

# INCEPTION



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# INCEPTION

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650 Prospect Avenue  
Ridgefield, NJ

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Inception Literary Magazine is designed to showcase the amazing talents of Slocum Skewes' young writers and artists in grades 6 through 8. It is a place where emerging writers and artists create and collaborate. This issue would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of our talented staff and the encouragement of our entire school community.

We would especially like to thank Mrs. Michelle Mariani for her assistance, as well as the administration for their support.

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## Larry the Llama

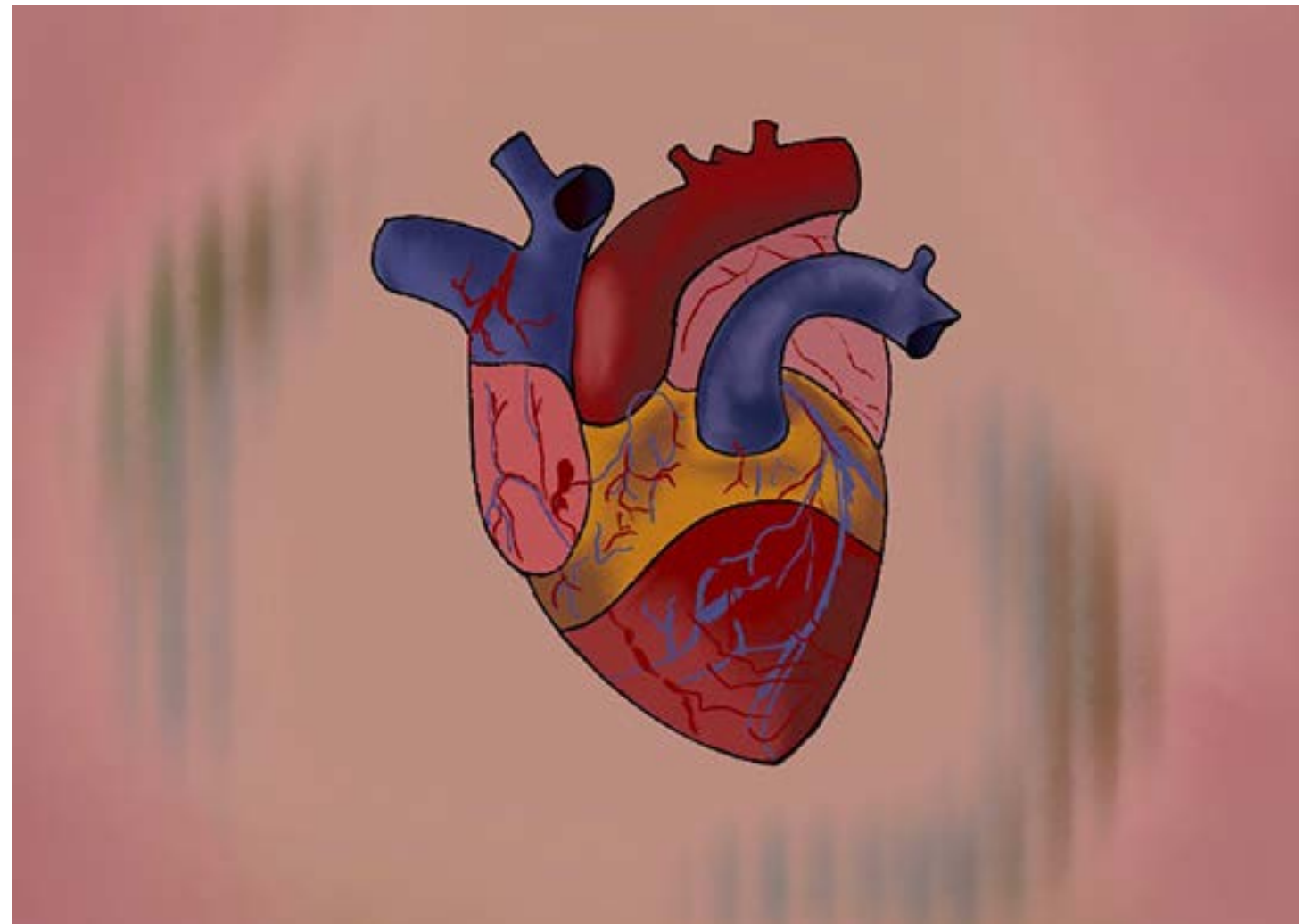
Strolling through the park was Larry the Llama,  
 Riding on his skateboard and looking for drama.  
 When he found nothing at the park,  
 And it was getting kind of dark,  
 He went back home to his mama.

By Eylul Oktay  
 Illustration by Renee Lee

## Heart and Mind

My mind is a gem and my heart is a mystery. How do I understand my mind more than my heart?  
 I don't know. Maybe it's because I can control my mind, but my heart has its own plans. You see, it's  
 really fascinating. The heart and the mind will always be connected, but never agree. Your mind tells  
 you one thing, and your heart does another. They balance one another out.

By Hope Koloszuk  
 Illustration by Kyle Yatangacal





An Ode to Dally

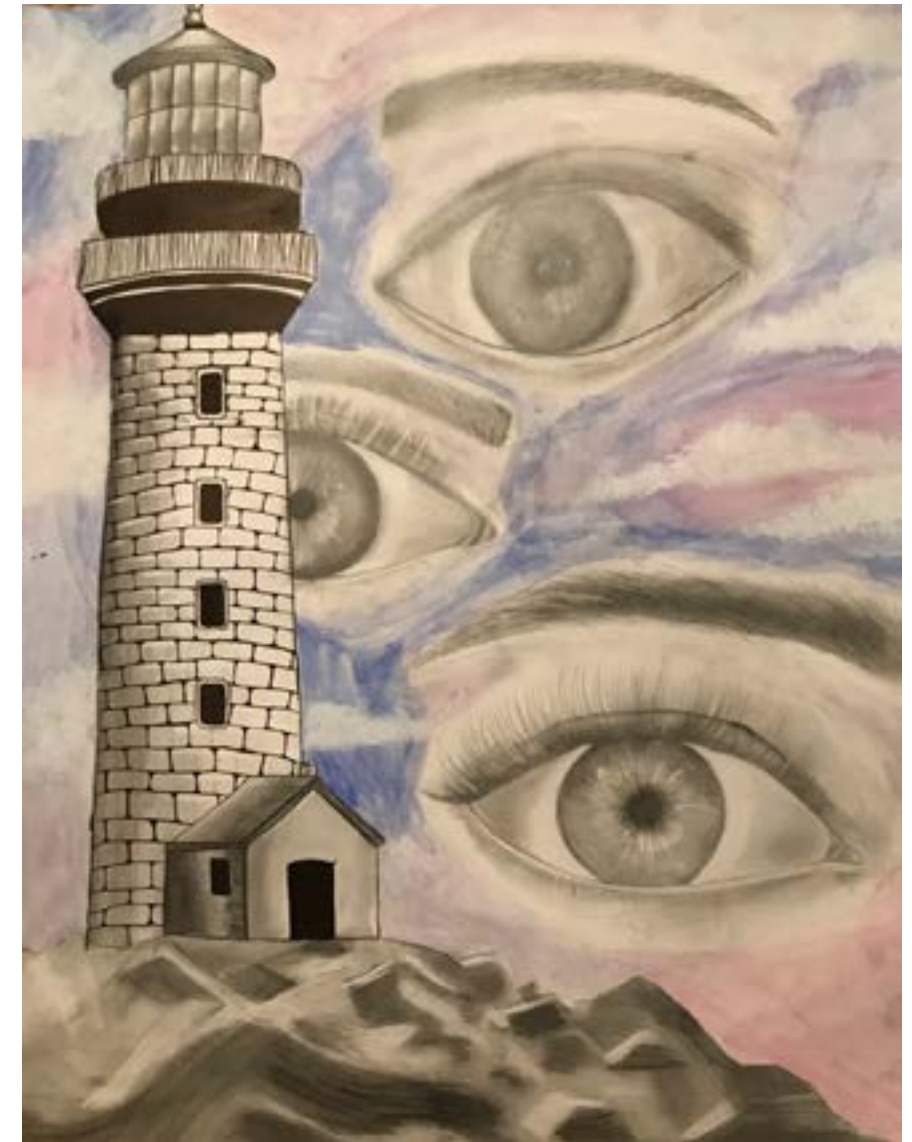
Dally, one of a kind,  
Gallant and brave.  
A person hard to find,  
A person now in a grave.

He was irritable and mean,  
Aggressive, and violent.  
A hood that was lean,  
Who never kept silent.

As a friend he was great,  
He was smart and witty,  
Who came to a tragic fate,  
A person we now all pity.

Never saw the sunset,  
Never wanted to leave the hood,  
Someone we'll never forget,  
Now that he's gone for good.

By Tuana Oncu  
Illustration by Ashley Kim



The Tower

The tower was always her favorite place,  
The abandoned refuge, the sacred space.  
This was the place where we could play for days,  
Before fate violently took us our separate ways.  
But after all of these years  
Why, of all places, was I here?

I gazed into the lifeless night,  
And the stars that seemed to gleam.  
And felt the darkness so deep  
I wanted to scream.

With a heavy stone nestled in my chest,  
I turned, ready to leave.  
But a small voice in my heart  
Told me–  
Not yet, something is yet to be seen.

I turned back, looking towards the horizon,  
As the nighttime turned to dawn–  
Illuminating what I couldn't see.  
The sky turned pink with a promise–  
And the feeling that she was watching over me.

By Chloe Kwon  
Illustration by Renee Lee



From Leo to Stargirl

I knew you were the one right when I saw you,  
You were as special as a snowflake.  
Then everyone hated you, and I felt blue  
Because I knew you were new.

Fell asleep one night and caught some feelings,  
You were just so appealing.  
Loving you was brutally easy,  
Easy peasy lemon squeezy.

You rejected all the hate from the others,  
Sorry, they're all ruthless.  
You ran over me with all your cuteness,  
I wish I'd learned to ignore their rudeness.

By Jaden Hong  
Illustration by Ashley Kim



Love Poem – To Stargirl

Many people might shun you,  
But I will never.  
People might have given up on you,  
But I will love you forever.

Your eyes glisten like the moon,  
Which is why I get up in the morning.  
I would hand you a balloon,  
Because then you would be the most charming.

With each smile, I want to make you mine–  
You are pretty, you are kind.  
Because every time you shine,  
You are always on my mind.

By Issac Chun  
Illustration by Suh-in Kim



Boundaries of the Sea

What are boundaries?  
For many, they are ideas we create,  
And for most, they are things we wish to  
abate.  
But when we look out to the sea,  
With glistening water that makes you agree,  
That no matter who we may be,  
We all wish for one thing in common...

We wish for our troubles and tribulations,  
And the limitations we may set upon  
ourselves,  
To dissolve and disappear,  
With profound unease,  
Like a boat on the horizon.

For boundaries are things we set,  
But are never things we forget.

Therefore, if the sea can make it so,  
That no matter what we undergo,  
We can all hope to merrily go,  
Wherever we may wish.  
To the ends of the earth,  
To the summit of the sky,  
And to the abysses of the ocean.

If the sea can make us all believe and hope,  
That regardless of our circumstances,  
We can do all things,  
As blithely as a passing wave,  
Then “boundaries” become obsolete  
And existent in our minds only as obstacles,  
And not as limitations.  
So, therefore, there is so no vindication,  
As to why we create imaginary bounds,  
That can be loosened by the sight of the sea.

By Jonathan William  
Photograph by Yamin Baba



Night

Starry night  
Moon shedding light  
Luminous night  
Glowing so bright

Blackest night  
Frightful fright  
Blackest night  
Ending all light

Peaceful night  
Children in bed tight  
Peaceful night  
Waiting for daylight

By Kenneth Ryu  
Illustration by Raijenny De Jesus Holguin



## Turtle Poem

There once was a little turtle who was filled  
with joy,  
Who had a mean older brother that was a  
grumpy little boy.  
When the little brother wanted to play,  
The grumpy turtle said, “Maybe another day.”

The little turtle was all alone in his room,  
And he wanted to do something to get rid of his  
gloom.  
So he decided to take a trip to his friend’s home,  
And he set off on his journey all alone.

While he was on the way,  
He didn’t realize that there was going to be a  
slight delay.  
But when he came across a cave that was  
very, very dark,  
He could make out the eyes of a very large shark.

The turtle started swimming away,  
Moving faster than he had on any other day.  
He looked back and saw the shark coming really  
fast,  
And he hoped that this journey wouldn’t be his  
last.

He tried to swim away to a place  
the shark wouldn’t find,  
Because if the shark caught him,  
he wouldn’t be kind.  
When he came to a dead-end,  
he could find no other way,  
So he tried to get out because there  
he couldn’t stay.



The little turtle saw the shark’s face that was ever  
so cunning,  
But then out of nowhere, he saw someone else that  
was coming.  
As the figure got closer, he saw that it was none  
other,  
Than the grumpy turtle that was his very own  
brother.

The little turtle knew that he was going to be saved,  
By his strong older brother that was very, very  
brave.  
He went to his brother and they started swimming  
away,  
Never to encounter a shark again on any other day.

From that point on, the brothers were best friends,  
They swam together, played together, the list never  
ends.  
They made sure to always be with each other,  
And they became two brothers that loved one  
another.

By Eylul Oktay  
Photograph by Fatima Lira

## Spring Poem

The lazy river hits the grass and splashes,  
The swing sways as the chilly wind passes.  
A crack on the seat but you still know,  
That the tree is not weak and will grow.

Cherry blossom flowers growing on the tree,  
With even more flowers growing under you see.  
Mountains hiding from the sun as it sets,  
Nighttime becoming a bit of a threat.

Not even harsh winters will hurt this  
beautiful town,  
With just a river, mountains, and a  
strong tree they own.  
Fluffy clouds move as the sun begins  
to rest,  
As birds begin to fly by and create  
their nest.

By Rebecca Santos  
Illustration by Eylul Oktay







Like a Movie

Many people think that life is quite boring  
I just think they haven't gone exploring.  
If they just look closely, they will see,  
That everywhere you go is like a movie scene.  
Like the clouds in the sky are like an action movie,  
Constantly changing scene after scene.

In my backyard, there are billions of frogs.  
Sometimes when it rains,  
I can see some of their little heads peep out from  
their logs.  
And they rest under mushrooms while their long  
tongues stretch out to drink the rain.  
When I watch them, I don't feel any pain.

I feel calm, like I was watching a whimsical  
fantasy.  
The rhythm of the rain tapping on the ground  
and the frogs' soft croaks are like a symphony.  
This is my favorite movie scene—  
Almost better than watching a movie  
from a screen.

By DaJeong Won  
Illustration by DaJeong Won

## Quarantine

Ice cream twice a day,  
Sit-ups five different ways.  
Trapped inside my house,  
I'm so lonely and sad.  
Without my friends,  
I've never felt so bad.  
I can't be in school—  
I can't be outside.  
I hope this virus goes away.  
I can't stand this quarantine!

By Nina Shehigian  
Illustration by Ashley Kim





Worth

Am I worth it?  
All those days I cried myself to sleep.  
Am I worth it?  
All those days I couldn't fall asleep.

Am I worth it?  
All those days they would bully me.  
Am I worth it?  
All those days they wouldn't defend me.

Am I worth it?  
All those days no one would ask how my day was.  
Am I worth it?  
All those days no one cared what I'd done.

Am I worth it?  
That one day a girl came to talk to me.  
Am I worth it?  
That one day she sat next to me under the tree.

Am I worth it?  
That one day she asked if I wanted to be her friend.  
Am I worth it?  
That one day that my depression started to end.

Am I worth it?  
All those days we would hang out after school.  
Am I worth it?  
All those days she would take me with her to the pool.

Maybe I am worth it,  
And so are you.

By Heba Mohamed  
Illustration by Yaejun Myung



Joan of Arc

Joan of Arc was born on the 6th of January,  
To a society that was broken and very scary.  
Her parents lived in a quiet village in France,  
Where she learned how to cook, knit, and dance.

When she got older she started to see visions,  
That she believed were from God to shape her decisions.  
She wanted to tell the prince about the messages that she received,  
But the prince was skeptical and didn't want to be deceived.

After a while, when he finally said, "Okay,"  
Joan knew that she was waiting for this day.  
She dressed up as a man and left her home,  
And she traveled the way there all alone.

When she arrived to where the prince lived,  
He was dressed as someone else so he could see what she did.  
When Joan was able to identify him under his disguise,  
He was convinced that she was, indeed, very wise.

Joan was now allowed to fight for military forces,  
And lead an army of soldiers riding on horses.  
She fought in the Battle of Orléans,  
never wanting to rest,  
And she had many abilities, making her one of the best.

Afterward, she had to go fight in another battle,  
And it was nothing that she couldn't handle.  
Except for this time she fell off her horse and onto the ground,  
And by the Burgundians, she was found.

They kept her hostage for a while in a dark cell,  
And when she was there, they didn't treat her well.  
She was charged with heresy, witchcraft, and more,  
And the Burgundians weren't afraid of the title that she wore.

The prince never tried to save or find Joan,  
Instead, he just left her alone.  
Then, by the English, she was bought,  
And about saving her, the prince didn't have a thought.  
Many would try to hurt the female fighter,  
But Joan protected herself by making her armor tighter.  
People tried to charge her for a crime,  
But they were actually wasting their time.

When finally one day the people put on Joan a charge,  
And the claim that they made wasn't very large.  
She would be burned in public for wearing men's clothing,  
Surrounded by people filled with loathing.

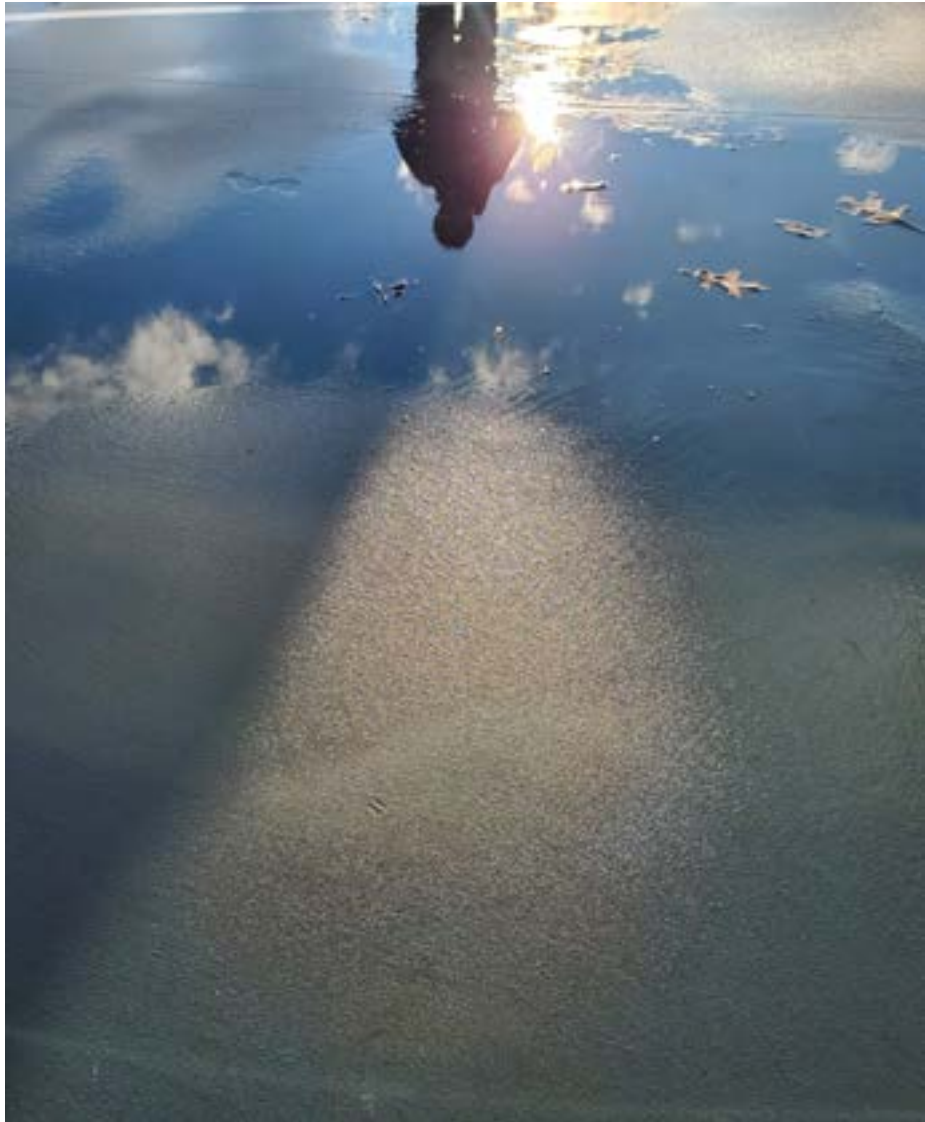
And then on the 30th of May,  
She was brought to a marketplace that day.  
Where they put her up onto a stake,  
It was more than she was able to take.

Years later a trial cleared Joan's name,  
And soon enough she started rising to fame.  
She was the cause for creations of literature and art,  
And her inspiration was only the start.

By Eylul Oktay  
Illustration by Kayla Soriano







Reflection

I can't recognize the person looking back at me on the surface of the calm waters. It almost seems like I'm staring at a stranger. I've never seen the person before, never encountered them—nothing. It's almost like I don't know who I am. Maybe if I look a little harder, I could see that it is me. That beautiful figure I see in the soft ripples of the lake is me. Maybe one day, I'll finally be able to come to the belief that the hair, the clothing, the skin, it isn't who I am. My choices are. My words are. My actions are... maybe that's why I cannot see myself in my own reflection. Because reflections are simply appearances. Who I am is within me.

By Hope Koloszuk  
 Photograph by Phillip Park

## When It's Over

Maybe one day it'll end,  
 We'll meet freedom like an old friend.  
 We'll enjoy the weather and the sky,  
 We won't have a reason left to cry.

Maybe one day we'll be free,  
 There are still so many things to see.  
 We'll be grateful to be outside,  
 We'll be in the open, no one will hide.

Maybe one day we can breathe again,  
 We'll be much more careful then.  
 We'll go to school and to the park,  
 We'll stay outside 'till it's dark.

Maybe one day we'll have nothing left to fear,  
 It'll all be solved and we won't shed another tear.  
 We'll walk and run and jump and bike,  
 Won't let another disaster strike.

Maybe one day we'll find a cure,  
 So we'll stay inside where we're secure,  
 We don't know how much we'll have to endure,  
 So let's be home where it's safe until we're sure.

By Eylul Oktay  
 Photograph by Renee Inan







## Two Face

The fox, seemingly innocent with a flower in her hair,  
She looks at every animal with the most disdainful little glare.  
She moves with grace,  
Hunts her prey with haste.  
Every animal she meets has quite the scare!

By Chloe Kwon  
Illustration by Tatiana Simo



## The City

When you're in the city,  
It's always loud.  
Nowhere quiet  
To be found.

The highways are loud,  
The bridges all crowd.  
Is there any place quiet,  
That won't be in a riot?

All I want is a quiet place,  
To think about my thoughts.  
But I live in the city, where the sound is roaring,  
Where everyone is out and about touring.

I go to the cafe, order a coffee.  
Walk to my apartment, waiting in the lobby.  
I get on the elevator, walk to my room.  
Set my purse on the table, walk into my bedroom.

Get all snug, my coffee in my hand,  
Take a sip and notice the coffee is not bland.  
Even in my apartment, it's not quiet,  
But that's what makes the city, the city.

By Heba Mohamed  
Photograph by Dami Bae





Persimmons

Laying there on the table  
was what I thought was a tomato.  
Except when I took a step closer,  
It didn't look like that at all.  
And I knew that it couldn't be a potato,  
It was way too small.  
It was bright in its color,  
And light in its weight.  
Who could have gotten this, my mother?  
No longer did I want to wait.

I took a knife, and sliced it in half,  
I brought it to my mouth and took a bite.  
I started to laugh.  
It was sweet like candy,  
As I tasted the burst of flavor.  
The person who got this must have been daddy,  
He likes delicious snacks to savor.

So what could it be?  
This delightful treat,  
Lying where everyone can see.  
But no one thought to eat.

During supper, I ask my family,  
"What is this, mother?"  
And she answers happily.  
"It is called a persimmon; it is very sweet."  
And indeed it was.  
"If you would like it, it is yours to eat."

Later that night,  
When everyone was in bed.  
I had made a plan,  
That had formed in my head.

I snuck down the stairs,  
And went to the kitchen.  
And beside a bowl of pears,  
I found the persimmons.  
I took a knife, and sliced it in half,  
I brought it to my mouth and took a bite.  
I started to laugh.

By Eylul Oktay  
Illustration by DaJeong Won



Snow

Snowfall is the greatest form of weather,  
Its white flakes that come down from the heavens.  
Those small flakes are as light as a feather,  
But they can be as heavy as lemons.  
Snow means no school on this happy day.  
Watching many movies and TV shows.  
While I'm lying here in my window bay.  
Rolling it round like a roly-poly,  
You can make it into something creative.  
Give it a nose with something coney,  
And possibly make it innovative.  
I shall not be like one of those to flee,  
I am very joyous and full of glee!

By Grace Osmanski  
Illustration by Ashley Kim

## A Sophisticated Summer Day

It was such a hot day in Turkey on my summer vacation that I bet you could boil some water if you put it on the burning surface of the flaming concrete. The heat was so much that it could not be compared to anything. I felt like I was swimming in a volcano, but it was something even hotter. The bright golden sun was cooking up my skin and it was playing laser tag with real rays. I was the target. As I stood helplessly on my grandparent's luscious porch, the appetizing smell of fresh-made bread filled the house. My train of thought slowly rolled down the tracks in my brain and soon enough my brain shut down. Suddenly, the idea came rushing towards my mind at lightning speed and it hit me – I would ask my family to go to the beach!

My parents and grandparents thought the idea was absolutely great, so we quickly grabbed our bags. In the flick of a second everyone was prepared to leave. They were no longer couch potatoes after hearing my idea. When we arrived at the beach, I stepped on the tiny sand dunes which made my feet feel like they were sizzling. As I walked into the bright blue flowing water, there was a slight breeze in the air that made me cool down. I could see the big pyramid-shaped mountains in the distance. People were either sunbathing, swimming, or playing ball games, and young children were making petite-sized sandcastles decorated with seashells.

Seagulls were surrounding the deep parts of the frostbitten water, desperately looking for a nice snack of fish. I could see the tiny silhouettes of fish and their last moments as they tried to swim farther away from the seagulls. Just then, my cousin dove right into the water, making a loud SPLASH sound. Before I knew it, I was soaked in freezing water and my teeth were chattering from the cold. I was enraged. But before I could go

over to punch him, something caught his eye. Suddenly, he was like a statue, but then he snapped out of it and pointed into the distance. When I thought he could not get any more ridiculous, he started screaming and ran towards where he was pointing. I followed him and saw that he was pointing to an enormous dock not too far away.

I ran like I was in a marathon toward my cousin, but was almost sinking into the sand. When I finally reached the dock, I saw bright red lounge chairs and people of various ages jumping off the dark brown dock. I decided to take a run, but before I could, my cousin pushed me off the edge and I landed harshly in the water. I swam to the shore and tried to catch my breath as I ran after my cousin. He was heading to the spot where my family was waiting.

After I reached family, I found out that they had bought us ice cream. After all of that running, some dessert was the perfect thing to make me feel better. For that moment, I had forgotten that I was angry. I decided to enjoy my delicious chocolaty dessert under our colossal sized umbrella. The umbrella was like a haven for me because I was nowhere near my cousin and I was perfectly safe. I almost got brain freeze as my warm tongue touched the smooth and cold surface of the dripping chocolate ice cream.

I started to doze off for a little, but I was quickly interrupted by my mother calling my name. When I turned around I saw that everyone was packed up and ready to leave. My mom waved her sunburned hand at me, signaling to come and get ready. She told me that it was time to pack up and go home. I did not realize how fast the time went by because I was having so much fun.

I did as I was told and dried myself off with my

orange towel with the sparkling flowers. I slowly hopped in the car, not wanting to leave so soon from the place I loved and belonged. I watched the deep sea devouring the sun as the car slowly glided away from the beach. I hoped that I would return there again.

By Eylul Oktay

Photograph by Gabriela Torres-Valencia





## The Fence

Just a day or two ago, I found a small site,  
Indeed it was simple, but there was a light.  
A light of hope, tranquil, and convenience,  
And all of this embraced me,  
As I entered a place that is now my haven.

The draping trees instantly embrace me,  
A sign that I have been accepted.  
Meanwhile, I lean on a fence so thin yet so strong,  
And watch the lily pads sway from side to side.  
While the hills above me, hold my dear shadow,  
Which had once suffered but is now content.

The atmosphere here is loose and comforting,  
And my soul feels liberated and less congested.  
At last, I can be myself without having to worry,  
No one is here to judge me at all.  
Finally, I found a place where I am free.  
Where I can scream or cry or laugh.

This heaven-like environment  
Blows my problems away,  
Just the moment I took my first breath,  
All the bad feelings flew away,  
My reflection on the crystal clear lake sends me a sign,  
That everything will be okay.

By Fatima Lira  
Photograph by Suh-in Kim



## Spring

During the springtime, all the trees grow,  
They grow with each other and with the winds blow.  
They grow with the sun, shining from up above,  
They grow with the call from an early mourning dove.

During the springtime, all the trees sing,  
They sing with the laughter that all the children bring.  
They sing with the flowers and their beautiful hues  
They sing with the ocean and its variety of blues.

During the springtime, all the trees hold hands,  
They hold hands without any demands,  
They hold hands with their blossoms and blooms,  
They hold hands while chasing away their dooms.

During the springtime, the trees grow,  
They sing, they hold hands.  
But one thing that we should all know,  
Is that the seasons come and go.

The tree will say goodbye,  
And its leaves will slowly die.  
But it will wait patiently  
for the next year,  
And during that wait,  
It will not shed a tear.

Then a day will come,  
When the tree can rise once more,  
A day will come,  
To wake the trees from their bore.  
Spring will come to revive the trees,  
And the wind will start to blow its breeze.

Then once again, the trees can grow,  
They can sing, hold hands.  
Springtime will come before you know,  
Because the seasons come and go.

By Eylul Oktay  
Photograph by Isabella Martinez



Happy Birthday, Earth!

It all started with a question.

“What super special day is it today?”

Earth asked Mars this question. It was a chilly, windless night in space, and everyone was minding their own business. Except for Earth, of course. Earth always loved trying to get to know the planets around him, even if some weren’t so willing. When Earth asked this question to Mars, Mars promptly responded–

“Go away, I don’t know.”

Earth didn’t mind. He had his humans try to reach Mars constantly, so it was only fair that Mars wanted some personal space. He thought of tugging her ponytail out of spite, but decided against it. He’d leave Mars alone, but would tell her later after the special day had passed.

Earth decided to quickly backtrack to his other neighbors, Venus and Mercury. Venus was very tan, and Mercury even more, as they lived very close to Mr. Sun. They were considerably shorter than Earth, but minded their own business in their warm homes. As Mercury and Venus were neighbors, today they were hanging out together on an asteroid belt.

“Mercury, Venus!” Earth cried cheerfully, rushing towards them. “I have a question for the two of you!”

“Oh, hi Earth!” called Mercury, with a sing-song greeting from Venus.

Earth arrived and stopped his flying, landing in front of the two smaller planets.

“What super special day is it today?”

Mercury tilted his head at him. Venus’ eyebrows cocked up.

“Well gee, I dunno,” said Venus.

“I got no idea,” said Mercury. “What super special day is it today?”

Earth felt a tang of sadness, but didn’t let it show. “Oh, nothing that special,” He waved his hand dismissively. “Really, I’ll tell you later.”

Venus shrugged while Mercury gave two bright thumbs up. “Okay,” they both said.

Earth waved goodbye and shot back the other way... past Venus, past his own house, and past Mars. He accidentally overshot his destination towards Jupiter and wound up bumping into her.

“Oh, why greetings Earth,” said Jupiter calmly. “Why such a rush?”

“Oh hey, Jupiter!” greeted Earth jovially. “Do you know what super special day it is today?”

Jupiter didn’t hear that, as Earth spoke incredibly fast due to his excessive flying. “What?” she asked. Earth took a deep breath, and repeated–

“What super special day is it today?”

Jupiter blinked. “Well gee, Earth, I just got no idea! Sorry.” Jupiter smiled a bit awkwardly.

Earth felt sadder. Had really no one realized? He spoke to nearly every planet in the entire solar system!

Earth hopped on over to The Nebula, where Uranus, Saturn, and Neptune were picking up little Pluto from the star daycare. Beautiful particles of gas and dust swam around the baby stars as they developed all their skills for the space world outside the swirl.

“Uranus, Saturn, Neptune, Pluto!” exclaimed Earth, making his way towards them quickly but carefully, as there were many stars by his feet.

All three of them turned their heads. With a chorus of greetings undecipherable by ear, Earth assumed they were happy to see him.

“What super special day is it today?”

Saturn looked to Uranus, Uranus looked to Neptune, Neptune looked to Saturn, and Pluto looked to all of them.

Saturn moved her pretty eyes back to Earth. “Sorry, sweetie, we don’t know. It’s Wednesday, I guess?”

Earth, full of despair, told them he was sorry for bothering them. He bid them a nice day, and walked away from The Nebula.

*Mars, Venus, Mercury, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Pluto?* Earth thought. How could they forget this day?

Earth slowly trudged back to his home, but when he opened the door...

“SURPRISE!”

Earth jumped back in shock, his mouth wide open. It was his roommate!

“Happy birthday, Earth!” Moon cheered. She was very excited, with blue and green streamers, party hats, and cake!

That was when Earth realized that Moon wasn’t alone.

“What!” Earth gasped. “Could it be?”

“Mars, Venus, Mercury, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto?!” Earth exclaimed. Everyone Earth knew was in his house, dressed up in all shades of green and blue. Even Mars, the mopiestic and pessimistic of all the planets, was wearing a party hat herself.

“We fooled you!” laughed Pluto, playing with a round balloon. “You know we’d never forget the day dedicated to you!”

Earth was so happy! The rest of the day was spent cutting a cake, dancing to music, opening presents, and telling stories about Earth. After all, it was his birthday! They told jokes and laughed all day, and Earth couldn’t ask for better friends.

By Ava Huzovic  
Illustration by Kayla Soriano





## Sunflower

All I want is a sunflower for my mom who has no more power. She stays in the hospital, lying there alone and I am stuck in a sunflower field searching for the thing she loves the most.

When my mother was just a little girl, her mother and father were so happy in love until something heartbreaking happened that made their life feel wrong. Her father, sick with no medicine to cure... how much time he had left, no one was sure. But he remained cheerful, with no day spent with the blues.

Finally, after a dreadful five months, her father's time had come, leaving them with nothing more than a sunflower. What does the sunflower represent, you may be asking? It was his favorite flower, bright and yellow and he brought his family one on the first day of every month. Her mother always kept them safe and sound, and somewhere special where they wouldn't get harmed. On the day of his death, ironically the first day of March, my mother and grandmother each got a sunflower.

Years had passed, and my family was still grieving. My mother noticed her mother getting more and more ill, which led to her getting diagnosed with heart disease. My mother felt like her world was crumbling down with no one to turn to, and no one around... just her and the dried sunflowers.

She stayed by her mother's bedside for the next two weeks, sobbing and sobbing all those nights, trying not to show it when her mother was awake. One morning, when she went to wake up her mother, she realized that her mother could wake up no more. There was no one left in her small family.

...So here I am in the sunflower field and I realize I am in the wrong place – going back to my mother's stories, she once told me they were kept in a special haven. I rush back home and run into her room. The memory of when I was young, and how I watched her get ready comes rushing back into my mind. I remember seeing a yellow box in her closet and asked what was in it. She told me it was a secret and maybe one day it would be revealed. I grab the box, rush to the hospital, and run into her room. There is the sound of two heartbeats and then all of a sudden– a flatline. She is gone. I sit beside her, slowly open the box and put one sunflower to her heart, then, one to mine.

By Heba Mohamed and Dami Bae  
Illustration by Renee Lee



## Save the Earth

If you see trash on the streets  
Or plastic in the majestic oceans and seas  
Whenever you feel like it's never going to stop  
Remember all the things you can do to help

Each person can help  
To restore the air we breath  
To plant the beloved trees that help us live

Anything you do matters  
No matter how big or small  
The Earth is our only home  
So take one day out of the year  
To help keep our Earth alive

By Jenny Kim  
Photograph by Brandan Choe

