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**FESTIVAL**

*A Celebration of the Arts*

**Creative Writing Anthology**

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Cover design by **Amy Runyon**, Hamilton High School West

This Literary Anthology is the result of the hard work and dedication of the following creative writing students:

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## Moonlight

*Mary Jay Albano*

The sun sets into the dark light  
 while I'm waiting for the night  
 when the moon is like a very bright  
   spotlight  
   it shines on you  
   it shines on me  
 and shines on everyone I see  
 but every night there's someone I seek  
   he is the one I wish to speak  
 but when I found out who he was  
 he was the person who had the personality  
   that I want  
   years have past  
   but many will come  
   he changed my life  
 for this is how I've become  
   few long memories past  
 oh how I prayed it would last  
   but that time has come  
   to meet the end  
 and open a new friendship,  
   at last  
   as I remember  
   all of September  
 all those times times you've surrendered  
 but every time I would think of you  
 and how I always knew that  
   I  
   Love  
   You

## Together

*Anuj Mehdiratta*

Enter the Red Barn,  
 Through its creaky doors,  
 Step on the rustling hay,  
 Contemplate upon the animals  
 Living in one small space.

Look at the,  
 Black and white  
 Cows  
 Crunching on yellow straw.

White hens, ruffled feathers  
 Nervous, sheltering each other  
 Anxiously waiting for their eggs to hatch.

Pink sheep  
 Freshly shorn,  
 Stripped bare  
 Deprived of their dignity,  
 Finding warmth against the angular wind that is  
 Piercing their vulnerability

Where else do creatures, so graciously  
 Share themselves?

Does a child have to be taught to huddle with each other for warmth?  
 Does a mother have to be taught how to love her child?

Then,  
 Why do humans have to be taught something just as simple  
 To treat everyone as equal?

If,  
 Such different creatures,  
 Big  
 Small  
 Weak  
 Strong  
 Black or White,  
 They found a way to achieve brotherhood  
 Under the same roof,  
 Why can't we, too, do the same?  
 With Dr. King's words that are still echoing in our hearts  
 "We must learn  
 to live together  
 as brothers  
 or perish together  
 as fools."

## My Home in Rhode Island

*Gabby Bieniasz*

A light warm breeze tossed my hair behind me as my toes sunk into the wet sand along the coastline. The warm sun was beating down on my face, and I could feel a light ocean mist cooling down my body. I looked up to see a bright blue sky covered with small white fluffy clouds floating about the sky. I gazed upon the horizon, where I saw a silhouette of a boat. She was slowly dancing across the spacious ocean. Above her, a few seagulls gracefully lowering themselves to capture fresh fish from the salty ocean. A stream of tears gently rolled down my burning face. I looked into the ocean, wanting all of my thoughts and worries to spill into it, like a tank of oil, leaking and polluting the innocent sea. I could not imagine life outside of the charming coast of Rhode Island. I would feel like a wild animal, being forced to be tamed. However, my biggest nightmare was now becoming reality, I was saying my final goodbyes to the place where I was born, where I wanted to get married, and where I wanted to die. Rhode Island was my home. I was trying to except a new life, however, no matter how hard I had attempted to, I just could not face the fact that I would soon be living in a dark and gloomy nightmare called New York City, in a dusty and lonely orphanage. I lowered myself onto the wet sand, and with my hands, I grasped it, and held it tight not wanting to let it go. Small grains of the bleached sand poured through the spaces in my clenched fists. I looked behind me. I saw The old Oak tree near the old Stone Bridge, which held so many memories which would stay in my heart forever, no matter where I would be forced to live. I looked at the valley, where the assorted flowers made it seem like a rainbow, which you could dance and fly through like a butterfly. I could feel the rippling waves slapping against my bare feet. I threw myself onto the wet ground and closed my eyes. I tried to forget my family, the nature and the beauty of this place, though it was impossible. The harder I tried to forget, the more I remembered. Devastated and tired, I slowly fell asleep on the shore.

I was suddenly awaked by the voice of an elder man, who awoke me, and was staring blankly into my teary eyes. I quickly got on my feet, and without any notice, I continued staring into the ocean. He tugged on my hand, and gestured me to follow him. I couldn't. I would never leave my home which is so dear to me. I will never leave my home. I paused. Realizing that I didn't have a choice, and knowing that if I stayed, there would be no place for me, feeling deprived of everything that I owned, I looked down, and followed the man into a "Ford". I had always wanted to see a "Ford.", though now, it just seemed so taunting and monotonous. My father was always interested in the newest technology and inventions, along with my mother, though they had disappeared in my life like snow, which melts after rainfall. My heart was hollow. It was empty, though I knew one thing that would always stay engraved in my heart, and be as fresh as an early morning; Rhode Island. Even if I were to live in a dirty orphanage in New York City, even if they took me miles further North, I knew one thing, that wherever I would be, my heart would never leave Rhode Island.

be caught. After several minutes like that, Tom was exhausted and started moving much slower; that's when the kid snapped the tweezers on one of his wings. He started to pull the little insect out of the jar when he let go of the instrument and Tom fell back in the jar. The boy had decided not to do anything to the small creature, he just closed the lid. He just sat there observing his "catch of the day."

That is when Tom decided it was enough; he tried to fly into the jar's walls to make it fall over. It did not work, it only made the boy laugh and the little firefly was starting to get bruises and bumps. He then decided to try to stop making light, to do that, he just sat at the bottom of the container and did nothing, it worked, stopping all activity made him turn off. It only worked for a few seconds because as soon as he had stopped, the child picked up the jar and started shaking it as if it was going to help Tom light up again. The poor little firefly was desperate; he thought that he would never get away. He just flew in circles sadly to keep making light so that he wouldn't be shook too much, he had no hopes of ever getting out. But, just when he was about to give up, he saw Lily coming with her friends from the birthday party, there were spiders, butterflies, beetles, worms, and many others. They were a little far for now but hope gained Tom again, he knew that soon, this nightmare would be over. As they grew closer, the child started to see them and was starting to panic; they came even closer and were now approaching his body. In a matter of seconds, he was up on his legs and "running for his life." When they were sure he was gone, Tom's new friends released him from this awful place that he never wanted to see again. He was very tired after this adventure so Lily brought him to her shelter. He lay down on the ground and fell asleep. He was sleeping peacefully when he smelled his mother's perfume; he slowly opened his eyes and saw her leaning over him to wake him up gently. Tom went to the bathroom and looked at himself in the mirror; he was a regular boy again. He thought he had dreamt about this whole adventure, until he saw the small bruised bump on his forehead...

After experiencing what it was like to be a firefly and realizing how dangerous humans were to insects, Tom decided never to capture them again. In this adventure, he also experienced the feeling of being held "captive" in a glass jar, especially if you were forgotten in it without food or water like he used to do. He promised himself that if he ever wanted to observe one, he would observe it in its natural habitat. Will Tom be able to keep his promise?

## Tom and the fireflies

*Mathilde Roux*

It all happened on a summer night. Tom was a little boy, his hair was dark blond and short, his eyes were green and shiny. Tom had just celebrated his seventh birthday and had received a book about insects. He loved observing those little creatures that could crawl or fly. He sometimes wished he could fly. The little boy loved to catch some of those insects and observe them, he would put them in a jar and look at them for a while, and then he would put the jar away and forget all about it. His house was an old farm and there were fields surrounding it, there were no other buildings nearby. Tom loved to play in the house or in the meadow. He would pretend he was an insect and would spend all afternoon acting like it. This evening, as he was going to bed, he wished that he was an insect for one day. He thought that it would be so amazing to live the way they do. He thought maybe his dream could come true if he wished for it to happen.

On the next morning, when Tom woke up, he flew to a pond and when he looked at himself in the water, he didn't see a little boy but instead, he was in front of a firefly! He touched his face and the reflection did the same thing. Tom could feel antennas; he had six arms and he also had wings. He got scared and suddenly, he lit up. He was panicked and he didn't know what to do or how to make his light stop, he was flying in circles very fast trying to find a way to stop it. Suddenly, Tom heard a voice behind him saying: "Slow down, you're going to get dizzy, you are not going to be able to stop this light whenever you want, just ignore it." He stopped and saw a beautiful firefly; she told him that her name was Lily. They talked and she said that they could go to her birthday party. The two young kids went and Lily introduced him to her friends, there were other fireflies, but also some spiders, some beetles, and even a butterfly. There were some leaves on the grass on which were parts of flowers with some honey brought by a bee, and also some dead insects. Tom was surprised by that and Lily explained that those were bugs that were found dead, and that they had not killed them themselves. The boy was starting to get tired and his friend showed him the way to her house where he could sleep. On his way, and because he didn't know very well where he was going, he got lost. He was about to go back when he bumped into something transparent.

He looked up and realized that he was in a jar in a little boy's hand! The human child started looking at Tom like he was a very strange creature. He took a lamp and pointed it at the jar; it dazzled the poor little firefly. The boy shook the jar and Tom bumped on the glass and felt a tiny red bump growing on his forehead. The child was going to shake the container again when a voice was heard, at the sound; he put the jar down and left. Tom, who was very tired, fell asleep as soon as everything became calm again. He was dreaming that everything was back to normal and that he was a little boy again. He was very peaceful, when suddenly he woke up because the jar had moved. The child was back. This time, he had tweezers! Little Tom started panicking, what was he going to do with this very dangerous tool. The boy came closer and opened the container, he reached inside and the firefly started flying all over the jar so that he couldn't

## How I feel about him

*Vanessa Conde*

I can't live without you  
day and night as sky is blue  
when night is dark  
I'm after you

Your like my life  
and with your gone  
I'm only half of me til dawn

Love is like a dove  
you let it go with the flow  
until it move  
real slow

It makes you sad  
but don't be down  
it's not so bad  
finally it has flown

I'm with you through thick and thin  
although it may not seem so  
I wear your love like a pin  
anytime and everywhere I go

your love is deep  
I like your soul  
it makes me weep  
your anything but foul

you have a twinkle in your eye  
your very special to me  
that everyone will buy  
you make them pay a fee  
but I get your smile  
free in the meanwhile

you give me a shoulder to lean  
you love the way I am  
and give me experiences I've never seen  
I love you for who you are

You are the person that I seek  
you are the only one I need  
even though we're sometimes in trouble  
we always have the time to cuddle

your very smart  
I like how you speak your mind  
in my heart you more than a part  
you always tell me what you find  
like true love

your heart is smug  
I like it so  
I also like your hugs  
so please don't go

every night you tell me no  
and a sure me that you won't go  
your hair is wavy  
and your never lazy

you look at me  
I look at you  
you love me  
and I love you

you like me so  
I like you more  
you say I'm wrong  
that you loved me way before

I feel like we've had this time in the past  
you give me kisses  
let this moment forever last  
you sometimes even call me your misses

your like my knight in steel armor  
you'll fight for me  
but it doesn't matter  
because your the only one for me  
I hope you see

## The Imagination Booster

*Kristen Mandigo*

"Zander, roll that window up. I got your hair nice for Grandad, and I'm not having you ruin it."

"Yes, Mum," Zander sighed. His shiny, dark brown hair was blowing in the breeze, little by little decreasing as he rolled the window up. He looked out the window with his bright blue eyes glistening in the setting sun. He looked around at all the farmland he was surrounded by. Liverpool was so much different than Manchester. But Zander loved going there anyway so he could visit his grandad.

"Welcome!" Shouted Grandad as he shot out of his door practically as soon as Zander's car went into the driveway. Zander felt excited inside. He adored going to his grandad's. It always made him feel a sense of consolation inside.

When everyone was inside and all settled, Grandad said, "Now, I have so much planned for your stay. First, Zander, you and I are going to go into my attic and look for some old things your mum over there have left behind and see if you would like to take any of it home with you." Grandad always spoke so quickly, and with his strong Liverpool accent, Zander could hardly understand him sometimes.

"Ok," was all Zander could say. Something about the attic?

"Well come on you! Time to get a move on!" Zander followed Grandad to the attic entrance, just a plain door in the upstairs hallway. As it opened, Zander saw stairs that were rotting away from years of termite damage and rot. He saw one pair of steps that were detached.

"It's ok," said Grandad, seeing the worried face on Zander, "I'm right behind you."

When they got into the attic, they were looking through boxes of old antiques and toys. They were looking through one box when Zander sees the strangest thing. It was some sort of contraption with eight golden tongs and a wooden handle. "Grandad, what is this?" He asked, observing the item. "Oh, that's a he-" Grandad stopped himself, "I mean, that's and Imagination Booster."

"A what?"

"An Imagination Booster. You just place it on your head, and you can come up with any story you desire. Here, why don't you try?"

Zander always had a problem with imagination. He never came up with good stories or anything. "I don't know Grandad."

"Come on, it's easy." Grandad placed the Imagination Booster on Zander's head. "Now, think of any story or place you would like to be."

*Come on, Zander; you can do it,* Zander thought to himself. Think, think, think... Nothing.

"Grandad, it's not working. I guess my imagination isn't good enough."

"Sure it is. Let me show you how it works," He put the imagination booster onto his

## A New Fairytale

*Zoe Gilbard*

Beneath her enchanting gown,  
Cinderella is having some trouble  
with those heavy old glass  
slippers of hers.

Fairy god-mother said grace would  
follow her every step, but  
Cinderella tripped on the  
crystal commodities three  
times already.

"Was I right to come here?"  
Cinderella thinks.  
"To a place I do not and  
never will belong?"

Hoping the night will be  
uneventful, Cinderella removes  
herself from the huge amount of  
unwanted company by pouring  
herself a glass of punch.

"Excuse me, excuse me," she says,  
pushing her way outside.  
Sitting at the base of the  
clock tower as it  
ticks and tocks her life  
seconds away, she  
rubs her aching feet and  
smashes one glass slipper on  
the ashen grey  
of the concrete tower.

Surveying the desolate urban jungle,  
Cinderella makes her way back to  
the ball holding the second  
glass slipper under her arm.  
After a while, the prince seems to  
notice her and asks her to dance.  
Having no excuses, Cinderella  
accepts and holds on as the prince  
whirls her around.

She doesn't like the way  
he dances, or the way he looks at  
her. When the clock chimes  
midnight, she runs  
grabbing  
that  
singular  
slipper  
and throwing it straight  
at the unsuspecting prince's  
handsome face.

Cinderella dashes into the  
cover of the forest as her  
charmed gown becomes  
a gown of  
rags.

The dirt that lines her  
cheeks streaks with  
her tears of joy.  
She broke free from  
that fairytale  
she thought she had to  
live.  
The binds were gone and  
she had changed her  
fate  
her future.  
Made a new beginning.  
A NEW FAIRYTALE

After I died, I turned into a cat and came back to help people who deserved it. I came to tell you that you were going to end up the same way as I did, dead." He said seriously. "Thanks for reminding me." I felt a bit annoyed. "I started smoking out of curiosity." Aries said. "Curiosity killed the cat." I muttered. All Aries said was "So did you." I understood. I only started smoking because I wanted to talk to animals, for instance. Aries was silent for a minute and then he said, "I could give you that second chance." I was shocked and all I could say is, "Really?" "Yes, but just want to let you know that I got a second chance and I didn't pass. All I can tell you is that it's not only about you." I couldn't believe that Aries had gotten a second chance, but didn't pass. I know this was all rash, but I always think this way. I just believe in things. It makes life easy for me. "I want a second chance." I said. "Okay, close your eyes." He sighed. Aries brushed his front two paws across my face and then blew air out of his mouth.

I felt like I was being squeezed to death, but then it stopped and I opened my eyes. I went back 8 years. I was 13 again and I was walking home. All I had to do was go home and my life would change...for the better. I started walking and was about to pass the boy when I remembered what Aries had said, "It's not only about you." I stared at the boy and remembered that his name was Jake. I went to him and said, "Hi Jake! Can I see that pack of cigarettes?" He handed them to me. I twirled them around in my hand and opened it, then closed it. I was about to give it back to him, but it "slipped" out of my hands and fell in to the sewer. "Hey, what did you do that for? That cost me 5 dollars!" said Jake. "Great way to use five dollars! Do you know how bad cigarettes are? I mean what are you going to get from it? It could kill you!" I exclaimed. "So? It's not like anyone is going to care. My own parents act like I don't exist." He said. I could see the pain he was trying to hide. "I know life is hard for you, but you shouldn't just ruin it because no one notices you! I saw you play the piano the other day. Your amazing! I play the piano, too. Maybe we could play together someday." I said. "Why do you care?" Jake asked. "Because I know it's wrong." I said softly. "Fine. Let's see how your idea works. Anyways, I want to see you

head. "Now, close your eyes, and don't open them until I say so." Zander did as he was told.

There was a long pause. What was going on? Was he going to do anything anytime soon?

"Ok, you can open them now." Zander opened his eyes, expecting to see his grandad's old attic, but he didn't. What he did see was open farmland, with bougainvillea everywhere. He also saw thousands of people looking at one stage.

"Grandad, where are we? How did we get here? What's going on?" Zander was so confused, his head was twisting and turning.

"We, my friend, are in the great state of New York. And this, is Woodstock."

Zander's head was about to blow off. What? Woodstock happened 40 years ago! And you can't get all the way from England to America without moving! "That's impossible."

"We're not really here, you little rascal. We're using our imaginations. And anything is possible if we use our imaginations."

"But Grandad, this isn't a story, this is an event."

"It doesn't have to be a made up story. Anything you desire. I desire being here. Could you imagine being here, during the whole thing? Being around all the crazy people? I remember hearing about it on television. I wish I could have gone."

Zander had nothing to say. He sat quietly as he watched Grandad enjoy the moment. After a few minutes, Grandad said "Ok, enough of my thoughts, it's time for you to try. Close your eyes again. And as soon as Zander knew it, they were both back in the quiet attic.

"Now, if an old man like me can do it, a good 7 year old boy like yourself can as well. Now here," Grandad did as he handed Zander the imagination booster, "you try."

*Now, what to think of,* Zander thought, *I GOT IT!* "Now, close your eyes, Grandad."

Zander thought of where he wanted to go. One, two, three... "Ok, Grandad, you can open your eyes now."

They were both standing in the middle of London, and a huge figure was behind Big Ben. It was a monstrous figure. It seemed to be attacking the city. Then, all of a sudden, a huge string of light appeared, and a man-like object appeared.

"It's Lemon Boy!" Zander screamed, with a reassuring look on his face. "Lemon boy?" Now Grandad was the one who was confused.

"It's my imaginary superhero." Zander moved closer in a procession. He wanted a closer look. He has always had a vision in his mind about Lemon Boy, and he had drawn comics of him. The monster was The Bitter Beast, as he had drawn before. Now, watching it up close like this was a dream come true.

"We should probably get back now, Zander. Your mum is probably wondering where we are." Grandad had said. Then, they both closed their eyes, and a few seconds later they were both back where they had started.

“Dad! Zander!” Zander’s mother was calling as she was coming up the attic stairs. “Oh, there you two are.”

“Mum! Look at what Grandad showed me! It’s an imagination booster! We got to see Woodstock, and Lemon Boy fight The Bitter Beast.”

Zander’s mother gave Grandad a rather dirty look. Zander got confused. “Tell him,” she said to Grandad.

“I was going to later-“

“Now.”

“Ok...” Grandad slowly rotated toward Zander. “Uhhhhh,” he hesitated. “Dad!”

“Ok, ok!” Zander, I have to tell you something about that imagination booster... It’s not really an imagination booster-it’s kinda something called a **head massager**.”

“So I came up with all that by myself?” Zander had tears in his eyes. But they weren’t sad tears. They were happy and joyful. He ran up to Grandad and gave him a hug and kiss. “Thank you, Grandad, for making me realize I DO have an imagination.”

“Uhhhhhhh your welcome?” Grandad said, confused.

“Goodbye! Come visit again soon!” Grandad yelled from his door as Zander’s mother was pulling out of the driveway. Zander held the **head massager** in his hands tight.

“He had done the same thing to me when I was about your age,” Zander’s mother said, looking through the rear-view mirror so she could see Zander.

“Oh, yeah. And I am so grateful he did.” Zander’s mother had a huge smile on her face.

After that, Zander rolled down the window, still holding the **head massager**, and smiled.

## Curiosity Killed The Cat

*Ipsita Rao*

I had never thought my life would end up like this. I was lying on a cold hospital bed with a needle stuck into my left hand giving me food and water. My name is Eeden Serdino and I was a addicted smoker. You might wonder how I got addicted or why I tried it in the first place. The problem is, I don’t know myself. I started smoking when I was 13. I just picked up a cigarette and that was it. It didn’t make sense to me. I knew how bad smoking was and I used to be disgusted by it. I still am. I gave it up, but it doesn’t matter anymore because it’s too late, I’m still going to die. I have about two weeks. I’ve been spending most of my time thinking of how I could have spent my life. I had everything a person could need; friends, family, good grades. I could have done so many things, but instead I chose the road to death.

I still wonder what had gotten into me that day. I was on my way home from school and I saw a boy from school lighting a cigarette and I just stared at him for a moment. Then I walk up to him and ask for one. What was I thinking? Well, I lit mine up and tried it. Of course I hated it, but I tried it again and again. After that, I never talked to that boy again, but somewhere I feel that he probably is or already has gone through the pain I’m going through now. Even though I try hard, I know that I’ll never figure out why I did what I did.

I’m 21 now and I’ve been in the hospital for 3 months. I haven’t seen my family or friends in years. I left them because I knew that I was just causing them pain. I wish they knew that I wanted to stop. My days here in the hospital are almost the same everyday. I sleep most of the time or watch TV just to distract myself from the pain. I usually have oatmeal for breakfast everyday and fruits and vegetables for lunch and dinner. Apparently I needed to stay healthy, like it mattered now. I looked outside my window, it was a bright, sunny day. I longed to run around and play like I once had. That’s when I noticed him. The most handsome cat was staring at me. There was something unusual about it. Looking at him made me feel more alive. It had goldish-or-ange fur with red streaks in it, like flames. Unfortunately, I blinked and it was gone.

I was having the best sleep of my life at the moment and I wondered why. I felt very warm and cozy, but I decided that I would wait longer to see why. I just couldn’t end this painless sleep. 25 minutes later though, I woke up to a purring noise. There was the handsome cat with its warm golden brown eyes. I sat up and pet him. It came closer and curled up in to a ball. Just then the nurse came in and saw the cat. She was going to take him away, but I pleaded her not to and she agreed.

After she left, The cat put its head up and looked around. Then he said, “Hello, I’m Aries.” My eyes widen and I moaned about hallucinations. He spoke again. “It would be very kind if you stopped calling me a hallucination. I mean okay I’m a ghost cat, but that doesn’t mean I don’t exist.” “What do you mean ghost cat?” I asked “Well, I’m a dead cat. Simple enough?” he replied. “How did you die?” I wondered. I knew that I was being weird, but at least I had company. I was desperate. “I smoked too much and died of Lung Cancer.” He said solemnly. “Cats can’t smoke!” I exclaimed. “I was human then.



It's Tiffany drowning! I look around and start barking seeing if anyone will come to the rescue. No one comes to my plead. I realize that moment, I will have to be the saver. As I am about to jump, I remember I cannot swim. I think of another way to save Tiffany. Finally a bulb comes to the top of my head.

I quickly run and get Tiffany's favorite toy. I attach it to a loop of a rope and put a life ring with it. I drop it into the pool and wait for a tug. As I am just sitting, I am pulled into the water. I feel water again running through my fur. Tiffany and I trying to kick our way to the top is making us sink more. As we are sinking to the bottom, saying good bye to the world. I use all my energy and pull us to the top. I take Tiffany on the tile and pull myself up too. We lie there in the sun breathing the air our lungs need to be filled with again. As we are sitting, Tiffany whispers her thanks. As she finished I hear people coming. The queen, cameras flashing, and news people coming our way, everyone now gathering around us.

I, Charry am a hero now. My dream on being on the cover on every ones newspaper came true. I thought I would love to be the new hero, but it does not matter much as I thought it would. All that matters is that I and my friend are alive, Tiffany.

## Spring Awaits...

*Shalini Ramaswamy*

Spring awaits upon us now  
It comes with that warm spring breeze  
And flowers blooming along the grass  
Spring awaits, beckoning us  
With its glorious sun and  
Birds fluttering, singing a song of their own  
It's almost too perfect to be true  
But oh yes, its true because  
Spring awaits upon us now

## Rainbows

*Shalini Ramaswamy*

Rainbows are full of color  
Glistening in the sky  
After the first rainfall of spring  
The sun comes out  
And dries up the rain  
The flowers open back up  
And the rainbow opens up  
As I think to myself,  
What a wonderful sight  
Of the rainbow's colors  
But it doesn't last for while,  
Soon the rainbow fades out  
Into the sky as the sun brightens  
And dries up the wet ground.

## Contigo, Mama

*Zonia Rueda*

Quiero agradecerte  
que estas en mi vida.  
Se que puedo contar contigo  
En momentos dificiles,  
Se que contigo puedo compartir  
Mis alegrías  
Y se que nuestra amistad  
Se sustenta en mutuo amor  
Como la luna llena en el cielo de la noche.  
Que eres mi mama y mi amiga  
Es el más preciado tesoro,  
Que le agradezco a Dios eternamente.  
Gracias por llenar mi vida  
Con tanta felicidad y amor.

## TE AMO, MAMA!!!

*Zonia Rueda*

### Mother

I want to say thanks  
that you are in my life.  
I know that I can count on you  
in difficult times,  
I know that I can  
share my happiness  
and I know that  
our friendship  
is sustained by silent love  
like the full moon in the night sky.  
That you are my mother and my friend is the best treasure I can have.  
That's why I give thanks to God.  
Thank you for filling my life  
with so much happiness.

I LOVE YOU, MOM!!!

## Kai and the God of Luck

*Natasha Vargas*

There once was a poor Jamaican village concealed by a tropical forest where a boy named Kai lived. One day, Kai's mother asked him to help the older boys in their village hunt. Kai was a perpetually lazy boy so instead of obeying his mother, he snuck deep into the forest. The village elders always told the villagers that the forest was cursed and that if you passed the boundary line between the village and the unknown, unimaginable dangers would follow. Instead of heeding town elders' words of warning, Kai traveled deeper and deeper into the forest. After awhile, Kai began to see a light seeping through the trees in front of him.

Kai continued in a trance. He had never strayed so far from his village and was curious what he would find behind the trees in front of him. Kai shoved back all of the hanging vines between himself and the light that was already beginning to warm his skin. As he parted the brush, Kai found himself staring at the single most intriguing thing he had ever seen in his life. A mystical oasis spread out in front of him. It was perfectly round, but various tree branches overlapped above it, giving the oasis a lucent and magical appearance. A completely still lake stood in the exact center and from the middle of the lake rose a stone and on top of the stone rested a wooden carving of a god's head. If Kai had paid more attention during his village's tribal gatherings, he would have known that it was the God of Luck's head. This particular god affected different people in different ways. For example, if someone was very good they would get good luck, but if they were disobedient and needed to be taught a lesson, they would get the luck necessary to learn the lesson.

Kai proceeded into the middle of the lake, for the head had enchanted him and he felt the need to reach out and touch it. Soon enough he was staring directly into the eyes of the head which seemed to be glowing. He reached out both of his hands and rested them on the sides of the head. Kai's hands started to tingle and his eyes glazed over. Suddenly he was surrounded by a dense fog and could see a man's body. The body was surrounded with an aura of such power and superiority, and yet, something was missing. The body had no head. Kai knew this could mean nothing other than that the head that he had just rested his hands upon was the body's.

Kai was frightened by the body alone, so when the head started talking, he nearly fainted. At first Kai believed that he was suffering from a mirage, but he knew that he could never imagine something as equally terrifying and magnificent as this. The voice came from the head's mouth confirmed Kai's belief that the man-like creature was actually a God, but not just any god, he realized, for this was the God of Luck.

"Thou hast awoken me from my slumber, and for that, thou must be punished," the head thundered.

"But I did not know that head was yours and I—"

"Silence," bellowed the head that was now floating towards Kai.

"Thou hast been a lazy, disobedient, and unthankful boy, and now thou must be

## A Hero

*Klaudia Karwowski*

Everyone always thinks that animals are just to be loved for and dressed up. Saying animals can't think and have no say in anything. But, I am a different pup. I get and say anything and everything I want. I am an eleven pound dog. My real name is Charles III, but I don't need a long fancy name. Other dogs bark away when they hear my name. That's why I like to be known as Charry. Pups and humans think of me as a prince, prince of pups. I though don't want to be known as a royal dog who get everything they want. I want to be known as a hero, which is how our story begins.

It was a sunny day and I was sleeping under the chair by the pool. I prefer to sleep here than the big, puffy pink bed my owner made me sleep in. I, am a macho man, and macho men don't sleep in pink doggy beds. As I am sleeping away, here comes the dog that actually enjoys this treatment more than I enjoy drinking water out of the toilet. Her name is Tiffany, she belongs to the queen of England. Did I mention I am the queen's daughter's dog. Anyway, Tiffany thinks she is the queen of dogs. Tiffany of course comes along and has to pull a prank. Tiffany somehow knows my biggest secret. I, Charry cannot swim. Now don't judge me. I was never taught. Tiffany comes and pulls me towards the pool when I was fast asleep. I feel the tile sliding under me and I start to wake myself. As I am opening my eyes, I see the pool water beneath me. Tiffany is about to drop me in the water. I kick and bark, but see Tiffany won't change her mind. I am now in the pool, the water going through my fur and my nose filling up with water, and not air. As I am sinking to the bottom, I am yanked to the top of the pool. I cough out the water out of my lungs. Unable to see who saved my puppy paws. Once I am able to see the light through my eyes, I see my hero, Tiffany.

Tiffany is one smart poodle. Tiffany pushed me in for the fame. As I am shivering on a towel, no one caring for me, everyone is around Tiffany. Cameras flashing, news people all around. Tiffany is being rewarded for saving my life, after she almost lost it. She is now known as a hero. Tiffany may be my hated pup, but she is the key for me to becoming a hero.

As the days past, Tiffany's fame slowly died down and is now history. Tiffany now is back to her normal self and it back to her routine. As for me, I am getting ready for my plan on becoming the next big hero. Tiffany everyday eats pudding after she gets her nails done. Today I am going to put a big piece of rice that she will choke and I will come in and save her. As I am getting closer to the pudding, so is Tiffany. As I just drop in the rice, Tiffany paws her way in with a click click sound from her paws. I quickly hope in the worst place, the pink puffy bed, but I have no other place to hide. As Tiffany started to be fed her pudding. She barks and pushes the pudding away. Tiffany does not want her pudding!

I paw away with disappointment. I, Charry will never be a hero. I am quitting my dreams, which I am told never to do. I take a seat by the pool and fall asleep. I dream all day about becoming a hero. I wake up with a splash of water coming my way. I sit up with fright wondering what is going on. As I look in the pool, I see a figure down below.

cept. Quickly, for the thousandth time, Lilyian went to her closet and rustled through her many clothes. She grabbed a pair of black skinny jeans and a black long sleeve shirt. *They probably don't want someone as loud as me* she thought to herself. There was an instant knock on the door; quick and sharp. Lilyian rushed to the door and let the stranger in. No going back now.

"Okay, so why do you want to attend this school, Miss Lilyian?" the stranger asked.

"I donno," Lilyian stammered. From her view point that would be the best part of the interview.

The interviewer filled the doorway. "Thank you, Miss Lilyian. I will get back to you shortly." He stalked out of the house and into the empty streets. Lilyian had felt as if she was trapped inside someone else's body, somewhere she didn't belong, through out the whole questioning. As if detached from herself, looking upon the questioning from the ceiling. She had answered the questions but they all began with an innocent piece of white paper that had questions Lilyian had been asked during the questioning. She bent over and gently clasped her hand around the paper. She stood up and read from it.

"Deserving of the school." The box beside the word no was covered by a big black X. Lilyian's heart sank, . She read on hoping to find an explanation for the horrid pen marks. "Notes: Shows no interest and no expression." That was all Lilyian needed to read. She bolted out of her house heading straight for the hotel where the interviewer was staying. The hotel was nothing extravagant. Just an old, decrepit edifice. She rapped loudly on the paint chipped door.

"May I help you?" the interviewer bellowed in a tone that was anything but reassuring.

"Yes, sir. You left this at my house." She slowly brought up her arm to show the interviewer the piece of paper. "I didn't like what I read. I was only reserved because I figured that would be the kind of person you were looking for at the school. I would like another chance to show you the real me."

"Alright, fine. I don't see a problem with that. I have seen everything there is to see in this small town of yours. I have plenty of time."

Lilyian walked home with a letter in her hand. She floated into her room and put her headphones on. She started swaying her head to her favorite music, the best way to express herself. She looked down at her acceptance letter and smiled to herself.

taught a lesson. From this day forward you will be cursed with bad luck," the talking head decreed.

With that the headless body pushed down on Kai's spirit and he found himself back in the lake and in his body, for a god would never talk to a person's spirit when it was concealed within a human body. When Kai looked around himself there was no evidence that anything had ever occurred, even the wooden sculpture of the head was gone. A sudden wind howled through the trees. In it Kai heard a voice.

"Cursed with bad luck, thou hast been, by the God of Luck." The possessed wind wailed. "But why, I have done nothing," Kai shouted, afraid.

"Precisely, no aid to your people have you ever provided, so now three tasks must be completed in order to dispel your bad luck," the wind replied.

"W-what kinds of tasks," asked Kai."

"One of compassion, one of labor, and one of courage," the wind whispered, disappearing.

"What must I do, who must I help," yelled Kai, but no reply came, for the wind was gone.

With nothing left for him to do, Kai decided to return to his village. As he got closer Kai began to smell something. Is that smoke? Kai thought to himself. Soon enough Kai came to the beginning of his village and saw the tell tale signs that someone's hut had caught on fire. *A task of compassion...* Kai's subconscious flickered. *Three tasks...* *one of them was an act of compassion...* *I wonder if...* Suddenly it struck him. By lived in the hut that had burned down re-build their home, he would be committing an act which was one of the three tasks that he had to complete in order rid himself of his newly acquired bad

The bad luck that seemed to follow Kai everywhere really started to take its toll. Kai seemed to hurt himself much more frequently and he could never seem to do things as simple as weaving baskets correctly the first time, and would have to start all over again to avoid his mother's scolding. This is how things went for a while Kai realized all the things he could have been helping his people with in the past. Things like when he helped an old man harvest his sugarcane because his son, who was recently injured, was unable to do it himself. This particular service counted as the task of labor that he had to complete in order to get rid of his bad luck. *Two tasks down, one to go.* Although this was true, Kai thought, he found that he actually enjoyed helping other people instead of relying on them. It had been three weeks since Kai had touched the possessed carving of the God of Luck's head and Kai had yet to complete a task of courage. Luckily for Kai, this would soon be changed.

There was a large wildcat the lived near Kai's village that had attacked one of the village's strongest men while he was hunting in the forest. The attack had almost killed the man and the village wanted revenge. One night Kai heard the wildcat, just outside of the bulwark that surrounded his village. Kai slipped out of the hut he still shared with his mother into the night with his bow and a satchel of arrows. Either the wildcat was deaf, or Kai was quieter than he thought, because Kai was able to sneak up close enough to the big cat so that he could take aim at its vulnerable throat. Kai stung an

arrow and pulled back his sinewy arm and let loose the arrow. The arrow struck its target and was followed by a dull roar that gurgled down to nothing as the cat choked to death on its own blood. Kai felt as if a great weight had been lifted off of his shoulders and instinctively knew that it must have been because all of the bad luck that had been forced upon him was now gone because he had completed all of the once seemingly impossible tasks. Along the way of completing the tasks Kai had realized that doing the right thing and helping others was very rewarding and that not only had helping others, as well as his whole village when he killed the wildcat, gotten rid of his bad luck, but it had also given him a sense of self-fulfillment.

## Winter

*Dana Scozzari*

Winter is  
A great time of year  
Snow falls  
Each and every year  
Watch for the deer  
But do not fear  
For great things will appear  
Holiday times  
And family get-togethers  
This time of year causes much stress  
But in the end  
We glow with success!

## Springtime Sights

*Dana Scozzari*

Flowers are blooming  
Green grass and colorful bulbs  
Are all springtime sights

## Summer

*Dana Scozzari*

Winds blowing and kids  
Playing are signs that summer  
Is really coming!

## Italy

*Dana Scozzari*

Slightly larger than Arizona,  
Rome, Florence, and Bologna  
Italy is the home of Pisa,  
Sistine Chapel, Mama Mia  
Michelangelo and the pope  
Saint Peter's Square so filled with hope  
Julius Caesar once lived here  
Alps to the north  
Mediterranean to the south  
Stucco roves and loud mouths  
Boats come and gondolas go  
But tourists will forever know  
Italy is the place to be  
The culture is  
Full of history!

## Seaside

*Dana Scozzari*

Seaside is  
The place to be  
Winter or summer  
You are free  
Hear the waves crashing  
Apon the beach  
Everything is  
Within your reach

## The Stranger

*Jena Kayne*

The long, paved road leads down into a small, remote town. On either side of the road is a pile of rubble; dirt and garbage. Things left behind. One lone stranger walks on that road. He heads towards the town. The town is nothing magnificent. A bicycle shop at the very entrance to the town. Next to the shop is a bakery. The truck entrance to the bakery is hanging open and next to the entrance is a truck. Around those two shops are a handful of stores and houses which look as if they have been scattered around the small, deserted town like seed. The only sign of life, the plethora of parked cars and the sweet sugary smell from the bakery lofting through the air towards the stranger's nose. The stranger sniffs the strange scent and continues along the long path. Around him a gentle breeze blows, just strong enough to turn the weathervane on top of a house. No leaves rustled for the trees had run away to a greener place long ago. No human voices can be heard. Nor an animal's cry. In the distance a layer of fog rests on the sky line.

In her room, Lilyian sat on her bed listening to her favorite music: hip-hop. Her parents knew not to bother her when she had her headphones on. It signaled she was stressed. Lilyian had recently applied to a private high school and today the interviewer was coming. To say Lilyian was stressed would have been an understatement. Anxiety was coursing through her body. Lilyian had stayed up many nights reading words from books whose titles' were unknown. She would read those words over and over and then read them again until they stuck in her brain. The pages worn where Lilyian's neatly polished nails had flipped them many times. The library had many empty shelves where Lilyian had taken out all the books. Lilyian's room hadn't been cleaned in some time. Glasses and plates were piling up and made turrets around her desk because she ate almost all her meals in her room with her books glued to her hand. She hadn't been to a friend's house if it didn't involve studying since she applied. Eva, Lilyian's best friend, was starting to get annoyed.

"You never leave that library of yours," Eva said one day at lunch as she slammed down the red cafeteria lunch tray. Eva stormed off. Eva and Lilyian had been best friends since the first grade when Eva had trouble learning her ABC's and Lilyian helped her. Across the cafeteria Lilyian beckoned to Eva to come back over. She jogged swiftly over to the table while her slim milk latte slashed around in its cup.

"I need to make sure I get in," Lilyian said in defense. It wasn't the first time Eva had made Lilyian feel guilty for leaving. Of course Eva was going to miss Lilyian but she wasn't about to break out of her bard exoskeleton to show it. She had spent many years building a bulwark around herself and she wasn't quite ready to break down her unique handy work.

Now Lilyian wished Eva could be there to help her through the interview. Lilyian jumped out of bed and sat down at her desk. She skimmed over her interview questions and in the back of her mind she thought about what kind of person the school would ac-

However, I must say,  
That wasn't the weirdest thing at all.  
Because right next to that mouse  
Was an elephant - three inches tall!

I looked back out the window,  
And what I saw was a beach!  
I put my hand outside that window,  
And there was a palm tree in my reach!

"What's happening?" I asked myself,  
Because things couldn't get much stranger.  
Scratch that out, because me  
Was a horse eating from a manger!

There were two strange things about this horse,  
Starting with his shirt, pants, and belt.  
The second one's even weirder,  
Because the horse began to melt!

I looked outside the window,  
And realized that it was high tide.  
But I wasn't worried about that at all,  
Because things were getting weirder on the inside!

I couldn't, see the elephant anymore,  
And the mouse just touched the roof!  
I wasn't worried about the horse though,  
Because all that was left was a hoof!

I didn't know what was happening,  
I must have been going insane!  
Things were getting worse,  
Because there was now thunder, lightning, and rain!

Then I heard the doorbell,  
Who could be here in this weather?  
I opened up the door,  
And found my mother with a pouch of leather!

My mother said she bought me something,  
And from the pouch she revealed a mouse.  
But I barely got to see it,  
Because I dashed out of that house!

This day had been crazy,  
But I know it must have been in my head.  
Because the next thing I knew,  
I was laying in my bed!

## Are Robots Alive?

*Dorian Armstrong*

I have recently read the short story "Robot Dreams", which is about a robot named LVX -1 who possessed the ability to dream. This is a very interesting feature, which humans believe only beings that are alive can possibly possess. Now, it is my job to argue whether LVX-1 (or Elvex, as he is nicknamed) was "alive" or not. Was Elvex alive?

Well, what is life, anyway? There are several meanings. Life is...

... the state organisms have that inorganic things and corpses do not have.

... the period of animate existence that organic things have.

... a state or existence belonging to the soul.

... a particular aspect of existence.

The first two meanings listed here claim that only organic things can have life. Robots are mostly inorganic machines. Simply being made of metal and not flesh may not be enough to say Elvex was not alive. Many people, however, believe that it is enough.

To get a closer look, we need to look inside Elvex's dream. He dreamed of robots working, getting tired and bowed down. Elvex wishes them to rest. This does not happen in reality, so why did it happen in Elvex's dream? This shows creative thinking on Elvex's part. He also explained his dream with his Robot Law, "A robot must protect its own existence." This is a fraction of the real Laws of Robotics:

1. A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
2. A robot must obey any orders given to it by human beings, except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.
3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.

Denying the very laws one was built to serve takes great measures. Doing that and not even knowing takes even greater measures, but Elvex did just that in his dream.

These findings made the human scientists who examined him (who are the cautious and elderly Susan Calvin and Elvex's bold creator, Linda Rash) decide to use his brain in all of their later robots. This experimental brain, by the way, was made with fractal geometry, which made it closer to that of a human. People arguing over Elvex's being alive could say that the brain is a copy of a human's brain, so all the human-like behavior is nullified by that fact. However, I disagree with this. Robots with human brains may only accept the knowledge of the brain, not the personality. Although this is only a theory, I feel that the mere possibility of this is enough to cancel out that which cancels out: the fact that the brain might be a copy. This paragraph pushes Elvex slightly towards not being alive, but not enough to not be alive.

In some media, robots play the role of the villain. They are built to serve humanity, but eventually rebel against their masters. As Elvex denied the Laws of Robotics in his

dream, he also visualized himself as a human who said, “Let my people go!” By people, he meant the robots, which means he was trying to free robots from their oppression. Cautious Dr. Calvin destroyed Elvex’s brain when she heard of this, because she was afraid of losing her robotic servants—or worse, having robots make her their servant! Being able to rebel is definitely a sign of thought, a sign of being alive.

My final contribution is an example. In the 19th century, many white-skinned Americans kept black-skinned people as slaves. They were thought of not as humans, but as property. It took many years to find out that black people were in fact humans with personalities, thoughts, and-you guessed it—dreams. Could the same thing happen with robots? It’s possible.

Was Elvex alive? He could think. He could dream. He could deny the very things he was built to do. He could do all of that and not even know. On the other hand, this inorganic robot served humanity with a potentially copied brain. I believe Elvex was alive. This is what I believe, and I hope you enjoyed my essay, because it is now over.

## Mission Accomplished

*Andrea Luna*

The words on the screen read, “MISSION FAILED.” James groaned. He was bored. Bored of school, bored of homework, bored of his video game, but most of all, he was bored of having nothing to do. He was also annoyed. Annoyed of always hearing those two words: “Mission Failed.” Not just in his game, but in life. He never made any of the teams he tried out for and he had C’s in some of his classes. No one ever told him he had failed, but he knew he had and those are the words that ran through his head every time he looked at a bad report card or backed away from an incriminating list on the wall. He wished that once, just once, the words “Mission Accomplished” would be able to run through his head. *Whatever*, he thought. He was about to click, “Try Again” when he heard his mother calling him, “James! Dinner time!” He quickly shut off the video game and the television. Then he flew down the stairs and jumped down the last three, doing a lay-up in mid-air as if he were playing basketball. He could smell the pasta his mother had made wafting from the kitchen. Yum!

*Ugh*, thought James. While he and his family were having dinner, he had mindlessly brought up the topic of how bored he was after school. He had instantly regretted it because now his mother was forcing him to try out for basketball the next day after school. James remembered staring at tile white ceiling, trying to think of an excuse so that he wouldn’t have to try out for basketball. He had thought of absolutely no excuses, but he had gotten a lecture from his mother about looking someone in the eye when they speak to you. She had finally gotten tired of scolding and yelling at him, so she had sent him had stopped in sixth grade, so he was a little rusty. He now remembered why he had liked it so much, the rush, the exercise, and especially the thrill that ran through him when he heard the *whoosh* of the net. The only problem was Chris. Why, oh, why did Chris have to ruin everything for James?

## You and Me

*Shama Ali*

I see your face in the moonlight  
When I see a smile on your face  
My heart wants to pace

When I see teardrops in you eyes  
My heart wants to cry

When I see you look away  
My heart runs away in dismay

When you walk towards me  
My hearts says to flee

When you look at me with love in your heart  
My heart tells me to remember how apart

Cause you are pretty  
And I am just with pity

Cause you are a star  
And I am just bizarre

Cause you are the light  
And I am no knight

Therefore we are not to UNITE!

## Home Alone

*Nick Hiner*

I was sitting at home,  
With nothing to do.  
So I looked outside,  
And saw a kangaroo!

But this kangaroo  
Was no ordinary sight.  
This kangaroo  
Was taking off in flight!

I closed my eyes,  
As the kangaroo headed for the sun.  
But when I opened them and turned around,  
I saw a mouse that weighed a ton!

## Moonlight!

*Shama Ali*

I see your face in the moonlight  
I turn my head at the sight.

Wherever I go I have this fright  
It makes me feel all uptight

You make me remember love at first sight  
I wish I could see you once more tonight

Although I am sad to write  
That I cannot visit your burial site

I see your face in the moonlight  
When the world turns dark I feel my heart thump  
Cause you have left me with a special mark  
A mark that makes my heart pump  
A pump that makes my heart spark  
Pumping so hard it makes me jump  
It makes me feel like a bad remark

## Childhood to Adulthood

*Shama Ali*

I see your face in the moonlight  
What do those innocent eyes know  
They barely know what they will undergo

They only see the righteous free  
Not the people who scream to be

As they grow older and older  
Is that when they will finally know they have to be bolder

When their tiny feet grow to their extent  
That is when the parents repent

How so carefully that child changed to be a teenage freak  
Since in itself each child is unique

The human who use to be in their teens  
Is now making a wedding scene

How they use to once be children too  
They now are the ones buying baby shoes

Before we know it they will be old  
Always sick with a cold and ready to scold

What a journey it is, a journey of a lifetime  
The one that lasts through childhood to adulthood

Now, James and the other sweaty boys watched as the coach and his assistant walked out of the office and towards the wall. As soon as the coach posted the list, he was swallowed up by a swarm of petulant yet slightly apprehensive boys waiting to see if they had made the team, James among them. He rushed to find his name on the list, but his heart sunk when he saw a crimson red slash right through it. He shrunk away from the rest of the gloating boys, with his head held low, but he wasn't fast enough, Chris and some of the other boys on the team cornered him and blocked the door to the locker room.

"Hey Pip-Squeak, good thing you didn't make the team or we wouldn't win a single game," teased Chris, snapping his gum.

"Bet you won't win a single game anyways," muttered James under his breath. "What did you say?"

"Nothing," responded James curtly.

Just then, they saw Coach Lyons, the cheerleading coach, walking deliberately towards them. When she got to tile boys, she stopped.

"Excuse me," she said, "What do you inconsiderate boys think you're doing?"

Chris turned a deep shade of red. While he and his friends were being scolded, James slipped away to the locker room. He didn't bother to change, because he knew he was going to have to take a shower and change at home anyway, but more importantly, because he knew Chris would come looking for him. He knew that if Chris got in trouble because of him, he would probably look for James until he found him, and when he did, he would try to wrench his arm off. He quickly got his things together, grabbed his backpack, and jogged to his father's snow-white car.

"Did you make the team?" his father asked with interest.

"No!" James snickered, "I'm not good enough, I'm not good at anything except for video games, and that won't even do me any good."

"That's not true," said James' father reassuringly, "Everyone is good at something."

"Yeahhhhh...ok." James said, perplexed by his father's theory.

Later that night, James is on the phone with Brendan, his best friend, "What's the answer to number four?" asks James.

Brendan replies, "Seven xy, square root three xyz, cubed."

"Thanks." says James.

"No problem. By the way, I meant to ask if you had made the basketball team."

"Of course I didn't!" mutters James moodily, "I'm not good! In fact, I'm not good at ANYTHING!"

"Sure you are," says Brendan, trying to console James, "Why don't you tryout for wrestling? Or wait until spring baseball?"

"I told you, cause' I'm not good."

"Yes, you are you have to be good at something! Everyone has their own special talent; you have to figure out what it is."

“Whatever. You sound like my dad. I have to go, bye.” “See ya.”

James sat there, thinking, listening to the *beep beep beep* of the phone until the obnoxious lady's voice came on and told him to hang up and try again, even though he wasn't calling anyone. He then finished up his homework hastily and went to sleep.

The next day, James asked his dad to drive him to school on his way to work so that he could avoid Chris. He was walking down the deserted, echoing hallway, when he passed an open door. Inside, he found a teacher he had heard people calling Mr. Tony, playing the drums. James liked the beat, he thought it was catchy, so he went inside and asked Mr. Tony to teach it to him since he was so early. Mr. Tony handed James the drum sticks. James learned so quickly, that Mr. Tony taught him a couple of more songs. Eventually, James realized he was going to be late to class. so he asked Mr. Tony,

“What time is it?”

“Nini-fifteen,” Mr. Tony responded.

“Oh no! I completely missed first period, and now I'm totally late for second!”

“Time sure flew by didn't it?” asked Mr. Tony craftily.

“Yeah, it really did, do you think you could teach me some more after school?” asked James eagerly.

So Mr. Tony promised to meet with James after school, and then he gave him a pass, sending him off to third period. Once he was gone, James mother stepped into the room and thanked Mr. Tony for his help, slipping out the back door.

James found a hobby and an after school activity. Not only that, but he gained the respect he deserved from his peers, and made some friends. Even Chris warmed up to him, although they never became the best of friends, Chris was at least civil to James.

member was a man in a black hat. Or was it a dream?

I awake not to the familiar words from the willow tree, but the sound of a man. I look around me and take a deep breath. There's that smell again. Who is this man? “Good morning!” He shouts. His voice doesn't sound familiar. “How was your sleep, Angus?” How does he know my name? I stay quiet and when the man in the black hat notes that I won't respond to his questions, he begins talking. “You thought I'd never find you here! Well, I'm not going to take this. Give me my diamond Angus. Where did you hide it?” The man in the black hat shouts. What is he talking about? I've never seen a diamond before, so why would he think I have one? I work up the courage to reply. “What diamond?” I choke out. The man in the black looks furious!

“The one that your parents stole from me! When I heard that they had died, I stopped chasing them and remembered that they had you. Don't hurt him! Don't hurt my little boy! They sounded like a bunch of babies.” The man in the black hat said triumphantly.

I'm speechless. All this time I thought my parents were alive and were coming back for me. Who knew I was wrong? What does my willow tree have to do with this diamond? These were all the new questions I thought about while the man in the black hat was pacing. He begins to speak again but all that comes out was a faint screech. All I remember was him ordering me to get this diamond.

“Do you understand?” The man asks. “I'll give one one night to give it to me.” I nod my head. Once the man is asleep, I wander off into the night, putting my plan into action. I sprint back to the willow tree. I whisper the words to my tree, only this time, I know what they mean. I look around for a rock or something sharp. When I find what I'm looking for, I begin to dig. It feels so wrong to dig up my favorite tree. But it must be done, and fast! I start digging faster than the speed of sound. I'm digging for the truth. For a new life. For my parents watching over me. It feels like hours of digging when I hit something. A heart-shaped box comes into view.

In this box lies the secrets beneath the willow tree. It's open. I carefully peer into the box, not knowing what to expect. I open my eyes wide to see a piece of paper. As I carefully open it, I recognize my mother's handwriting. Tears now into my eyes. I read the letter over and over. I remember the key points in her letter, *so sorry we had to leave you... the man...chasing us...wanted the diamond...promise me...all the secrets lie beneath the willow tree.*

After thinking everything over, the diamond in my hand, I hear the man approaching me. Without any final thought, I stand up and thrust the diamond deep into his heart. A sense of power passes through me as I see the man in the black hat fall to the ground. He lies still for a very long time; the diamond still jabbed in his cold heart. I am safe. As I take the diamond out, I have a new plan. A plan to live a normal life.

Three years later, Angus is living a new life with new parents who love him. He was never bothered again and has many friends. However, Angus still visits his tree. On his first visit back, he feels the wind picks up and he smiles as he hears a new phrase said not by the willow tree, but by his mother's sweet voice. *I told you all the secrets lie beneath the willow tree.*



## The Secrets Beneath the Willow Tree

*Mariefred Evans*

Imagine yourself alone in the eerie woods. The moon in the sky looking like the heavens from above are hanging a lantern out for you. The soft wind blowing against your face. It smells as if a rain has just passed. Your only companion in these deep woods is an old willow tree. Its long trunk, the only thing you'd be able to hug. This is the life of Angus Kerry. He smells these same smells every night. Looks up at the moon for guidance. Alone in the woods. His only friend, the old willow tree. Why can't he see that all the secrets he's been looking for are hidden beneath the willow tree?

Searching for something that's greater than me. The reason why I'm here in the dark woods sleeping next to this willow tree. My name is Angus Kerry and I am on a quest. A quest to discover why I'm here and what happened to the family I once knew and loved. I've been here all my life, well, I've been here as long as I can remember. It's always just been the willow tree and me. My life has consisted of trying so hard to remember my mother and father and the secret they left with me when they left. "The secrets lie beneath the willow tree. That willow tree will protect you from things. Promise me that you'll never leave this tree. Don't let him have it. I love you, Angus!"

Protect me from what, and who was "he"? The only way I remember these few words is because I told the tree. I was left here when I was only three, that's what I think anyway. By then, I'd already been taught how to talk and walk. So, every night I'd whisper these words to the willow tree. Every morning I'm awakened not by the bright sun, but the willow tree's words carried by the wind. These words still make me think today. So many things pass through my head every morning. Why did they leave me here? What's so special about this willow tree? So today, instead of spending my whole day pacing back and forth. I decide to take a walk around the woods. I've been safe here for over nine years and nothing has happened to me. I think I'll go for a stroll and see how the other animals are doing. I know them very well! This turns out to be the best decision of my life.

When I'm skipping back to the willow tree, an odd sensation passes through the air. A feeling of wrongness. Now I'm sprinting for my life, trying to get back to the willow tree. As I'm getting closer to the willow, I smell an unusual smell. I recognize this smell! Father? It's the same cologne my father used to wear. I'm approaching the willow tree. No one is there, but the smell is stronger here. I look around to see if the man is near. I'm wishing so hard; hoping that that wonderful smell meant my father was here to take me home. After I make it certain that it's only the willow tree and me, I notice an imprint in the dirt next to the tree. It reads, *Remember me, I'll be the one to find you.*

That feeling of joy and happiness has dissolved. This man isn't my father. Could this be what my parents were talking about when they said they couldn't protect me from something? Then, something bizarre happens. A giant gust of wind comes by and I hear the willow tree repeat my parents' message to me. This has never happened during the day. This should mean something. I think it over as I drift back to sleep. I was so tired that I don't even whisper my parents' words to the willow. The only dream I re-

## Skateboarding, Fashion, Blood,

*Sabine Palat*

The sunlight that shone through the small square window above my bed woke me up. My eyelids fluttered open and I saw the white walls that surrounded me. Where am I? I thought. This isn't my room! Confused, I shook my head. Ouch! It hurt! I sat up to look around at the clean white room. Then it started coming back to me; the car, the blood . . . and then nothing.

It was Tuesday, after school. I was hanging out with a few of my friends, talking about clothes and guys. I glanced over to where my twin brother, Leon, was skateboarding with a couple of other boys. I spied Luke---the cutest boy in 7th grade---here was the perfect opportunity to show off!

"My mom thinks these shoes were a total waste of money, but they're so cute---"

"Sorry! I've got to go!" I said; breaking Callie off mid-sentence. I raced off without explaining.

"Leon!" I called to my brother, "My turn next!"

"Fine," he grumbled, "In a minute." He pushed his sweaty blond hair out of his eyes.

"She's not going to skateboard in those shoes is she?" questioned one of the boys disbelievingly. Ready to surprise them, I walked quickly, my heels clicking on the asphalt.

"Just you watch me!" I retorted. Although, he was right to point out my shoes, they would make things more complicated. Nothing I couldn't handle of course, but they were two inch heels! I got them last weekend; I had spent nearly three months babysitting money on them!

Leon skateboarded back and forth several times before I became impatient.

"Leon! It's my turn!" I yelled to him.

"Fine Noel, give me a second" he called back sourly. "You really should get your own board though."

"Leon! You know I spent all my money on these shoes," I glared at him. He knew I didn't like admitting that I was fashion obsessed in front of boys.

"Whatever," he replied dismissively.

"Hand the board over," I commanded. He thrust it at me, glaring angrily. His glare didn't worry me though. He had taught me everything I knew about skateboarding, so he liked when I showed off; after he got over the initial feeling of annoyance from giving up his board.

"Is she gonna do it?" one of the boys whispered.

"Can she?" whispered another.

"Watch!" snapped Leon.

I tucked a lock of my light brown hair behind my ear, and sped back and forth, throwing in a few tricks my brother had taught me. Encouraged by their awed faces, I headed towards the street. A few seconds later I heard someone shout.

“Noel! Get out of the way!” they yelled frantically.

I turned to face them, “Why?” I asked, surprised. I looked up the street and realized a car was coming right at me. I found myself frozen, unable to get out of the way. When it hit me, everything went into slow motion. I was airborne for only a moment, but it felt like longer. My head hit the pavement as the car ran over my right leg. I heard the sickeningly loud cracking sound, but strangely, felt no pain, as if I was not connected to my body. Are my shoes ok? I looked down to see if they were alright. But, when I saw blood was everywhere and I forgot about my shoes. My brand new Diesel jeans were ripped and everything was stained with blood. But the worst part was my leg, which bent backwards at the shin. The man who had been driving the car came over and tried to talk to me, but my head began to throb and everything went black.

The door creaked open and a nurse with a kind looking smile came in to my room.

“How are you feeling?” she asked kindly.

“Fine,” I said automatically, although I had a small headache. “What time is it?”

“Noon,” She replied. “Wednesday,” she added, when I looked confused.

“I was here overnight?” I asked, surprised. “Why don’t I remember anything?”

“You were sedated while you were being operated on, and then we just let you sleep. You haven’t been awake since the accident. We kept you overnight just in case you had internal bleeding. Luckily the damage was limited to your leg, so you can go home. Your mother will be here in a couple of hours to discharge you. You may watch TV until she gets here.” She pointed to the TV, and then left the room. I watched reruns of “Project Runway” until my mom arrived.

“Hey sweetie,” she said softly. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine mom. My head hurts and this cast is itchy, but I’m fine.” I assured her.

“You know how many times I’ve told you not to play in the street,” she began to rant.

“I’m sorry mom! It was stupid, I know! I won’t do it again!” I said, cutting her off.

She took a deep breath and began again, “Come on, we’ll go pick up your brother.”

I gathered my things and strapped on my left shoe. Luckily my shoes had survived, unlike my jeans. I would have to figure out how to fix those when I got home.

At school, my brother was outside with Luke and some other skateboarding friends.

“Are you ok?” they asked looking at the purple cast that stretched from my thigh to the pavement.

“I’m fine,” I said with an embarrassed sigh. After a few more minutes of talking, most of the boys went home, but Luke stayed. “You know, you are really good at skateboarding,” he said with a shy smile and then he walked away. Maybe this day wasn’t so bad. I had a huge annoying cast but Luke seems to like me. Still smiling inside, I hobbled over to my mom, ready to go home.

## Anthology on Trees

*Leanna Smith*

### Roots

The roots of an old oak tree  
Intertwine under the cover of the earth  
Making it powerful enough to withstand  
Anything that nature brings  
From the heavy tears of angels  
To the brightest rays of the sun  
And in this old wooden chapel lingers laced together are the roots  
And the only thing that can touch us  
Through the stained glass windows Is God.

### Sunlight

*Leanna Smith*

Sunlight shimmers over all  
Making the dew on the tips of leaves glow  
Casting glimmering warmth over the trunks of trees, wide and tall  
But, there is something that the sun will never show  
The roots of the tree in an intricate web  
Hidden, but the most beautiful  
And, the sun shines over me  
Putting a sheen on my brown hair  
Making freckles on my face pop out everywhere  
Adding a glint to my average brown eyes  
But there is one thing about the sun that I despise  
The only thing that the sun will never see  
Are my roots, the best part of me.

### Willow

*Leanna Smith*

The Weeping Willow is my favorite tree  
It never minds to sit and cry with me

### Buds

*Leanna Smith*

The snow will melt  
The buds will grow  
Hope will be felt  
But how can we know?

### Trees

*Leanna Smith*

Sally likes the Dogwood tree  
For it flowers prettily  
Jimmy likes trees that are short and squat  
To play and climb in when the days get long and hot  
Grandma likes the old Oak  
She says it is noble and wise  
But the Weeping Willow is the best  
If you look through my eyes