can't describe

Day turns to night, which turns to day
Yet all this little girl sees is grey
But this mask is a gift
To hide her pain and sorrow
She may look happy now,
But she'll cry tomorrow
She may be smiling and enjoying
But it won't last forever
Sometimes, this little girl sits in the dark
Wondering what's wrong with her

Why can't she be like the mask she borrowed?
But it's no use
This mask is a permanent cover
And as days go on
So do her struggles
That girl with the mask is me
And the mask is the girl I yearn to be

The Beautiful Rose

DIVINA SARAH DOULAGAR

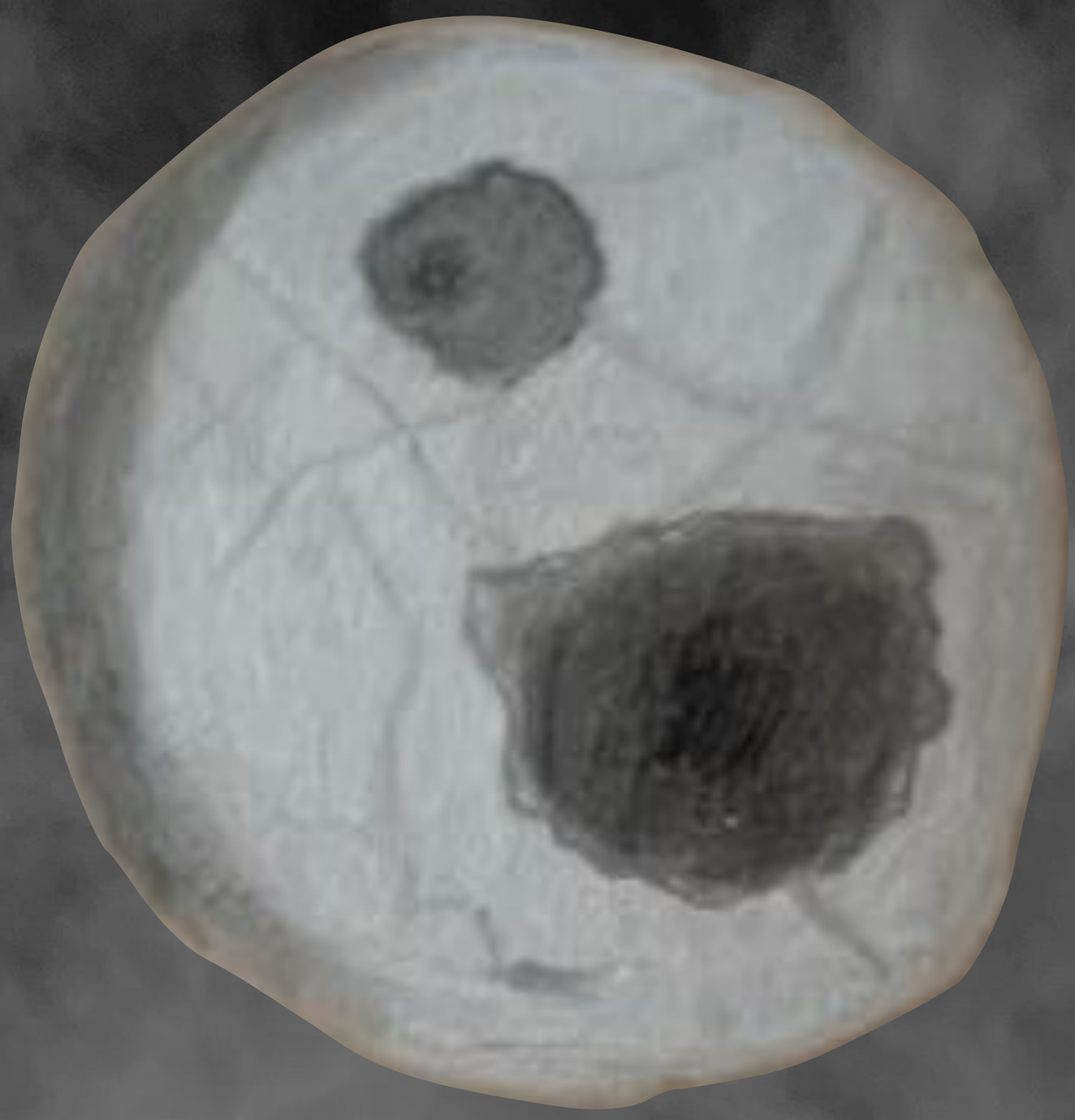
Such a beautiful, elegant rose,
With such a heavenly glow,
Olive green leaves scattered along it's stem,
With dewdrops on the petals,
delicately nestled.

Birds twitter in song nearby,
But none can compete with the rose's soundless lullaby.
Although, true beauty can't always be found,
If you don't search far and all around.

Alas, beautiful things,
Don't always last,
For when icy frost coats the decadent ground,
This epitome of beauty,
Shall no longer be found.

Such a beautiful, elegant rose.

AADYA YADAV



DIYA ARUNPRASATH

Besties: A Short HORROR Story

AAROHI MUDAKATTE

Finally, the end of school. No homework for 3 months. Today was probably going to be the best day of my life. Or at least one of them! I gladly walked with my best friend, Emma. Emma is the kind of girl who is really shy and barely speaks. That's why, I am besties with her. We are practically inseparable, like peanut butter and jelly.

"So, are you excited for our sleepover tonight?" I asked her curiously.

She nodded, and then pulled out her phone. Her phone was so cool. It had glitter and cute pink hearts topped with a purple background. I wish I had a phone.

After a couple of minutes of walking, I finally reached my house.

"All right, see you in the evening!" I say, as I open the door.

"Yeah, can't wait!" she says happily.

As I enter the house, as usual my brother is sitting on the velvet red couch playing some stupid video games.

I ignore him and then go up to my room. I love my room, it's really aesthetic. It's filled with a bunch of posters that I bought.

I sigh and then plop down on my bed. Wow, I missed this!

I figured that I would be useful with my time and start reading a book! I mean, that's always productive! After a couple of hours, I headed over to Emma's house!

Emma's house is really big. It's basically a mansion, but y'know better! I ring the doorbell, and then her mom opens the door.

"Hey, Madeline! We are so glad to have you here!" she exclaims, and I head inside. I see Emma in the kitchen, preparing our snacks.

"Hey Emma, what should we do first? Should we watch a SCARY movie?" I say excitedly.

She nods. Then we both go to her room and sit down on her bed. I get back up to turn off the lights. It gives it a little bit of a scary vibe, which is perfect for watching a horror movie!

"Umm… are you sure that we should be doing this?" She seems really tense. I assure her that nothing is going to happen. She sighs, and then I proceed to turn on the TV.

"Ooh, how about 'Smile'? I heard that it is a pretty scary movie!" I ask, waiting eagerly for her response.

"Fine… I guess." Then I turn on the TV, and put on Smile. It was honestly kind of scary. I mean there were multiple jumpscares during it, and honestly, that was probably the scariest part.

I check the clock, and see that it's 3am. Already? Wow, I guess time goes fast when you are having fun!

Suddenly, I realize that I drank too much water so then I have to go to the bathroom for y'know.

"Hey, I'm gonna go to the bathroom, okay? I'll be right back," I assure Emma and then head over.

It's pitch black dark, and for some reason something doesn't really feel right. I'm not sure what though.

I wash my hands in the bathroom, and look up at the ceiling. Oh my gosh! It said: *You Need To Leave* in bright red. It almost looked like blood. A shiver ran down my spine. Why was there a message like that in blood written on her bathroom ceiling? I've been to her house multiple times but I haven't ever seen anything like that before.

I ran back to Emma's room but only to see that she wasn't there? What! Where did she go?

I start to panic and then I see a shadowy figure come closer and closer to me. I ran as fast as I could, but then I fell into a dreamless sleep.

God's Tears

ISHANVI
MOHAPATRA

I let God's tears
Fall into my hands.

Placidly, gently,
They fall,
Yet they maim.

He mourns
Fragmented visions
And silenced voices,
The unsung echoes
Of humanity's
Lost potential.

He yearns
For us to mend
Those aspirations,
For us to heed
Those cries,
For us to remember
Those echoes,
For us to discern
Lives lost.

He waits,
With hushed forbearance,
For rays of benevolence
To part the somber clouds,
For a sacred spectrum of hope
To span the heavens,
For His Children
To commiserate
With the world
Once more.

Monsoon

ISHANVI
MOHAPATRA

The children run into the village streets,
Rain has come after the waiting weeks.
They dance and prance in turbid puddles,
Unkempt hair and clothes wholly muddled.
They drink the rain with hungry glee—
No joy greater than this, we see.
Tears of joy on rosy cheeks,
Embraces shared, the joy it speaks

I Sit

SUMMER GREENE

I sit,
Perched on my window sill
and stare at the world outside.
In here it's safe and warm.
Out there it looks like it might storm
Yet life carries on
No rest despite possible upcoming turmoil
No pause to take a breath

I see a child, walking,
holding a balloon.
Perhaps it's his birthday
I hope it doesn't blow away.
The winds can steal so much.

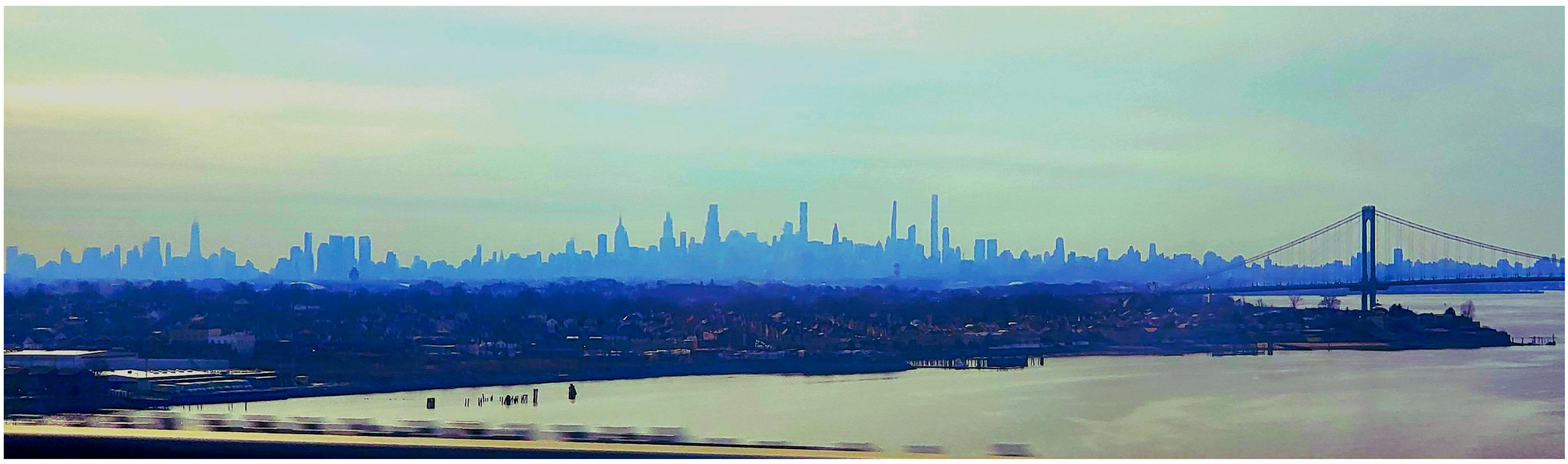
I glimpse my neighbor
She frequently likes to fret
An unkind word, a disgusted glance.
She doesn't like our family
Why do I let it get to me?

I glance to the left
And see the old dogwood tree.
Many summers were spent in its loving arms
My favorite branch had broken off
A strong late season storm
Memories from a childhood that went too fast

Middle school,
then high school,
then on to university
Where is the time just for me?
I get to school early to practice the violin
I barely go home before I go to enrichment
By the time I get home for the night,
I eat, shower, do my homework
and sleep
Only to do it all again
tomorrow
No end in sight.

But still, I take this pause
A brief respite
I sit at my window
I wonder if someone is ever peering back
Wondering who and what's inside.

PRATYAKSHA
YADAV



AAKHIL CABOT

NYC collection 2023 - 2025

DIYA KRISHNA

I walk through the crowd of people and
look past their shoulders
There it is
Times Square
I have waited for this moment
There are tons of people, gathering around
I peer over their shoulders to see what
their looking at
A young girl, a guitarist, is in the center
She plays
She sings
She taps her foot
I almost sink into the music when a hand
pulls my hoodie
I turn around to see my Dad
He nudges me
I grin and we walk towards where Mom
and my brother were waiting for us

It's night time
I frown
How'd it become night time so quickly?
My brother pats my shoulder
He's tall and broad
Just like Dad
"We'll come back, don't worry," he says
with a smile
"I know!" I say, smiling back
"Kids, picture time!" mom announces
We shuffle together and try to take a selfie
But it fails
A lady asks if they could take our
photo
Dads hands his phone to her
She takes the picture
She looks
She takes it again
She hands the phone to Dad
He thanks her
I wonder if he intentionally did that
so she could take a photo of us

I'm hugging my Mom
She strokes my hair
I tighten the scarf around my neck
The lights around us are so bright,
they look like stars
Speaking of stars, I don't see any
I squint my eyes
Nope
Nothing
I click my tongue
I look at Mom and she smiles down
at me
I grin
She messes up my hair
Dad and my brother come out from
the gift shop
We race over to them
I hold my brothers hand
Dad holds Mom

"Let's make up as much time as possible, guys," Mom says
The scent of cinnamon suddenly fills my nose
I close my eyes and breath in the scent

"Race you to the nearest restaurant?" I challenge my brother

"You bet," he says

And we run, no stopping us from anyone or anything

"That was fun!"

"Sure was," Dad says, ruffling my hair

"We should do that again sometime!"

"But we have school," my brother says, nudging me

I frown

"But hey, at least we had fun, that's what matters,"

"Your brother's right," Mom says

Of course he is
I roll my eyes

I stop

"Mom, look!"

I point to the sky

Stars, many miles away, blink in the pitch black night sky

"So pretty!"

Dad picks me up

I reach my hand up to the sky

"Look, I caught a star!"

"Sure you did," my brother says while chuckling

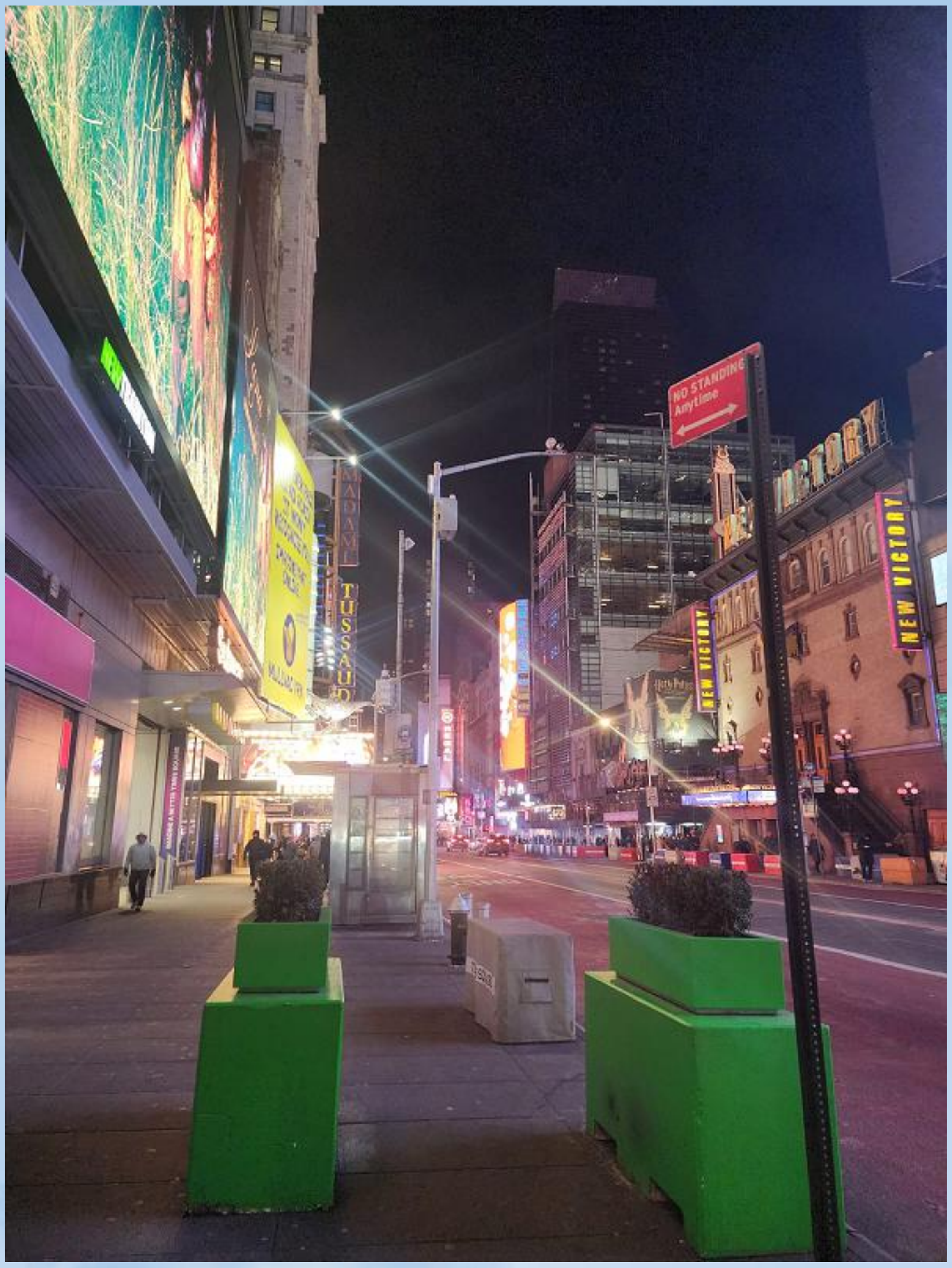
Dad puts me down and I jump up and down

There's only one thing I have been wanting to say

And so I say it

"Best vacation ever!"

EVA SCHMIDT



AAKHIL CABOT

日本
GABE ROSARIO

It Starts with "Konichiwa"

Part One

AARNA JAGGI

"Konichiwa, hajimemashte!" I type into Duolingo, waiting at the airport to board my flight to Tokyo. I need to practice my Japanese or…let's just say, my new life will be terrible without it. I can never imagine not even knowing how to order food!

Oh yeah, you're probably wondering what exactly I mean by "new life". Let's get into it.

I've always been interested in robotics, partially because of the fact that I've won so many robotics competitions that I can't even count. So when I thought about college options, Japan popped up; I've always heard about Japan being "in the future" with all their cool technology, and I really wanted to play a part in it. So, crossing my fingers, I applied to the University of Tokyo's robotics school. Since they're one of the top colleges in the world, I knew I didn't have a high chance of getting into it. But then, I got a phone call just a few days ago…

Three Days Ago

"Hello?" I greeted whoever the other person was. Was it even safe to be picking up?

"Is this Karina Ling?" the caller said in a harsh tone.

"Y-yes…may I know who this is?"

"We're the University of Tokyo, and we're very glad to inform you that you have been accepted into the Robotics School! Please show up by October 10th!"

"Oh my god, thank you! Wait-but that's in 4 days!"

But they had already hung up.

Present

Now I'm super duper excited, even though it was really short notice! This is going to completely change my life (which is what I meant by "new life" earlier). The only problem is that I have to leave everything behind in America: including my best friend, Nancy. Nancy and I are inseparable; we've done almost everything on our bucket lists together.

I guess the only thing that we can't do on our bucket lists is go to Japan. Tears well in my eyes as I think about her. I had just said goodbye to her a few hours ago as I was leaving for the airport, and it was less emotional than I expected. But I guess it's hitting me hard right now. I decide to text her to make myself happier.

"YO wassup Nancy-Nance?" I text rapidly. Nancy usually replies back extremely fast, but not today. I'm left on Delivered, so I sigh and take a seat. I guess I'm going to have to wait till after I get to Tokyo to talk to her.

"Flight 2A566 to Tokyo Boarding Right Now!" the intercom blares.

I get up, logging my suitcase along with me. Within an hour or so, everyone's already boarded onto the flight and we're about to take off.

Sayonara, America.

***

Konichiwa, Japan. I've just arrived at Tokyo International Airport, and everything's so high-tech. I see cute robot helpers carrying luggage. Wow, that must be an expensive service.

It's kind of hard to navigate, but I use my very limited Japanese skills and finally make it out of the airport. I get on one of those "airport buses" to get to the dormitory that I will be living in.

As I pack away my luggage and take a seat on the crowded bus, I whip out my phone, checking if Nancy has replied to my message. I see a blue bubble next to her name, and I let out a silent "Yay!" while immediately clicking on it.

"Hey." is the only text message I see. Well, this is really off. Nancy usually replies a bunch of messages at once, not singular ones! I feel kind of worried. What if she's being held at gunpoint? What if she's kidnapped? What on Earth's going on with her?

I distract myself by looking out the window, and my eyes are almost blinded. Everything here is so flashy and bright. There are so many cars outside of every color, and buildings-no, skyscrapers-that have kawaii ads on them of different products. But Tokyo is really cool.

Finally, I arrive at a building that's super bland compared to the other buildings. But it is really tall; it towers over me like a gigantic dinosaur. I guess this is my dormitory.

I thank the bus driver and haul my baggage up to the second floor. Thankfully, the second floor isn't very high, but it's high enough to get me sweating a bit.

I open the door, only to witness the coziest room ever! It's similar to an American dorm; two ready made beds with purple blankets. Each bed has its own dresser-drawer, and opposite to all three beds is a TV that's playing some sort of Japanese song.

Well, I guess I'm in Japan now. Cool.

All of a sudden, a Japanese girl walks in. She has a black crop top on and a skort made out of denim. Her hair is super long, and I mean it.

"Konichiwa," I have no idea if she knows English or not. "Hajimemashte!" I bow.

"Girl, I know English," the girl gives my whole "Japanese greeting" a side eye. "Well, are you my new roommate?"

"I guess so," I shrug. "Anyway, college's starting in like…3 days. What do you wanna do?"

The girl chuckles and replies, "So we're besties now, huh?"

"I mean, I already have a best friend-"

"I'm joking, chill! Well, I'm Hinata-"

She starts to say something else, but then gets a text. Then she opens it up and laughs so hard it's like she's gonna die! I want to ask what's going on, but I decide to walk over to the campus (it's not that far away so I can get there by walking) and get myself checked in.

The campus is really beautiful; there's intricate designs everywhere and Japanese paintings of blossoms. In the front yard, there's different plants but the one that stands out the most is obviously the pink blossom tree. Well, it's pretty empty right now; I can only see a few staff members roaming around and getting ready for their lessons in a few days.

The lady at the front desk who checks me in looks pretty strict. She doesn't say a word to me other than the necessary questions for me to get checked in. I want to make small talk, but I don't want to risk offending her with my terrible Japanese skills, so I just thank her after she checks me in and head back to the dorm.

Hinata's busy texting someone, probably the person who texted her earlier. I plop down next to her, trying to be her friend. She looks up at me and smiles.

"You never told me your name," she remarks.

"Oh, I'm Karina," I smile back at her. "Well, who are you texting?"

"My online best friend," she replies. "I met her on some app a while ago, and we're best friends ever since. She's flying to Japan tomorrow to meet me in person, and I'm so excited!"

Her talking about her best friend reminds me of Nancy, who still hasn't said anything other than "Hey."

"That's so exciting for you! I'm excited to meet her too," I tell her, and Hinata smiles even wider.

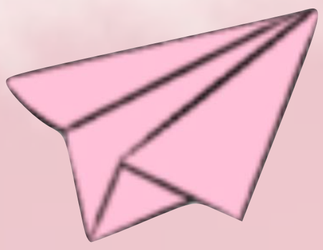
She goes back to texting, but then her jaw drops, "Wait, she can't come for some reason, because her enemy's in Japan…" Then, her jaw drops even wider. She shows her phone to me and her best friend has sent a picture of me, but with devil horns drawn on. What-why-how does this person even know who I am?

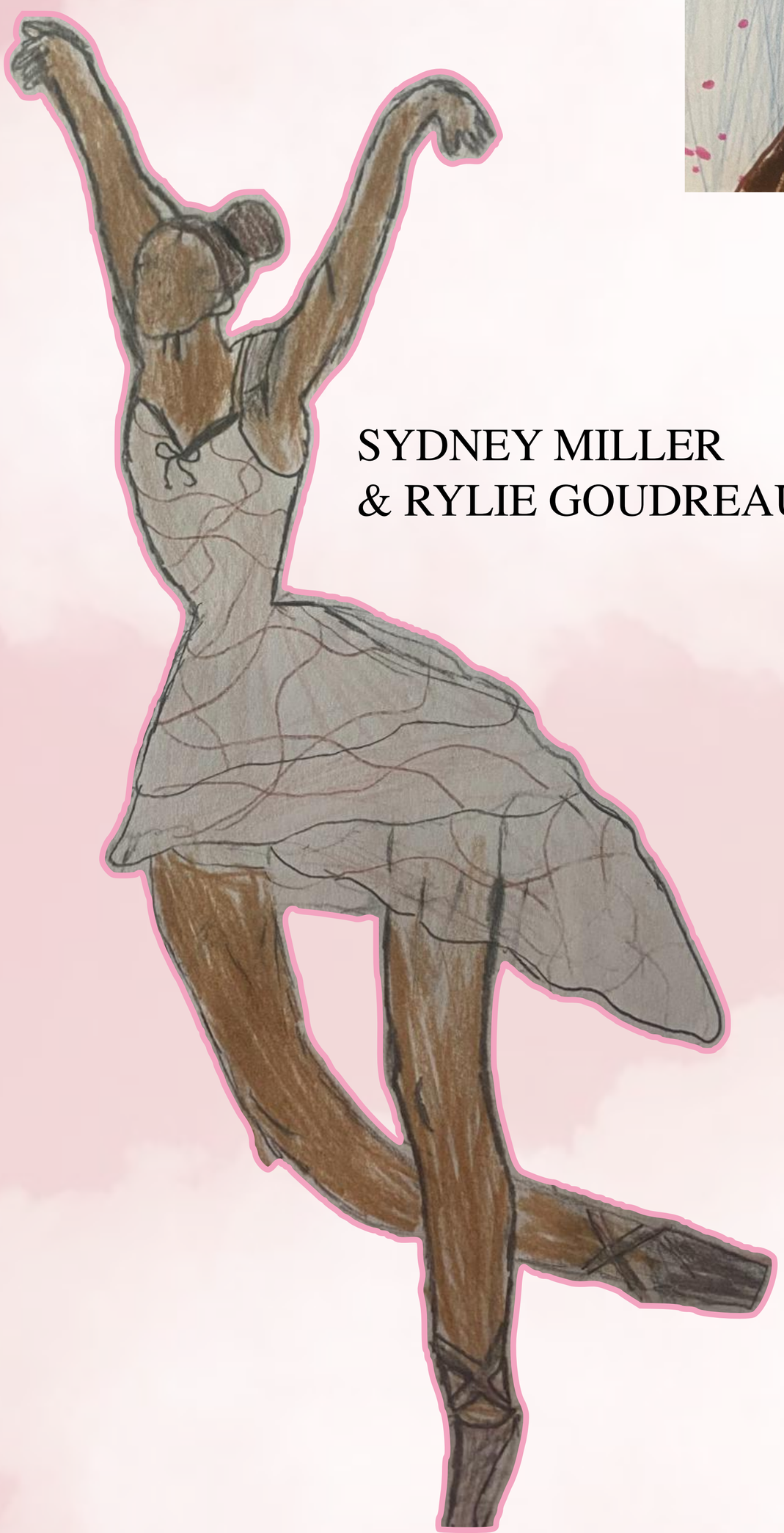
That's when I read the contact name: Nancy-Nance.

THE END

Part 2 will be released soon!!!

SYDNEY MILLER





SYDNEY MILLER
& RYLIE GOUDREAULT

A Mother's Love

KARTHIK JAYAKANTH

When clouds of anger darken the sky,
And tears may fall from her loving eye,
Beneath it all, her heart beats strong,
A symphony of love, a timeless song.

Her stern voice might cut through the air,
Yet in her gaze, there's tender care.
For even in moments of firm admonishment,
Her love remains, an eternal look.

Through trials faced and lessons learned,
Her love for me has always burned.
She steers my path with a guiding hand,
Her endless love, a golden strand.

So when the storm of temper rolls,
And anger speaks through worried souls,
Remember deep within her core,
Her love for me is evermore.

In laughter and in times of strife,
Her love's the constant in my life.
A mother's heart, so vast, so kind,
Forever in her love, I find.

For Amma!

Know Who Your Friends Are

Know who your friends are
You're older
You're bolder
Soon enough all the weight is off your shoulders

You're caring
You're daring
Soon enough all will be staring

They will come to you
They will come to me
They will ask for forgiveness and beg for prosperity

They will ask
They will treat you right
Like you did to them
you were polite

They are not friends
They pretend
And they offend
Soon enough it still comes to an end

Find friends who treat you right
Find friends who give you light
The friends who are forever and never leave
As the others once did
the people who never believed

True Friends

True friends are the people who you talk with happily

They are the people that you share with rapidly

The people who you trust with all your might

The people who show you that you shine bright

The people that help you become who you are

The people who show you that you're a star

The people who always will help you believe

The people who help you when you're in need

Friends are your family you choose from the heart

The people who you love right from the start

The Qualities of a Good Friend

KESA VISWADA BODDAPATI

"Be picky about who you keep around you. Personalities, words and traits do rub off naturally." There are a lot of qualities that a good friend should have but the most important qualities a good friend should have are honesty, respect, and loyalty. I like to make sure that all of my friends have these qualities because we get to choose our friends, who are going to be part of our life. So, friends that have these qualities, that are around us, would also make us better people.

I think loyalty is a very important quality that everyone wants in a friend. You want friends that would depend on and tell you everything knowing that you won't say anything. A good loyal friend should always be there for you no matter how the situation is. Friends that have this quality won't go and talk behind your back and they would never betray you for someone else. Friendships usually last because of this quality, so it is important to check if your friends have it or not.

Honesty is a very essential quality needed in friends because you don't want a friend that constantly lies to you about things. They won't be trustworthy. We want people that could be honest and even tell us if they are doing something wrong. Friends that don't have this quality won't have a lasting friendship because things just won't work out if everything they say is a lie. This is a very important quality that I personally check in a friend because people with this quality are just phenomenal because they would be willing to be the " bad guy." To be honest, without honesty I don't even know how friendship could even last a day.

Everyone has their opinion and we cannot judge someone because they don't agree with us, but we need people that would respect our opinion and decisions without judgment. People should always remember that they are worthy and that they should be treated with respect no matter what. If a friend doesn't have this quality, end the friendship as quickly as possible because that's what is best for you, trust me. Make sure that they also respect the people that are important like your family and also the people around you like your teachers and other friends. I think only honest people should deserve more respect than others because it's hard to respect a liar.

In conclusion, friends should have all these qualities because they may be stuck with you for the rest of your life, so it's important that they are the people that would hope for the best for you .

CARTOON

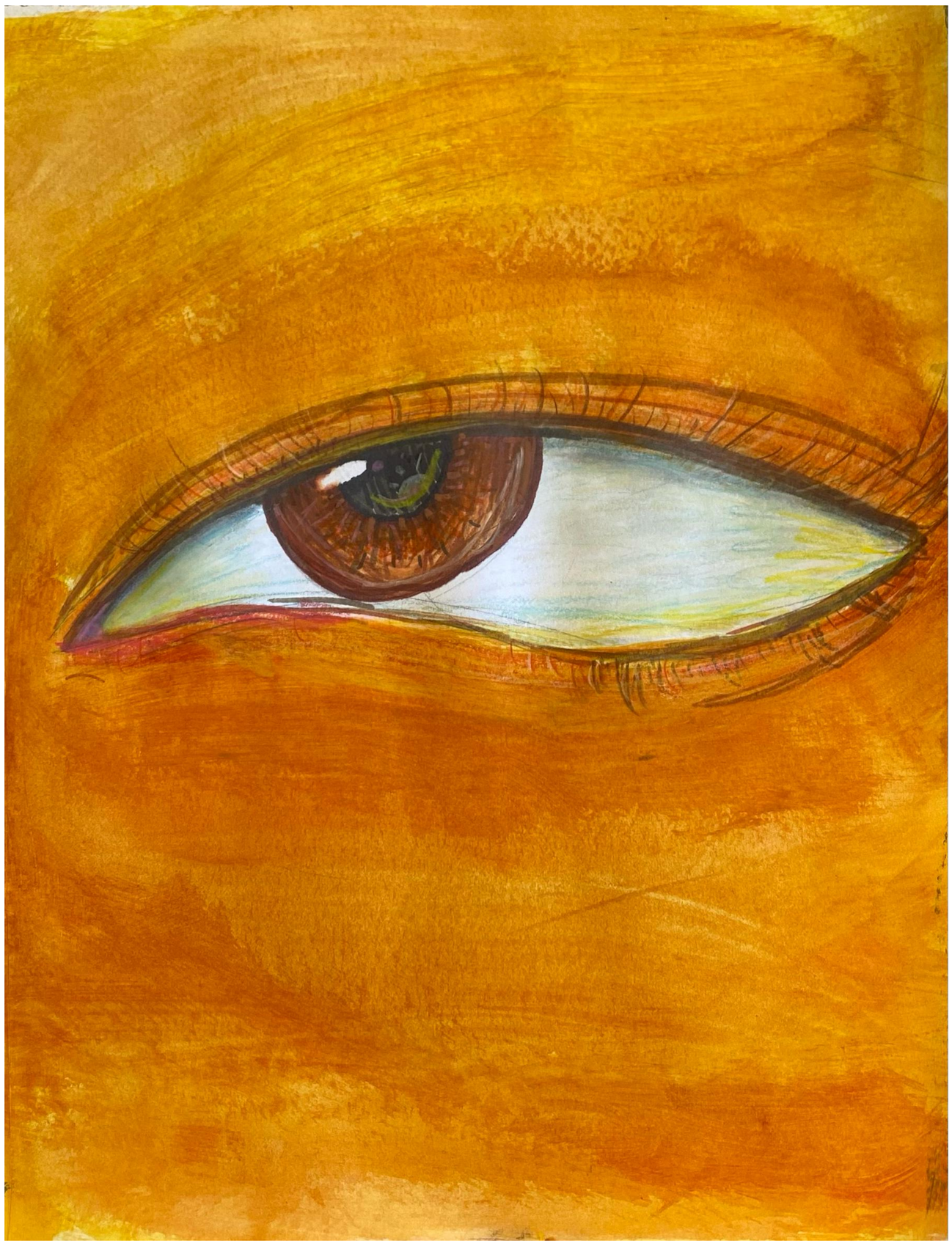
COLLECTION

GARV BHANDARI

VISMAAD SINGH

SHAKTHISRI SARAVANAN

SHAKTHISRI SARAVANAN



JULIA

MARVIN

KRITHIK VINOTHRAM

My friends and I ventured to a movie theater that resembled a fairy tale castle. As we entered, the warm scent of buttery popcorn enveloped us, fueling our anticipation. The theater's stunning architecture and shimmering lights created an enchanting atmosphere, making it look like we had stepped into a vivid dream. As the lights dimmed, excitement crackled in the air. The screen lit up, and I eagerly grabbed the warm, fluffy popcorn. The first crunch was exhilarating, with its rich, salty flavor overwhelming my senses. The room buzzed with the thrill of friendship and storytelling, each moment heightening the magic around us. In that captivating world, every emotion felt extraordinary. Toward the end of the movie when Iron Man died, sadness enveloped me like a thick fog, making it hard to see the light. As I left the theater, I reflected on the bittersweet moment of watching Iron Man's peaceful demise.

ARNAV RASTOGI

Comparing Shakespeare and Modern Texts

ARNAV MALPURE

Inspired by his 8th grade ELA class

Imagine loving somebody from the bottom of your heart and then it hits you, they don't love you back. The thematic ideas of unrequited love can be found in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and are still reflected in modern pieces of literature today. For example, both Shakespeare and Gotye discuss the concept of unrequited love. In *Twelfth Night,* Shakespeare uses the characters, Orsino and Olivia to portray that one should let things go, otherwise one's life could be filled with negative emotions. In "Somebody That I Used to Know" by Gotye, this theme is also portrayed. While the lessons both authors portray are not exactly the same, they both teach that refusing to let things go, can lead to negative outcomes.

Both *Twelfth Night* and "Somebody That I Used to Know" demonstrate that one should learn to let things go. Duke Orsino holding onto his love for Olivia is conveyed when he sends Viola to Olivia's house and delegates, "Be clamorous, and leap all civil bounds,/Rather than make unprofited return" (Shakespeare 1.4.20-21) in order to express his love for Olivia and the limits he'll go to just for her. This is furthered by the phrase 'Be clamorous, and leap all civil bounds' implying that Viola should do whatever it takes to win Olivia's affections. The phrase, 'Rather than make unprofited return' implies that Orsino has been consistently trying to win Olivia over and has been constantly rejected. On the other hand, one of the results of Gotye's endless attempts to acquire love from his love interest is demonstrated through the quote, "Then Change your number" (Gotye 2011). The phrase, 'change your number' conveys that Gotye has been constantly calling her to try to win her over, but has failed every time. It has annoyed his love interest so much that she changed her number just to avoid him. One similarity between Orsino and Gotye is that they both try to win their love interest with constant effort. While they both have similar experiences, Orsino likes someone who never loved him back whereas Gotye loves a girl he broke up with. Both Gotye and Orsino hold onto their love, instead of moving on.

However, due to Orsino and Gotye deciding to dwell in the past and not let things go, both of them experience negative emotions. Duke Orsino's mixed emotions are portrayed when he says, "Farewell, and take her; but direct thy feet/Where thou and I henceforth may never meet" (Shakespeare 5.1.163-164). The phrase, 'Farewell and take her' conveys Orsino's sense of sadness, because he suddenly gave up on Olivia's love that he has been constantly pursuing. The fact that Olivia was married to another boy, finally drove Orsino to understand that his love would never be requited. Adding on to that, the phrase, 'Where thou and I henceforth may never meet' portrays his disbelief and anger towards Cesario, who had been his best friend for a long time. Since Orsino was willing to let go of his best friend, it implied that he didn't want to keep a close relationship with anyone after being heartbroken by Olivia. Similarly, Gotye's despair after separating from his love interest is conveyed through the phrase, "You can get addicted to a certain kind of sadness" (Gotye 2011). Words with negative connotations such as, 'addicted' and 'sadness' convey Gotye's sadness and loneliness.

Gotye's 'addiction' to sadness implies that he has spent days and nights constantly thinking about his love interest. One similarity between Gotye and Orsino is that they both experienced sadness and a sense of loneliness after getting hit with the bad news. While they face similar experiences, Orsino is angry and surprised, whereas Gotye is just sad. Therefore, both Orsino and Gotye have faced the outcomes of dwelling in the past and refusing to let things go, by experiencing negative emotions.

Through the theme portrayed by Orsino and Gotye, one can learn that holding onto something that was never mutual, can come back and bite you when you least expect it. Due to Orsino and Gotye's constant effort to win over their respected love interests, it conveyed that they weren't ready to let go of their unrequited love. This caused negative outcomes to occur, portrayed by their despair after finally realizing that they would never acquire the love that they hoped for. Learning this lesson can be beneficial to one, by helping one understand that constantly pondering about what happened in the past can affect your present and future.

Sunday, May 15 - 3:14 pm

Aurora

My mother said she named me Aurora because of the joy and light in my eyes. That seemed to be a valid explanation for the past 11 years of my life, but not anymore. In fact, I was feeling the total opposite of how Mom would describe me. How could there be joy and light in my eyes after what had happened last month?

1 month ago

Mom and I had just sat for dinner and Dad was still out of sight. I was about to call Dad when Mom's phone rang. I watched her answer the phone and her expression change from terror to tears. When she hung up, I immediately asked what was wrong. Even after Mom told me, I still couldn't process it. Dad was really gone.

Sunday, May 15 - 4:59 pm

Daniel

I stared out the window and saw the glimmering drops of rain slide down the glass. Mom and Dad had gone to my Aunt Jenny's wedding, and Amelia was scrolling on her phone. As usual.

"Can't you do something other than scrolling on your stupid phone?" I ask.

"Mind your own business!" Amelia snapped.

Bored, I turned on the TV and gasped.

"Amelia?" I asked.

"I told you to leave me alone!" Amelia lifted up her head, and I saw her face go white.

Monday, May 16 - 6:54 am

Pablo

I woke up restless, but then and again who didn't? After what was on the news, it was impossible to sleep peacefully.

1 week ago

The invasion started out small, but grew larger. News stations all around the world were reporting about the new virus. Whenever someone turned on the TV or their phones and computers, all they heard was about the new virus.

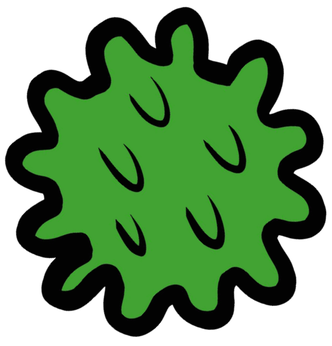
"We are reporting from Montreal, Canada where people are suffering from a new virus: H561-2. Scientists and doctors are trying to figure out the sudden appearance of this new virus and we kindly ask you to stay at home."

Tuesday, May 17 - 2:03 pm

Sara

Everybody at school was talking about the news. I couldn't understand what the big deal was. It's just a virus, and I'm sure Mom and Dad can do something about it. Mom is the mayor of the town we live in, Brooksville. Dad is the CEO of a famous car company, Tesla. Even if the virus strikes our town, we could easily escape.

That's the perks of being rich.



Tuesday, May 17 - 2:31 pm

Aurora

I trudged through the crowded hallways, squeezing through the people bunched around lockers and classrooms. I peered through the window in Room 281, wondering to myself where Sara was. Ever since the day she was absent, she had been acting very… oddly. I switched my eyes to my watch- it was getting late. I spun around to walk to Ms. Klasp's room, until something caught my eye.

It was Sara, tip-toeing towards the teacher's lounge. I knew I was going to be late, but I couldn't help but follow her.

I entered the teacher's lounge and quickly crouched behind a chair in the corner. Sara frantically walked over to a desk and started to rummage through a stack of papers.

I couldn't help myself.

"What are you doing here?" I asked, standing up.

"Ahh!" Sara shrieked, jumping from the desk. "It's none of your business. Why are you following me?" she asked, nervously looking down at her feet.

"How about you first answer my question," I replied, crossing my arms.

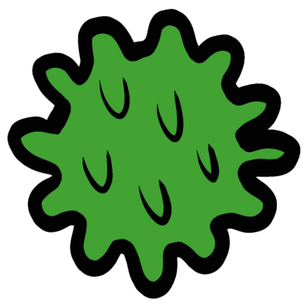
"I… um…," stammered Sara. "I f-failed my science test that's why. That's all. Nothing else," she explained. "Now it's your turn. What are you doing here?"

"Well, I saw you entering so I wanted to know what you were up to," I said.

"Okay, well, forget about that. We're going to be late to class. Ms. Klasp is going to kill us!" Sara exclaimed.

"Don't worry. I've got an idea," I throw her a devilish grin and walk to the side of the classroom. There are two bathroom passes on a table, and I quickly snatch them.

"You're one smart cookie," Sara replies, throwing on her own villainous grin.



Wednesday, May 18 - 3:36 pm

Daniel

It was not surprising to hear about another virus, they're always around. What was surprising, however, was the news on Sunday. In a matter of just a few days, an estimated 10,000 people were infected, with 3,000 people already dead. The images were gruesome. The news said scientists and doctors were doing their best, but from what I'm seeing, it doesn't seem like it. Plus, for the first time in ages, Amelia has been taking notice of what's happening everywhere other than what's happening on her phone.

Thursday, May 19 - 1:24 pm

Pablo

No school!

Since there was a huge thunderstorm, school got cancelled.

Must seem great, right?

No it's not.

Mom took advantage of the whole thing.

Now, instead of a day filled with fun, I have one whole day filled with grocery shopping, a doctor's appointment, karate and piano class, plus rumbling thunder and flashing lightning outside.

At least Daniel is coming over at 3:00 pm, maybe that will make my day better.

Friday, May 20 - 6:42 am

Sara

I still can't believe it.

School is cancelled again?!

I trudged down the smooth, marble steps and into the kitchen.

"Hey honey, your breakfast is on the table," Mom conveyed, clacking away at the keys on her keyboard.

I sat down at the table and slid my knife and fork through the soft, buttery pancakes.

The fresh strawberries and blueberries glistened in the morning light as the thick, sweet syrup oozed down the pancake.

To make it perfect, a small cube of creamy butter sat at the top of the pancake, as if it were the jeweled crown worn by a king.

Suddenly, Dad burst through the door, stomping into the house with excitement.

"Sara! You know how I told you about the raffle for the free trip? That the school is sponsoring?" Dad exclaimed.

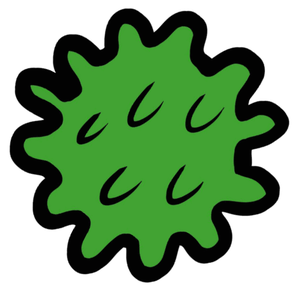
"Yeah?" I replied.

"Well you were chosen!" Dad cried out, excitement glimmering in his eyes.

"Wha?!" I exclaimed.

"Isn't that amazing? 4 students were chosen- you, Aurora, Daniel, and Pablo," Dad replied.

"Oh, okay," I casually replied, but inside me my heart was beating as fast as a race car.



Saturday, May 21 - 7:54 am

Aurora

I hopped out of the car and skipped towards the school bus. I waved at Sara, and excitedly ran up to her. “Hey Sara! Aren’t you excited for the trip? We even miss school!”

“Umm, sure,” Sara mumbled, peering down at her phone.

“Okay, listen up everybody! When I call your name please say if you’re here,” Mrs. Klasp exclaimed as she strolled to the bus.

After attendance, I entered the bus, finding a seat next to Sara.

“Here we go!” I exclaimed, forcing an exaggerated smile onto my face.

Saturday, May 21 - 8:21 am

Pablo

I stare out the window, watching big, fat water droplets slide down the glass. It feels like only a minute, but I soon hear the bus driver yell, “We’re here!”

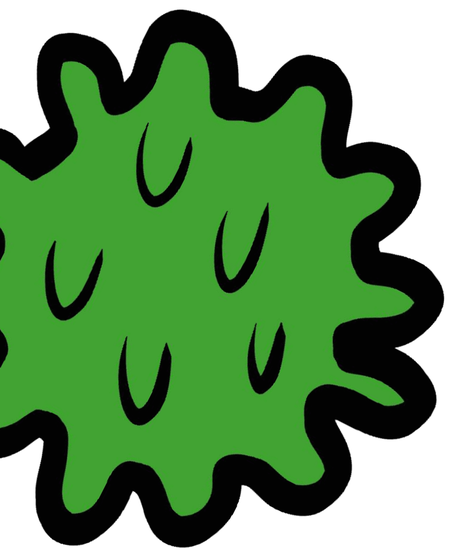
I pick up my suitcase and walk out of the bus, trying to see where we are. There are cars and buses everywhere, and I see airplanes.

Mrs. Klasp put her hand on my shoulder and said, “Welcome to Susan Airport!”

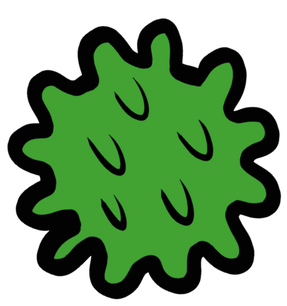
Everybody followed Mrs. Klasp to the airport entrance. After what seemed like hours, we were finally seated in the airport, ready to take off.

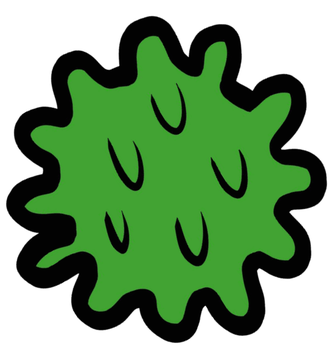
As we traveled to the Bahamas, I heard a sudden boom. One of the airplane's wings had somehow caught on fire. Everyone started to scream.

The next thing I knew, we were going down, down, down.

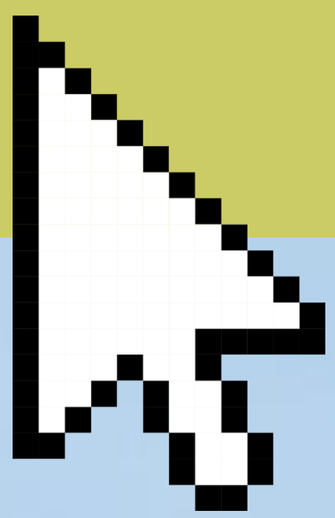


If you want to know what happens next, read the next story in this series - Survival.





Games



Interview with Mr. Cat!

Aarna Jaggi

Made with Scratch

Bluespot's Playhouse

Aarna Jaggi

Made with Scratch

The Killer of the Cyclone

Inspired by The Warriors Series

NATALIE WILLIAMS

The horse stomped on the dusty earth as the sun dipped lower, waiting for the same familiar shadow to fall across the moor. A silver cat slipped out from beneath the undergrowth, her paws lightly trailing over the fallen leaves. She hurried across the open ground, sailing freely towards the horse. The horse's ears swiveled; something was wrong. Silver Tree did not carry the same scent. Blood.

"Silver Tree?" the horse called out, the moonlight shining on her back.

"Silver Tree?" the horse called again, more frantic this time.

A voice, barely more than a whisper, echoed through the horse's ears.

"Beware of your destiny," the voice sounded, "for it will lead you on a path never walked before."

"What do you mean?" the horse neighed frantically, pacing back and forth.

Clouds of dust formed as the horse continued to trot.

"I cannot stay. Follow your heart, Moth," the voice faded away.

"Come back!" Moth neighed, the call piercing the silence.

Moth gasped, opening her eyes. Birch was beside her, his pale mane blowing slightly in the breeze. Of course her brother was still asleep. Moth slowly stood up, her dream making her antsy. She headed towards the lake, the sun sparkling across the water. The light brown mountains rose around her, the lake pinpointing the middle of the guarded ring they made.

As she wandered across the tufted grass, her thoughts wandered. Who was Silver Tree? Who told her to beware of her destiny, and why? Her destiny was here with Birch. Here with her Ma. Here with the lake and mountains.

What did it matter? As she dipped her head to lap softly at a pool not far from the shore of the lake, a call of a crow sounded. The cry echoed in her ears, until it sounded as though it was coming from every direction.

Moth pulled away from the pool, shying as the hair along her spine stood straight. Something wasn't right. Suddenly, an ear splitting roar filled the air. A ginormous cyclone raged towards her, whipping up everything in its path.

Moth went rigid. She burst into action, galloping towards Birch. Nosing him softly, her brother finally opened his eyes.

Sensing waves of nervousness flooding from Moth, he stood quickly and glanced around, spotting the cyclone. Birch burst to his feet, his ears swiveled backward toward the cyclone, even though Moth knew he couldn't hear anything.

Moth beckoned to her brother, and together they sprang forward, although suddenly she stopped.

"Ma!" she cried out into the raging storm.

The wind whipped against her face, her mane following the direction it blew.

Moth couldn't even hear her own voice now, but she knew she was shouting. Moth turned around for Birch, only to find the spot where he had stood was empty. How could this happen?

"Moth," a whispery voice filtered through her.

"Who's there?" Moth called, her voice shaking with fear.

"Beware of your destiny," echoed through Moth's ears.

Wait, hold on. Where had she heard that before? The hairs along Moth's spine rose, and she suddenly remembered. Her dream! Silver Tree, the voice, all came crashing back. Questions flooded Moth, but the roar of the cyclone captured her from her thoughts.

The wind seemed stronger, now that she was caught off guard. She felt her hooves sway beneath her, and she couldn't feel the ground anymore.

Moth opened her eyes to the sound of something crashing nearby. Raising her head, she caught a taste of salt on the breeze, and she turned to see vicious midnight waves crashing barely a fox-length away.

Springing to her feet, her ears swiveled back, she started pacing, her hooves seeping into the feather soft sand. Where were Birch and Ma?

There was no sign of the cyclone, it appeared as though it was just a bad dream. But surrounding her was unfamiliar land, pine forest stretching for miles, deep green against the fiery sunset. Lush grass met sand, followed by sand meeting water. The harsh tang of salt made Moth's eyes sting, and her ears rang from the crashing waves.

The vivid image of the cyclone ripped through her mind, and Moth shut her eyes, trying to forget it. She needed to concentrate on finding Ma and Birch. Stiffly trotting up a gentle slope, Moth squinted her eyes against the glare of the sun, trying to make out what lay ahead.

A low rumbling sound alerted Moth, and she spun around, sure she would see the cyclone that had brought her to this mysterious place. Instead, a large creature with a shiny pelt and round paws sat on a hill, its eyes glowing in the dim light. Alarmed, Moth backed several fox-lengths away, her hooves leaving prints on the bare earth.

The creature's eyes stopped glowing as soon as the rumbling stopped, though it didn't change Moth's distrust. Three smaller creatures, hairless except for a tiny mop on their heads, climbed out of the shiny-pelted creature. They walk on their hind legs, their fore paws dangling uselessly in the air.

Another shiny-pelted creature, larger than the last, followed the first. The zero-hairs, Moth decided they deserved that name, walked over to the second shiny-pelted creature. Oblivious to Moth's presence, they began to unload something from the shiny-pelt.

Moth began to turn and walk away, but stopped as a strange yet familiar scent wafted across the breeze. *Horse!*

Whipping around once more, Moth couldn't believe her eyes. A dark gray and brown stallion, his mane whipping in the salty breeze, carried a zero-hair across his back.

The zero-hair carried a long, sharp looking tendril type thing, the end drooping down so it brushed the ground. It looped into a circle, and suddenly Moth felt frightened.

Moth turned and started galloping, but she couldn't. The tendril had gotten a hold of her.

Moth awoke to the scent of raw wood. Something felt off, although she couldn't figure it out. Darkness engulfed her, it must be nighttime. The ground felt as though it was covered in dried grass, and an overwhelming scent of deliciousness wafted towards her.

"Hi there!" a voice exclaimed, spooking Moth so she nearly lost her footing.

Turning around, she tried to make out where the voice came from, but everything was pitch black.

"Where am I?" Moth asked, hoping whoever had been there a second ago would answer her again.

"What do you mean?" the voice asked, less enthusiastic this time.

Suddenly, it hit Moth.

I can't see.

Anger surged through Moth. Whatever those zero-hairs had done to her, she was going to make them pay. Raising her head, she sensed the eyes of the creature who had spoken practically boring into her.

"Who are you?" Moth asked, wariness edging her voice.

"Silver Tree," the voice replied.

Silver Tree! Moth knew that name all too well.

"You're a cat, aren't you? I shouldn't be talking to you! You know that different animals aren't allowed to speak to each other!"

"It's a dumb rule," Silver Tree said, and Moth could picture her twitching her ears in annoyance.

"It's important!" Moth shot back.

Silver Tree scoffed. "Yeah right."

Moth sighed. Why was this cat so difficult? Nevertheless, she needed to know where she was.

"Where am I?" Moth asked, her voice stern.

"You're in the barn. Where else would you be?" Silver Tree taunted.

"No, I mean, where are the mountains?"

"Mountains? There aren't any mountains around here," Silver Tree said, and Moth practically saw her flicking her tail, twitching her ear.

A loud bang sounded close by, making Moth shy slightly.

“What are you so afraid of? Gosh, you're as jumpy as a squirrel,” Silver Tree snickered.

Moth bristled. How dare this cat insult her!

“Anyway, better go before Coming Dawn comes searching for me,” Silver Tree sighed.

“Coming Dawn?”

“My aunt,” Silver Tree explained.

After that, Moth was aware of Silver Tree leaving, for suddenly, silence engulfed her.

For the next few weeks, Moth spent her time talking with Silver Tree, who came and went, her non stop chattering making it easy to tell when she was present. When Moth was alone, she spent her time trying to figure out how far she was from the lake and the mountains, and where she was currently. Moth had gotten used to the feeling of only darkness, and was able to recognize what time of day it was depending on if she could feel the sun on her back, or if the ground felt cold beneath her hooves.

Moth stood outside; she could tell it was nighttime. She stood in a small field, the zero-hairs called it a pasture. Moth stamped impatiently. Why did Silver Tree have to be late? Suddenly, Silver Tree appeared from beneath the undergrowth at the edge of the forest; Moth could hear her paws trailing over the dusty earth of the moor. Something was so familiar, like she had done this before.

Silver Tree’s scent reached Moth. Except, this wasn’t Silver Tree. It smelled more like….death.

Suddenly, realization hit her. *This* was her dream! Moth suddenly felt nervous. She could smell blood as the cat came closer, blood that smelled like horse, blood that smelled very familiar. Like….Birch and Ma!

Sadness welled up inside her, but Moth swallowed her grief. She knew that she wasn’t safe here.

A hiss sounded behind her, and Moth bolted forward, jumping the fence that wove around the pasture.

“Moth?”

Silver Tree!

“We’ve gotta get out of here!” Moth said frantically.

“What’s going on?” Silver Tree asked, undaunted.

“Come on!” Moth panicked, nudging Silver Tree forward.

“Hey, watch it! I’ll move, okay?”

Moth galloped forward, aware of Silver Tree following close behind.

“Wait, why are we running again?” Silver Tree asked once they had run for quite a while.

“Big…c-cat. Predator,” Moth choked out.

“You’re kidding?” Silver Tree asked frantically.

Moth shook her head.

Silver Tree became a statue. Fear flashed across her eyes. If Silver Tree was afraid, it must be something terrible.

“I always knew there was something strange about Coming Dawn,” Silver Tree growled, and Moth could almost see her tearing grass with her claws.

“You mean your aunt?” Moth asked.

“Oh, she was just looking after me because my parents had to go find a place with more food. Although now I’m not sure if that’s true,” Silver Tree spat.

“What do you mean?” Moth whispered, but she already knew what Silver Tree was going to say.

“Coming Dawn is a killer.”

A Watched Pot Never Boils

DIVINA SARAH DOULAGAR

A watched pot never boils,

What a wonderful phrase!

It means not to toil,

Until the end of your days.

Just relax and don't worry,

Let life be a flurry,

A dreamy haze.

A watched pot never boils,

It means not to toil.

Learn to be like water,

Like clay for a potter,

Adapting to anything.

A watched pot never boils,

It means not to toil,

So simply move on!

And all of your worries will be gone.

You don't need this much

Simply live life carefree.

A watched pot never boils,

What a wonderful phrase,

It means not to toil,

Until the end of your days.

Just relax and don't worry,

Let life be a flurry,

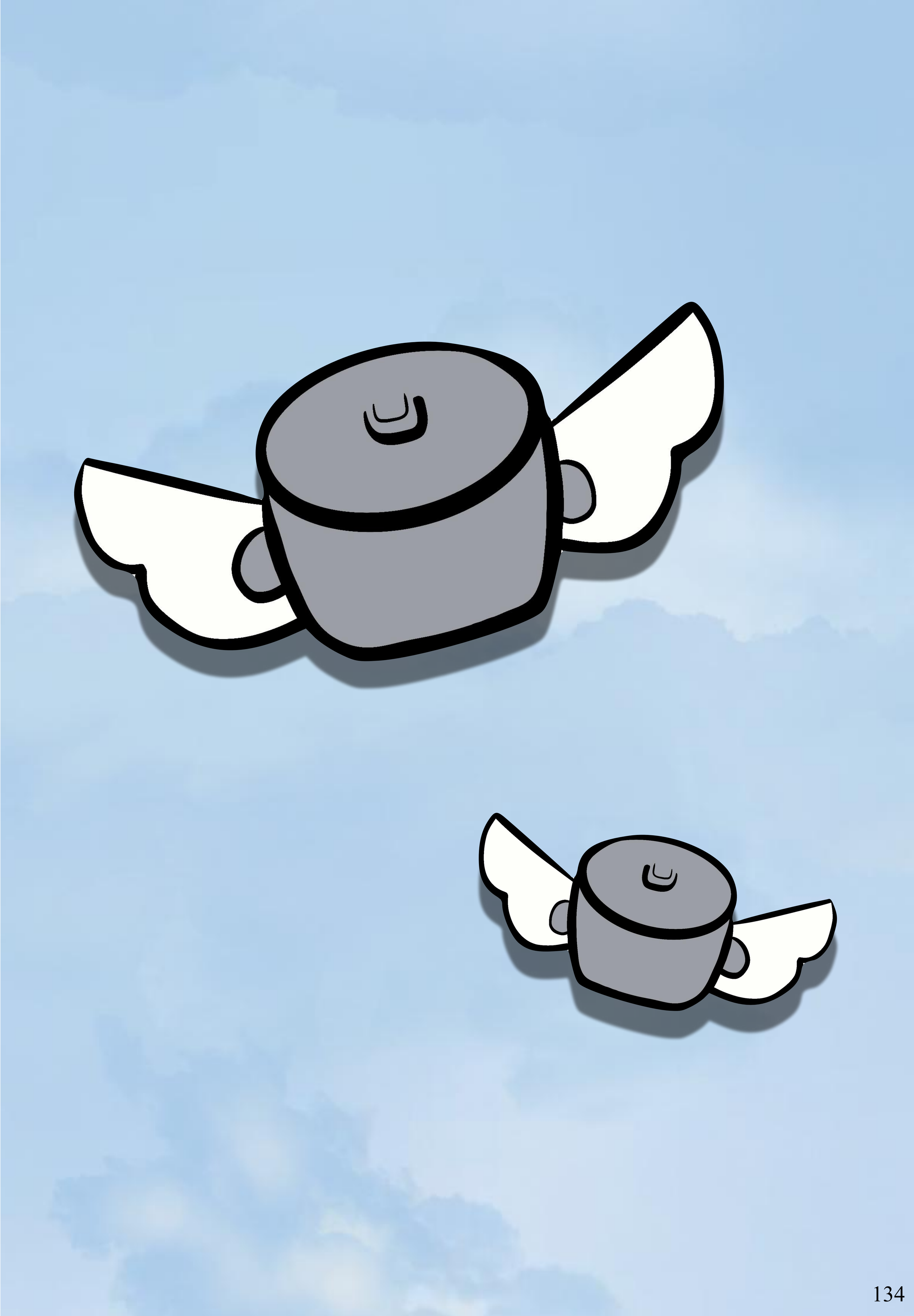
Like a beautiful, dreamy haze.

Just leave that pot to boil,

And before you know it,

You will have to admit,

That a watched pot never boils.



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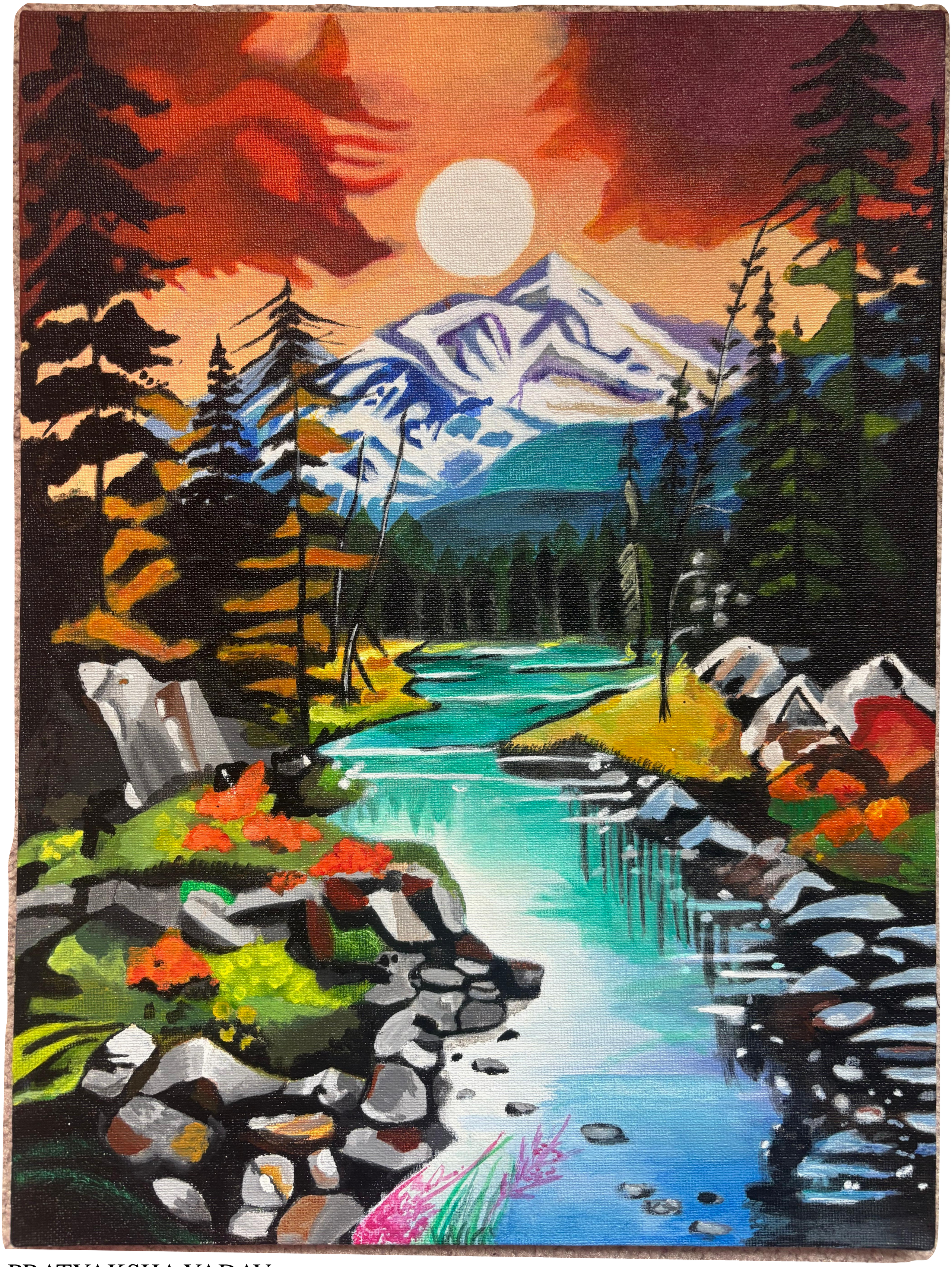


PRATYAKSHA YADAV

The World

KAASHVI SINGHAL

The world is beautiful, like a shining star
The world has people who are unique as they are
The world is gorgeous in its multiple forms
The oceans it has, the lands that transform

The world is gorgeous – the sunsets it makes
The pretty colors, like the water in lakes
The world has animals like lions and giraffes
The world has people who smile and laugh

The world can be lovely if you give it a chance
Take in the world's face and hold it in your hands
Soon you will see how wonderful the world can be
Once you view different perspectives, like the world I see

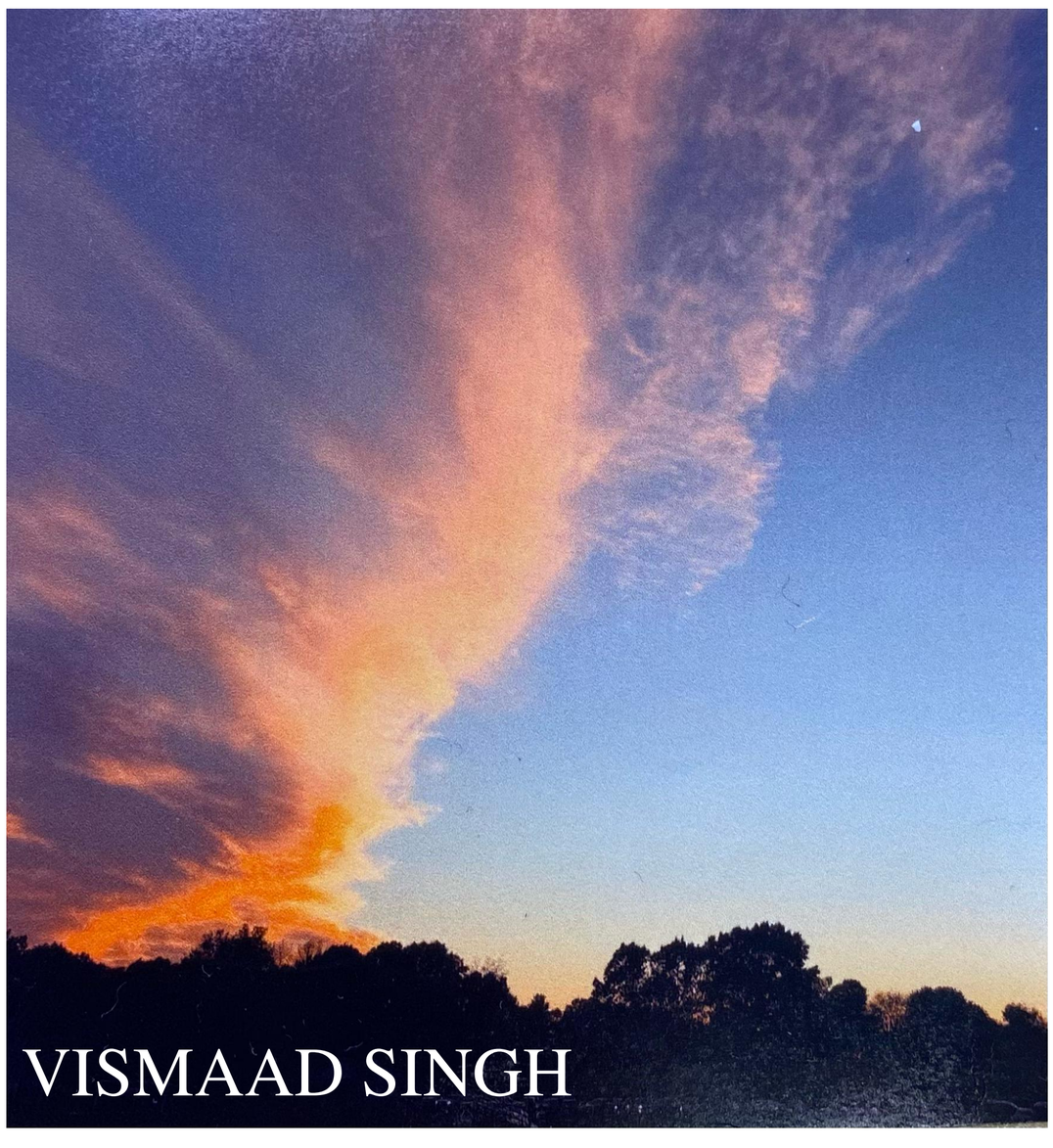
The world can be delightful from afar
Like you capturing fireflies within a jar
The world is just like a firefly at night
It shines so bright in its light

Give the world a chance, you and me
We will come together and live happily!

ISABEL/SAM KING

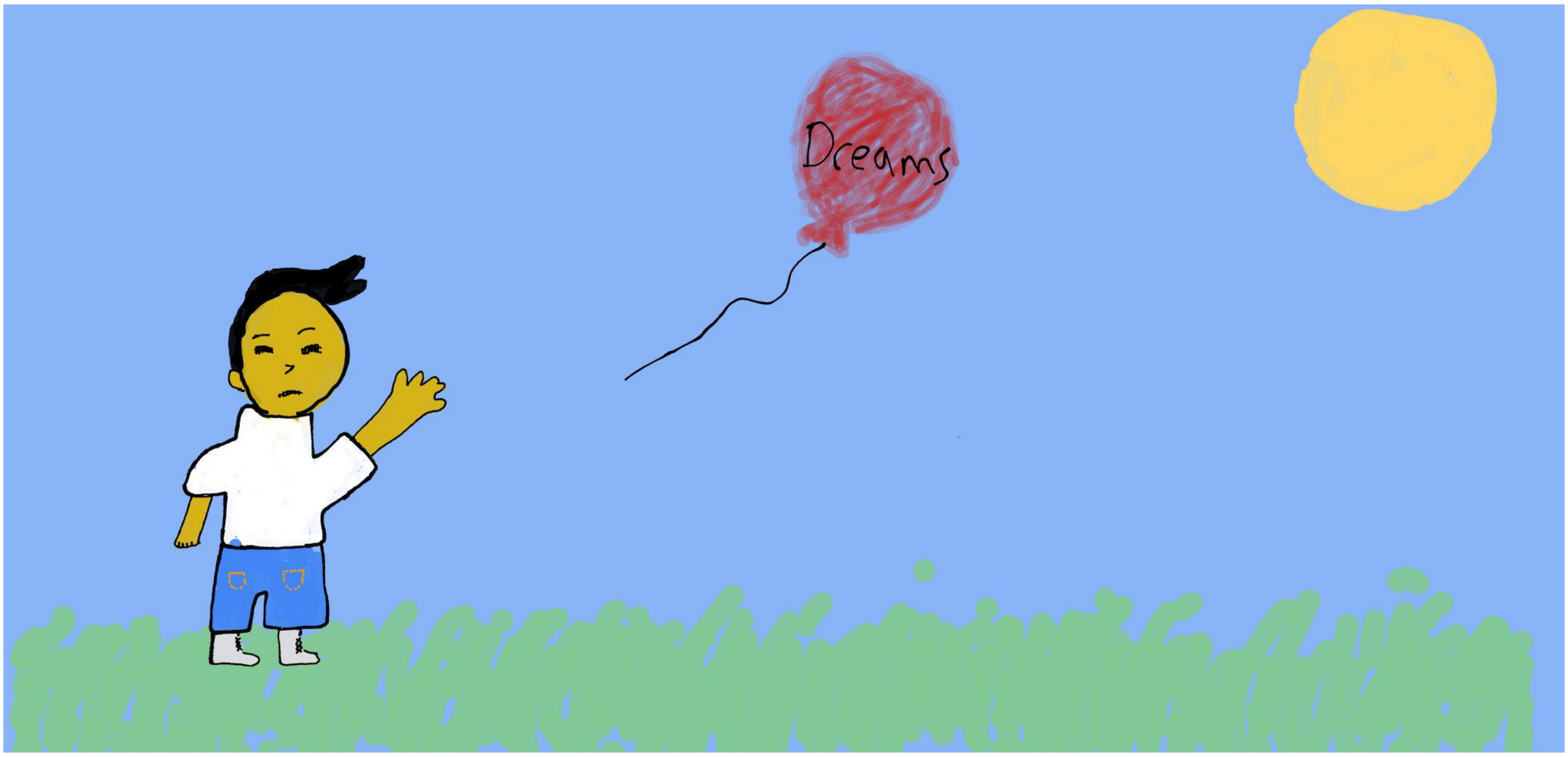
AKSHITA NAVEEN (ARTIST & WRITER)

I stared at the colors
From the black and white
The people there living their
lives happily
The breeze here was cold
But warm on the other side
Why does everything have to be
Out of the Blue?



VISMAAD SINGH

TRINITY PHAM



Dreams

DIYA ARUNPRASATH (ARTIST & WRITER)

As I walked through the field
With my balloon floating within my grasps
Dreams come floating in

I could be a doctor!
Or a scientist!
Or even a professional sleeper?
A food taster would make me fat……
But
happy!

I could make a hot air balloon
With this balloon
I let these dreams fill up the balloon
I would let it go with my dream-fuel
But first I had to tell someone

Mommy! Mommy! Guess what I want to be?
What honey? says Mommy
A chef to make people delicious food!
Honey, maybe you want to be a doctor or a scientist
Chefs don't get paid a lot and most of them are female
Besides if your a doctor or scientist you can save people
Like a superhero! said Mommy

As I walked away defeated
The balloon slipping out, the tears streaking down my face
This time floating away with a different type of energy
Crushed-dreams fuel
How could a balloon cause this
A simple, small, red balloon

Vacation's Here!

ARNAV MALPURE

Vacation's here, it's time to go,
No more work, time to let go.
I'm loosened up, I'm feeling free,
Excited for what's out there for me.
The beach is calling, the waves are loud,
I'll dive right in and yell *WOOHOO!* aloud.
I'll take my towel and leave the sand,
Heading out with a popsicle in my hand.

Golden Dreams

SKANDA KOTLA

Restless nights of searching for gold,
Wondering what the future ahead me holds.
Sunset to sunrise, determined to find,
The hopeless feeling struck my mind.
A cold, wailing breeze dancing in the wind,
The tree is brown and very dark skinned.
The leaves tumbling in the air,
Glowing fireflies in the dark makes me stare.
The moon's smile glows as bright as the sun.
I search for gold for days, I find it ahead of me, I won.
The box is smooth like a softened butter.
A thrilled feeling of success and relief as my mind felt as light as a feather.

CANCUN, MEXICO
ISHANVI MOHAPATRA

Blooming

MYSHA HUSAIN (ARTIST & WRITER)

In the midst of the colossal meadow of flowers I begin to feel small,
A mesh of colors to disperse for my darting eyes to catch them all,
Some unfurl large petals like arms stretching to the sun's golden ray,
Yet some have begun to droop-against the ground withered petals lay,

Most would oversee the flower which was now withered and old,
They prefer the ones with a perfect image-it's colors still bright and bold,
But as they continue to shun, a truth banes that they may never know,
That the flower has fought great battles-through both wind and snow,

It's simple for them to judge-aimlessly with no faze,
To them the beautiful flowers are the ones that deserve praise,
But what if beauty is nothing except something that we measure,
Something that we see need to be maintained through pain or pressure,

The flowers grasp with all their might to meet what beauty seems to need,
They fight each other for a spot in the sun's light, into your standards they feed,
And so as flowers try to push and grow with all their might,
They remain overshadowed by the others-petals blocking the sun's light,

But yet somehow-in the midst of all the chaos caused by needing to fit a mold,
Hidden in a shadow, a secret story lies-one the may never be told,
Against all odds-and on its own,
A unique flower has grown,

It's petals may not be idealistic-their not bright or bold,
And its stem is not smooth-instead creased with fold,
But maybe without the standards of beauty looming,
We can learn that the real beauty may just be in blooming.

A Strike of Power

MYSHA HUSAIN

My head rested on top of my textbooks. I could hear my teacher's shrill voice, lulling me to sleep. I kicked my feet under my desk, staring at the clock while counting the seconds until class ended, the only bit of entertainment restraining me from dozing off.

Just as my eyes began to droop, the sharp-*ding*-of the bell snapped me awake. My teacher droned on about some assignment while I stretched my arms, grateful that it was time to go home.

I walked up the street to my house. Against the sidewalk stood large houses with fresh lawns, and cars parked in the driveways. I turned the corner, and watched as the grass faded to dirt roads. The houses only got smaller as I turned into a neighborhood of brown condos. I walked towards my house.

As I entered the house I was met with the sight of my mom with her phone between her shoulder and ear, her hands typing away at her computer. She sat at a table stuffed into the corner of the living room. She looked at me, peeling the phone away from her ear. “Hi Evelyn,” She said, quickly resuming her call. I waved, heading up the stairs.

When I entered my room, I was first greeted with my reflection in an old full-length mirror. I stared at my jeans, topped with a baggy brown hoodie. My brown hair is a frizzy mess, stuffed into my hood. I stared into my own blue eyes, the only feature I liked about my face.

Now laying on my bed, I shut my eyes. The day’s memories filled my head, the most memorable moments surfacing. My thoughts slowly became more vivid, my consciousness wavering as I drifted into a dream.

I frolicked through a meadow of sunflowers, their long stems topped with bright yellow petals, open towards the sun. I picked one of the flowers from the ground, inhaling its floral fragrance. Everything *was* perfect.

Suddenly, I heard a rumble boom from above, the blue sky rapidly fading to a black night.

The now inky darkness above was streaked with flashes of white-hot light, every zap of lightning producing a shattering rumble.

The lightning kept coming, one blast after another, until I was on the ground, covering my face to shield my eyes from the light. I peeled my eyes open, squinting to see the lightning, which had now become an eccentric red color. Then, the dream ended.

I woke up with a start, shooting up to a sitting position. My neck was beaded with sweat, my heart thumping in a fast rhythm. I peered out of the window above my bed. Just like in my dream, a storm roared outside. Raindrops pattered against the glass, blurring the view of the clumps of grey storm clouds streaked with flashes of light. I stood up on my bed to look closer outside. I knew it was crazy, yet I couldn't help but scope out the storm for red lightning.

I saw nothing out of the ordinary, so I began to step down from bed, until I heard a nostalgic *boom* rumble from outside, shaking the room. I whirled around to face the window, which held the sight of red lightning.

I stood there, paralyzed in shock. I could hear my heart thumping. My vision tunneled, my eyes fixated on the spot where the red lightning had struck, on the parking lot right outside my house. Just as I was about to pinch myself, to wake myself up from this dream, the blood red flash of lightning landed again outside of my house, producing the same, sickening rumble.

Without hesitation, I bolted downstairs, guided by nothing but my curiosity. As I reached the door I could hear my mom frantically asking me where I was going, but I had tuned her out, the ringing in my ears prevailing over all other noises.

I whipped open the front door, and ran to the spot where the red lightning had struck, its proof lying in the smoking crater in the concrete.

Standing in the same spot, I looked up at the clumps of dark grey storm clouds, one of which was darker than the rest, brewing with rose colored beams of light.

The next few seconds were a blur. The lightning came down so fast, I hadn't even noticed it struck. A raging burning sensation filled my head, and spread like wildfire throughout my body.

A jolt of energy flooded my senses, but quickly subsided to furious pain. My arms had shot up, and my legs had locked together, forcing me into a *T* position. In just a few seconds I had crumbled to the ground, desperately clinging to my consciousness, the only sound being the lasting rumble of the lightning.

My head raged. The world spun. My body shook. My muscles felt like weights, pulling me down to the ground. I closed my eyes, waiting for the pain to stop. Then all of a sudden, it did.

Somehow, the pain had washed away, and newfound energy washed over me. I stood up, surprised by how easily I could. I felt as if I could run a marathon. My head swarmed with so many questions, I almost couldn't hear my moms frantic bombardment.

'What were you doing?" she pestered. To my surprise, my mom looked more confused than I was. "The last thing I remember is that you ran outside, and then it got all bright. I can't remember much from there."

"Oh, I was just, um," I began to explain, before realizing how crazy I would sound telling my mom that I had gotten struck by literal lightning. With my head spinning, I managed to form some alibi.

"I was just getting the mail." I lied. My mom paused for a second, yet, instead of questioning me, she just smiled.

"Oh, ok." she said, as if that made perfect sense.

"Really?" I couldn't help but ask. *It does?*

"Yeah, totally. Now I remember, you went to get mail." she replied, nodding.

"But there's a storm outside," I replied, now even more confused.

"What do you mean?" my mom asked, pulling back the curtain to reveal clear skies.

The world paused for a second.

"You know what, I'm really tired. I think I'll just head up to my room." I said, bolting up the stairs before this conversation could continue.

I buried myself under my covers, my eyes burning. *Was I going insane?* I thought of endless possibilities on what happened. Life didn't feel real. It *couldn't* be real. Eventually these thoughts continued in their spiral, slowly subsiding into dreams.

Ring-ring! My alarm clock blared. My hand slapped on top of my phone to snooze it, my eyes squinting to see the time-6:00 AM. By now, I would have been stuffed under the covers, with plans to oversleep for another thirty minutes-but not today.

I felt oddly energetic, but my liveliness quickly subsided when I remembered last night. My head throbbed just thinking about it. I pushed those thoughts to the corner of my brain, it was time for school.

I was in social studies class.

After droning on for what felt like forever, my teacher paused. “Who can tell me what year Tutankhamun's tomb was found?” Mr. Stein asked the class, his posh British accent filling the tension in the room.

My teacher looked around, scoping out a victim. After a moment, he paused, looking at me. “Evelyn, care to enlighten us?”

I lifted my head from my desk, my brain working overtime, sifting through every useless piece of information Mr. Stein had spiraled on about. “I-I’m not sure,” I stuttered, giggles erupting from the class.

He sighed. “We’ve been learning about this all week, just take a guess.” He asked, his voice dripping with annoyance.

“Fine,” I muttered. I knew I had already embarrassed myself enough, there was nothing I could say to make it worse, so I owned it.

“How about... 2072?”

Mr. Stein’s face dropped, so did the other students in class. It got deadly quiet. Everyone's eyes glassed over, the tension in the room thickening.

“Good job Evelyn,” Mr. Stein eventually said, breaking the silence. “That’s correct.”

I looked around the classroom, my eyes wide as saucers, my heart pounding. Yet, my classmates seemed to agree.

The rest of the day was a blur. I had no clue what was going on.

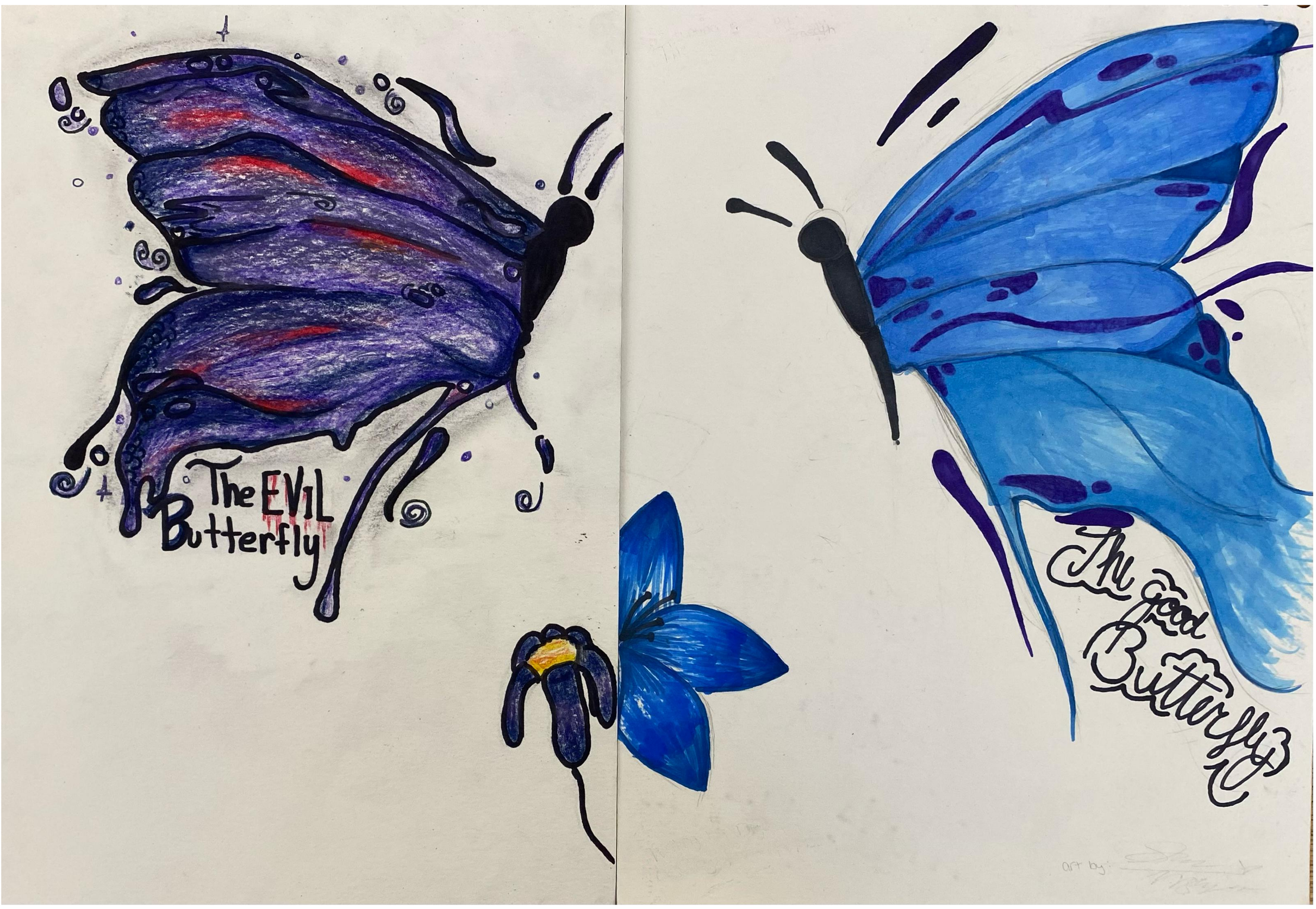
I considered talking to someone about it, but who could I tell? Everyone would just call me crazy.

The school day flew by, suddenly I was at home, staring out the window. I remembered my mom and Mr. Stein. They had believed everything I had said, and as much as I didn’t want to believe it, I knew this was no coincidence.

Something wasn’t right.

Something was wrong with me.

And whatever it was, I was going to figure it out.



LANA NGUYEN & GABRIEL ROSARIO

The Half Good, Half Evil

DIYA ARUNPRASATH

Butterfly Haven isn't the best place to live. I should know that. I'm a freak. The half-good, half-evil butterfly.

In Butterfly Haven there are the evil butterflies (like my mom) and the good butterflies (like my dad). The evil butterflies are brown with tan spots. The good butterflies are blue with purple spots. Once upon a time there were an equal amount of butterflies. They both took to their territories and minded their own businesses. The evil butterflies hunt at night. The good butterflies cook during the day. The evil butterflies population has been decreasing due to their poor living conditions, while the good butterflies have flourished in their treetop homes in the rainforest. There are guards at the rift line to make sure no interaction between the two tribes can be established, except for diplomatic meetings. My father traveled to the evil butterfly's side for a diplomatic meeting and fell in love with my mother. Then they both had me and an intertribal freak was born.

My mother quickly realized that the good side would be a better kinder place and sent me there. That she was wrong about. I couldn't even join school until I was eleven.

My father would plead, "He's good! He's a good butterfly!"

But the teachers would say, "He's evil too. He's half evil!"

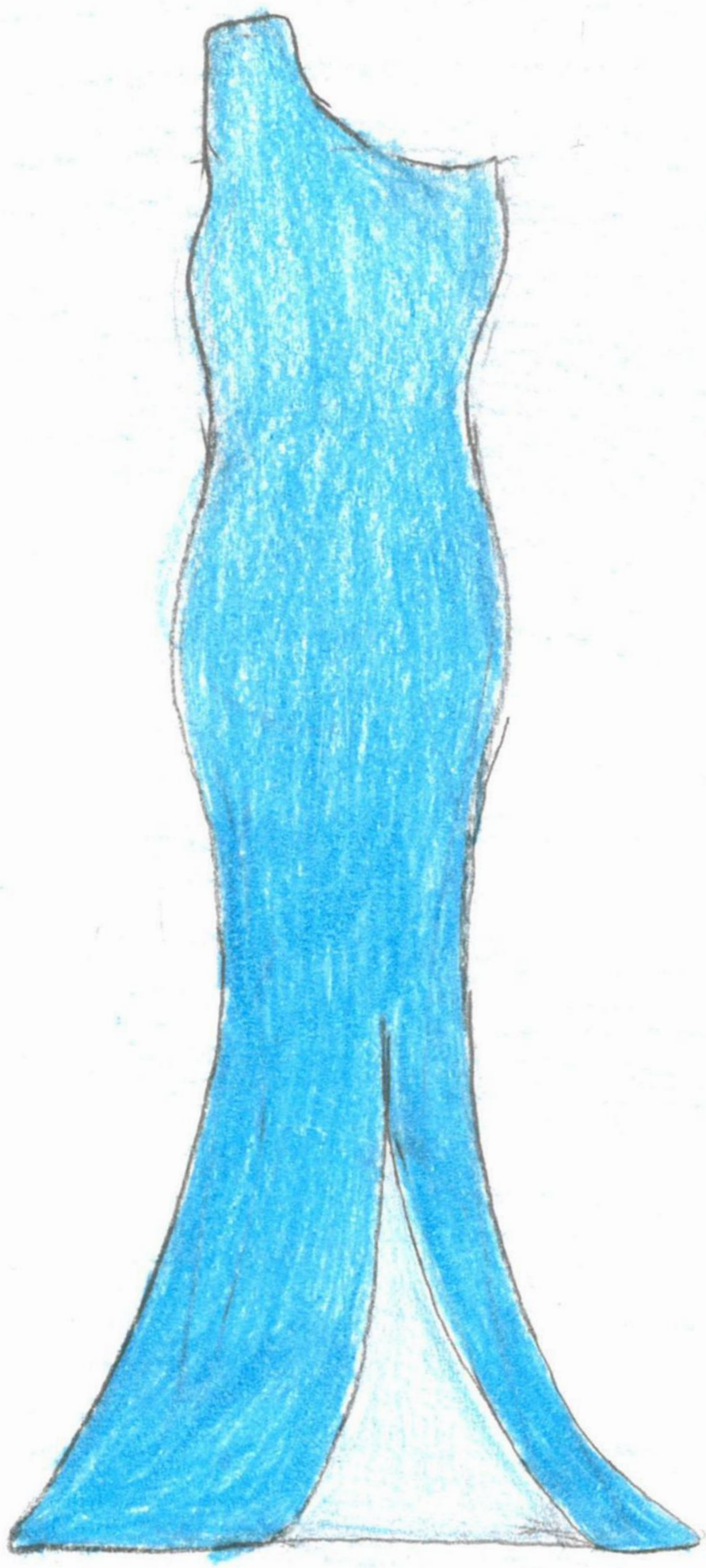
The harsh reality was that good butterflies were perfect and evil butterflies were not. So I had both mixed traits in me. Sometimes I could have horrible outbursts. Sometimes I was kind and perfect.

As I walked into school I felt nothing. No snide comments, no bullying, no shoving. Just empty silence. And other butterflies hyping up the school bully James. Guess he got a new freak to target. I walk closer to see the commotion. Tiny bug eyes stare up and plead. I don't know what is happening but something inside me snapped for the little guy.

I walked over and hit James. The whole school starts booing the "freak." I help the little guy up and help him clean up in the bathroom. He stares at me very intently. He probably thinks I'm a freak. He should be glad I saved his life.

Instead he slowly says, "You're blue now".

By: Allison Higgins



Out of the blue

Fashion

ISHANVI MOHAPATRA

Fashion is odd
You can wear leather, sequins, or dots
There are no rights or wrongs.
It isn't fair to say
You're "doing too much" today,
Your style is yours to keep
It is never wrong to be unique.
Even if no one else is around,
You don't have to tone it down.
But somehow, some claim
You're boring if you look the same.
If you dress like everyone else,
Are you truly being yourself?
They don't understand! That's just not true
Fashion is what makes you *you*.
The way you look, the way you feel
Ordinary or surreal
Is yours to own, your own trend,
It's your expression, from the start to the end.

It Can

ANANYA SAVE

It can shatter into countless shards,
Yet mend and restart,
It pulses with infinite energy,
Or mark the silence of a final part,

It supplies life to everything,
Yet gives it all, a selfless fate,
It stirs the deepest love within,
Yet hold the seed of hate,

Like the torn strings of a broken song,
Or a melody that's fading to gray,
Once it has been broken,
It might stay that way,

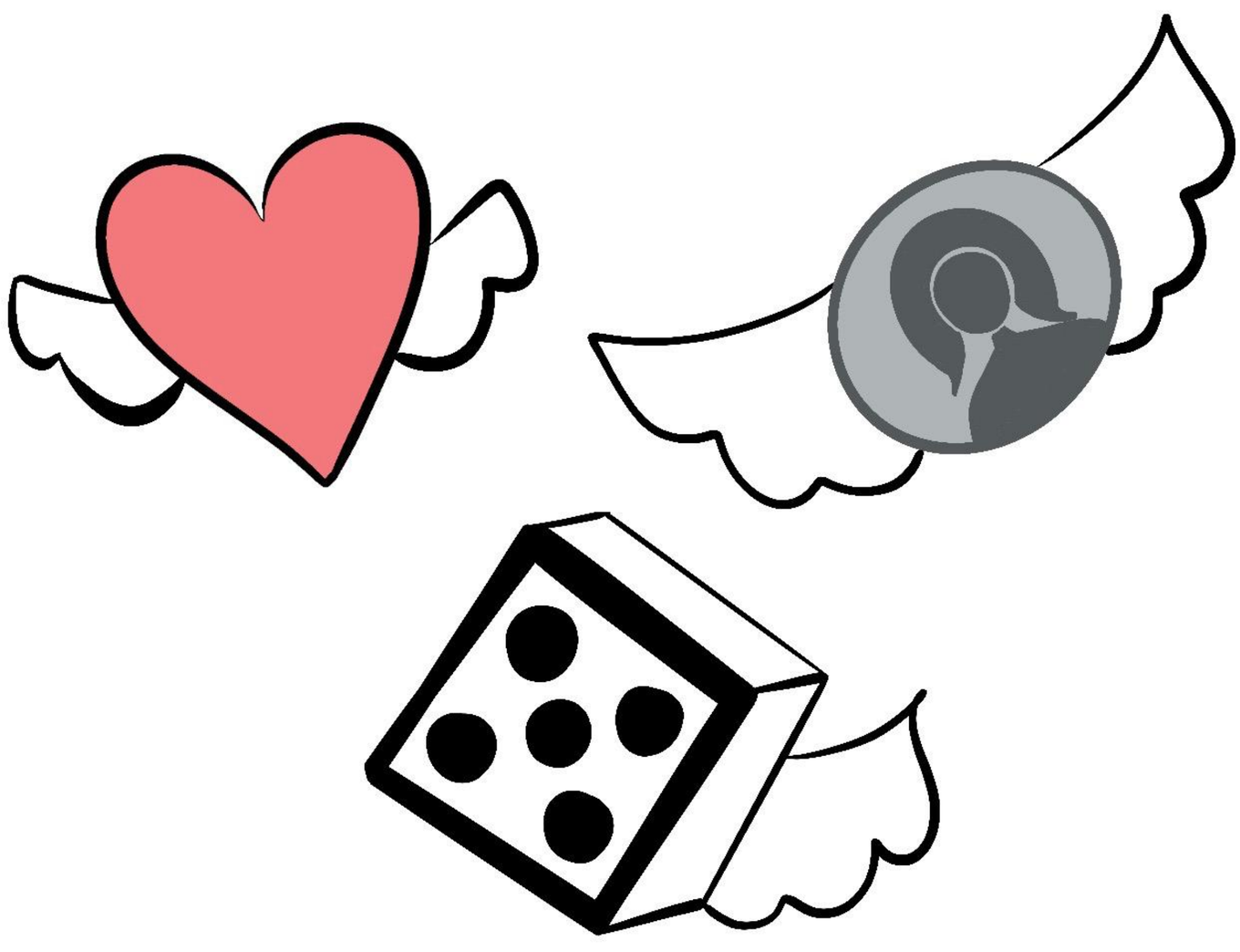
Sometimes it doesn’t mend,
Sometimes it stays broken,
Sometimes the spark is gone,
It may never be woken,

But after time it can move on,
After time, it can change,
But can it really,
After all that pain?

Yes, it will,
It can be joyous once more,
It can bloom, flourish, spread its wings,
And get back to its happy core,

Bad or good,
Moments happen randomly,
Like the roll of a die,
Or a coin and gravity,

It may seem arbitrary,
Maybe out of the blue,
Just like this magazine,
I know it's just for you.



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