

# Inception



Fall/Winter

## **Inception Staff**

**Cover Artist**  
Samuel Yun

**Grade 8**  
Deja Rose Fernandez  
Chaerin Kim  
Yenni Myung  
Camila Peña-Marte  
Ashley Sorto  
Kelly Wang

**Grade 7**  
Victor Amaritei  
Edward An  
Mia Cruz  
Lara Gandour  
Ashley Gomes  
Sebastian Gomez  
Olivia Hong  
Rebekah Kim  
Eunice Lee  
Sofia Martinez  
Noor Mohamed  
Sofia Narvaez  
Shailene Nuñez  
Diane Park  
Sara Prtoric  
Samuel Yun

**Advisers**  
Mrs. Teresa Becker  
Ms. Courtney Goch  
Mr. Matthew Mulholland

**Grade 6**  
Sophia Benton  
Eftihia Christou  
Ava Huzovic  
Renee Inan  
Alyssa Kim  
Marianne Kim  
Nicole Kotchman  
Isabella Martinez  
Nina Shehigian  
Abesera Tessema  
Kyle Yastangacal

# **INCEPTION**

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Principal: Mr. G. Angelo Bellizzi  
Assistant Principal: Mr. Michael Lennox  
Vice Principal: Ms. Laretta Thrower

Inception Literary Magazine is designed to showcase the amazing talents of Slocum Skewes' young writers and artists in grades 6 through 8. It's 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 owe a debt of gratitude to the teachers who assisted with the editing process and we appreciate their level of expertise and advice.

We would especially like to thank Mr. G. Angelo Bellizzi for his unwavering support.

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## His Name Was Poe

His name was Edgar Allan Poe,  
Some of you may never know,  
His really tragic life  
Filled with misery and strife.

His mother died—  
His father didn't cry.  
He went away,  
With nothing to say.

He was left an orphan,  
Taken in by the Allans.  
His new mother loved him,  
His new father hated him.

He was sent to West Point  
But he hated that joint.  
He wanted to  
Draw and write  
Poems by the moonlight.

He gambled,  
He scrambled,  
He got kicked out,  
He wanted to shout.

Later Mrs. Allan died,  
Mr. Allan had more pride.  
He kicked Edgar out without a care,  
Refusing him a penny to spare.

Edgar cried—  
He drank,  
He sank,  
His mind went blank.



Until he met a beautiful girl  
Whose smile was brighter than a pearl.  
Her name was Virginia Clemm;  
She became his world, his gem!

He started writing,  
He stopped fighting.  
The Raven, Tell-Tale Heart,  
Works of true art!

He and Virginia got  
hitched.  
But then his fortune  
switched.  
She died of tuberculosis—  
At that time  
A deadly diagnosis.

He cried  
When she died.  
No consolation,  
Only desperation.

He wrote Annabel Lee  
Longing to be carefree.  
His life would soon be gone,  
But his legacy of work will go on.

By Mia Cruz  
Illustration by Samuel Yun



## The Lonely Homebound Turtle

Once there was a turtle  
Swimming alone in the sea,  
Playing carefree,  
Frolicking with glee.

Then came the seagulls  
Swooping down,  
Snatching that poor turtle,  
His world was upside down.

While flying in the seagull's beak  
Twisting, turning, and squirming,  
He couldn't help but take a peek  
As his world was swirling.

Then, down, down he went,  
Free falling towards the ocean—  
Heart racing rapidly during his descent  
And landed in a graceful motion.

The turtle swam back  
Towards his home and family.  
He could not get sidetracked  
With his newfound temerity.

Now there are four turtles  
Swimming in the sea  
They are happy and carefree,  
What a lovely family!

By Victor Amaritei  
Illustration by Samuel Yun





## Love Lost

Your eyes sparkle like the morning dew,  
 Your hair as golden as the sun,  
 Your heart bigger than the milky way,  
 Your style more unique than the stars above.  
 I the fool, that critiqued your appearance.  
 I the fool, that thought you were not worthy  
 of my love.  
 I the fool, bloodthirsty for attention,  
 I the selfish, too afraid to love.  
 Us the imperfect, yet perfect for each other,  
 Us the different, too much for some.  
 Us the ignored, shunned by strangers.  
 Us the doomed, destined to break apart.  
 Me the selfish, who chose others over you,  
 Me the fool, who realized too late how great  
 you were.  
 Me the adult, longing for the past.  
 Me the loser, because I lost you.

By Sofia Narvaez  
 Illustration by Rebekah Kim



## Howell the Cowl

There once was a creature named Howell,  
 A mix between a cow and an owl.  
 He was like no other.  
 He had three whole udders.  
 In fact, he was really quite fowl.

By Sara Prtoric  
 Illustration by Camila Peña-Marte





### The Red Cardinal

What's that splash of red I see?  
 Could it be?  
 A red cardinal  
 Perched upon that tree?

Yes, it seems  
 It's the red cardinal I see  
 Perched upon a tree  
 Admiring this winter scene.

In the snow, in the cold.  
 You decided to stay,  
 While everyone else flew away.  
 I wonder of your ways.

The white of the snow,  
 The green of the trees,  
 Yet, nothing that the eye can see,  
 Can be as bright as thee, this winter's eve.

Oh red cardinal—  
 What made you stay?  
 Well, at least let me say,  
 You have made my day!

By Shailene Nuñez  
 Illustration by Olivia Hong



### Fall Is Here

Fall is here—  
 The time for you to warm up  
 And take out your mittens, scarves,  
 and sweaters.  
 The leaves change to beautiful colors,  
 Shades of red, yellow, and orange.  
 But don't forget to rake the leaves  
 And then, together,  
 We can jump in them like frogs,  
 Just like we did when we were young.  
 Strangely, the other trees' leaves don't fall,  
 And the spiky needles still dance  
 and shake in the wind.  
 Wait, what's that inside the tree?  
 A small squirrel getting ready to hibernate,  
 Much like how many other creatures would.

Inside a home, an old pumpkin  
 has been carved,  
 And an acorn-scented candle fills the air.  
 The sudden darkness brings a chill to the air  
 As time marches closer to winter.  
 So I walk back inside,  
 Settle near the fireplace,  
 With a blanket wrapped around—  
 Because that's what happens  
 When fall is here.

By Sebastian Gomez  
 Illustration by Camila Peña-Marte



Athens

The tourists flood your streets  
 For they can't comprehend your beauty.  
 Athens, your ruins are the trophies you have kept  
 From the fights the world picked with you.  
 Your people protected you back then—  
 As they still do now.  
 Our love for you will always linger,  
 Even if we are far apart.  
 Your flag waves proudly  
 And the people proudly yell,  
 "This is our country! You will never take it!"  
 And to this day, the rest of the world will know  
 To never pick a fight with Athens!

By Eftihia Christou  
 Photograph by Eftihia Christou

## Eyes

I look at the teacher,  
 Hoping she doesn't call me,  
 But I know deep down that my time had come.  
 She calls my name next  
 And as I walk I feel eyes on me.  
 I try to look away and ignore the feeling  
 But this task is impossible.

When I reach the front  
 I cannot ignore the eyes,  
 The stares,  
 The gazes.  
 I try to speak,  
 But it comes out as a squeak,  
 I try again,  
 And the words get caught in my throat.  
 Everyone is looking,  
 Everyone is judging me,  
 And the world is spinning around me...  
 I can hear my heartbeat in my ears.

I take a deep breath,  
 I look around at my fellow classmates  
 And see their reassuring smiles  
 Like they know what I'm going through.  
 I look at my friends  
 Giving me a thumbs up,  
 Cheering me on.

My shoulders relax,  
 My face softens,  
 My mind goes back  
 To all the times I practiced this.

I look at my notes,  
 Take a deep breath  
 And I start reading.

By Alyssa Kim  
 Illustration by Chaerin Kim





## Childhood

Childhood, you have left me for another.  
I've grown now, just like many others.  
Why would you leave me...  
What have I done?  
Did I hurt you, my dear loved one?

The love that we've shared  
Is stronger than all the metals on Earth.  
Never have we put a fight in between us.  
You comforted me whenever I whined,  
You taught me how to be just.  
And yet, after the time we've spent together,  
Still you must leave to comfort another  
Who longingly awaits you  
With outspread arms  
And a soul made purely for you.

You've made me joyful, and sad,  
And even angry at times—  
Soothed me through countless night-times,  
Shown me what it is like to be a child,  
Shown me how it feels to be larger than life.

From the first smile I cracked  
To my first scraped knee,  
For the snug, innocent feeling in my stomach,  
I can thank only thee.

Although our souls and hearts have parted  
I will always remember you  
As the best friend I have ever had—  
No one will take away my memories of you.

Now, as adulthood awaits,  
And your familiar, carefree feeling gone,  
I miss you so very much  
With a strong and tightening bond.

By Victor Amaritei  
Photograph by Deja Rose Fernandez

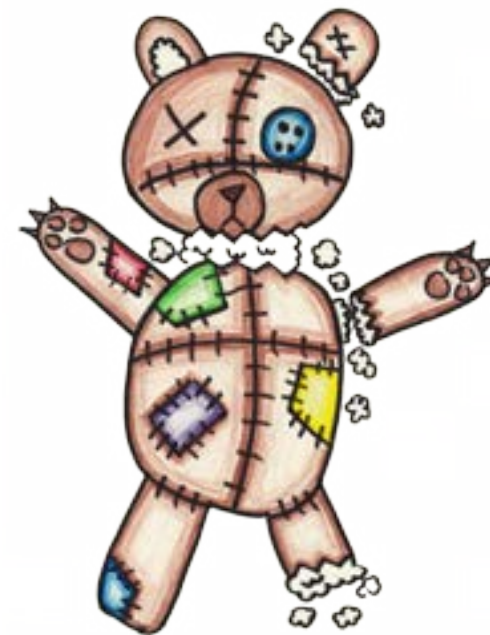
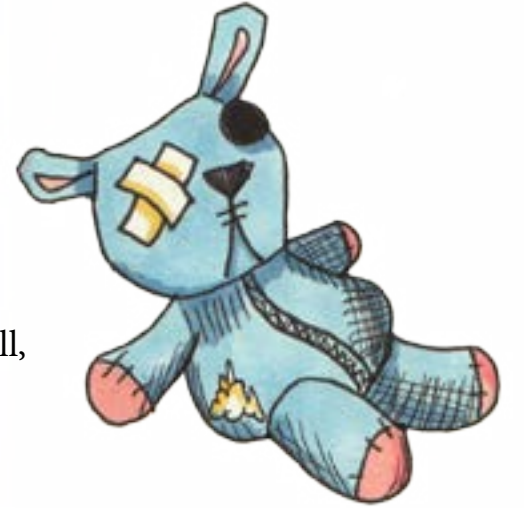


## Childhood Days

My childhood days were cheerful and fun.  
It was a life full of adventure,  
It was...my childhood.  
Oh, how I miss the days when I basked under the sun  
And played games with the neighborhood kids,  
When I would come home late in the day with stories to tell,  
And the smile on my mother's face—  
Those were the days of my childhood.

My childhood days were worry free,  
No job, no stress, no place to be.  
I often wish to go back to those good old days  
When I was young and full of wonder,  
A time when I always felt safe.  
I was protected— the bad stayed away from me.  
Those were the days of my childhood.

By Edward An  
Illustrations by Noor Mohamed and  
Camila Peña-Marte





## The Quest

CJ was like any other kid his age. He learned the same folk tales told by the same elder. He played the same games as the other kids and he imagined what the world outside the reef was like. Oh, did I forget to mention? CJ is a merboy.

The elder from the reef was the only living merman that had gone outside the reef. He told the merchildren tales about big and small fish. He told stories about plants that would snatch you up and hold you until you stopped struggling. He spoke of great big fish that were as large as the gray clouds that floated over the reef.

These interested CJ the most. He couldn't count how many times he had tried to swim away from home, only to be caught by his mother or father. No one had ever told him why they weren't allowed to leave. Whenever he asked the adults they all hung their heads low and didn't answer. So CJ went to the person who everyone went to when they had a question. He went to the elder.

"Sir, no one has ever answered my question although it is a very simple one," CJ said.

"Well, if it's so simple tell me," the elder said with a small smile on his face.

"Why aren't we allowed outside the reef?" CJ asked the question that he had wanted to be answered for years. Like the others the elder hung his head low, but, he was the first who answered.

"You see, my dear boy, we merfolk once had a beautiful queen. She was the finest mermaid in all of the seven seas," he started. CJ listened closely, not wanting to miss a single word.

"We would swim to the deepest depths

of the ocean to get her gifts as beautiful as her. One day she swam outside of the reef to get a gift for all of us, to show her gratitude. The only problem was that she never came back. The myths say that the moment the ocean saw the chance to keep our beautiful queen it took it," the elder said, a mournful look etched upon his face.

CJ couldn't believe what he was hearing—the ocean had taken the queen! "CJ, my boy, that is why no one wants to go outside the reef, they don't want to meet the fate of our queen." The elder finished the story and swam towards his home. CJ only had one thing on his mind. He had to get outside of the reef.

That night, when his family was asleep, CJ swam outside and towards the edge of the reef. He thought about what the elder had said. He wondered if he really should go outside. Then his plan swam through his mind and he once again became determined to achieve his goal. He was going to save the queen. If she was as beautiful as the elder said she was then the ocean surely kept her alive.

He swam past the border and felt the chilly water engulf him. He looked back at his house and smiled. He kissed his hand and then waved it. I'll be back, don't worry, he thought. He kept on swimming and swimming. Though he didn't know what he was looking for, he knew that when he found it he would know. Then, in the distance, he saw a big gray cloud and the sun cast an orange light. Except this cloud wasn't above the water like the others, it was in the water. Panic shot through CJ's body, as he realized it was the first living thing he had seen outside the reef.

It swam above him and he had to crane his neck back to get a good view of it. Its black beady eyes were staring forward as if it had a destination. Its massive fins propelled it for-

ward causing a swirl of bubbles to form. CJ stared in amazement at the creature. He had heard his parents talking about this creature with the elder. They called it a whale.

CJ shook his head and thought about what he had to do. He looked back at the whale one more time and then swam forward.

In the distance he saw a white glow that was as bright as the sun. He squinted, but he still couldn't see what it was. He swam forward forgetting all about his task. He swam and swam until he reached the white glow. What he saw before him was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen. There was a magnificent throne made out of marble and the finest blue coral in the ocean. Sitting on the throne was a beautiful mermaid with fair skin and light blonde hair. Her tail was adorned with jewels and her head was decorated with a crown that sparkled like the morning sun. She smiled at CJ and swam toward him.

"You have ventured very far from home, my child. You are a very brave soul. I know why you are here, but unfortunately, you will not be able to achieve your task," she said with an airy voice.

CJ was confused. Why wouldn't he be able to take her back home? "Why can't I achieve my task?" he asked with a puzzled expression.

"I do not wish to go back to the reef," the queen began. CJ was shocked, "I do not wish to go because, I want to stay here and search for young, brave souls like yours. I want to see how much of our kind is truly beautiful on the inside. The ocean is a vast and beautiful place. I want you to go back and tell everyone that it is



okay to venture away from the reef," the queen explained with a smile. CJ nodded, still not fully understanding, but he did not want to argue with the queen.

"So, I must go back home once again? Without you?" CJ asked.

"Yes, but, before you go," she swam down from her throne and towards CJ. "Take this as a token of your bravery." She handed him a necklace made from black seaweed. A charm of a whale was attached to the seaweed. CJ began his journey back home, excited that he too had a story to tell.

By Eftihia Christou  
Illustration by Ashley Sorto



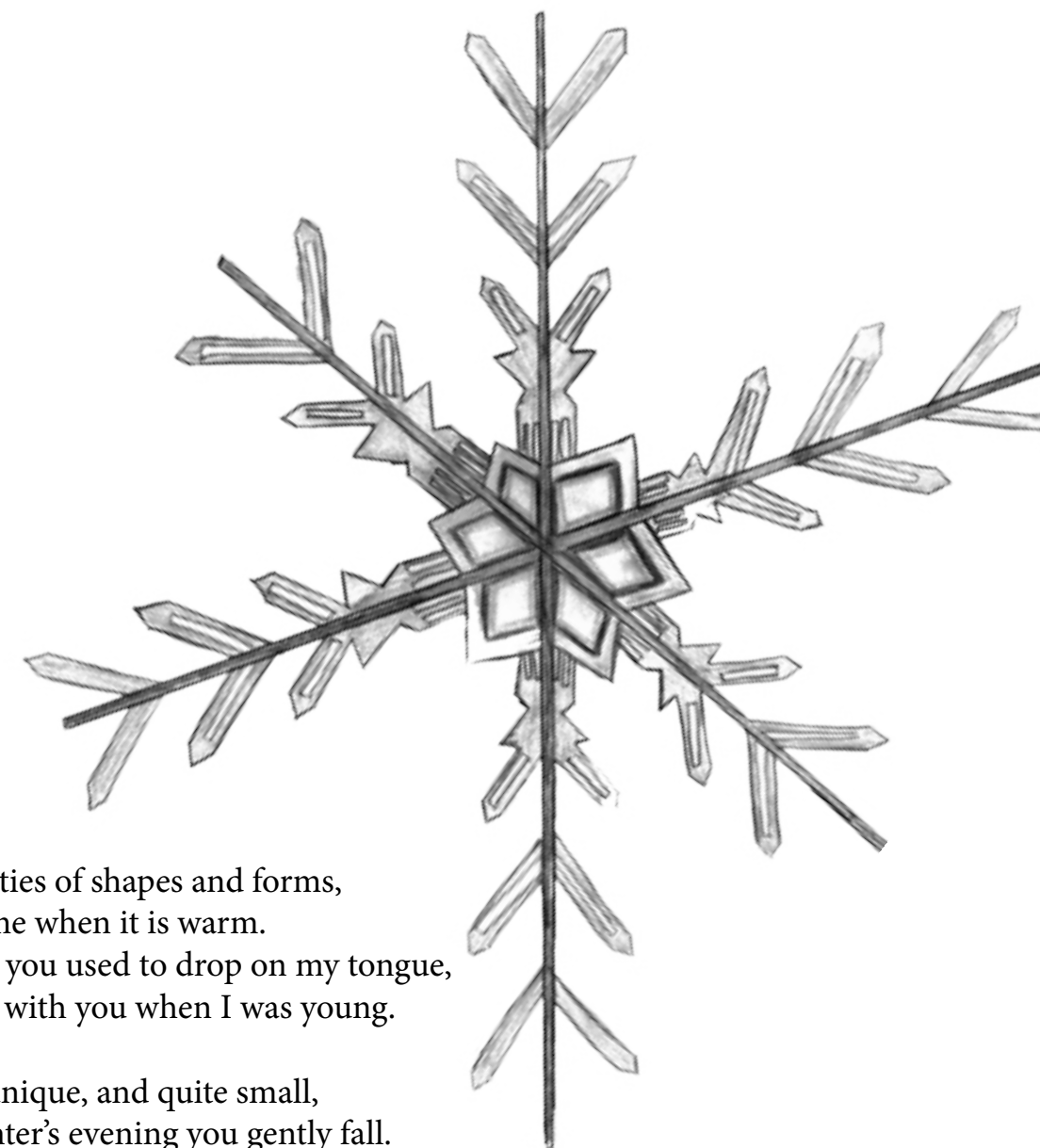
## The Play

The point of her toe,  
The stretch of her hand.  
She sautés and relevés.\*  
You watch her leap  
Then gracefully land.  
Her every move tells a story,  
A beautiful play.  
She never falters.  
And the audience watches her,  
In awe.  
You hear whispers  
Of people calling her the queen.

With her head held high  
She curtsies  
And bows,  
Knowing that  
Everyone loved  
Ballerinas now.

By Ashley Gomes  
Illustration by Kyle Yastangacal

\* Sautés- a jump off both feet,  
landing in the same position.  
Relevés- a classical term



## Snowflakes

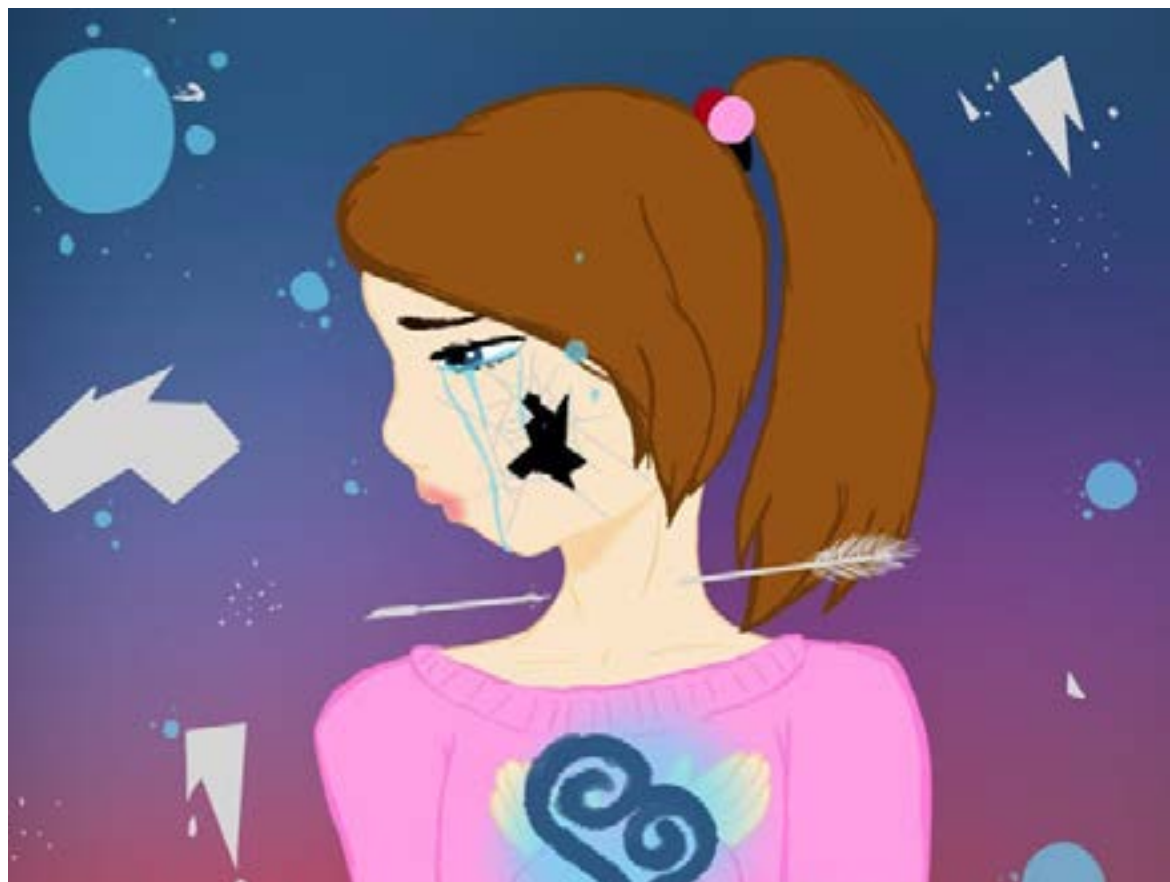
You come in varieties of shapes and forms,  
But you never come when it is warm.  
I remember when you used to drop on my tongue,  
And how I played with you when I was young.

You are delicate, unique, and quite small,  
And on a cold winter's evening you gently fall.  
You are a soft blanket on the ground below–  
There is nothing more lovely than new fallen snow.

I would now like to express my gratitude to you,  
For all the fun things I can do,  
Like building a snowman, riding a sleigh,  
Or laying on you and making snow angels all day.

By Noor Mohamed  
Illustration by Noor Mohamed





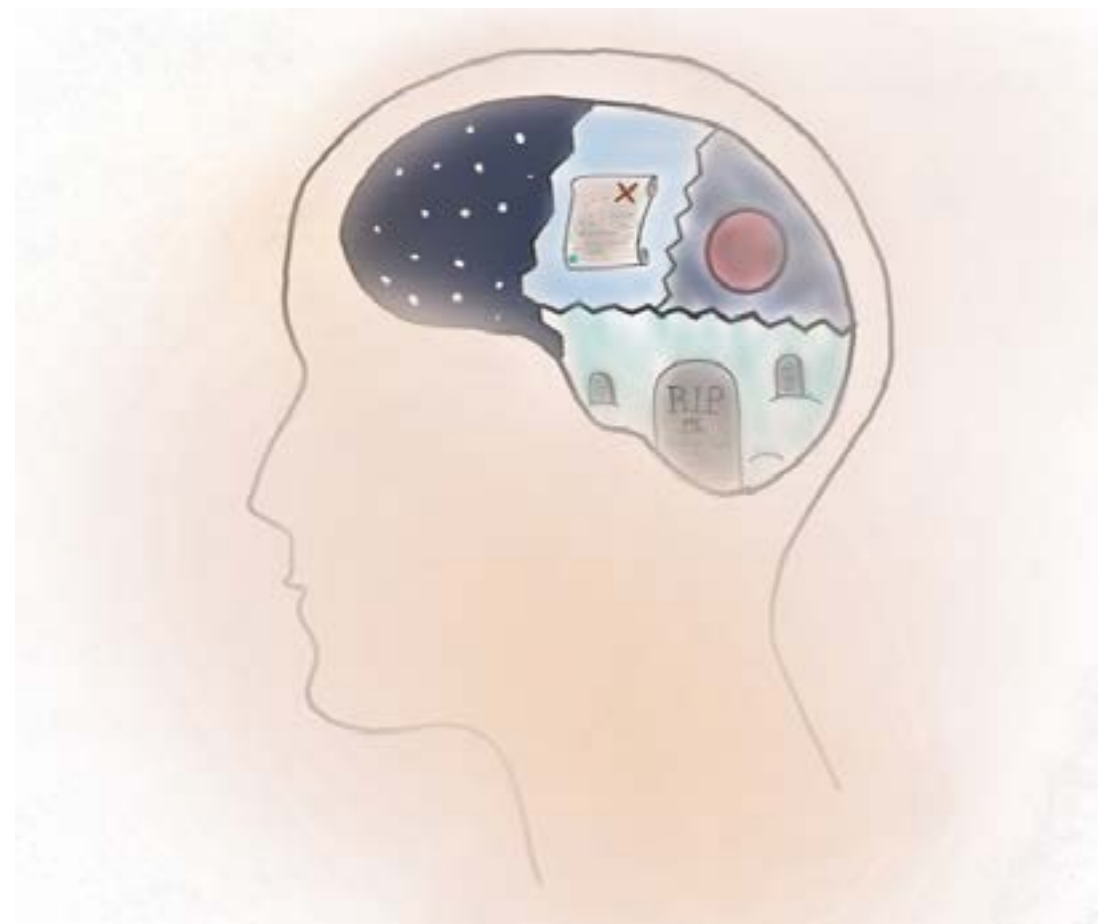
## The Dare

I've been hearing these voices inside my head. They tell me that I'm not good enough... that I don't fit in. But then...I saw you. You turned my world around. My silent heart started beating like never before when it sensed you were near. I wished I was around you, near you. Sadly, you had someone else. I never understood relationships, but I somehow sensed that you did. I wished I knew how it felt to be loved and cared for. I longed to be the person who showed you love and affection. I thought that would never happen.

Then one day, it did happen. I confessed my love for you and you said you loved me back. It was the best feeling. My heart soared. Then one day it ended. I found out you had been dared by a group of friends. Dared to date me, dared to love me, dared to hurt me!

I changed. I became scared. Scared to love, scared to date, scared it would happen again. I was fragile. You broke me to pieces without caring at all. That's what hurt me the most. You didn't care. After you I have never been the same. After you I don't dare to love. I don't dare to feel. I don't dare to trust.

By Deja Rose Fernandez  
Illustration by Marianne Kim



## Life

Every day I see the light fade  
Every day I see more darkness  
Every day I become afraid  
Of what is to come

Life can create a wonderful experience  
Or life can be destroyed  
Life can be taken for granted  
But life should be embraced

You see people passing by  
And in the blink of an eye  
They are gone  
Wandering in another world  
Trying to find who they are

They await this journey  
That cannot be described  
But it is called by one word—  
Life

By Lara Gandour  
Illustration by Isabella Martinez

## My Umbrella

I hear the raindrops hitting my umbrella  
I hear them hitting rooftops nearby

I see businessmen briskly walking  
I see the bus passing me by

The rain brings the aroma of flowers  
Winter has left without a goodbye

Gone are the cold nights drinking hot chocolate  
Replaced by morning dew and butterflies

The rain is gone and left behind  
A rainbow arching across the sky

By Nina Shehigian and Alyssa Kim  
Illustration by Alyssa Kim



## A Stargirl Poem

You are why I look forward to waking up in the morning.  
Your heart is pure, and your soul always soaring.  
You are unlike the ones we are surrounded by,  
And I love you because of that, but why?

Because you have changed the way I look at life,  
Because you taught me how to be kind,  
Because you released my spirit from its cell,  
Because we get along so well.

You are why I look forward to waking up in the morning.  
Your heart is pure, and your soul always soaring.  
You are unlike the ones we are surrounded by,  
And I love you because of that, but why?

Because of all the moments we've cherished,  
Because of all the secrets we've shared,  
Because of all the places we've been,  
Because of that kiss, I am fully aware.

You are why I look forward  
to waking up in the morning.  
Your heart is pure, and your soul always soaring.  
You are unlike the ones we are surrounded by,  
And I love you because of that, but why?

Because I can now live life to its fullest,  
Because when you're next to me,  
I am strongest,  
Because I need you,  
Because I love you.

By Victor Amaritei  
Illustration by Ashley Gomes





## The Summer Disaster

I thought it was going to be an uneventful summer; one filled with the typical summer outings my family and I usually enjoy doing. My friend Allison and I were playing catch on the beach while my dog Lucy followed the brightly colored beach ball we were tossing as if she were watching a tennis match. Allison's parents were sitting on the front porch with my parents reminiscing of the good old days. I loved these lazy days of summer. I also loved our beach house. It was located on the end of a cul-de-sac and a bit isolated from the others, but it was right on the beach. It was usually filled with people, But today however, we were the only people on the long stretch of sand.

In a blink of eye, the sun that had been shining brightly disappeared behind huge, ominous clouds. The water that had been calm just minutes before was now getting very rough.

"Amia! Allison!" my mom called us. "Come inside. It looks like it's going to rain!"

Reluctantly, we went back to the house hoping that the rain would quickly pass.

After two hours of patiently waiting for the rain to abate with no luck and countless games of monopoly with Allison, the perfect summer day I had been hoping for was being washed away along with the dunes on the beach.

"When is this storm going to end?" I asked getting a bit impatient. "I am tired of spending these summer days doing boring stuff!" I was whining and I knew it. "I want some excitement in my life!"

I demanded.

"Wait!" I heard my father say as he tilted his head listening for something.

"What is it dad?"

"Stop, listen. Do you hear that sound?"

All of a sudden we didn't just hear a sound, we felt the entire house shake.

"Everyone go to the basement!" My dad yelled as he grabbed me by the arm and steered me toward the steep steps that led to the basement. It was also where my mother, Allison and her family were headed. As we were heading down, I saw the roof of our beach house being torn apart.

"I think it's a hurricane!" Allison's dad said.

"A hurricane?" my mother asked, "I didn't think it was coming this way until the end of the week."

"I know, that is why we came to spend the day with you guys today," said Allison's mom. "We would have never come if we thought we would get hit with a hurricane".

I sensed that the adults were worried. It seemed that the hurricane caught everyone by surprise.

"Well, at least we are all together and safe." I heard my mother say as Allison and I were about to reach the entrance to the basement. But that was all I heard because just then we all began to realize that this hurricane had brought along an even more dangerous companion- a tornado!

In an instant I felt myself being sucked up while the wind, wet sand and rain pelted every inch of me. I realized I was going to lose consciousness but not before I reached out for my dog Lucy who was afraid and confused as she too was being

tossed about. Then nothing...

When I finally regained consciousness, I was wet, bruised and confused. I was in a field far from home. Luckily, Penny was with me. She was scared, confused but unharmed. A few feet from me I heard Allison stirring.

"Where are we?" she asked scared and confused.

"I have no idea. Are you okay? I think we must have been thrown from the house."

"Amia, I'm scared. What about our parents? Are they okay?" She was beginning to panic.

"I don't know but we are going to find out. Can you walk?"

"Yes, I'm bruised, but nothing is broken."

"Okay, let's try to find a road or something before it gets dark." I didn't want to show Allison that I was scared, but I was. I was worried about being lost, about the fact that it was getting dark, and more importantly, I was scared about what may have happened to our parents.

After what seemed an eternity, we found a road and we began to follow it. I was hoping we would run into someone who would help us. I never realized just how isolated our summer house was from the rest of the island. Just as we were about to give up hope, we saw the flashing lights of a police car.

Allison and I began to jump up and down we were both so happy. As we approached them I realized

they knew our names. They had been looking for us.

Apparently, our parents had been okay. As soon as the tornado passed, they had gone looking for us. When they could not find us, they contacted the police.

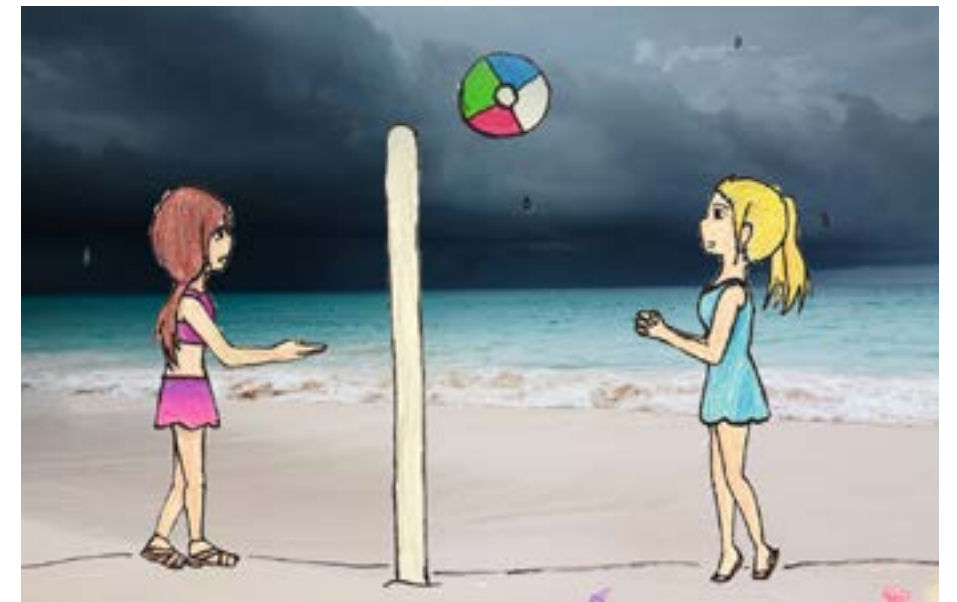
The reunion was mushy with a lot of hugging and crying. We were all safe and together. Our parents wanted to know what had happened. We gave them all the details adding a few embellishments here and there. Our house was okay with the exception of a whole on the roof. My parents said the insurance would cover it and I should not worry about it.

"Well Amia, do you still want more excitement in your life?" my father asked jokingly.

"No! No! No!, I just want another perfectly boring day playing with my friends on the beach!"

"Well, then, what are you waiting for?"

By Kelly Wang  
Illustration by Diane Park





## City Lights

The city lights  
That shine so bright,  
To see them shine in the night  
It's always quite the sight.

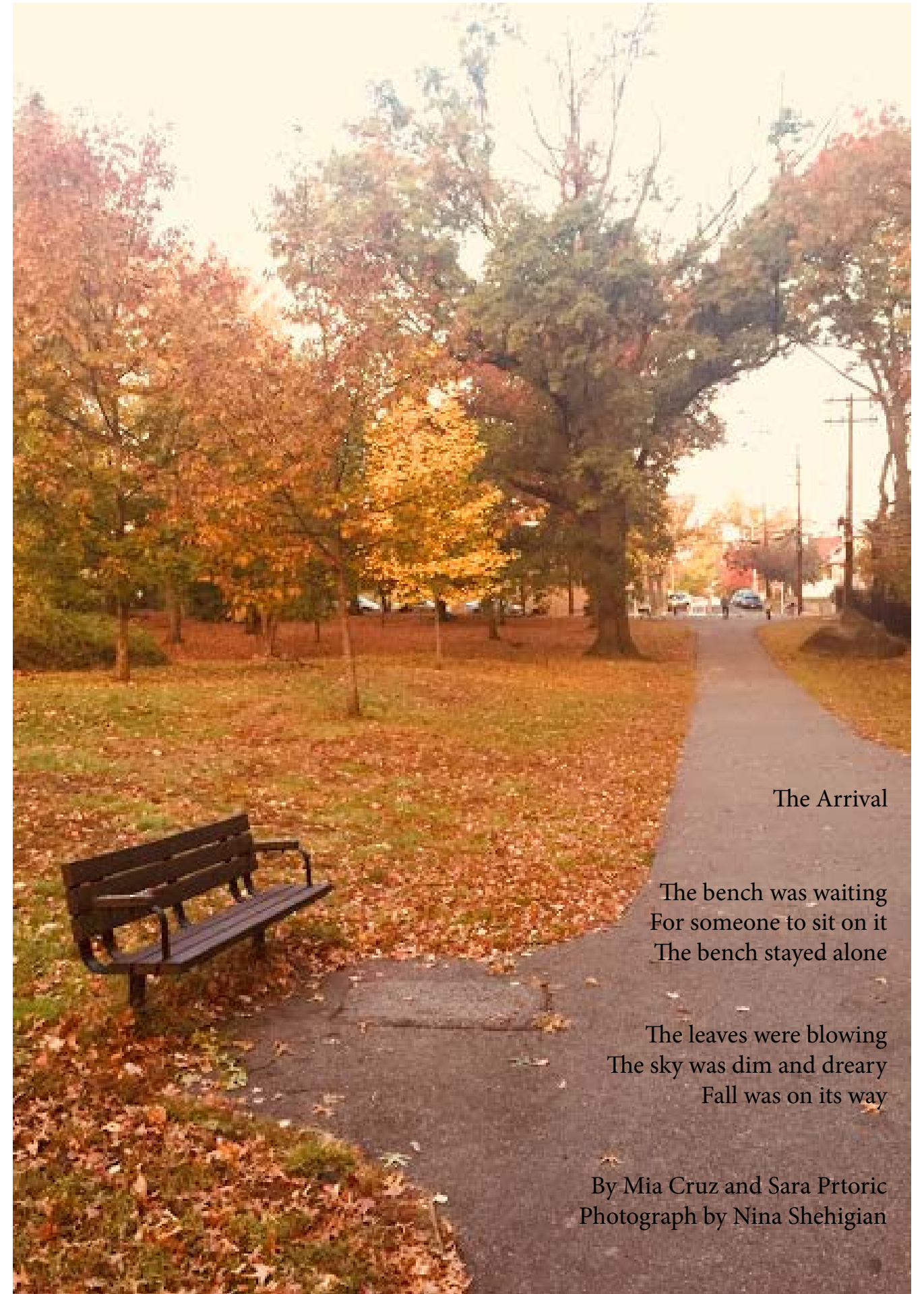
It's like the stars  
From afar  
Put on a show so bright,  
It just seems so right.

During the day  
Your lights are away,  
Instead the sun shines  
The shine far brighter than thine.

During the night  
The sun's bright light no longer shines,  
So you no longer hide  
But instead you shine.

Oh, city lights  
Your sparkle, your light,  
You bring me such delight.  
So please,  
Continue to shine bright.

By Shailene Nuñez  
Photograph by Isabella Martinez



## The Arrival

The bench was waiting  
For someone to sit on it  
The bench stayed alone

The leaves were blowing  
The sky was dim and dreary  
Fall was on its way

By Mia Cruz and Sara Prtoric  
Photograph by Nina Shehigian



## The Apple and the Slipper

Cinderella had some mean step-sisters!  
Her sisters just loved bossing her around while bathing in rich mud.  
Feeling bullied, crying Cinderella called for her fairy godmother.  
She came visiting in her red riding hood, smelling like fresh baked cookies.  
Holding a basket of goodies, the fairy godmother said to Cinderella,  
“Give these to my dear friend, you will find him in a race with a hare.”  
So Cinderella rushed to find the tortoise and the elderly reptile replied,  
“I can’t have sugar. Give these to the witch with the house made of candy.”  
Cinderella arrived as the time was tick-ticking closer to 12:00 and to her sixteenth birthday.

The wily witch was waiting with a wooden spinning wheel and a Cheshire’s smile.  
“Hello my dear,”

she said suspiciously with sugar syrup seeping through her crooked teeth–

“Care to help me with my spinning?”

Being the nice person she was, Cinderella helped her only to be  
tricked and pricked  
and drawn into a deep sleep.

Thankfully, Hansel and Gretel came to the witch’s house,  
while Cinderella was about to be cooked.

They pulled her out of the thick dough after feeding the witch a red apple,  
a red red apple

Hansel and Gretel dragged Cinderella to the three bears’ cottage.  
They laid her down on the baby bear’s just-right bed and went to eat.  
Unfortunately, they ate the bears’ just-right porridge.  
The brawny bears’ came back only to find Hansel and Gretel  
sleeping on Papa Bear’s just-right bed.  
Furious, Papa Bear threw the two children out of their just-right house.

While walking in the woods they met a frog.

The frog croaked,

“Please kiss me! I shall turn into a handsome prince!”

Out of fascination, Hansel immediately pecked it.

The wart covered frog fulfilled his promise

And a towering man wearing a suit with many badges brushed off dirt.

“Mr. Prince! There is a damsel in distress,  
probably getting eaten by bears right now,” announced the siblings.

And off to the cottage the three departed.

There he found a woman with one missing glass slipper sleeping next to a flower bed.

He took her away and hid her in a winding tower of doom.  
With a smirk on his face he locked her up in the room.

Hundreds of thousands of years had passed and the princess has yet to wake up.  
The once stone tower was now covered in ivy and beautiful flowers.

A new prince, the other prince’s great great great great great grandson, found this tower.  
It had a sweet woman’s blond locks draped out of the window.

So naturally, he climbed up a huge beanstalk,  
and watched the princess as she dozed on the bed with a pea in the mattress.

He kissed her softly.

The princess woke up suddenly and yelled,

“I have to go! It’s already midnight!”

She jumped up and ran down the spiraling stairs,  
Leaving her glass slipper behind.

By Olivia Hong  
Illustration by Samuel Yun





Artist's Block

Sometimes artists can't put their pencils down.  
Writers can't stop writing—  
Other times they get stuck,  
And on their face, a frown,  
Imprisoned in an artist's block.  
They look out the window for inspiration,  
Read books and skim through magazines,  
Searching for ideas in desperation.  
Few words glare back from a page—  
The story is left, untold.

They gaze at paintings and photographs  
And stare at people,  
Looking for something that will spark,  
Just wanting to leave their mark.  
But when they finally break free,  
Free from the imaginary bars  
Inside their head  
Ideas gush forward,  
Words fly,  
Paint flows,  
And the world is a better place.

By Olivia Hong  
Illustration by Marianne Kim

## The Gift of Gratitude

The pretty pink  
Shimmered with grace  
However, the darker  
Just stood in their place.

Almost as a dream,  
The yellow flowed  
As if the warm light  
Trickled down to your little toe.

However these colors  
Had their limits, indeed,  
For the green cannot dance  
with the pretty pink,  
And yellow cannot move as swiftly  
as the green leaves.

The pretty pink couldn't stay still  
Like the grass upon the land,  
And the grass could not move their little feet  
Like the little ants can.

And the little ants cannot swim  
For that is the fishes' little whim,  
But the fishes could never bear the gift  
Of soaring through the morning rift.

But the blue in the sky  
Wants to be simple as the tan on a beach.  
And who said the white of the clouds  
Want to be painted upon the blue?

What if the ants were granted fins?  
What if the fish swim in the air?  
What if the blue replaced the tan?  
What if the grass came dancing?

Trailing back to the little flower,  
All these colors make their parts.  
If the green were the pink  
And if the yellow scattered across the brink,  
The question will still remain—  
“Who is grateful for their gift?”

By Ava Huzovic  
Photograph by Sophia Benton





## Why Can't I Feel?

I found myself wandering around an alleyway, trying to find my way home. From what I can remember, I was clearly lost. The air was getting heavy and snow was beginning to fall. I looked up and watched the little snow crystals fall gracefully, as if they were dancing. A snowflake landed on my cherry red nose, melting almost instantly. Some things are just untouchable, like snowflakes, I thought. You can't hold them for even a split second because before you know it, they are gone. I looked down to the black cement ground, my legs were shaking as I watched the ground around me begin to get blanketed by snow. I had not realized I was in a pigeon pose. I laughed at myself and looked forward. There was an entrance to a patch of trees. They looked beautiful with their pine needles covered in ice crystals. I walked in through the opening and immediately I felt as if the forest was welcoming me into its beautiful parlor.

I looked around and saw nothing other than trees and little shrubs— everything was still and silent. I liked the silence, it was calming. I looked around and saw that no one else was there. No one to hurt me. The taunts, laughter, and rumors hurt me. I still picture their faces looking down at me, always looking down. Never had anyone looked up to me. Why would they? I was shy. I was a loser, a weakling, a wimp, and a cyborg. That's what I have been told. That I am a cyborg... a robot... an emotionless robot— something that can't have feelings. Sometimes I think they are right. I lack the feeling of love, happiness, and joy ever since he left me. My crush, my angel, my voice, my power, MY FAITH! But... he's gone... I can no longer talk to him... he is up

there, up in the skies with the rest of the snow crystals... gone, never coming back. I closed my eyes, hoping for a tear to stream down my face, hoping to feel the emptiness and the pain one feels when they lose a loved one. But nothing. I am a robot.

I was so caught up wallowing in self pity that I didn't hear the steps coming towards me. When I finally did I couldn't move. I closed my eyes, I was waiting for a kick in the gut or something. I expected to find one of my tormentors, a bully who would hurt and tease me. When I finally opened my eyes, I saw this person I had never seen before. He was looking at me and I saw that he had these warm brown eyes that exuded warmth and kindness. His black hair was the color of coal. I looked at him and noticed a soft, warm smile directed at me. I felt my heart skip a beat, and the feeling surprised me as I hadn't felt my heart beat fast in a long time. He tilted his head, and



\*This fictional story was written to highlight the harmful effects bullying can have on a person.\*

reached out with his hand to brush the snow that had been falling off my face.

"Um, Hey..." he whispered. I remember thinking he had such a soft voice.

"Hey..." I responded weakly. I followed his gaze and I said that his eyes were looking down at my leg— the leg I didn't have. It was the reason I got teased and made fun of all the time.

"What happened?" he asked. I looked down at my metal leg, The flashbacks were flowing into me again, the car accident that night, that changed everything. Waking up in that hospital, that terrible atmosphere or death, I felt it all over the air. I wanted to scream. I never talked about that night. The memories are too painful. However, for some reason I was pouring my heart out to this person, this total stranger with the kind eyes. I felt his hand touch my face. I looked up and saw his eyes begin to tear.

"Why are you crying?" I asked, startled at the reaction I was getting. I noticed that he began to shake and I could tell that he was not repulsed by me but instead, he was feeling my pain, my sorrow.

"I'm sorry, I just—"

I had not been expecting his sympathy and concern and all of the sudden I noticed that he was crying. I got very angry. I looked at those tears as they glistened in the moonlight and I got mad.

"Why is it that me, the one who is pain, can't shed a tear? And here you are crying— That's unfair, painfully unfair. You don't understand how much I want to feel that sting, that pain, that burn! What makes you think you have a right to cry for me when I can't cry for myself!"

He jerked and his eyes widened. Then he whispered, "Ha ha. I guess my magic worked, crying doesn't suit you."

I brought my hand to my face, I felt a tear. It stung...bad. It was a sensational feeling. I laughed at myself. Finally, I was able feel that sting, the pain, and all it took was to have someone to talk to who didn't judge, didn't ridicule, and didn't make fun of me.

"So how does it feel?" he asked.

"It's painfully beautiful, thank you," I replied.

We laughed at each other and I reached in for a hug. The warm embrace was calming and drew me in. I felt my heart race. We stayed like that for a while. I felt warm and maybe not a robot, not a cyborg anymore.

"When can I see you again?" I asked.

"Wait a bit, you'll see me around." Then just like a dream, he walked out.

I walked home alone that night, wondering if I had dreamed the whole encounter. Then, hoping I had not.

I waited and waited. That's what he said, to wait a bit. I went to school and searched the hall. I heard the usual taunts and I ignored them.

"Hey cyborg girl," I heard a someone say. Those around me started to snicker. If they only knew I didn't go by that name anymore.

Then I looked up and there he was. He grabbed my arm and lead me away from the bullies and the bystanders. I looked up into his eyes. He tried to mend my wounds, but then frowned at me.

"You shouldn't let them treat you like that. But don't worry, I'm here to help you now." He smiled that sly soft smile. I blushed and we talked more. And that is how I stopped being a cyborg and started being human again.

By Ashley Sorto  
Illustration by Yenni Myung





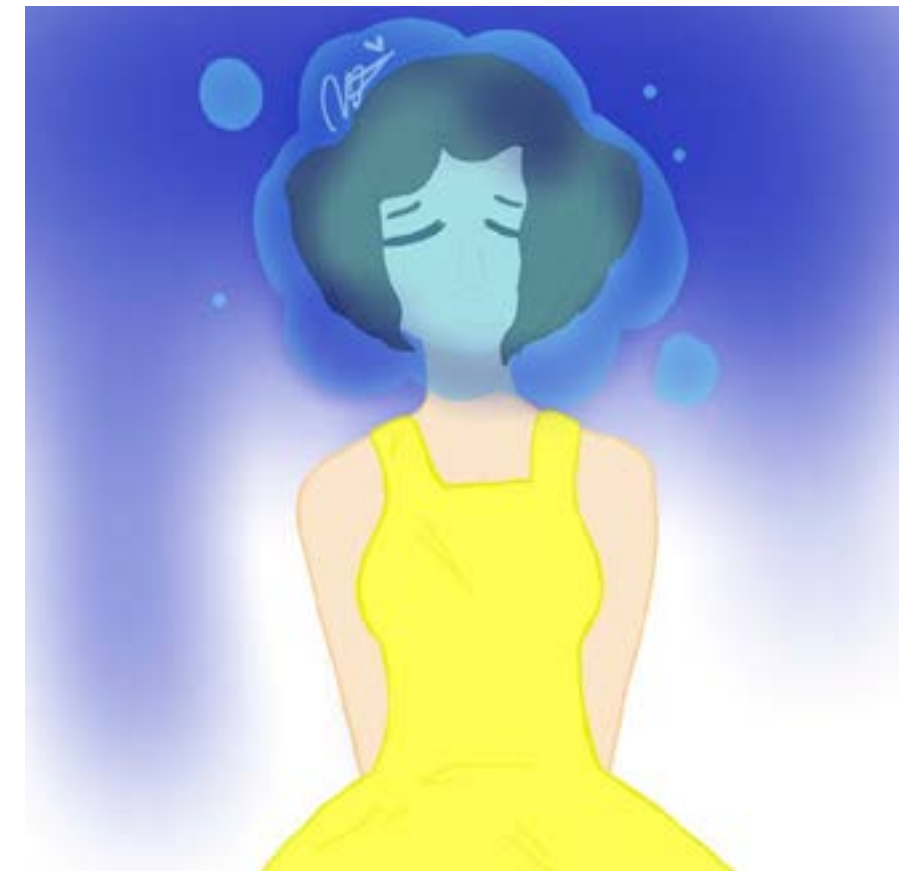
## Winter Treasures

Frosted windows  
Bare trees  
Red nosed smiles  
Hot chocolate marshmallows  
Wet socks and mittens  
Snowballs flying  
Children's laughs  
Snow days

Jolly old Santa  
Reindeer  
Silver bells  
Popcorn strings  
Balls of red  
Evergreens  
Piles of Presents  
Peppermint canes  
Milk and cookies  
Left by the fireplace

Families gather  
Hearty dinners  
Storytelling  
Nutmeg and cinnamon  
Aunts and uncles  
Grandparents  
Red and green scarves  
Mistletoe kisses  
Stuffed stockings

By Olivia Hong  
Illustration by Ashley Sorto



## Why Have You Left Me?

Oh Childhood,  
Why have you left me?  
Without warning, you went away.  
Back then, I was so youthful, so free.  
Now I'm missing you every day,  
No more tooth fairies and Santa  
When we believed in many fantasies.  
Gone are the days of naptime and  
Listening to funny stories.

Oh Childhood, how free were we?  
Not a single worry crossed my mind  
Never did it occur to me  
That whatever happened,  
Your kindness remained  
By my side, till the end.  
You made me feel happy, sure, and brave.  
Childhood, you were certainly my best friend,  
I am so grateful of all that you gave.

Oh Childhood,  
What am I to do now that you are gone?  
I am disheartened at the loss of you,  
But I look at all of the gifts you have left me.  
Because of you,  
There was never a weight on my shoulders;  
From time to time you taught me a lesson,  
One that stuck with me till this very moment.  
You taught me to be strong, to persevere.  
Childhood—  
You are one that I continue to revere.

By Samuel Yun  
Illustration by Marianne Kim



## City Dreams

I look out from my window,  
A breathtaking view  
And a nice breeze in my hair.  
People become little dots  
Like the ones on a ladybug.  
They hustle and bustle  
in all the street corners.  
Children run in and out of houses,  
And dinner is being served  
With laughter and smiles  
And as the sun goes down.  
The city stays awake– a night owl.  
Late night cafes serve midnight coffee.  
Night officers and watchguards  
are busy at work.  
Lights still on at the window  
Of a hardworking student,  
Wishing and dreaming  
of becoming a doctor.  
In the morning,  
I can see people scurrying to work.  
The maze like streets overflowing–  
I can look through the window  
of a businessman preparing emails,  
Hoping for a more successful job.  
Another window shows a mother  
waking her baby,  
Willing him to grow into a beautiful child.  
The city is awake and ready–  
To make dreams grow big!

By Olivia Hong  
Photograph by Renee Inan



## A Breath of Fresh Air

A breath of fresh air  
I hope no one will stare  
I'm in despair  
From this cold air

I moved  
I snoozed  
I feel like I always lose

I was scared  
Not prepared  
For a breath of fresh air

I feel trapped in this world of mine  
Stuck on a line  
Not on stairs  
With a breath of fresh air

Water dripping  
Someone is bidding  
My feet are bare  
Surrounding them in cold air

I'm in an affair  
With this cold air  
It's all in my hair  
I think I love this breath of fresh air

By Mia Cruz  
Photograph by Nicole Kotchman



## Remember

Remember when I spied?  
I was mortified,  
Hoping that you wouldn't see me  
But before you could say anything, I fled.  
Remember when we first talked?  
When you came over, I gawked.  
I ran away but you caught me  
And we broke our boundary.

Remember when we walked to that place?  
That place where I should've  
Pulled you to my embrace.  
I looked over to you,  
I felt my heartbeat,  
A way that happens once in a blue moon.

Remember when we just walked out of school?  
The smile you gave me, made me feel like a  
fool,  
A fool that fell in love with someone like you.  
Remember when we held hands?  
Maybe you didn't understand,  
But I felt so many feelings.  
I have never felt so dreamy,  
My head felt dizzy.  
Remember when I walked away?  
I was the fool who knew not what to do.  
I left you to be ridiculed,  
Knowing all the time I should have stayed.  
I think about you night and day,  
And every night, for you, I pray.

By Eunice Lee  
Illustration by Abesera Tessema



## December

December  
Rides in on his sleigh  
Bringing joy to all  
The world is merry at his sight,  
Hanukkah, Christmas, and Kwanzaa  
Invite him to their celebrations.  
He is festive and bright,  
The trees light up for him  
And sweethearts stand and kiss  
Under his mistletoe.

By Sofia Martinez  
Illustration by Ashley Sorto





## Run Away May

When May heard that there would be another member in her family, she was devastated. She didn't want to share her parent's attention, her room, or her life with another person – a complete stranger. She also didn't want to hear how this person had been abandoned by her real parents.

When the day finally came, May, who had decided to let her parents know exactly how she felt, had an obvious frown on her face. She couldn't help but roll her eyes at the mention of the new family member's name. On the way to pick up her new sister, she struggled to get out the car, dragging her feet behind her. She hoped that her parents would change their mind. When she begged them to reconsider, the response she got was always the same–“May, we promise you will love her.” She was already annoyed and she knew she was going to hate the new member of the family.

Then she saw her. The invader had bright blonde hair, a very pretty face with a small slender body. She also had the most beautiful blue eyes May had ever seen. May didn't want to admit she was pretty, but she couldn't deny it. She was absolutely stunning. She thought, how could anyone abandon this girl? May's confidence dropped to the floor. The girl waved to her, but May rolled her eyes. Despite the rude action, the girl came over.

“Hi, my name's Ashley,” a gentle voice said.

“Yeah, I know,” May responded. She knew she was being rude and deep down inside she felt a pang of guilt. However, her sense of betrayal was too strong to allow herself to feel guilty.

“May. What did I tell you?” Her mother warned her. May rolled her eyes, turned

around and got back in the car.

The ride home was extremely awkward as May's parents attempted to make small talk. They also tried to get May involved in the conversation, but she refused to take part. She stared out of the car window desperately wishing it was all a bad dream.

Finally, the car pulled into their driveway and stopped. May dashed out of the car, grabbed the keys from her father's hand, and opened the front door of their home. She bolted into her room and locked it. She couldn't seem to calm down. Her anger was escalating as her confidence was declining. She kept asking herself, “How could my parents do this to me? Did they not consider my feelings?” She hated everything about Ashley– the way she smiled in the car, the way her sweet voice politely answered her parent's questions, and the way her blonde hair flew in the wind. For no reason, everything and anything Ashley did, May hated.

The next morning, May finally left her room, but when she walked downstairs she saw her parents and Ashley having breakfast. May scoffed.

“Thanks for the invitation,” she spat.

“May. What is going on with you?” Her mother asked angrily as she stood up from the table and walked over to May. “I expect you to be nicer from now on. Do you understand?” her mother demanded.

“Why can't she just leave? She doesn't belong here!” May shot back. As soon as those words escaped, May could see the expression on Ashley's face change. She could tell those words had hurt her and May did not feel particularly good about it.

“I am so sorry for her behavior. She isn't usually like this,” May's mother reassured Ashley.

“It's okay, I understand. This may take some time for all of us,” Ashley said, looking



over to May who was glaring at her. Ashley smiled. May frowned.

“I'm done. Bye.” May stood up quickly and stomped up the stairs into her room. Her anger was at the maximum. She couldn't stand the thought of Ashley anymore. She didn't want to hear of her, see her, or even breathe the same air as her. May grabbed a duffel bag and stuffed her clothes in it. She grabbed her teddy bear and broke her piggy bank for some money.

May successfully ran outside and down the street but then suddenly stopped. “Now what do I do?” she said, not realizing how cold it was or that she had nowhere to go. She sat there in the cold with nothing but her thoughts. After two painfully long hours, May started shivering. Although she didn't want to, she trudged back into her home. She walked inside and quietly closed the door. Her parents were not there and neither was Ashley, so May walked into her room and snuggled in her bed. Her eyes became droopy and the room went black.

When May woke up, she could hear

sobbing downstairs. Puzzled, she slowly walked down the stairs and saw her mother and Ashley crying while her father was on the phone. Then, Ashley looked up and her eyes met with May's. Disappointment and hurt was obvious on Ashley's face when they looked at each other for a split second. It was at that moment that guilt seeped into May's heart after seeing her mother cry. Her father looked up and his shoulders immediately relaxed, however, his stern face remained as he spoke.

“May, you have disappointed me and your mother more than you know. We expected you to welcome Ashley into this home,” her father said with a surprisingly soft tone. However, his tone made May feel even worse. She slowly nodded, with tears glossing over her eyes.

Silence filled the room. The only thought in her mind was how awful she felt for scaring her parents and making Ashley feel pushed away. She realized that everybody needs a loving family and she already made sure that Ashley felt like she didn't have one. Cautiously, she tapped Ashley's shoulder, scared that she would shatter from her touch.

“I'm sorry. You deserve a lot better than how I was treating you. You deserve the most welcoming sister and I wasn't that person,” May whispered. Ashley slowly looked up, but her silence made May assume she was not going to be forgiven. May turned around and walked toward the stairs, but a small voice was heard.

“It's okay.” Ashley said. May whipped her head and after a few seconds, they both smiled at each other and knew that everything was going to be okay.

By Eunice Lee

Illustration by Camila Peña-Marte

## First Love

She loved a boy a year older,  
But was too afraid of getting the cold shoulder,  
They were friends, but could they be more...  
Or would he judge her for sure?

When they first met,  
Who knew she would be swept,  
Stuck in a fantasy...  
She thought they were meant to be.

She hoped to tell him one day,  
But that day was always far away.  
So he never knew,  
And left her for someone new,

Time passed, wounds healed,  
In her heart she will always feel,  
The pain of that day—  
When her first love came to an end.

By Sofia Narvaez  
Illustration by Chaerin Kim



## Love

Doesn't matter how long you love me,  
I will always be by your side.  
I will not only be your companion,  
But I will also be your guide.  
Doesn't matter how long you love me,  
As long as you are always there.  
I like spending time with you,  
We can go anywhere.  
You bring me such happiness,  
I know that you care.  
I love when you send me flowers,  
To adorn my hair.  
Forever is a long time,  
My love will be only for you,  
For as long as you love me,  
I will always love you.

By Ashley Gomes  
Illustration by Ashley Sorto





**The Red Umbrella**  
 I was happily walking on the sidewalk  
 On a rainy, gloomy, and dark day  
 With a wide red umbrella grasped in my hand  
 I tramped over pools of water and walked past others going to work  
**I began to notice garbage cans, cars, food stands**  
 I heard cars honking, people shouting, the rain pattering down on the sidewalk  
**I saw how grim everyone was, no one was in any mood that day**  
 The dark and dreary colors filled my eyes- black clothes, black cars...black umbrellas everywhere

I  
 Was  
 Holding  
 One  
 Lonely  
*Red*  
*Umbrella*  
 In  
 A  
*Sea*  
 of  
*Black*  
*Ones*

By Edward An

Apples  
 Apples  
 Apples  
 Juice dribbles down my chin  
 As I bite into the red ball of nature's treasure  
 The apple of my eye hanging carefully on the tall tree  
 The red ball of crisp deliciousness contrasts with the green leaves  
 Apple pie, cider, candy apples, the treats with apples are endless  
 Grandma is making these sweets with her apron tied around her waist  
 Applesauce with a hint of cinnamon and nutmeg and other warm spices  
 Apple turnovers and candy apples dipped in melted sugar for this fall  
 Apple fritters popping on the hot oil, baked apples soft out of the oven  
 And sometimes just plain apples with sticky sweet caramel to dip in  
 Cut apples left on the floor to brown under the red and green tree  
 My family goes apple picking, on a mission for the reddest one  
 I pick a few apples for myself, and save one for my teacher  
 Gala, Red Delicious, Fuji, McIntosh, and Granny Smith  
 Johnny Appleseed with a pan resting on his head  
 Jars of apple jam wait patiently on the attic shelf  
 The crunchy delight is gone with a few bites  
 A wait too long for this autumn treat  
 A wait till the fall to come again

By Olivia Hong



## The Heart

My heart is the best part But it's so easily broken  
The inside of me is bright as the sun but when the darkness comes, what a fright.  
I have a beautiful heart that is strong, but as I get older, parts of it break and weaken.  
When I see my love my heart skips a beat. But if my love is not returned, then my heart breaks.  
The love of my friends help my heart grow strong, but at times their words wound and leave scars.  
My heart is a vessel that holds all of my memories. Oh how I wish they were all filled with joy.  
I was happy when I was younger and energetic, but now I feel withered, damaged, and weak.  
My heart has seen many things that are good, but I have seen things that have caused me pain.  
Now that years have passed I understand better, about how things go and things change  
People I love are in my head and heart, even those who are long gone.  
I can remember a few things, but I've forgotten more.  
Things have been fun But not for long.  
Now am in a sad place  
With a sad heart  
Waiting for  
Love.

By Kelly Wang

Oh  
The  
Christmas  
tree plays a  
very important role  
in the hearts and minds  
of families. Adorned with bells  
and tinsel and ornaments,  
A child could ask for  
nothing more. On Christmas Eve  
It stands with glee next to the soothing,  
burning fire. On Christmas Day, it stands proudly,  
ecstatic to see the children's happy faces  
when tearing off festive wrapping paper  
from humongous gifts. And then, it  
stands tall and straight  
while the family enjoys some eggnog  
and wholeheartedly sings jolly carols together.  
The Christmas tree plays a very important  
role in the hearts and minds of children. Adorned  
with bells and tinsel and ornaments, a child could ask  
for nothing more. In the end, the Christmas tree  
leaves its house for good. But it will not have been  
in vain, for all the memories it has  
shared are too  
amazing to  
be forgotten!

By Victor Amaritei



