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Mercer County Culture & Heritage Division.

2011 Teen Arts FESTIVAL

A Celebration of the Arts

Creative Writing Anthology



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

Nancy Badilla, *Capital Prep Charter High School*
 Cressie Barlow, *Capital Prep Charter High School*
 Kristen Barroso, *Capital Prep Charter High School*
 Jaire Battle, *Capital Prep Charter High School*
 Te’Asia Burris, *Capital Prep Charter High School*
 Leslie Caceros, *Capital Prep Charter High School*
 Shyheim Russell, *Capital Prep Charter High School*
 Caoimhe O’Sullivan Roche, *Lawrence High School*
 Madeline Price, *Lawrence High School*
 Olivia Davis, *Lawrence Middle School*
 Mariefred Evans, *Lawrence Middle School*
 Integra Feliciano, *Lawrence Middle School*
 Maeve Humphreys, *Lawrence Middle School*
 Emily Pham, *Lawrence Middle School*
 Kevin Quis, *Lawrence Middle School*
 Ipsita Rao, *Lawrence Middle School*
 Leanna Smith, *Lawrence Middle School*
 Sujay Shetty, *Lawrence Middle School*
 Patrick Thornton, *Lawrence Middle School*
 Grace Townsend, *Lawrence Middle School*
 Jake Verga, *Lawrence Middle School*
 Passion Davis, *Mercer High School*
 Michael Hartnagel, *Mercer High School*
 Emily Hayes, *Mercer High School*
 Miguel Saez, *Mercer High School*
 Marcus Sanders, *Mercer High School*
 Jessica Servis, *Mercer High School*
 Zonia Rueda, *Princeton Friends School*
 Sarah Freeman, *Robbinsville High School*
 Joseph Rejent, *Robbinsville High School*
 Cassie Spain, *Robbinsville High School*
 Unique Crawford, *Trenton Central High School*
 Shadura Lee, *Trenton Central High School*
 Jascynt Pecco, *Trenton Central High School*

Promise in the Dark

Leslie Caceras

Sometimes when one door of happiness closes, another may open up. Yet you may be so willing for the closed door to open you don't even bother to open a new door.

It's sad to hold on to things that cause us more pain than happiness, yet I chose to live this beautiful lie, when I already know the hideous truth. It's foolish that I sit here every night and cry about it, rather than telling you about it. But I guess sometimes my tears are the words my heart is too reluctant to speak up.

You promise you love me, and she's just a friend, but I feel like your promises mean nothing, and are equal to a promise made in the dark. I don't think you will ever fully comprehend what you really mean to me. I take all this unnecessary pain because I don't want to imagine my life without you. I've gave our relationship my all, and I won't stop now, not for her.

I promised I would never leave your side, and I'm still here, after all the broken promises and shattered dreams. The situation is truly confusing because I'm tired of being lied to, but I just can't let you go. I know there is no worst way of being blind, than choosing not to see, yet I sit here and blindfold myself.

.....And so maybe I should open up a new door, because it would seem best, but for now I remain blind, and I find myself trapped in the darkness of lies.

Slashed Skies

Miguel Saez

Slashed skies with no clouds,
Nothing by darkness.
Always dark, no light.
Not even rain.
Day after day always darkness.
People feeling depressed,
People feeling hurt.
Slashed Skies are very silent
Not a sound
There will never be blue skies
Never to be found.

An Eye Opening Summer

Nancy Badilla

As I fastened the last button on the ugly burgundy shirt, I glanced down to my name tag. "Nancy Badilla. Food Services. Six Flags Great Adventure." I began to talk to myself, *My first job. I can't screw this up, Mami is counting on me.* At only fourteen years of age, I shared the responsibility of supporting my family. With a bundle of nerves, I walked into the restaurant where I would spend the next couple of months, serving pizza to the theme park crowd.

"Don't be nervous," Vera, my manager said, "You're smart; it'll be a piece of cake. Just remember greet, take the order and deliver the food to their hands."

"Yeah, *piece of cake*, got it," I replied as she continued to rumble on, explaining how to use the touch screen menu scattered with fast food items. I was beginning to daze off when my first customer appeared through the window.

"Excuse me, do you guys serve pies?" the customer asked.

Pies? Doesn't he see that this is a pizzeria? I thought to myself. "No" I replied. The customer walked away in disbelief.

"Nancy, a pie is a whole pizza. This is a pizzeria. We do indeed sell pies," clarified Vera. At that second, I felt as if I had just shown my foreign underwear to the entire theme park. I could not believe that six years in this country had not taught me such a simple synonym. After moving from Costa Rica at the age of eight, I was a little sensitive about my grammar mistakes. I kept replaying the incident in my mind, making it a little bit worse each time. I constantly looked over to the clock, counting down the minutes until it was time to go back home. When I arrived home, I launched onto my bed as if it was a pile of feathers.

The next morning I woke up still tired and suddenly I wanted a cup of coffee. I was surprised that this new experience came with new morning cravings. I was determined to begin a new day with fewer mistakes this time. As I kept working that summer, I made fewer mistakes and I realized that no one saw me as a lesser person for the mistake I made, instead I was seen for my hard work and reliability.

On the last day at Six Flags, ready to hand my uniform in, I ran into Vera. "Hey Nancy, before you get going, I wanted to ask you if you were interested in working weekends at the restaurant of a friend of mine? I was telling him what a diligent and motivated worker you are," she said. Although I politely declined Vera's offer, deciding to focus on school, I left Six Flags that August night standing taller than I had in June. On my first day, I was a self-conscious teen worried about the ways in which my immigrant status might limit me. On the last day, however, I walked out a self-assured young woman who had just realized that the sky is the limit.

Shallow Sea

Madeline Price

Did I dare enter the dark water and face the unknown? I couldn't tell what slimy beasts I might encounter or whether they would welcome my presence. Nonetheless, I took the plunge. I volunteered to go seining in the bay on that radiant July morning as I realized I had to seize this opportunity to make the most out of the day's wetland adventure. The water was warm and refreshing, nearly comforting, as it slowly blanketed my body. I didn't let the mysterious nipping sensations on my legs distract me from towing the expansive net across the water. As brief as the undertaking was, an experience is an experience.

As we hauled in each catch of fish, crustaceans, and other sea life, numerous gulls descended from above. They hovered just over the catch, curious, or anxious for an easy meal. These Laughing Gulls called out, amused and mocking, as we struggled with slippery fish and unruly crabs. Eventually, we gave into their influence and tossed some extra fish high in the air, and they were satisfied. The gulls knew that, soaked in water and harassed by flies, we children of suburbia were out of our element.

To Me

Cressie Barlow

To me, life is something everyone should live.
 To me, my life is a game that only I can play.
 To me, only I can live my life the way it should be lived.
 To me, my eyes tell a life story.
 To me, my life is a story that only I can tell.
 As though my life as a child hasn't been great I think I should tell my life story anyway.
 To me my life shouldn't be played with.
 I think I'm winning in the game I call life as I am careful.
 The question is, are you ready to listen, to envision, to learn my life story.
 If only you knew the real me.
 No one knows the real me! But will they ever?
 The real me is hidden deep within the body you see before you yet you neither see, nor notices anything only of what you want.
 I consider myself complicated, unknown, misunderstood, different, smart also talented as well as other things.
 Who am I?
 Maybe you should find out for yourself.
 Do you know who you really are?
 I happen to see right through people wither they want it to be seen or not yet they still don't notice.
 Only I know the real me maybe not for long.

but be stabbed from the front
 i was withering
 like a spring flower in the winter

so i flew
 to the furthest of the meadows
 the closet to the horizon,
 the sun was shining,
 golden tears dripping into the oceans
 the suns eyes were crying
 and finally i felt i had found someone
 that understood me.
 accepting my past,
 i parachuted into
 romance.

and there
 at last
 my mistakes did not matter
 kissed by the snowflakes
 erased my autumn leaves which had fallen
 and dried
 but now they were reviving
 filling my apple tree with a reason for striving and enjoying my
 beauty

being the panegyric of life
 i flourished
 my pastel colored wings glittered
 and shined against the sunlight
 where my Rosebud reached up to me
 and we were at peace with our mother:
 nature.

One Cold Night

Passion Davis

One cold night sitting at home alone,
 Suddenly I decide to pick up my phone and call whomever was home.
 Scrolling down my call log, then his name appeared right then my stomach started to
 feel weird.
 Calling felt so right, I thought to myself I'll ask him out tonight, "Hello", he picked up the
 phone, I felt a shiver through my bones.
 At a loss for words I said, "Hello" in my most timid voice, suddenly the conversation
 sprung fourth with questions, answers, and lots of laughter.
 On that one cold night I think I met the LOVE of my LIFE!!

Nature's Bud

Jasycnt Pecco

when my cherries blossomed it was the heart of june
i felt more than a girl
i felt more than the room
i was standing in
my red lips were then
pressed against my fingertips
and then the dandelions separated
and i lost my innocence.

the rainshowers then
watered the buds of love that
floated in pollen form
and they were planted
and grew until there were two
of us
thus
the honey bees buzzed about speaking the language of
deceit
the lies defeated me.

the tears dominated my wishing well
to the point there was no room for me
to hopefully crawl away with my caterpillar friends
to a cocoon
to rebloom myself
because i had died
i needed sometime to become a butterfly
allowing myself to flutter in my carefree episodes
amongst natures playground

but the contrary happened
i become a moth
breaking into peoples houses
stealing pieces from their lives
to make mine complete
a home wrecker perhaps
no

a mother trying to make things work
but nothing changed its pace
still stuck in that dark place
i had to make an effort

so then i flew
because i was through with the subterfuge
becoming a myriad of monstrous madness
for me to watch my back

The 21st Century "Global Citizen"

Maere Humphreys

Colonial citizen Thomas Paine wrote many pamphlets that led to the uprising against the British, and the start of the Revolutionary War. He was just an ordinary citizen, who expressed his feelings about how the British Monarchy was mistreating colonists. Through his pamphlets, his words touched almost a third of the colonists living in America. Today, the Internet is our contemporary version of such "a global citizen." The Internet is a vast computer network linking smaller networks worldwide. It allows people who live across the world to communicate instantly, something unheard of only a few decades ago. The Internet, along with all of its associated social networking sites, has greatly influenced many situations going on in the world around us.

One example is Tunisia, a relatively small country in Northern Africa. It is highly populated with Europeans and known for promoting gender equality between men and women. The Tunisian citizens were unhappy with their leader, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali. He had held power through an autocratic government for more than twenty years. Democratic activists in Tunisia began posting how they felt about the government on various social networking sites. One group of students made a Facebook page that did just that. The anonymous page's picture was that of the national Tunisian flag, smeared with blood. The citizens were very unhappy with how their government was being run, especially young people. Chaos broke out when an educated man in the streets posted a video of him burning himself because of his dire economic situation in Tunisia. As soon as the video hit the Internet, protests against the government started immediately. They were trying to peacefully better their homeland. Cyberspace was their weapon of change. After numerous weeks of protesting, the Tunisian leader agreed to step down. Soon after, this rebellion in Tunisia became known as "The Jasmine Revolution." Other names for it were "The Facebook Revolution" and "The Internet Revolution."

If it wasn't for the Internet, the rebellion in Tunisia would likely have not been successful. People wouldn't be given the chance to stand up for what they believe in. The Internet was a way for these people to organize efficiently and assemble peaceful protests. Regular common citizens stepped up, spoke out, and were able to create change. It is likely that many of the citizens in Tunisia had thought that their government needed change, but they didn't realize the extent of discontent until people began posting their thoughts on social networking sites. Just as Thomas Paine sparked a revolution in the colonies, the Internet sparked a modern day Tunisian Revolution.

The revolution in Tunisia has inspired other countries in the Arab world to follow their example. Have you heard about the revolution in Egypt that ousted the autocrat Mubarak? What about the situation in Libya? These pivotal political events started with their citizens observing what happened in Tunisia. It shows that with the help of "a global citizen" like the Internet, the impossible is suddenly achievable.

Essay

Caoimhe O'Sullivan Roche

This essay is in response to the Chinese Proverb, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step", and the corresponding question: "What is the first step you will take on your journey toward making a difference in the world?" It centers around the organization Operation Smile and my intentions to attend their Mission Training Workshop and International Cultural Exchange Conference in Beijing, China this summer.

On August 1st, 2010, I arrived at the International Student Leadership Conference (ISLC) in Denver, Colorado. Highly encouraged by my friends in the LHS Operation Smile Club, I decided to attend still unsure of what I was embarking upon. On August 5th, 2010 I found myself feeling inspired, at home, and tremendously upset to leave. The speeches and stories of speakers like Robert Pruitt and Wade Hooton still give me goosebumps, hearing of the great amounts of human strength and compassion demonstrated in each instance. The conference had this amazing ability to make myself and over 400 other students feel *empowered* with the ability to make a difference. I left the conference with this new sense of enlightenment, feeling like I had all the answers. Though when I got home, I realized these were just words, as life changing as they may have been. I knew I had to find some way to get to Beijing, China so I could put these words into action by attending the 2011 Summer Mission Training Workshop. From the moment I left ISLC last summer I have been on my journey. Actually applying to be a part of Mission Training with the hope of going on a mission is my first true step in making a difference.

All great leaders have understood that they must lead by example, if they seek the loyalty of their people. Ghandi once said, "Be the change you wish to see in the world." Therefore, instead of attempting to change the aspects of the world that we find immoral or wrong, we must first change these things in ourselves. By looking inward, we can gain the insight and perspective needed to create a true ripple effect in the world. I strongly believe in those words by Ghandi and have tried to live by them since Dr. Bill Magee relayed them to us during the conference last summer. Mission Training will provide me with the opportunity to change myself and subsequently make a change for someone else. As much as I wish it possible, in life I am not guaranteed the chance to personally improve the lives of millions around the world. By going on a mission, I know I will have the chance to improve the life of at least one person. The simple action of kindness can make a great deal of difference in someone's world, especially when they have not previously experienced it as a result of a cleft lip, palate, or other facial deformity. What is most important to remember, is that whether it be for one person or for one million, I can still make a difference in the world. Attending this summer's Mission Training Workshop will help me to accomplish this.

I have always thought about how I, Caoimhe O'Sullivan Roche, impacted the world. I am a white, fifteen-year old suburban girl, raised Irish-Catholic in a small New Jersey town. When envisioning myself traveling the world, exploring cultures, and embarking

they say knowledge is power
and even though it may seem
as if my brains aren't equipped to abstain from influence I remain contained
because the dilemma of abnormality or normality is obscurely obsolete
I've realized its better being complete because neutrality outweighs normality
I'm Adam
with these confined propositions that will never define me

Schizophrenic Nightmare

Sarah Freeman

My vocal chords are burning
Like a giant burnt-out candle.
The wheels in my head keep turning
As my words fly off the handle.
My reflection is a hypocrite
As it shatters to the floor.
She knows I'm inconsiderate,
And I know she's insecure.
My mind is in a coin toss
Between realistic and insane.
The benefits outweigh the loss,
But they don't relieve the pain.
Nothing stops the echoing,
The million voices in my head,
The conscience that keeps beckoning
To view the words unread.
The fine print in my contract
That binds me to my soul
That, left without my contact,
Could escape all known control.
It whispers as I'm screaming,
The victim without help,
As a shattered reflection's gleaming,
She claims vic'try in my yelp.
She steals silence as her prize,
And extinguishes the flame.
Though normality and sane-ness rise
Nothing can ever be the same.

Addictions

Jessica Servis

Addiction
Is something that can make you
Or break you
It's something we've all been through

Addiction
A mother who pops pills and
Come home drunk to her six year old
Baby girl
Starving for her mother's love.

Addiction
Is that mother who will never understand
The hurt and confusion
She puts her baby girl in

Addiction
Is that little girl will grow up
With no trust of others around her
Until she learns not everyone
Will hurt you inside and out

Addiction
Is that little girl wanting to be loved
Trying to find it
That mother never caring

Addiction
Is the hate and resentment she feels

Addiction

The Rise and Fall of Eve

Unique Crawford

I reside in the Garden of Eden
 as Adam
 with these confined and defined
 propositions
 of normality
 I am Adam
 and even though it may seem my brains aren't equip to abstain from influence
 i remain contained
 because this garden is a floral phoniness
 and the smell of the stench is the reason that Eve saw the eve of her everything
 she, like many, let these colors over paint her well-being
 seemingly becoming ill and these trends were fluent
 she's impeccable
 beyond her flaws
 and she forgot that was still human
 so I witness sickness fill this space
 as she begins straightening her hair, painting her nails, and wearing these brands
 purposely placing labels on herself, when she never came with one
 never understanding these brands weren't branded on her body
 sickness is what she becomes
 she's impeccable
 and I'm trying to return her heart to its natural color
 natural state
 though foreign fonts clutter her inner purpose
 and its funny how we came here with nothing
 no things
 so these brands were never branded on our bodies
 she took those leaves off her vagina and breast, thinking that finding something better
 would
 impress
 trying to be the best
 she's selfless
 purposely placing herself in a fixed position, as number one
 but numbers are as bad as labels
 and these brands were never branded on your body
 she straightens her hair
 addicted to the brands
 she paints her nails
 addicted to the labels
 she applies makeup
 addicted to the trends
 waiting to exhale
 but the stench is overfilling her air passage

on new things it is usually something to be accomplished when I am older. Though, there is absolutely no rule, protocol, or law stating that being young means I cannot do all of these things. "If not you, who? If not now, when?", was a message that floated through my head during all of ISLC and even now, being home almost seven months later. ISLC gave me the ideas about how to make a difference, but Mission Training will actually give me the chance to put these ideas into effect. I am a white, fifteen-year old suburban girl, raised Irish-Catholic in a small New Jersey town; and I have as much capability to change the world as anyone else.

Madame's Poetry

Emily Pham

May not be able to see you, eye to eye,
 but may I hope you think about me.
 May not be able to hear you sigh;
 Loneliness, tiredness, with you it lies.

She wishes to make you happy
 even if she is unhappy as well.

Starts to call you pappy;
 When, until, she becomes ill.

No, sir, don't take her away!
 The daughter shall cry in Heaven...
 The mother might as well say:
 "She died on lucky number seven."

Now you and I are sad;
 No story shall fall behind it.
 What you and I had
 was just an endless, dark pit.

I swallow my sadness every single day.
 Watch as the sun falls into the sea.
 Watch as I cry into my useless paycheck.
 Watch as you leave past my ole cup of tea.

But I may not be able to see you, heart to heart;
 may I hope you also think about me.
 May not be able to sense you at night;
 Loneliness, tiredness, with it may you sleep.

Revenge is... Satisfying

Kristen Barroso

I walked across the wrecked room, glass crunching underneath my shoes, to the man in a fetal position in the corner. He rocked back and forth, rambling on about how he had been a horrible man. In those rambles I heard a few apologies. I held my cell phone in my hand and watched him, wondering if he still deserved this. "Stupid guilt," I thought. I knew I was doing this for a reason. As I looked down at the shattered glass on the floor and at the gauze that now wrapped my arm, I thought back 7 years ago.

As a little girl I had it good. My father was the business owner of one of the best-selling companies out there. He gave me everything I wanted except his attention. I never took his lack of attention to me seriously, but I should have. He was the handsome business man and I was just the little girl with blonde ringlets and deep blue eyes that always walked behind him.

One summer my dad had an opportunity to expand and become richer. When Forbes magazine asked what his decision was he replied, "I have accepted and my plan begins tonight." That night I went to bed in a beautiful 5 star room.

The next morning I woke up in a small off-white room. It was full of boxes and to one side was a tall glass door leading out to a small balcony. To the other side was a brown door that completed the room. I figured I must be dreaming so I went back to sleep.

In the morning I was greeted by a young woman with a nice smile and dark brown hair. She introduced herself as Lorelei and she gave me a letter. "This should help you understand more." She said. She left the room while I tried to read the letter. Lorelei walked back into my room to say something but she read the confusion on my face and offered to read the letter to me. As she read I listened. When she finished, I froze. I can feel my heart get heavier and my eyes swell up. Lorelei put the letter in my hands and said, "I'm sorry but come down for breakfast and meet everyone, you'll make new friends." With that she smiled and left me in my room. I tightly gripped the letter that my father wrote telling me, I was now up for adoption. I was only 8 years old, and I refused to believe this. Just like that, as every muscle in my body relaxed, I let go of the letter and let it fall somewhere to the floor. My eyes were back to normal and I took a deep breath while convincing myself to forget it all.

This adoption center was my choice. This is my new life. I thought, and I believed it. With that I unpacked my things and set up my room never finding the letter, though I wasn't looking for it, and went down to breakfast.

Seven years passed, and I was fifteen years old. I was coming home from a busy day ending in gymnastics. Lorelei yelled at me that morning that I needed to clean my room so I went straight up to my room and began to clean it. I was almost done when I found something between the floor boards underneath my bed. I pulled it free and looked at it. It was a letter. I read it...over, and over, and over again.

Suddenly, everything came back to me. The feelings of rejection I wouldn't allow

Infected

Shadura Lee

Crack seeped through the cracks of my house, floating in the air so freely
that someone was, bound to get addicted
Sneaking in through the back door because grandma's house was congested
too, setting my mom up to automatically have an addictive personality
It contaminated my house, sinking in through my mothers veins, combining
with her blood, colliding with her brain
Transforming her
Turning her into the beast of the night and after a while, boldly showing its
face in the day
See, shame no longer hindered her
And even though my body fought against it, crack affected me too.

She was my queen!
O how I loved to see her happy
Hear her laughter
Make her proud
Her, beautiful smile
Her teeth perfectly aligned
But as cracked attacked, her body broke down
She was no longer that mother that I use to know
Perhaps she found a new love
But it didn't love her like I did
See, what she loved, destroyed her!
Her milky brown skin began to yellow
As she began to die
Withering away
And even though my body fought against it, crack affected me too.

Every night she left the house she neglected me too!
I wonder if she knew how much I loved her?
Mama! I wonder if you knew how much I loved you?
More than any drug could pleasure you.

The silence in the house reminds me of the enemy
And even though you're gone,
Crack still lingers
Taunting and teasing
Pulling and tempting
Trying to delude
And make me fall in love with the pleasure as you did
But even though crack affected me
I refuse to let it infect me

Gentleman's Code

Jaire Battle

My word is my bond. I would give my left arm to uphold my beliefs.
I am sorry to say that other boys
Don't feel the way I do.

You don't see many guys like me anymore
That will treat you with so much respect.
It's hard for me
because you don't want respect.

You should be treated like a queen,
Have all you want and more.
But if there's one thing you forget,
You put your greed above your respect
And tarnish the bond we have made.

You want a "rough dude" that
Smacks you upside the head
And then want me to save you?

It would not have happened if you didn't do me so wrong.
Dump me! Hate me!
Why did you treat me so badly?

I can't just leave you alone.
It's against my gentleman's code.
So I guess I will save you and amaze you,
But stop making me second best.

I want to love you, and hold you with all my might
But you are away, out of sight

So until you see that you were wrong
You will be with him.

But my gentleman's code will stand.
So call me when you want a real man.

Wake Up!

Michael Hartnagel

The feeling of waking up held me back.
The soft exterior of my blanket was so irresistible that my body couldn't bear to move.
The bed was so comfy that my mind left me nothing by one option, to sleep.
Waking up was so hard, I started to feel like a zombie.
Eyes couldn't bear to open.
Body felt numb and tiring.
Moving slow, struggling to get out of bed.
Whoever thought waking up was so hard to do.

myself to feel when I was younger overwhelmed me. My eyes filled with tears and streamed off my face. My heart felt heavier and I dropped to my knees in front of the glass doors. With my puffy eyes I looked out at the sun setting and was bemused about the letter. The more I thought about it the angrier I became.

I put my hand on the cold glass door but then I pulled it back and with all my strength I punched the glass. All the glass within the door frame shattered and showered me. My arm, from my elbow down, that impacted the window was seeping blood from where some of the glass stuck in my arm. It was extremely painful but I didn't scream or cry. I just sat there and let the frigid evening air surround me as I watched the sky loose every bit of the sun's given rays.

I could hear Lorelei rushing into my room. She tried to talk to me, but I didn't want to talk. She screamed for Mr. Valentine, the founder of the adoption center. He was the same young age as Lorelei, but with light brown hair and crystal blue eyes, and he just loved to workout. Our basement was an actual gym and he trained himself and other kids there. He always said, "It forms a healthier lifestyle."

He came quickly and studied the situation while Lorelei was on the phone with Emergency Response. He simply wrapped me in a blanket and picked me up. Mr. Valentine carried me outside and we waited for the ambulance to arrive on the porch steps. The siren was nearing when he asked, "Jennette... what happened?"

I just couldn't speak so I looked him in the eyes and let him see all the anger that I know was showing in my puffy blue eyes. With that he understood and rode with me to the hospital.

That night in the hospital, while Mr. Valentine slept in the chair beside me, I thought of a way to get back at my dad... and I came up with a great plan. It was such a good plan I had to grin, and I slept with that grin because I knew exactly what to do to get revenge on my father.

*** **

I looked up from the shattered glass to the rambling man in the corner, my father. He may look innocent now but he's not, I thought, He deserves this. I took a card out of my pocket, which I took from the hospital that night, and dialed the number from it. The phone rang a few times until someone finally answered. "Hello?" Said a sweet voice.

"Yes, I saw a crazy man enter some house, he was running and throwing papers and screaming I'M FREE!" I lied.

She asked for the address and I gave it to her. After we hung up I left the house and scattered my father's Psych Ward registry papers, filled out by his forgetful "doctor", all over the sidewalk. I hid and watched as a special ambulance came to get my father. When I saw them lead him away in a strait jacket, I grinned. Finally, when there was no light left in the sky, except for what little light the stars gave off, I left my hiding place and began my walk back home.

Dancing in the Headlights

Joseph Rejent

Since birth, I was a junkie with a hangnail spine,
a broken crashdummy flunkie, stir-fried in brine,
playing bloodhound along colors where they've strayed from the lines,
soaked and jilted, with a tilted pinball witch on my mind.

So baby, tell me your religion and I'll show you the vulture,
throned opposite the monkey, where they're perched on my shoulder.

They sing nihilistic show tunes to acknowledge my presence
As they twist my pessimism from the future to past-tense.

All I've ever wanted was a spark and some butane,
but all I ever got was a new look and some back pain
bounce-passed from Atlas as he shrugged and he yawned;
now, too heavy for grace, I'm stranded on the front lawn.

I let the gearshift fumble between neutral and park,
hunting under lifted hemlines like a velveteen shark;
my ampullaes seek those with vices where their virtues should be,
sipping nectar from a pink drink fountain drenched in deceit.
Now baby, tell me your religion and I'll show you my arms,
tattooed with schizophrenia and riddles and scars.

I crashed my Chevy in the levee and confirmed it was dry,
watching infants fall from cliffs in fields of whiskey and rye.
Believe me, all I ever wanted was some semblance of rescue,
but all I ever got was a bus pass from the trash chute.
Now, alone inside this phone booth, I feel life slipping past;
there is no number I can call to kill the dialtone's laugh.

I was born between the tonsils of revolving doors,
where I commit mass pollination, using undead spores
to fill the lapses in ellipses and retailor my beat,
living at Wit's End by what I was taught on Manic Street.
So lady, tell me your religion and I'll bottle your lust,
then reveal fear in a varicose fist filled up with dust.
I can reroute your mind's eye socket and plug into your head;
you'll have a body in your closet and a monster in your bed.
Just know I'm known to misread Rorschach blots and imitate the sane;
I once lobotomized a seraphim and sold her holy brain.
But every night, I wander, lost, through parking lots behind the church,
moving aimlessly, my body like an ancient, make-shift hearse
as I play bullfighter, armed with the sharpened comma 'twixt my teeth,
slitting throats of white balloons just to pretend that I can breathe.

momma Casey kissed Molly on the head
the sun gave birth to a blue circle of light
suddenly the circle flew with great might
lighting the forest of birches' white
covered Penn's grave in darkness of night
it rose over the hillside covering stars
right next to big bright Mars
floating through the sky submerged in water
the gods had never a prettier daughter
following no law
except for the Law of Paw!
The sound cut across the night
and sleeping birds took flight
animals calling to their queen
No one knows what the wolf's howl means...
But for Penn passing through heaven's seam

A Country Life

Mariefred Evans

Pull up in a rusty, old truck.
Large white houses with wrap around porches.
Summertime in Tennessee.

Open fields to frolic.
Horses running about.

Straw hat on my head.
Freckles on my face.
Laying down with a cold glass of sweet tea.

Picnics in the field.
Love and happiness in the air.

Drive down by the lake.
Sun glistening on the water.
Ice clinking in my glass.
Sweat running down the side.

Fire burning bright in the night sky.
Banjos being played loud and clear,
Singing the words to my favorite song.
Bright smile appears on my face,
Dimples and all.
Eyes shining in the moonlight.

I love this country life.

The Wolfs Howl

Kevin Luis

Blue circle in the sky
 why do you float so high?
 Kissing the earth for only a second.
 going away and coming back a crescent
 Having no rules, boundaries, or laws
 only stopping for padded paws?
 The sound of the beast calling back to Earth
 the blue circle slouches down to give birth
 bearing the rays of anew day
 blue circle slipping away
 sun shining anew
 covered with dew
 the sun hits every crop
 as sunflowers heads drop
 while the farmers reap
 everyone comes to meet
 at the local church on a Sunday morning
 Nobody thinks the pastor is boring...
 he tells of the devil and the lord
 he even mentions the school board
 everyone leaves at the stroke of nine
 to meet the afternoon rain or shine
 kids listen to each other's calls
 while parents travel the strange halls
 town's people gathering again
 gawking over the funeral of grandma Penn
 nobody cries or minds the summer heat
 dropping some dirt on the dead lady's feet
 she mattered not to them
 she was dead, no one knew since when
 the men and women quickly went off again
 to pick up the children from the play pen
 nobody cared about the lady six feet under
 no longer experiencing wonder
 she had no family and her husband dead
 perhaps he lived just in her head
 so without speaking to anyone in town
 no one minded her bright red gown
 she wore it every day wherever she went
 nobody knew the story behind it and repent
 she, only a name on a stone now
 long dead in everyone's memory anyhow
 when the people went home, time for bed

Observations of the Pine Barrens

Madeline Price

The pygmy pine plain was a five foot tall spectacle right in the center of the Pine Barrens. We could easily survey this expansive sea of green since we all towered over the fully-grown pitch pines. Many of them grew outward instead of vertically, appearing more like shrubs to those of us who grew up in the shadow of skyscraping pine trees elsewhere in New Jersey. Comprehending that these midgets and giants were both the same species was a challenge; we forgot that humans were not the creatures that could be so strikingly distinct within a species. These pine trees were like foreigners adapted to different continents, even though they all existed within the Pinelands.

After hiking all day, we drove to the Mullica River to unwind with a swim. We took a trail that would lead us to a unique spot, we were told, which we anticipated all day. However, once we reached the destination, dark, rust-colored water immediately put us on the defensive. The waterway looked filthy, and a delicate dip of the toes revealed that it was chilly too. Yet, whether it was the tempting excitement of the rope swing or the desire to cleanse ourselves of sweat and sand, the water coaxed us in. We soon sought the iron on the river bottom, wanting to see for ourselves what had painted this water rusty. Still, at the end of the day, the interest for exercise or learning could not prevent a free-spirited splash fight.

During a sunny morning at Webb's Mill Bog, I watched an act of torture, a slow and painful death. A spatulate sundew ensnared two small dragonflies on its sweet-looking gluey mucous. Instead of desperately flailing their wings in panic, these insects attempted stepping away from this trap leg by leg, but to no avail. Perhaps they recognized that their end approached, not bothering to waste their energy in a hopeless battle against a voracious carnivorous plant. The fact that some plants are not at rock bottom of the food chain just goes to show that the possible interactions among different organisms are infinite, and sometimes, some are just unlucky.

As a native of central New Jersey and not the Pine Barrens, I naturally consider the sight of pinecones the size of clementines scattered across a forest floor of sand an oddity. More northward in New Jersey, pine trees are dreary monsters compared to the spindly pitch pines here; taller, thicker, and darker, they practically weigh down the landscape. In contrast, these pine trees and cones on our sandy campground triggered in my mind images from a beach environment: warmth and openness. My mind was incapable of putting those opposing environments together. Funny how a change in trees can make different regions within a single small state feel like separate worlds.

The Letter

Ipsita Rao

Beep! Beep! Beep! I quickly turned my alarm off and rose out of bed. I had been awake for the past hour waiting for the alarm to go off. I quickly ran into the shower, brushed my teeth and got dressed. I ran down the step and was enveloped into a warm hug from Bella who said jubilantly, "Happy fifteenth birthday, Aria!" "Thanks Bella," I replied after she let me go. I was an orphan and Bella had taken me in. She and I lived alone in the back portion of the bakery shop she owned. I really loved it. It was perfect. I always felt warm and cozy there.

"Now come sit, sweetie" She summoned, "I've made your favorite chocolate chip and marshmallow pancakes."

I sat down and she set a plate of pancakes in front of me. I started eating. It was delicious! I devoured it all so quickly I became tired. "Bella, no one I know makes better pancakes than you," I stated. "Actually, no one I know makes better food than you in general!" I hesitated and she said "So, now that I'm fifteen you get to fulfill the promise you made to me five years ago," I remind her.

"I was hoping you wouldn't remember," She sighed, "Nevertheless, a promise is a promise." She moved towards me and looked me in the eye. "Dear, the place brings back horrible memories so I can't bear going there, but I won't stop you." She turned around and walked to the stove and asked, "Do you know the way?"

"Yes," I whispered.

"Okay then just promise me to go after school." I could hear a bit of reluctance in her voice.

"I Promise, Bella! Thank You! I Love you! I must go now. I hear the bus coming!" I quickly replied and rushed out.

I was so excited I felt like there were fireflies in my stomach. My parents had died in a fire at our house. The remains of the house are still there as a memorial to my parents. Ever since I was young always wanted to go there and see what the place looked like. Bella wouldn't let me though. She said I would hurt me too much. When I was ten, I argued with her that it wasn't fair and she then promised me that she would let me go see the remains of the house when I turned fifteen. I couldn't wait 'till school was over.

Tick. Tock. Tick. Tock. I stared longingly at the clock. There was one more minute before school was over. I was counting the seconds in my head. *46... 47... 48...* It seemed like the longest minute of my life. Finally, the bell rang and I sprinted out the door. I had made myself memorize the route to the house when I eleven. My logic was that if Bella broke her promise, I would go anyway because I knew the route.

I walked through the long driveway that led to my house and when I was there I just stared for a minute. I couldn't believe I was here. I took a deep breath and walked

These arduous sets are difficult, but two very good things come out of completing them. The first being a sense of accomplishment and you feel good about yourself. The second is that you get to do warm down.

Finally, it is the finale of a swimmer's practice, warm down. Warm down is used by most coaches as a way to cool down swimmer's muscles, so they don't pull or tear outside of practice. Also, it is used to lower the heart rate of a swimmer. That is why warm down is usually at a less intense pace. The body temperature and heart rate of a swimmer can drastically rise during practice, and warm down is vital to help lower these two things. After these warm down session, a swimmer gets to go home! After a long practice filled with hardship, and exhaustion, a swimmer's practice is done. Now he can go home and rest, and prepare for another day tomorrow!

Sometimes it is hard for swimmers to go to practice. Sometimes they are tired, or sick, or just not in the mood for swimming. However, my longtime coach and mentor Lynn Shields always told me that coming to practice even when you don't want to is a true sign of a champion. The life of a swimmer is not all fun and games. When you see them, you see them race, and win, but what you don't really see is everything they do to get there. It's not always easy to get there, but if you do it makes all the trying worthwhile.

Rubies Among Diamonds

Te'Asia Burris

Diamonds are meant to be a girl's best friend
But what if she doesn't want diamonds?
You see this wants a ruby,
Bright red, radiant, and expensive.
She holds this close and never lets go.
You wonder,
"Why not a diamond?"

Because she watches the moon instead of TV.
She talks softly instead of screaming.
She listens before she speaks.
Thinks before she seeks.
She shines brightly although she is dark red
A wife to be
Something you should cherish
Like a ruby.

Biography of a Swimmer

Patrick Thornton

The Swimmer stands up behind the block, ready to start his race. He puts his swim cap on and his goggles over his eyes. Adrenaline is coursing through his veins. He has trained for this race his whole life. As the starter gives the command to stand up, he rises up to starting block. As he steps up, he takes one last glance at the competition before getting into ready position. His mind is racing. Questions are buzzing through his head like bees.

“How fast are the people next to me?”

“Are they better than me? What if I don’t win?”

He can’t give up now. He has come too far to give up now. The starter gives the second command.

“Swimmers take your mark...GO!”

However, in the life of a swimmer, everything that builds up to this is what really matters. The long grueling hours in practices, the one thousand meter sets that push them to the limit, and the blood, sweat, and tears that go into the preparation that makes a hard earned victory that much sweeter.

Swimmers would usually wake up around five o’clock in the morning, to start hours upon hours of difficult practice. If you think getting up to go to school is hard at six o’clock, try waking up an hour earlier, and pushing your body to near exhaustion. The first thing on the agenda for swimmers is usually a type of exercise called ‘dryland’ ‘Dryland’ is just a term swimmers use for exercise out of the pool. It usually consists of a mile run, and arm, leg, and abdomen strengthening exercises. ‘Dryland’ usually last for about one hour. So even before swimmers even enter the pool, they are already exhausted themselves.

Furthermore, the next thing on the agenda for a swimmer is warm up. While warm up is not very difficult, and not very far, it is just a small taste of what is to come in practice. Swimmers like to savor the short distance and ease of warm up. It is the closest thing they will get to a break all practice. Warm up will usually be about one thousand meters total, which for a swimmer is like a walk in the park. The main stroke of the warm up is usually freestyle, the most basic, and easy stroke for veterans and rookies alike. As I have noted, warm up is not that hard for most swimmers, but if warm up is a guppy, than the subsequent sets are like giant sharks that eat the guppies.

Immediately after warm up is what the bulk of the practice is for a swimmer, sets. A set is a specific distance that has to be repeated a specific number of times, at a specific pace, or the swimmer has to start over. An example of a set would be ‘seven eight-hundreds on the six minute,’ which basically means that a swimmer must swim eight-hundred meters in six minutes, seven times. Everyone would probably find that simple until they actually try to do one, let alone a couple hours worth.

Picture it like this: Try to run across fourteen city blocks (approximately 800 meters) in six minutes, and if you cannot do it, then you have to turn around and do it again.

towards the house. The front door was lying on the dry terrain. Someone had taped big plastic sheets over the door. I tore them down and walked in. Most of the walls were charcoal black, but sometimes I could see the intricate patterns. I couldn’t believe I live here. Even though the place was almost completely burnt, it still looked amazing. I saw some chairs lying on the ground and a dusty half burnt rug. I sat down and wondered what my parents were like. I wish I could remember them, but I was only one and a half years old when they died. I got up and went to the kitchen. Everything was burnt, but two draws. I opened the first one and there was nothing there so I closed it. I opened the other one and found a broken pen. I closed it and it sounded like I just crumpled some paper. I opened it again and bent down and looked all the way inside. All the way back of the drawer an envelope was stuck. With a lot of struggle I took the envelope. The ink was smudged, but I could tell it said “Aria” on it. I opened it and took out a piece of worn paper. It read:

My Dear Aria,

You are the most beautiful baby in the world. You are one and a half years old and just last week you learned to say “Dada”. Now you say it every time you see your daddy. What brought me tears was you just learned to say “Mama” today. It made me so happy. You make these rough times feel like heaven. I’m writing this letter to you just in case I and/or your father are not here to tell you. I told Bella to hold on to it just in case, but she refuses to. I know she will in the end though. She loves me too much. After all, we are best friends. I have told her to give it to you on your fifteenth birthday. So... Happy Fifteenth Birthday, my love! I am 100% sure that you have become beautiful and wise young lady. You’re in high school now. I understand how scary it must be at times. There are good people and bad people in this world and you have to learn to embrace it. A person once said, “Fairytale do not tell children dragons exist. Children already know dragons exist. Fairytales tell children that dragons can be killed.” You will have to face many challenges in life. Be strong, wild, and courageous. It’s okay if you make mistakes on the way; it’s how we all learn. Whatever happens don’t let anyone tell you aren’t smart or beautiful. Also, have people love you because of what you look like on the inside not the outside because who you are is more important. Remember, your father and I love you very much!

Love,

Mom

P.S. I have left my locket in this envelope .It was always lucky for me. Where it and you will always find me close!

I put my shaky hands in the envelope and pulled out the most beautiful locket I’d ever seen. I put it on and put the letter in my back pack and ran home.

“Bella!? Bella where are you?” I asked. She came down the steps and I ran to her and gave a hug. I burst into tears. I couldn’t help it.

“What’s wrong dear?” Bella asked with concern.

“Nothing’s wrong, Bella! I found a letter. I found a letter from Mom. The one she was

going to give to you.” I exclaimed as I wiped the tears from my face.

“You found it!? I thought it had gotten burnt in the fire.” Bella explained. “So do you have the locket?”

“Yes, I’m wearing it. Look!” I showed her the locket. “What really happened to Mom and Dad Bella?” I finally asked, “How did they know they might die?”

“I don’t know, Aria. They would never tell me,” She looked into my eyes once again, “Maybe one day you will find out.” She pulled me towards the sink. “Come on now. No more crying. We still need to cut the cake and you need to open your present!”

“Thank You, Bella. Thank You for giving me a life worth living for.” Bella smiled and gently kissed my head. I couldn’t believe I had never told her that before.

That day I realized that just because someone dies doesn’t mean they are gone. They are always with us and will forever remain in our hearts.

My School

Sonia Rueda

My school is so beautiful
 With big brown buildings
 Which I love
 It's marvelous.
 To it I come
 To learn and share
 With my teachers
 Who guide me with their learning like a bird teaches
 her young to fly
 So I can depart filled with
 Happiness yet sadness for
 The fabulous things they have showed
 To me and my friends
 For their kind friendship that they gave me
 And I will forever have In my heart.
 Rooms filled with joys
 To them I come with happiness
 Because learning is precious
 It's my heart, my start, and great
 Passion that I will always have in my Mind
 Now it's time to say good bye to it with love like a
 fledgling must leave its nest
 And gratitude for the marvelous moments
 That I am leaving and yet will carry
 In my soul forever.

Now, you’re just making us regret that decision we made. Your father has been having a hard enough time with work these days, and it isn’t practical to add another weight on his shoulders!”

“But it’s perfectly practical Mum! It’s my future we’re talking about not yours or his! Can’t I please go to school here? I don’t like math or language arts or social studies. They’re all so stupid! Human school is stupid! I want to live down here when I’m older!” I shouted, although I immediately regretted the last part. Mum stared at me, and then sighed.

“Angelfish, you’re too young to know exactly what you want yet. Your father and I thought that the education humans provided was better, considering I went to school In both realms, thanks to the concoction merdoctors made so humans and merpeople could learn how to communicate. But I promise you darling that you will get plenty of exposure so that when the time comes, you can find out where you want to spend the majority of your life. Remember, you will always have the land and the sea, where your father and I only had one.”

I was now staring down at my scales, my eyes watering. Mum was right. Even though I loved the ocean and all of the creatures in it, I loved the land just as much. For one thing, I couldn’t dance, or ride my bike, or play football in the sea. Without even thinking about it, I swam into Mum’s arms and hugged her. We floated there for about a minute, until Mum pulled away. “I think there’s someone that is waiting to hear from you,” she said through her smile.

I smiled back, and then swam inside. Even though I knew an hour of lecturing awaited me, I couldn’t wait another minute for it. I picked up Mum’s shell phone and speed dialed home.

The Scene That Celebrates Itself

Cassie Spain

Superfluities of silent Shoe-gazers,
 Litters of lidded litigious Loners,
 Warrens of woefully wry Wallflowers,
 evolve into Seers, Lovers, Wonders.

 jumbled into cleared out barren basements,
 forgotten Youths cursed with pie plate eyes watch
 golden Boys scream their songs of drunk lament.
 despite bleeding hearts, they sing from their crotch.

 a saltwater taste collects in the air,
 from their rising, swelling, crashing Bodies,
 like waves to the moon, this fervor so rare
 lives, despite amps and mics that are shoddy.

 pouring out all their sadness and their dread,
 for the moments they live outside their heads.

A Storm in the Pacific

Olivia Davis

"I DON'T CARE! I'M LEAVING!" I shout as I run for the door.

"MORGANA DON'T YOU DARE WALK OUT ON ME WHILE I'M TAL-" my father's shout was cut off as the front door slammed shut. I was already running down the sand dunes, tears streaming down my face, and not even caring about the scorching sand stinging the bottom of my feet (I hadn't even gotten a chance to put on my shoes). As I reached the pier, I hastily took off the cover-up I wore over my bathing suit and tied my dirty blonde wavy hair in a ponytail. Without even looking back to see if my dad was coming after me, I dived into the deep blue water, as graceful as a dolphin. Diving deeper into the water, I felt my legs tingling and my lungs transforming. The nerve of *him*, I thought as I swam just above the coral beds of the Great Barrier Reef. It was one test, one test in which I had gotten a 74%, and he flipped like a fish. I was furious. It's one thing to take away my cell phone or dessert for a few weeks, but my swimming privileges? I wasn't going to stand for that.

As I neared Full Moon's Rock, I stopped to rest. As I did so, I looked down at my shimmering turquoise mermaid tail, the same color as my eyes. Even though I knew how my dad felt about me frequently running off and socializing with the other merpeople, I didn't understand why it was *that* that he was taking away from me. So what if I made friends with mermaids and humans? If you just found out you were a mermaid the summer before eighth grade, wouldn't you want to take advantage of the fact? Besides, the ocean was Mum's turf, not his, which was precisely why I was headed to her house to discuss the matter with her.

Remembering Dad had a way to reach Mum, I immediately started swimming towards Coralville, faster than my tail had ever taken me before. As I got close to Mum's house, I could see the outline of her body swimming back and forth by the doorway. From even a few feet away you wouldn't be able to tell the difference between Mum and me. Or, as Pop says, I'm a spitting image of her. Once I was inches away from her, my stomach did a belly flop in remorse. A stern look was on Mum's beautiful face, and she only had that look when she is extremely disappointed.

"Morgana, my little gem, how many times have we discussed that running away to the sea is not a good way to get away from your problems?" Mum eyed me, shaking her head. I gulped. I didn't know how to answer this question, considering I had answered it about a dozen times. Well, not quite a dozen, but you get the picture. Mum sighed, "Do you realize what you are doing to your poor father? He's worried sick about you! He only wants you to do well in school so you can have a bright future."

"But Mum, maybe human school isn't what's best for me. Maybe I should come down here and live with you so I can learn about what I like, like marine biology and different swim strokes!"

"Sweetheart, your father and I had agreed that living on land was what was best for you before you were born, and that we would only tell you about the other half of you when you were responsible enough to handle it! We thought just before eighth grade would be the perfect time to tell you the secret we'd been keeping from you for years.

Untitled

Grace Townsend

Winter's wrath is long and gone,
but yet spring weather is far from done.
Sprouts are blossoming and starting new life,
all of the flowers awakening from their suspended night.
Creatures are waking from their long, dark sleep,
just to create and share in nature's lively leap.
Next will come summer, with sweltering hot days;
too hot for comfort, but perfect for laze.
But now spring is here, celebrating all life,
no matter how significant or no matter how slight.

Mi Escuela

Zonia Rueda

Mi escuela es tan hermosa
Con grandes edificios de color cafe
Pues le tengo un gran amor.
Ella es maravillosa,
A ella vengo a aprender
Va compartir con mis maestros quienes,
Me guiaron con sus enseñanzas,
Como un pajarito que enseña a sus pajaritos a volar.
Para que yo me vaya llena de alegría
Y de tristeza por todo lo maravilloso que
Me enseñaron.
V mis compañeros
Par la amistad que me dieron;
A ellos siempre los llevaré en mi corazón
Con mucho amor.
Clases llenas de alegría
A ellas vengo a aprender
Pues aprender es valioso,
Va que me da alegría.
Esta es mi corazón,
Desde un inicio,
Ha sido mi gran pasión
Pasión que siempre llevaré en el alma
Y hoy me toca despedirme,
Como un pájaro que deja su nido.
Con afecto y desconsuelo,
Por las cosas asombrosas
Que dejo y las que llevaré conmigo,
En el alma para siempre.

The Akuma Chronicles

Shyheim Russell

Yo, Akuma here. That's what they call me but I'd rather be called Akio. I can't remember much except for that name and what happened right before I got captured...

I got home at 11:25am after hanging with some friends. My place looked like it had been ransacked. I was partially drunk, but I felt like I was going to have some fun. I looked around hoping for something to happen. *Thu-thump*. I saw my vestibule had been forced open. *Thu-thump*. I walked in slowly, avoiding the booby traps and looking for signs of any corpses. *Thu-thump*. No one was in there, or so I thought. Suddenly, the room started to spin and my head started pounding. "Argh too early for a hangover", I thought, but it wasn't. *Thu-thump*. My body started to burn like it was set on fire and my head pounded ferociously. "My heart, ah is this a heart attack or something?" The pain was excruciating and it seemed like it would never end, until finally I blacked out. I had experienced intense pain, but nothing like that before.

When I regained consciousness it felt like something was strapped onto me. I tried to move, but I couldn't. I looked around and noticed I was in a capsule with wires stuck to me. I tried to ask what was going on, but I couldn't speak. There was a mask on my face keeping me breathing. I looked outside the capsule and saw a couple of people in white lab coats, you know the ones you see scientist wear on TV, and they turned and looked at me with such joy. They looked so happy. For some reason it kind of frightened me. After all, I'm only a 17 years old.

"Let's begin our test now shall we?"

I may not have been able to speak, but I could hear. *What test?* They began doing experiments on me, very painful ones. There were moments when I wondered why they were doing this, and what their goal was, but then the pain would come again, and all I could think about was making it stop. I felt like I was going to die. The rest was a blur.

Thu-thump. "Oh god he got loose! Call for- ahhh"

"Stay back, stay back, get away from me!"

"Aaaaaahhhhhh!"

I awoke. What had happened? Why did I feel so...powerful? I looked around and noticed that everyone was dead. Had I done this? I couldn't have! This was all just a dream! Ha yeah, that's it, I passed out in my home so I should just..."

Wake up.

I froze. "Who said that?" I said, "Who's there?"

I am the darkness that has been sleeping inside you for so many years; I am your demon soul.

I ran out of the lab and found myself in a hall, and everywhere I looked I saw more and more doors. I wondered if this was an asylum but I wouldn't know for sure until I got out of there. I just hoped I'd still be alive to do just that. An alarm! I ran faster.

am a lawyer there. I have come here regarding information as to the whereabouts of Carrol Cole." "Nice to meet you John, now what information do you have about Cole", Lt. Charles questioned. "Well sir, I was at work today when I checked my email. In it was an email with no return address that I believe was from Cole. It stated that the Mayor was going to get shot in the head on Tuesday at 12:00 during his daughter's softball game. He wrote in his email that he was in the building and I didn't want to take the chance so I deleted it. Before I did that though, I copied all the information into a Word document. But here's what makes me think it really is Cole, right after I copied the information the power went out and I lost it. I believe Cole blew the fuse of the office", John said in a rushed kind of voice. The lieutenant replied, "Well, do you have any proof that this was actually Cole that sent the email? We receive tons of calls about fake emails. What makes your email any different, the fact that your power went out after you read it? If so, that's not really proof." John was getting worried now. This was not going at all how he had hoped it would go. "Well sir, I know I don't have proof but can't you just trust me" John replied, his voice wavering. "I'm sorry but there's nothing substantial to base your case on." Lt. Charles replied adamantly. "Well can you at least send some officers to the game" he asked desperately. "You don't think we didn't already ask him if we could. He said no because he thought it would scare all the girls. Now if you excuse me, I have work to do. I believe you can find your way out", the lieutenant said sifting through some papers. John stumbled out of the office to the main room. The secretary asked him if there was anything else. John just walked right out. When he got in his car he just sat in the seat for what felt like hours. Then he woke up and wasn't sure if what had happened was real or just a dream.

Looking Back

Emily Hayes

As I look back through the years
I see where I came from
And I know where I'm going
As I look back through the years
I see life has opportunities
And I'm ready for them
As I look back through the years
I've been through a lot of changes in my life and I'm ready for a new chapter
As I look back through the years
I see that this is an ending
and ...
My life is just beginning.

Untitled

Jake Verga

Everyone in the office was staring. He looked down to see the picture that had fallen from his desk, but that didn't matter. What mattered was the email in his inbox. He picked up the picture and sat back down. It was a picture of his wife and kids. The frame was personalized and said, "John, I will love you forever". Everyone started to look away. He went back to his computer and checked to see if the email actually said what he thought it said:

"James Cartisen will be shot in the head, 12:00 Tuesday at his daughter's softball game. If you tell anybody you will die. Right after you receive this email, move it to your trash and delete it forever. I am watching."

It was Cole. Carrol Cole is the serial killer terrorizing Princeton for the past 3 weeks. He's killed all the important people in Princeton except for two people, the regional FBI director and the mayor. The mayor has refused to leave and the FBI Director thinks he has enough protection. The thing about Carrol Cole is that he sends an un-traceable email to a random citizen in Princeton two days before he kills someone, but the thing is that then he uses a computer virus to delete it right after the person reads it. John copied the email and its information and then deleted the email forever. All he had to do was save it to a word document. Then the computer screen went black. So did the lights. That's what he was afraid of. The power went out. He lost his proof. Now the police would never believe him, but he had to try. The lights went back on. He got up and clocked out. He was going to see Lt. Charles at the police department hoping he would believe him. When John got in the car he checked his phone. It was his wife Sharon. Sharon would have to wait. He put his car in drive and sped towards the police station. As he was speeding down Route 206, he passed Lollipop Park and thought of his kids, seven year old Ryan and 2 year-old Nick. He hoped he'd get to see them again. John pulled into the library parking lot across from police headquarters. The library closed to the public at five. He looked at his watch. It was 4:15, he had enough time.

John walked up to the door and opened it. He was greeted with a blast of cool air. Obviously the air conditioner was running. He walked over to the desk. The secretary looked up. She was in her mid-thirties. "Yes", she said. John replied, "I want to speak to Lt. Charles. It's really important." "He's in a meeting, sir", she replied like this was the most boring place to be. "Tell him it's about Carrol Cole", John stated. The secretary's eyes opened wide. She clearly knew who Carrol Cole was, but then again who didn't. She typed something on her computer. Then she glanced up. She looked at him and replied flatly, "Lt. Charles will be with you in just a few minutes. Just sit on that couch over there." He turned around and saw a leather couch in the corner. John replied "Thank you." It was seven minutes before Lt. Charles came from the offices. Lt. Charles was wearing his dress uniform. He was a big man and certainly someone to be afraid of if you committed a crime. Lt. Charles gestured for John to come into his office. John got up and followed him around a corner into his office. Charles motioned for him to sit in a chair in front of his desk. John sat down and the officer opened his mouth as if he were going to say something but closed it and went into his desk and pulled something out. He put it on his desk. It was a manila folder marked Cole, Carrol. John said in a nervous voice, "Hello Lt. Charles, I'm John Skwara, I work at Armstrong & Quis Law Firm. I

"There he is, don't let him escape." I wondered if it might be security, but decided not to stick around to find out.

"Get him!"

"Don't let him get away."

"Jesus!"

These guys were more agile than I thought, too but I was faster

"Invento flame soul"

"Time to ravage this place, later!"

"What the hell, he disappeared?"

"Darn (sigh), we lost subject Akuma should we pursue?"

"OF COURSE YOU MORONS!"

"HE'S WAY TOO VALUABLE TO LOSE, BRING HIM BACK OR I'LL HAVE YOUR HEADS!!"

"You won't escape me my dear experiment".

Whoa....that was cool...

TO BE CONTINUED

The Hope Trilogy

Leanna Smith

If he had waited a while longer
And watched the dreary winter
Melt away under the glow
Of the spring-time sun
Would he still be here today?

The little blue bird's hopeful song
Is the solitary thing that keeps me moving along.

Hope is the sun rising on a new day
Hope is a young child running out to play
Hope is the light behind your eyes
Hope is the song that never dies
Hope is laughing through your tears
Hope is living and forgetting your fears
Hope is your favorite song on the radio
Hope is your heart saying 'yes' when the world says no.

Untitled

Sujay Shetty

The sound of crickets drifted to my mind. It was like the sound of death itself, breathing down my neck. It had been 147 days of torture and arduous work... 147 days since I, along with my comrades, was taken prisoner by the merciless Nazis. It was night, of course. I however, lay awake, as always. It was very difficult to fall asleep, knowing where you are. Your life could be stolen away, just like candy being taken away from a baby. I was just sitting there, wondering, "Will I make it back to the States within being in a coffin"? Then I remembered, "Oh yeah, if I die here I'm not gonna be in a coffin, more like a pot of ashes." One of my comrades imprisoned with me, woke up, and asked, "Hey Bill, fancy a game of poker?" This game was the only thing that was keeping us sane and alive, by just a thin thread. It gave us the food and thought away from our situation. I thought back to how I ended up in this mess.

I am Corporal Bill Reese, proud to be part of the 5th Ranger Infantry Battalion, one of the most dangerous (and back then what I thought exciting) divisions of the United States Army. It wasn't long before I received my first special assignment, and boy, I did not know an inch of the danger I was getting myself into.

I was put into a special platoon of six for the special assignment, our mission... to assassinate Heinrich Himmler, the Chief of the SS, and Hitler's right-hand man. I was not permitted to speak of my assignment to anyone at all, it was a very high-clearance mission. My comrades for this mission were SSgt. Charlie, Private Samson, Sgt. Joe, Lt. Rodriguez, and Captain Armstrong.

We had to take a truck into the village were Himmler supposedly was, the truck was disguised as a Nazi supply truck. We all were going into; we were all dressed in Nazi clothing, and were fluent in German. We arrived at our destination. We stormed through many buildings and finally found a person who looked like Himmler jogging through the backyard; I took out my sniper, and made the fatal shot. Suddenly we were surrounded by Nazi SS troops, their officer warned, "Do not move, you are under arrest!" Soon my comrades and I were tied up taken roughly to a cellar, we had nothing but a deck of cards that we managed to smuggle. Next thing you know, Himmler himself came in, we were all shocked; "You all have failed, you have slain my decoy, now you shall all pay!" Himmler took out a .25 caliber and fatally shot Rodriguez and Samson, he threatened to the rest of us that he would give us so much torture; we all would wish to die. We were made to do arduous tasks like digging trenches and machine gun nests, at night us four played poker with some of our Nazi guards gambling some items such as our watches, necklaces, or bracelets, in exchange for food. We had to gamble to gain our fill.

Back in my prison, I thought of how life was at the States, my children, my wife, all depending on me to come back alive. The worst part was, they had no idea where I was, this is was a level 5 clearance mission, meaning only the top staff had knowledge of it. I knew it was definitely time to act. One night, we only had two armed Nazi troopers guarding us, and they were both playing poker with us. I stealthily took a pistol from one of the Nazi guards' holster, while Armstrong did the same to the other. Two pops later, and both guards lay dead on the ground. The four of us armed ourselves with

their weapons and broke out of our cell and managed to sneak into the radio station, killing four unaware Nazi radio operatives. We managed to contact our command and Armstrong called in for reinforcements. We were rescued by other members of the 5th Ranger's Battalion. We all received the Congressional Medal of Honor, and to this day, I keep my medal next to the deck of cards that kept us alive...

I Have Power

Integra Feliciano

The will.

The will to challenge myself.

The will to learn.

The knowledge.

The knowledge to know what is wrong and what is right.

The knowledge to know what is best for me.

The knowledge to understand other's ignorance.

The heart.

The heart to build after everything is broken.

The heart to pump blood into a lifeless person.

The heart to stand up to whom should be sitting down.

The strength.

The strength to accept my weakness as life-filled moments.

The strength to forgive.

The strength to love those who had once hated me.

The strength to live.

And with these elements these four elements that live in me, I have power.

Believe It's True

Marcus Sanders

It was a cold night, the fire place shined through the window.

Hot chocolate on the table.

Head laid back.

After five minutes, I took a nap.

Present under the tree, waiting to be open,

thinking of how much paper will be on the floor.

As I fall asleep for a few minutes, I hear creaks after a window has been opened,

Could it be, the one, the only.

Say it's not so but it is by his long beard and rosy red outfit.