

A Student Homeschool Literary Magazine

Creativity



Cover by Sebastian

Creativity

Volume 1



2026

Creative ELA

Advisor – Kelly Sage

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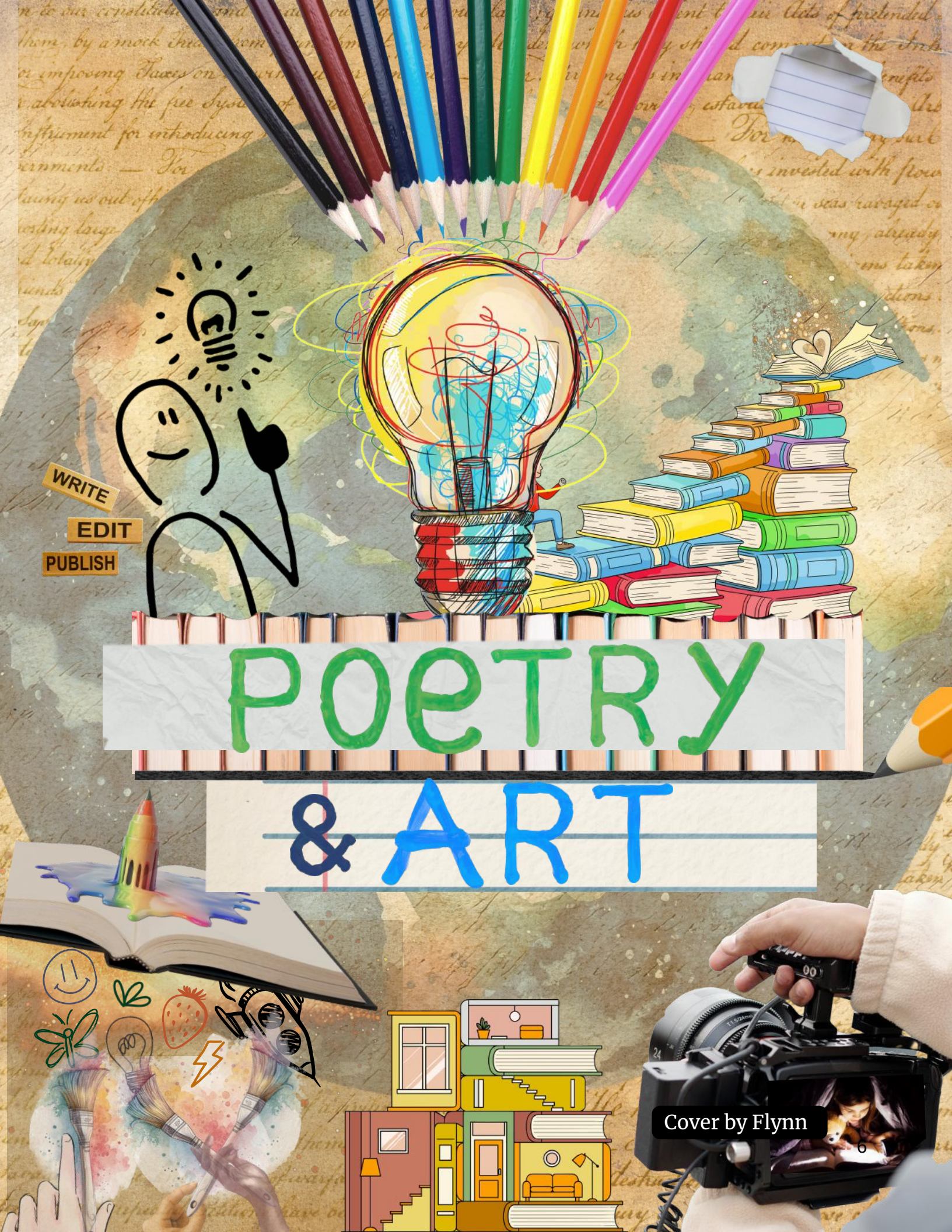
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POETRY & ART

FICTION

NON FICTION

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WRITE

EDIT

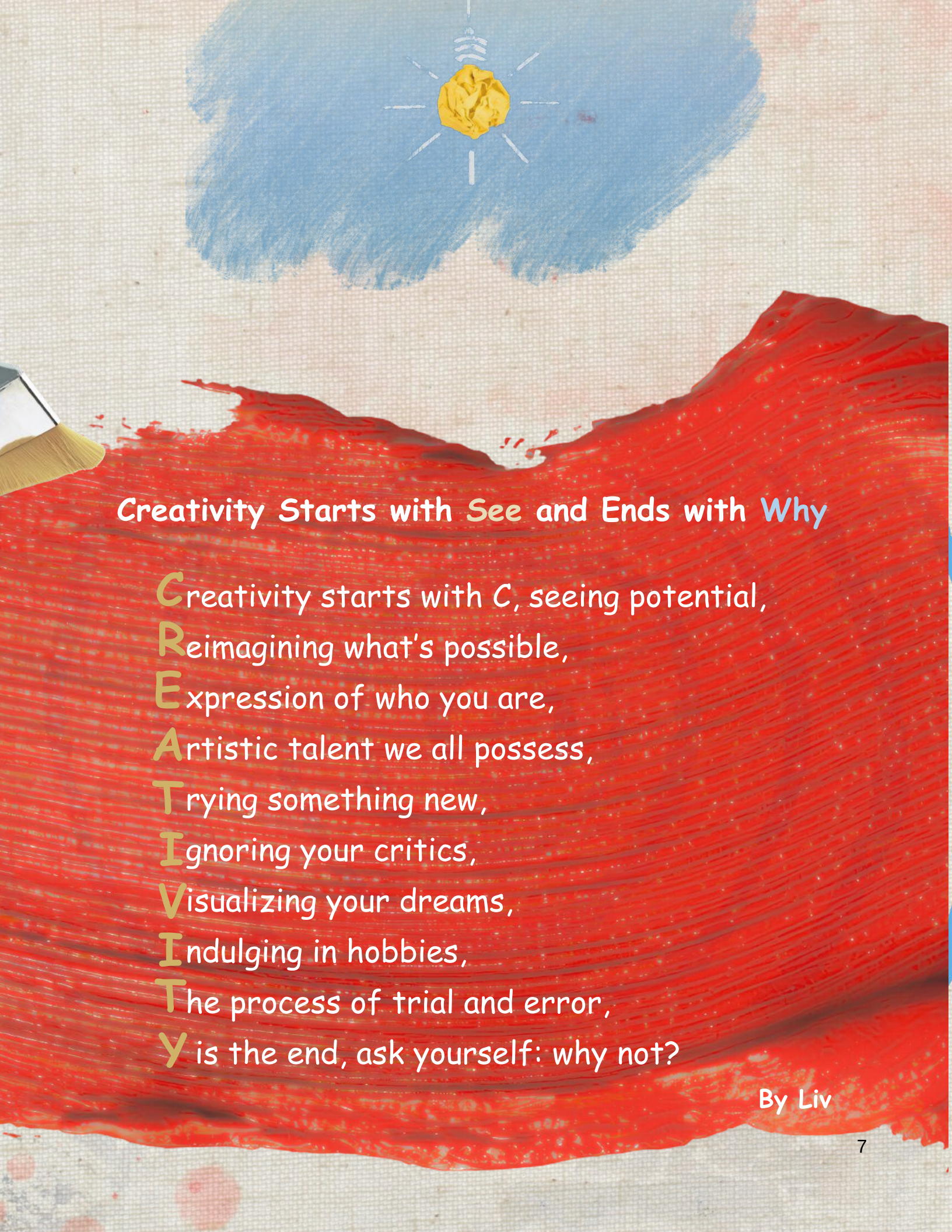
PUBLISH

POETRY

& ART



Cover by Flynn



Creativity Starts with **See** and Ends with **Why**

Creativity starts with C, seeing potential,
Reimagining what's possible,
Expression of who you are,
Artistic talent we all possess,
Trying something new,
Ignoring your critics,
Visualizing your dreams,
Indulging in hobbies,
The process of trial and error,
Y is the end, ask yourself: why not?

By Liv

Wolf



Howling to call their brethren
Understood by few
Never truly cruel, but best left alone
The wolf is my most favorite of the wild canids
Ever joyful, ever hunting
Roaming their territory

Charlotte Age 14

Tiger



Tenacious hunter

Interesting to watch

Goodness, their stripes are stunning

Eternally wonderful

Reddish-orange against the emerald foliage

Charlotte Age 14

The time has come. The rose has withered.
The tree is poisoned, it falls from the leaves.
It has poisoned all, including me.
Though how come no one sees
The crimson shade of pain
And the blackness of poison
Until it is too late?
The poison is blinding
The leaves whisper
The withering is like rot
The rose murmurs
The blackness in your heart
Is all your fault

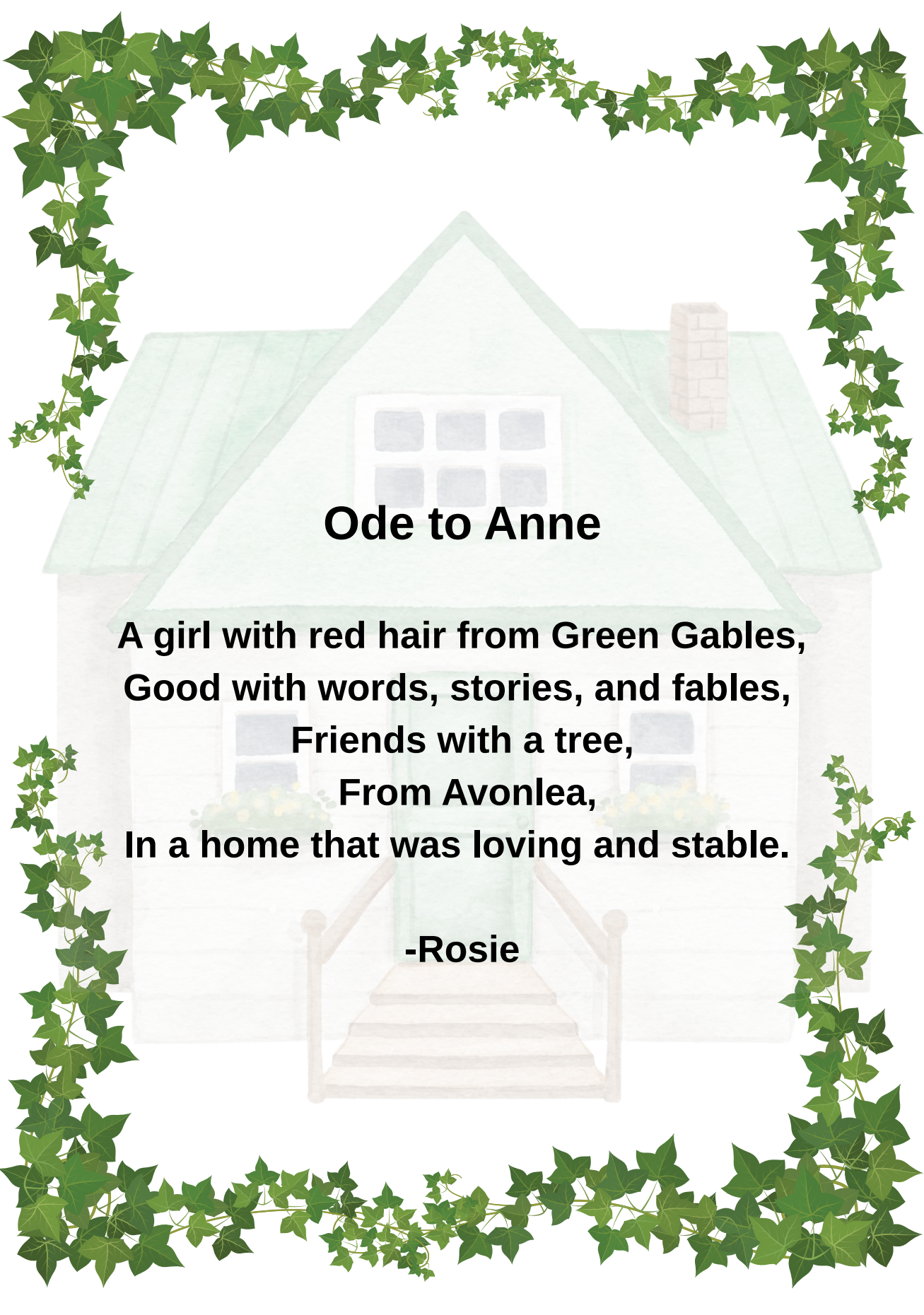
POISONED LEAVES

by Reegan

As the rings of poison spread farther and farther
What can be done?
The poison taunts
I certainly can do nothing
For I am the poison. I am the rot.
I wither all, and love not
Your time has come,
The poison sings
As I bleed and bleed and bleed
As you die, take one last breath,
Say your last words,
For I am the poison, I am the rot,
And I cannot be stopped.



Forgotten Fletching
by Reegan



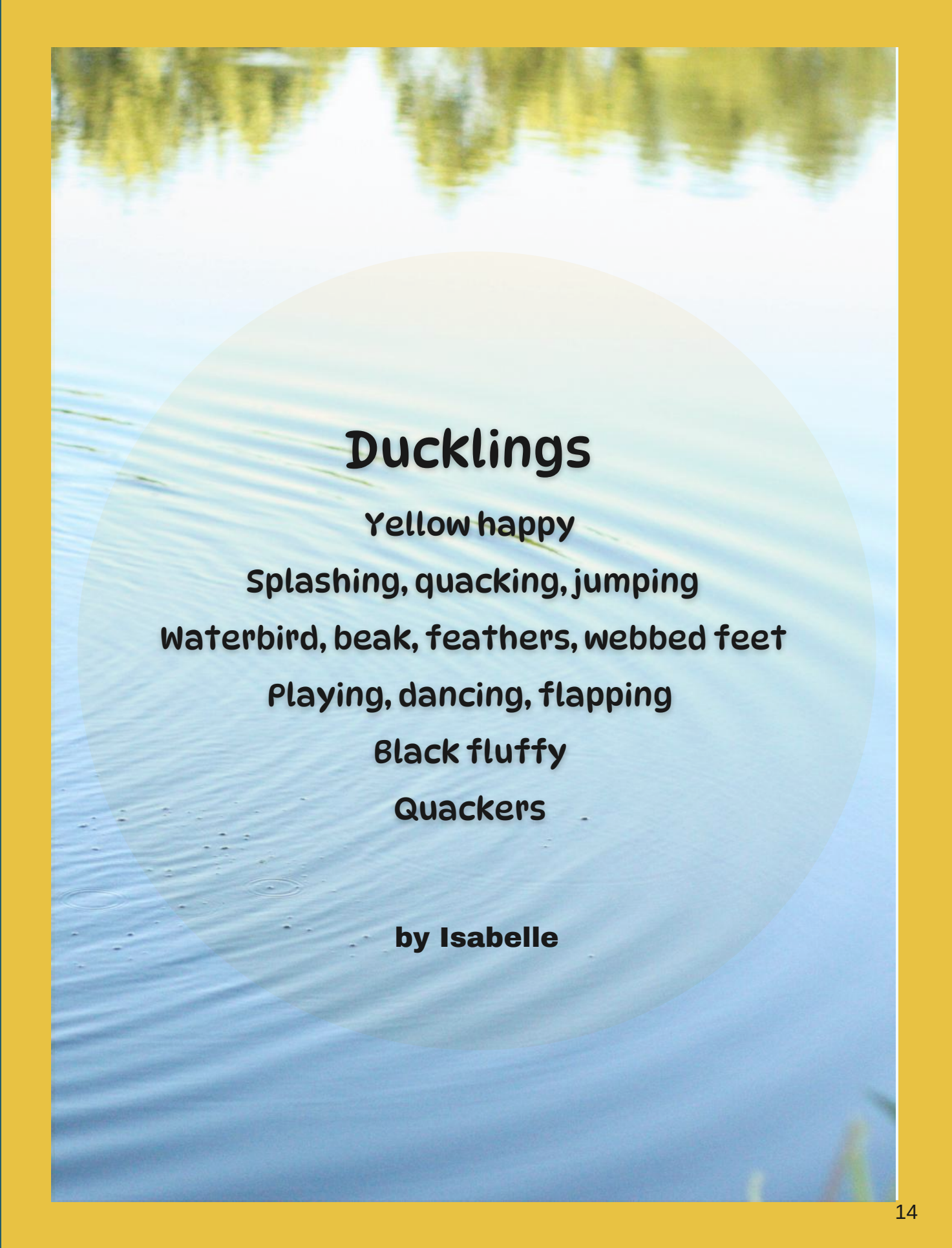
Ode to Anne

**A girl with red hair from Green Gables,
Good with words, stories, and fables,
Friends with a tree,
From Avonlea,
In a home that was loving and stable.**

-Rosie



Nick Wilde by Rosie W



Ducklings

Yellow happy

Splashing, quacking, jumping

Waterbird, beak, feathers, webbed feet

Playing, dancing, flapping

Black fluffy

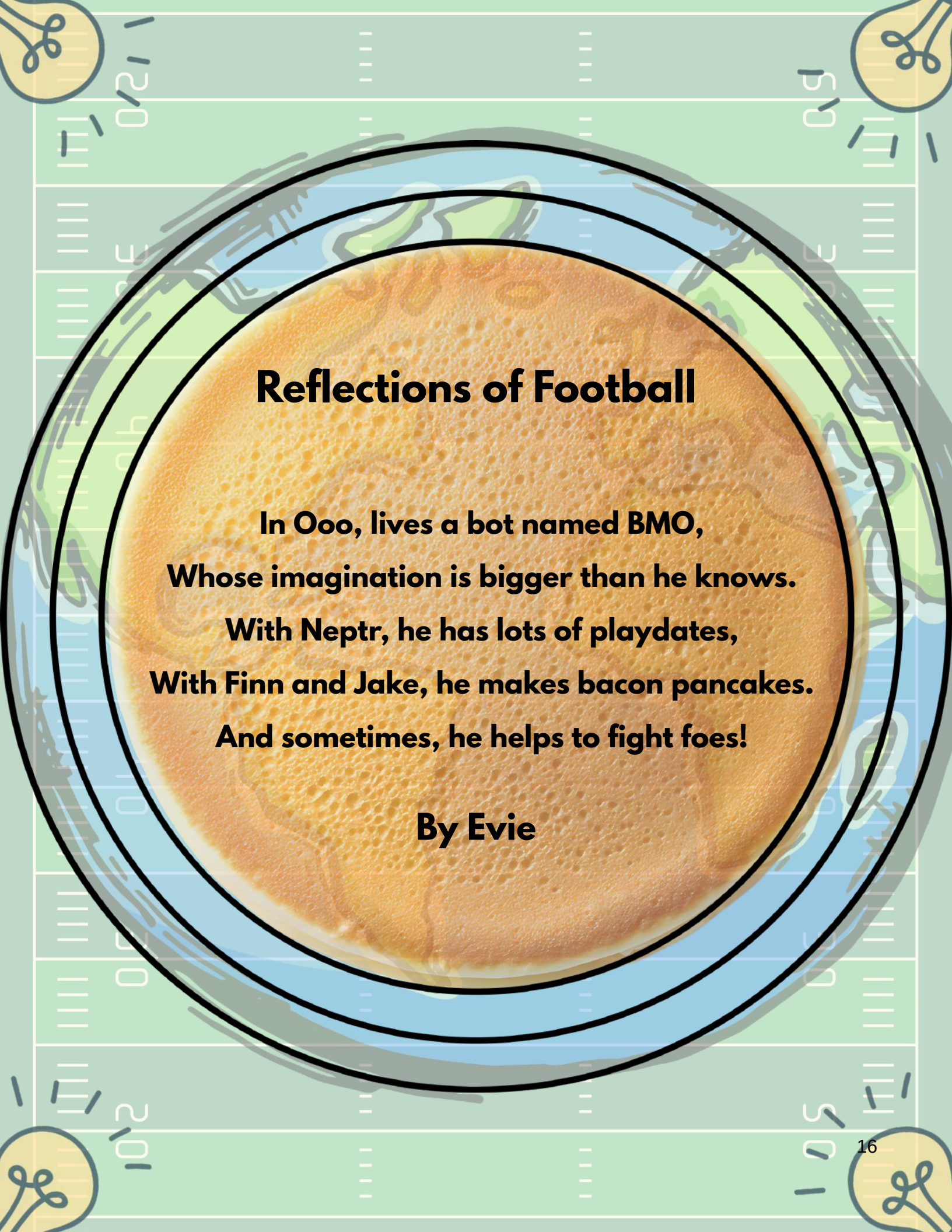
Quackers

by Isabelle

Little Red Riding Hood Bunny



by Isabelle



Reflections of Football

**In Ooo, lives a bot named BMO,
Whose imagination is bigger than he knows.
With Neptr, he has lots of playdates,
With Finn and Jake, he makes bacon pancakes.
And sometimes, he helps to fight foes!**

By Evie

Onyx, Jet, and Obsidian

**Black cats in
Staring with their
Creatures**

**the grass
beady eyes
with nine lives.**

by Evie

Am I?

Am I supposed to be mad?

That you were the one who brought me to my knees

And that you ended it with one final blow.

Am I supposed to believe?

That it will be better without you and me fighting

And that now it's over, I can breathe.

Am I supposed to be sad?

That now I can't protect the ones I love and hold dear.

And that now you win this sick game.

Am I supposed to grieve?

That now I've lost everything including my own life

And it seems I've lost my way too.

Am I supposed to be glad?

That I won't have to see your slimy, smug face anymore.

And that it's all said and done.

Am I supposed to feel something, anything?

I know I should be mad at you, for what you did.

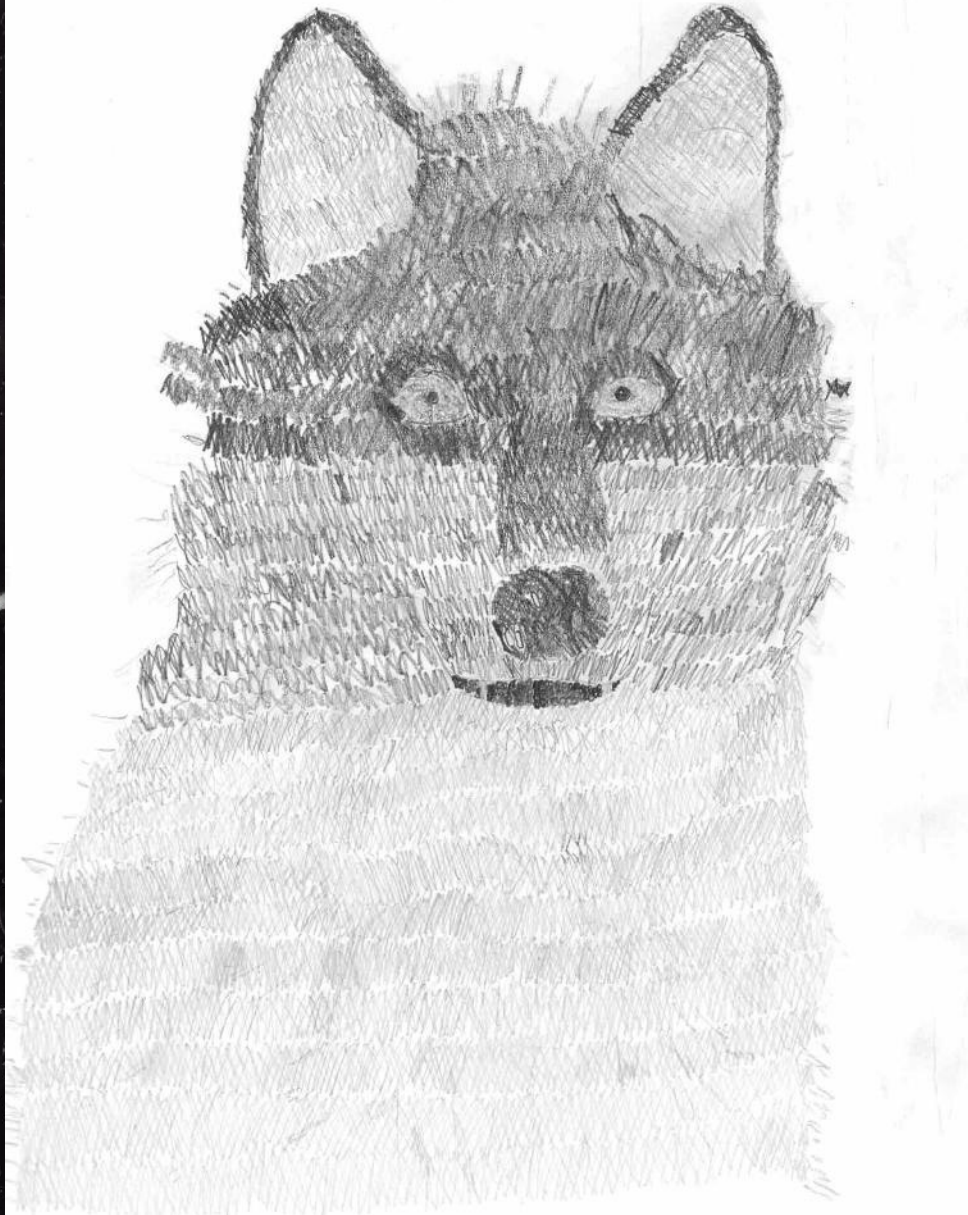
I know I should be sad for the people I've lost.

I know I should be glad that I don't have to fight anymore

So why now that I'm dead, I don't feel anything at all

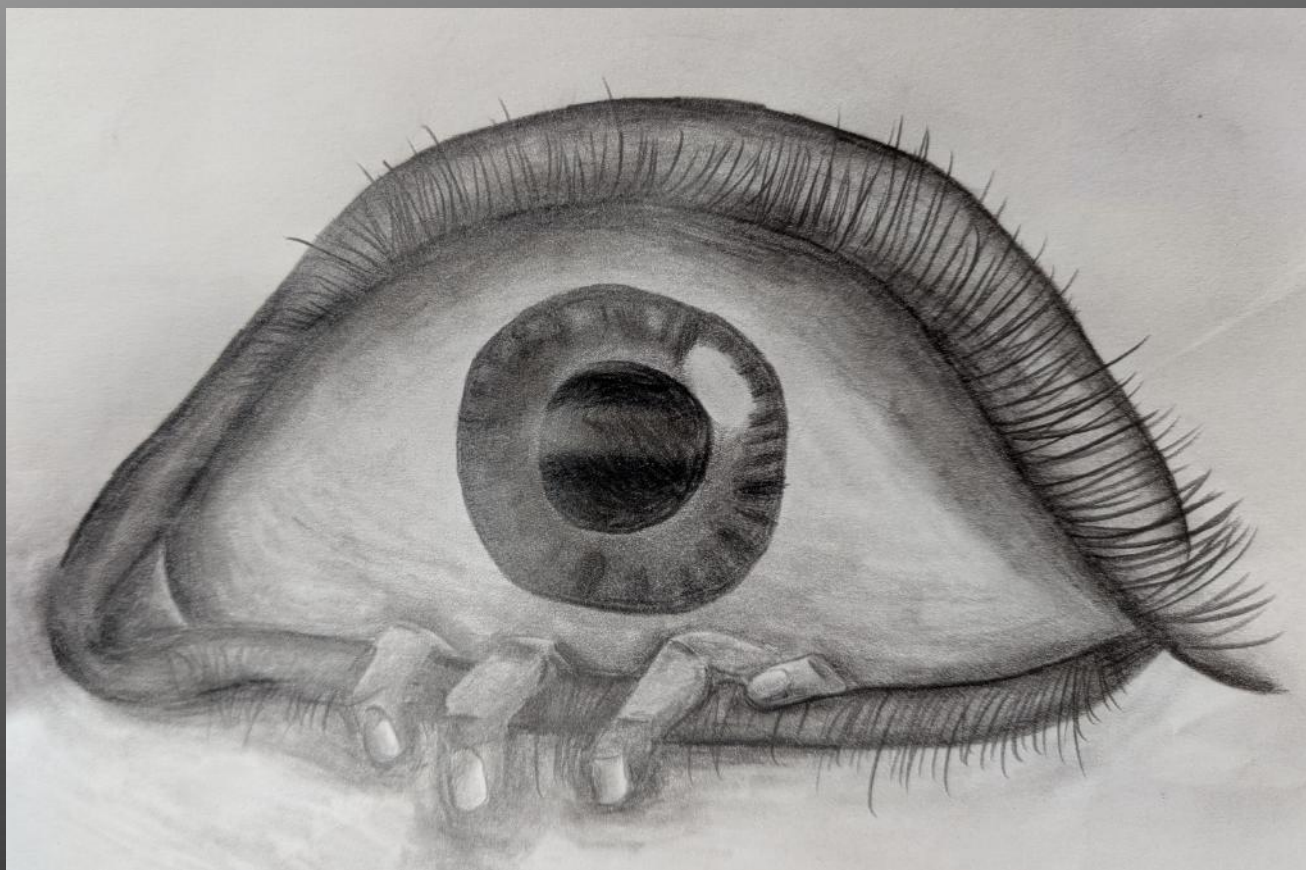
Amy

A Wolf Sketch



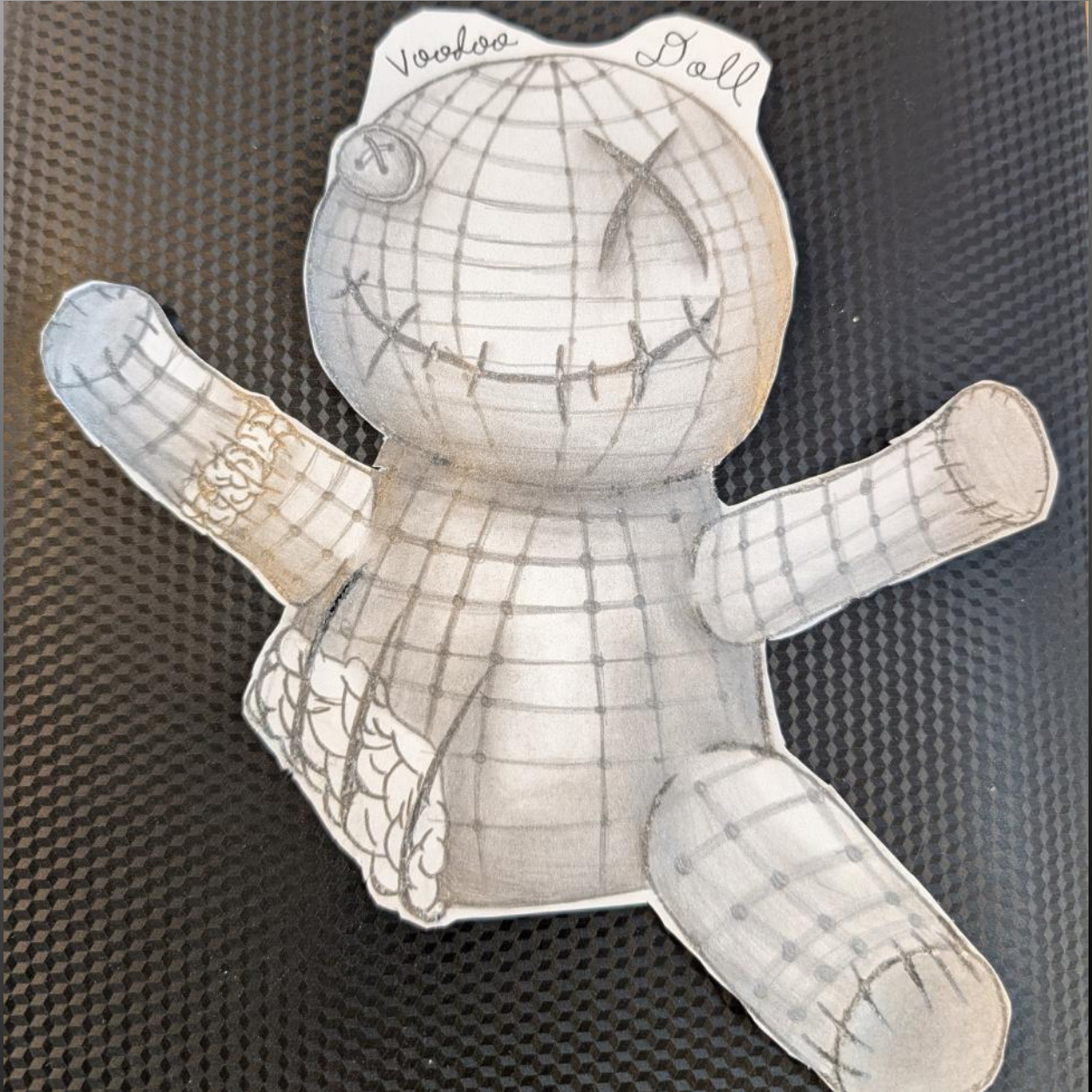
With big ears and a mouth that causes fear,
the gray wolf stares,
perhaps at nearby hares.
With its intimidating bark,
it scares creatures in the dark.

By Skyler



EYE CRAWLER

BY JAINA



VOODOO DOLL BY JAINA

The Dive

By A Friend
(Malachi)

When life is
 Good
You rise
 High
Like a bird
 Or a falcon
But when times
 Are
Bad
 You swoop
You fall
 Like when the
Mighty falcon
 Dives down
Low
 But the funny
Thing is
 That when a
Bird dives, that's
 Actually a good
Thing
 It catches food
Grips it in
 Its talons and
Rises back up
 Sometimes
It misses
 But even then
It rises
 With powerful
Beats of its wings
 It soars back
To its majestic heights
 And tries
Tries
 Tries
Tries
 Tries
Again
 Like you

Sometimes I
 See birds
That hit
 Windows
Trees
 Were hit by
Cars
 I know exactly
Where to find
 Their bodies
These birds
 Can't rise
But
 Sometimes
They shake it
 Off and
Fly back up
 A wise person
Once said
 "The nice thing about hitting rock
bottom is that there is no place left to go
But up"
 So rise
All of you
 You are
Falcons, sparrows
 Starlings, swallows
Hawks, robins
 Kites, and chickadees
Go see the
 World
And if (Or when)
 You fall
Rise back up
 On the powerful
Everlasting
 Wings of your
Heart





The Falcon

By Nathaniel

Nobody
By A Friend
(Malachi)

There once was a time
When I thought that
There had to be
Someone
Like me, but now I see
There is nobody
Like me
Sure, I've met like-minded
Folks
Sure, I've met people who
Act like
Think like
Are like me
But
But nobody is me
I am me
Fingernails, stains, white
Rage,
Loves, joys, fears,
Longings, hobbies, friends,
Nobody takes my
Place
I am needed

Everyone is needed
Loved, longed for, even
When they're gone
So don't go yet
You are uniquely
You
And, since
We don't live in a
Vacuum
The world will forever
Need, be changed,
Long for you
You aren't
Nobody
But
Ain't nobody like you.

-Love, YourFriend

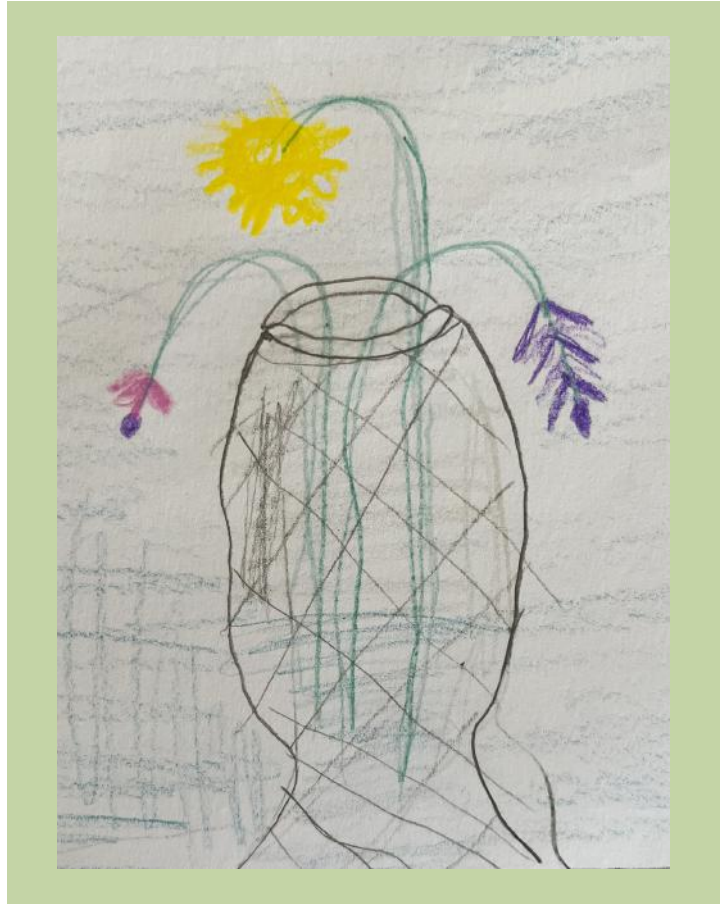


MentalHealthAwareness
Don'tgiveup # Youarenotalone





The Life of Flowers



Flowers

Colorful beautiful

Floating growing waving

Seed bud stem leaves

Wilting drooping dying

Fresh vibrant

Blossoms

By Charlotte



A POT OF GOLD CANNOT COMPARE

BY K.F. BARRETTE

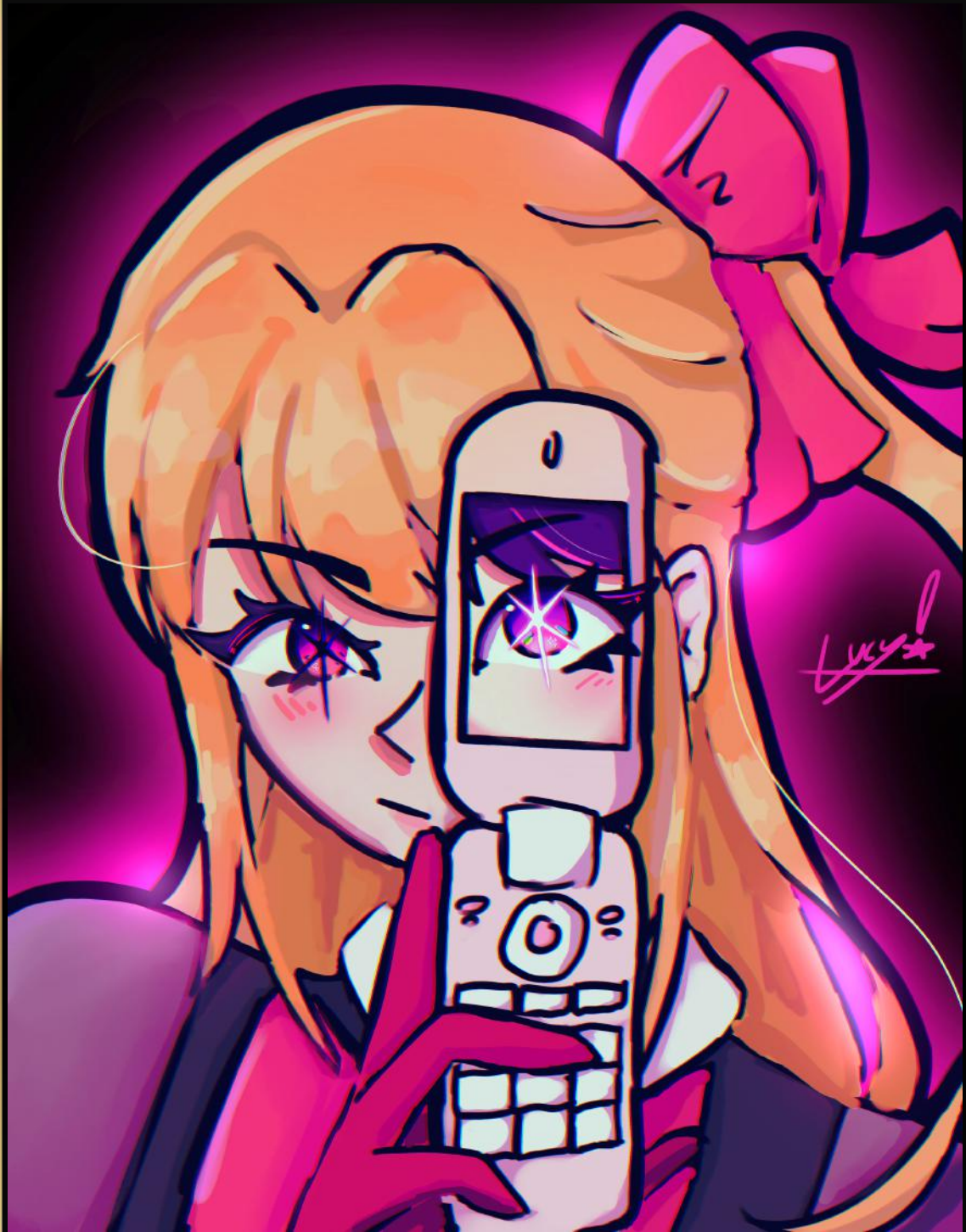
A pot of gold cannot compare;
To a summer wreath of roses,
So perfect I think I would not dare
Disturb the happy gathering there;
The floral throng that poses.

A diamond crown compareth not
With the birds and bees;
And their sweet singing cannot be bought,
Nor their wisdom be earthly taught;
By humans such as these!

A clear blue sky—what words can even contemplate?
Must one beware the words they spare?
Or dare say I, articulate?
An expanse of blue is truly great,
And it is impossible to compare.

That God would create such lovely things
For us, whose lives are but mere breath
The passing pleasures His creation brings
Regardless of pheasants, paupers, or kings
Inseparable till death!

Like Mother Like Daughter



By Lucy

Forest and Cliffs



by Josie



Fireflies and Rain

By Josie





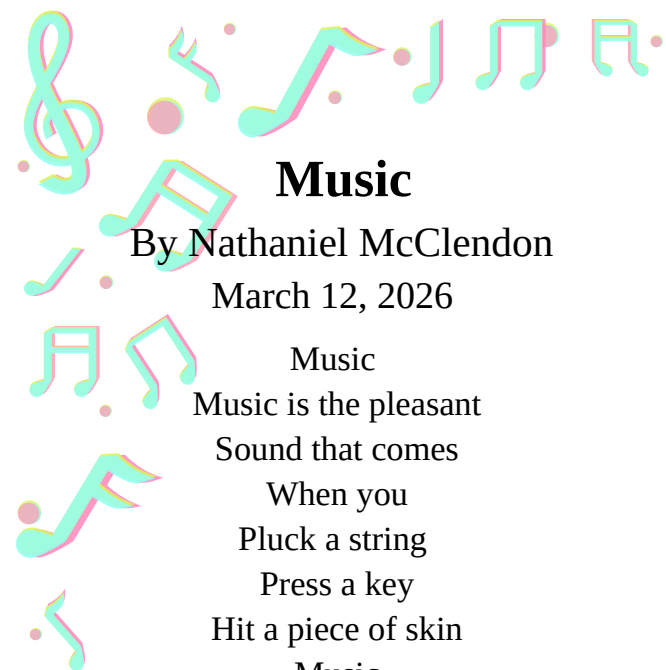
Estranged Relatives

by Coraline W.

the
strange
pigeon



by Coraline W.



Music

By Nathaniel McClendon

March 12, 2026

Music

Music is the pleasant

Sound that comes

When you

Pluck a string

Press a key

Hit a piece of skin

Music

Music is around us

All the time

You know

Rain falling

Waves crashing

Birds twittering

Music

Music is beautiful

Music is life

It fills the soul

It fills the heart

The soft pluck of strings

The beat of drums

The hauntingly beautiful melody of a violin

It grips the soul

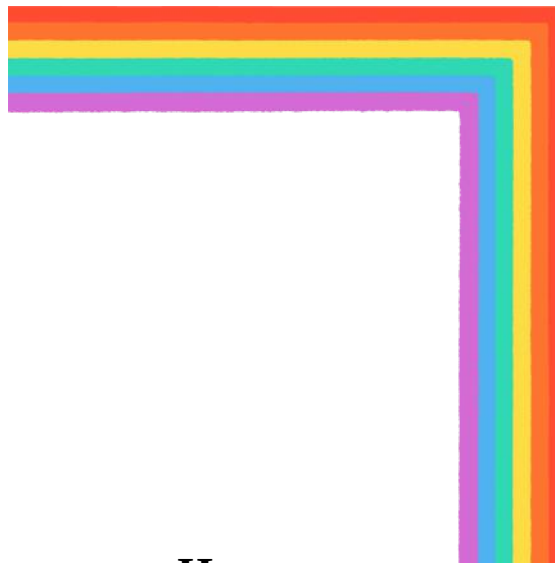
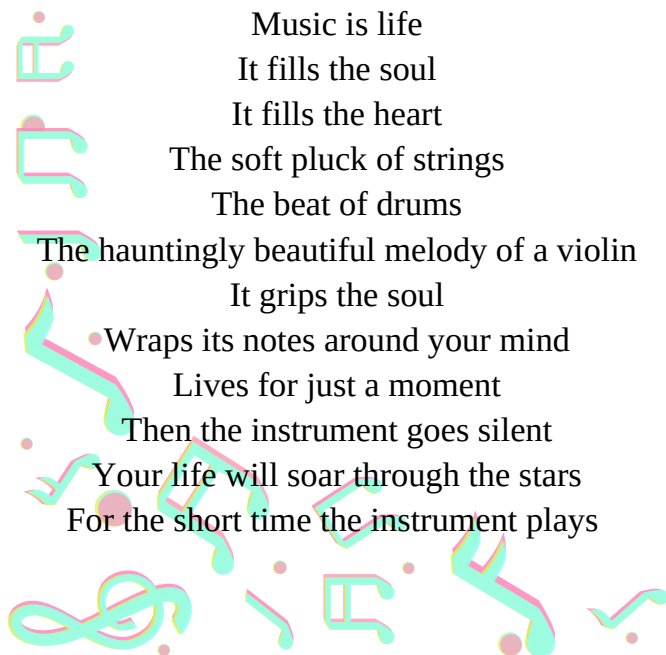
• Wraps its notes around your mind

Lives for just a moment

Then the instrument goes silent

Your life will soar through the stars

For the short time the instrument plays



Hope

By Nathaniel McClendon

February 5, 2026

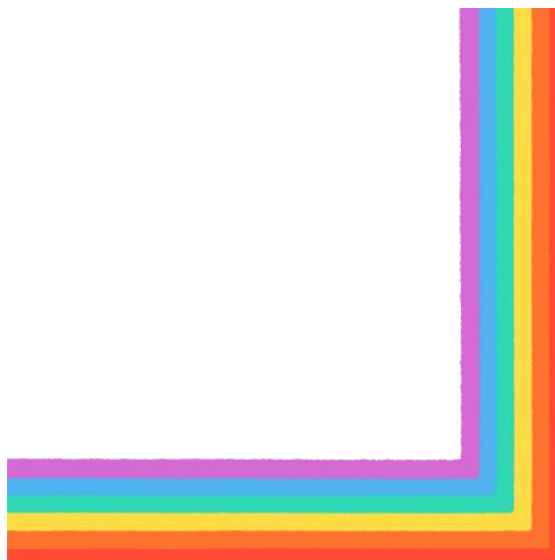
What is hope?

Is it the thing you hold onto in the midst of
struggles?

Or is it something that you give to others?

I think it is both and more.

What is hope?





Romeo & Juliet

By Maka D.

In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
Liveth two youthful lovers with distance between.
This be a tale of their star-crosséd love;
Juliet perched on the balcony above.
Romeo stands in the courtyard below,
On their lips, serenades seem to blossom and flow.
Let's pretend, in the end, their fates aren't to die...
He could be thou, and she could be I.
We could get lost in each other's sweet verse,
A secret convention so we can converse.
Hasten, sweet Romeo! Run to me fast!
Oh, how I long to hold thee at last.
Thy voice like a nectar I drink and I drink,
Thy words are such rapturous morsels, I think,
Thy mind an astute and witty device,
Thy tongue just as sharp, thy verse as concise.
Wherefore art thou so near yet so far?
And wherefore art thou there where thou are?
Thou hath successfully captured my heart,
Thy face memorized, though we are apart.
Thy flattering words fall on hearkening ears;
To me, far more treasured than even Shakespeare's,
Thou built me a palace of thine own affection,
Though thy love itself is the sweetest confection.
Confessions recorded by pencil or pen,
I've heard them before, but please tell me again!
My mind could devour thy poems forever,
Thy tone so emotional, wording so clever.
Run to me, lover! Doth heed my call!
Follow my voice or do nothing at all.
De te fabula narratur, the story we all know:
The tale of Juliet, and her dear Romeo.

We are two halves...



*Of a beating
heart.*

By Maka D.



Spring



By Clementine

Flowers are blooming.

The air is wet.

The sun is out.

Spring is here.



My Spring Messenger by Charlotte



A Warrior's Kit by Augusta

**Ode To Verbs
by Gabriel**

**At the start, there was nothing
stillborn people and rocks
static, minuscule planes,
polygons at rest**

**Abruptly, movement happened
a fracture in space**

**You, the verb were here
to save us from this
life of stasis,**

**Little ducks scrambling in a line,
one falling behind**

**A stack of sheep eating grass,
reaching the sky**

**You allowed us to be
and to move
through a life greater than ever before**

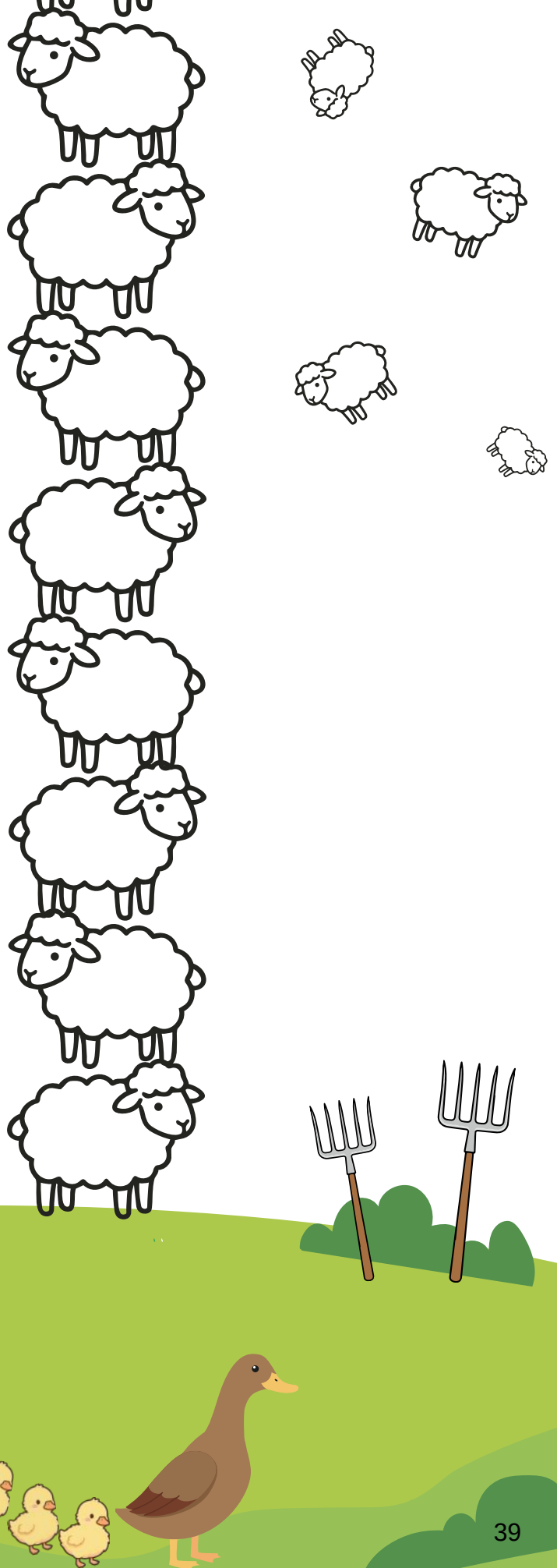
**A life with sheep falling out of the sky
a life with pitchforks standing high
a life with ducks building their nests
a life with people waiting to grow
and a life with hooves and fowl**

We can change our own lives

**We can be ourselves,
and with you,
we can change
and with change comes future**

To create, to change, to move, to live

Thank you, verbs.





Derpy Tiger by Rosie

A vibrant illustration of a spring landscape. Two large, leafy trees frame the top of the page. A bright yellow sun with rays is in the upper right. The sky is blue with soft white clouds. The ground is green with blades of grass and several brown rocks. The overall scene is bright and cheerful, representing the season of spring.

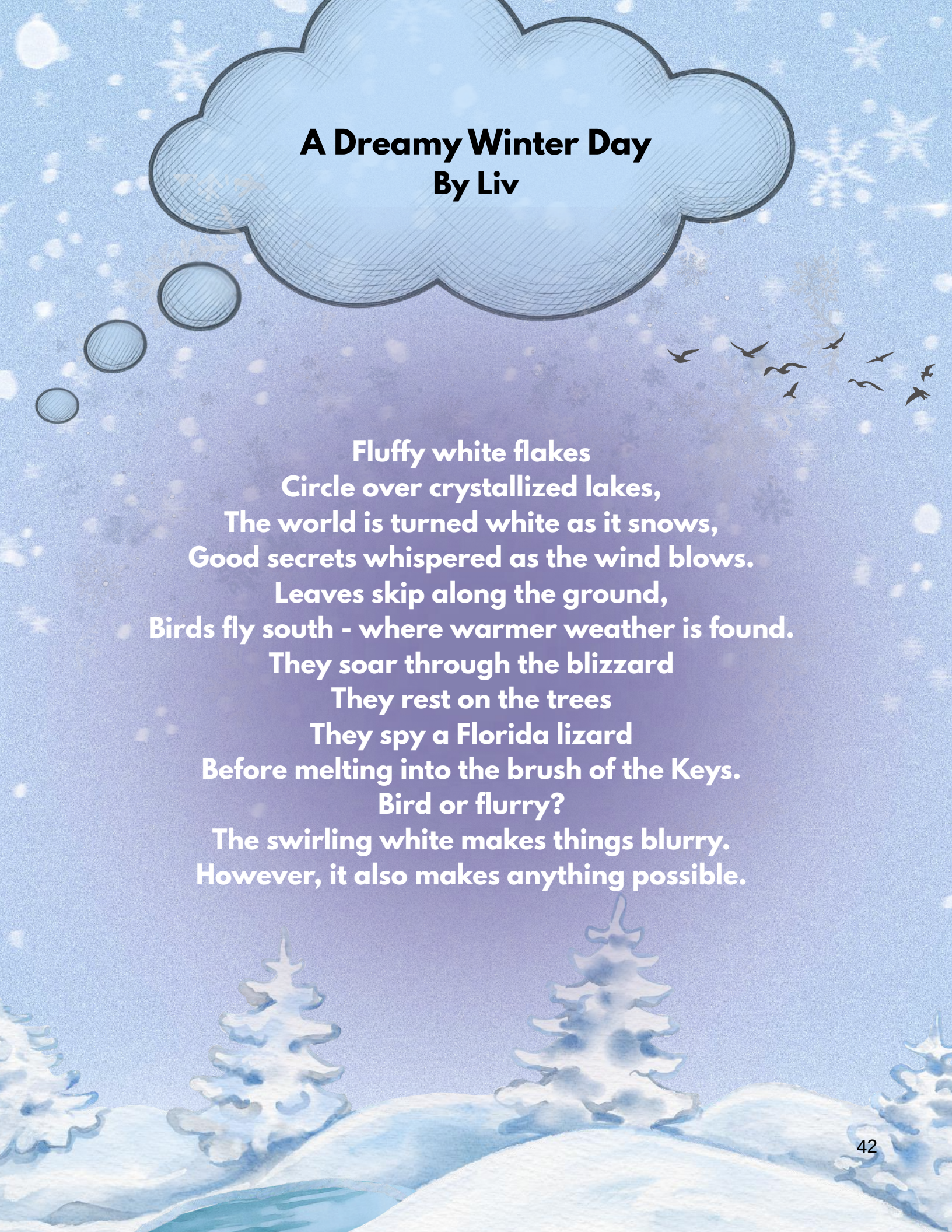
Spring is Here

Flowers are blooming,
No more snow, I'm assuming.
Already seventy degrees,
New growth on the trees.
Frost on the grass would be a rare sighting,
Some rain sure sounds inviting.
As we move from winter into spring,
I'm sure of one thing,
There will be flies, mosquitoes and gnats,
So always remember to wear your hats.
I'll miss the previous season,
But Spring is here for a reason.

Limertankostic Riddle

This cat prowls the night,
In wild jungles, a rare sight.
Giant striped beast jumps far,
Eyes of gold, guess what they are.
Read acrostic, are you right?

By Flynn



A Dreamy Winter Day

By Liv

Fluffy white flakes
Circle over crystallized lakes,
The world is turned white as it snows,
Good secrets whispered as the wind blows.
Leaves skip along the ground,
Birds fly south - where warmer weather is found.
They soar through the blizzard
They rest on the trees
They spy a Florida lizard
Before melting into the brush of the Keys.
Bird or flurry?
The swirling white makes things blurry.
However, it also makes anything possible.

Rumi



By Evie W

Is Changing Bad? by Amy

Changing, always changing

Whether it is changing to a smile and cracking a really bad joke
Or just sitting down next to you as all of your frustration pours out

I find myself changing to who the people around me need
But when I read the room wrong (because no one's perfect least of all me)

I feel like walking away and disappearing in the sunset never to return
I feel like I should stop trying to be everyone's friend and leave for good

Even if I feel this way for... only a moment and then forget all about it
By well... how else? Cracking another really bad joke

You may think changing it to a really bad kink and I feel the same
Until I inevitably crack under the pressure and break down, then

All those people who had to hear all of my horrible jokes
All those people who cry tears of sorrow in my arms
All those people who laughed and breathed the same air as me

They show up and they do the same for me, as I have tried to do for them

They are now the ones cracking jokes and making me smile
They are now the ones who hug and cry with me

They are the ones who tell me it's going to be okay
And then help me up off the ground and dust me off

Change isn't bad. It's just different from what we're used to
And yes I may never find the right answer to the question "who are you?"

But everyone around me knows what I am to them.
So do I really need to know myself?

Jeongbang Falls on Jeju Island, South Korea



by Roanan

With its
feathers soft and light,
The bird glides smoothly
through its flight.
Beady eyes and
a sharp beak,
A bird's evolution
is at its peak.
Swooping and gliding ever higher,
Most birds' wings rarely tire.
No other flier can match their speed,
For in any race they would
take the lead.
Best sight
of them all,
A way to make
a powerful call,
Talons that
can hold and grip,
Through the sky birds shall forever zip

Untitled by Alex



Cats

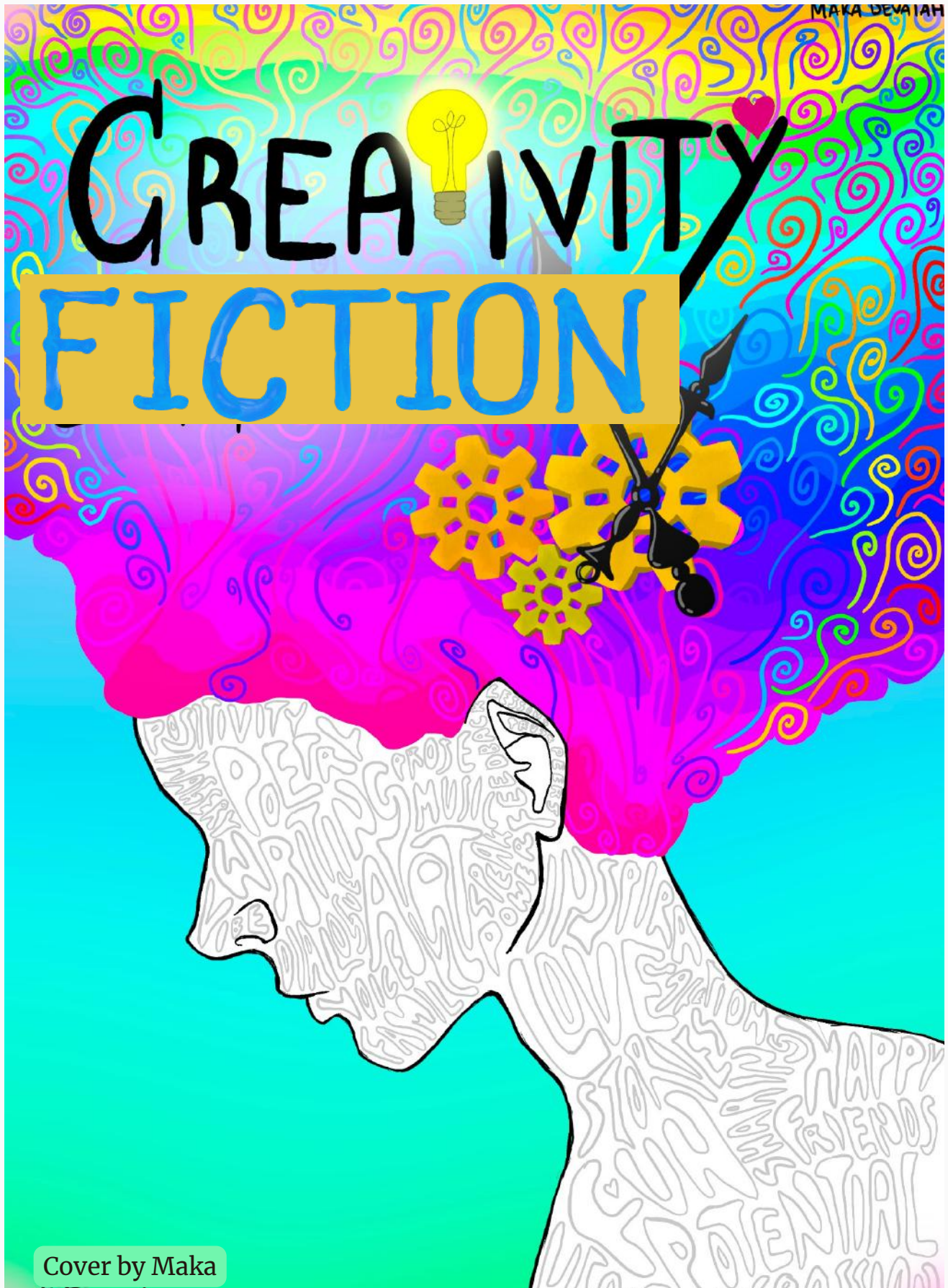
By Jesse Scott

Cats are cute.
Cats are cunning.
Cats are camouflaged cannons.
Cats are crazy quick.
Cats are claws, sharp as daggers.
Cats are rugged, tough explorers.
Cats are crazy daredevils,
But yet I still love them
For their fur, fangs,
And, most of all,
Their fluffy, fuzzy, bottlebrush tails.

My Alaska Hoodie

By Jesse Scott

Alaska hoodie in the shop
Filled with fishing fun
Glorious memories of fish so strong
Swimming up a river so long
Splish, splash, splash, splish.
Powering against the current
No personal gain,
End of their lives
Ensuring the next generation.



Cover by Maka

Fido and Friends: The Chase

By Elle S



Fido the beagle dog has wandered far from home. His favorite thing to do is go on adventures. Fido has a problem, though. Something is trying to stop him from having fun. It is a creature called the Barking Adafa Kit, or the Kit for short. It is a blue doodad that runs on four legs.

Back to the story!

Fido passes a bush, and the Kit jumps out of it! Fido runs away, but the chase is not over. It takes a while for the Kit to give up.

Fido hides behind a rock, a big one. The Kit misses Fido, and he sneaks out the back. Fido steps on a stick, and the Kit notices him. Fido runs as fast as he can. The Kit is still chasing him.

Fido finds home. The Kit doesn't see him go into his doghouse. He is safe.





A Walk in the Park

by Liv

Squibby Duck was on the plains, galloping on his horse with his family by his side, breathing the dusty air in his lungs as he rode the 450 miles from Cheyenne to Yellowstone, Wyoming. The heavy gear they'd spent weeks preparing was digging painfully into his side, but he was still grateful for it. Or at least he would be, if he were on that horse now. But he wasn't. The trip was canceled!!! All because the horses had gone missing, and they couldn't get any more in time. By the way, Squibby Duck isn't his real name; it's James. As you might have inferred, he's not a duck either, since ducks can't ride horses. No, he is a human; a hardworking, heavily tanned, platinum blond, ten-year-old boy to be exact. And Squibby Duck was not giving up on this trip. Not after all the preparation, money, and excitement that had come from it. He'd find the horses, but he knew doing so would be no walk in the park. Little did he know just how wrong he was to use that expression. A walk in the park would be the answer.

What Squibby Duck needed was a plan. He needed to get to the farm and investigate. It's not like the farm wasn't investigating; they'd posted all around about the horses. They'd also found a hole in the fence the horses must've escaped out of, but that was all. Should he ask his parents if he could go? Naw. They'd just try to stop him or tag along. This was a one-person job. So... he was sneaking out then. It had to be in the middle of the night too, since his mama worked at home selling fresh herbs.

Alright... Squibby Duck said to himself in the dark of his room, at a time he shouldn't have been awake to see, This'll be easy. Sneakily, he slunk into the garage. Bike, helmet, churn pedals, five miles, boom. Upon arriving, he did a gnarly skid and a Squibby Duck n' Roll to the ground. Haha, get it? It sure looked cool, but those five miles were no joke, and it was more from fatigue than anything else. No one was watching, after all. But then again, the pun was awesome. You could do a lot with a funny name that originated in the bathtub.

S.D. shook his head just thinking about it. He'd been so young, only around five. His favorite toy was a squid with a hole in its mouth for water to squirt out of. Oddly enough, he also had a rubber ducky with a small nub on the bottom from where it'd been molded. One day in the tub, he found he could put the two together, and combining their names as well, he had himself a Squibby Duck. He'd been so excited about his discovery that he said it nonstop for weeks. His parents started calling him Squibby Duck-obsessed, which eventually shortened to Squibby Duck, dropping the obsessed part. With that, his nickname was born. Looking back, the whole thing seemed a bit far-fetched. But people bond over the unexpected things, right? Squibby Duck thought. Just then, some animal started making a ruckus nearby, and S.D. snapped back to reality. He was on a trip to the farm, not memory lane.

He searched the woods behind the farm for hours, but there were no obvious clues. No hoof prints, no horse hair – and even if there was, it was a super unreliable lead. Time spent, Squibby Duck and his ridiculously heavy backpack wearily rode back home to get his roughly five hours of sleep. As he lay in bed, he tried to ignore the elephant of failure on his chest and stop worrying. But what about that science homework... maybe they'll have already found the horses by morning, and everything will be fine. Wouldn't his expedition be pointless, then? Whatever it takes. Whatever it takes to save the trip. Whatever it takes. Whatever it takes. Squibby Duck repeated that until he nodded off.

The next day, nothing went right. When he finally got home from the day he didn't want to dwell on, the last thing he wanted to do was sneak out in the middle of the night. He'd much rather catch up on his Z's. Earlier, his mama and papa had dropped the bad news that the horses were still missing, so S.D. couldn't stop yet. He also didn't have much time; as the rental his parents had booked for when they arrived at Yellowstone required them to cancel their reservation in two days to get a refund. Even worse, he wasn't at full strength. A bully had tripped him while he was running fast, making poor Squibby Duck fall smack into a slide during a game of perpetual tag at recess. The green bruise still throbbed. And he'd have to face the bully again tomorrow. It made him so tired just thinking about everything, he actually dozed off right there on the old, red leather couch! This, though, would be good for his nightly trip, although bad for his school work. Also today, he'd forgotten two pages of his

science essay at home! Oh well, this trip was more important.

That night, Squibby Duck and his bike lay flat under a bush, as he hoped vainly that they wouldn't be spotted. Why in the world does my neighbor feel the need to walk her dog at the pitch-black witching hour?! S.D. thought, incredulous. This would delay his schedule to no end, and after tonight, he'd only have one more night left to find the horses, or the trip would be off. Time was not in Squibby Duck's favor. Maybe he could cut around her? It'd be a lot more miles... and his neighbor was taking forever. The boy formally known as James grew impatient. He wanted to do something to find the horses. Heck, that was why he was here in the first place! Plus, something on the ground was digging into his oh-so-tender wound. Also, every second he spent near his neighbor was another second he could be found out. In conclusion, he had to leave.

Pesky midnight lady was coming towards him, so not yet. He held as still as humanly possible as the dog sniffed the bush he was under. Why was this taking so long??? The dog, which he knew to be named Jelly Bean, must have been able to sense his fear, impatience, hope, anxiety, slight annoyance, slight boredom, and overall exasperation, or he wouldn't linger so long. Finally, Jelly Bean moved on to continue the loop of Squibby's cul-de-sac.

As soon as he could breathe safely, S.D. inched his way out of the bush, ripping his long-sleeve shirt along the way. Ditching his bike because of the dense forest, he proceeded to follow the best alternate route through a nearby park. This walking was much slower, especially injured, and the park route was more populated by homes, so he had to keep his flashlight off. He longed to go the direct way, but it was the circuit Jelly Bean and his owner would most likely walk, so he'd already marked it as off the table. The minutes crawling by felt like hours, with nothing protecting Squibby Duck from worrying or wildlife. A rabid squirrel could put an end to him right here, right now.

After an eternity of limping, he finally made it to the park. Squibby Duck had loved playing here, at Lucas Tote Park, which the sign used to proclaim before it fell into disrepair. His favorite part was the HUGE turtle climbing structure with a perfect clubhouse under its shell. He patted the rusty shell lovingly as

he went by. The thud he made resounded in the hollow interior and then multiplied like a thousand times. Huh? Was all Squibby Duck had time to think before thundering thuds exploded out of the structure.

He screamed and dropped to the ground. He could hardly hear the pounding sounds over the pounding of his own heart. S.D. curled into a ball, protecting his neck and covering his ears. He'd never been more scared in his life. He was shaking, palms sweating, eyes bulging, and liable to have a heart attack any second.

The thuds stopped by the pond that the park framed. Squibby Duck uncovered his ears to hear the somethings breathing heavily. Then he heard a surprising sound: a snort. A snort? How could that be? He momentarily stopped being scared out of his wits and used them. Were his kidnappers humorous? No, that wasn't it... then he identified a soft noise. It sounded almost like... could it be... a whinny? Like, the sound made by horses??? Without thinking, Squibby Duck uncurled and pointed his flashlight like a lightsaber at the maybe-whinny maybe-horses. His thumb clicked the on switch and suddenly he was staring into mostly black eyes. He dragged his gaze down to see several stocky brown, black, and white bodies with long sturdy legs attached, four apiece.

HORSES!!! He'd done it! He'd found them! He'd saved the trip! He must've made some exclamatory noise because the horses reared back and retreated into the water. Impulsively, Squibby Duck went over and tried to ride one, ending up soaked, on his back in knee high water. He laughed, delirious with joy. Suddenly, a light illuminated him.

Squibby Duck stopped laughing, until he saw who it was. The woman and Jelly Bean! He burst out laughing again, soaked to the bone and having had the fright of his life made him giddy with relief.

"Kid, what happened???" the dogwalker exclaimed, astonished, "Are you quite alright?"

Giggling, S.D. stood up and shook the water from his blond hair. "Best I've ever been," he responded, and it was true.



DIWALI PARTY DISASTER!

by Charlotte

Ding-Dong went the doorbell. I opened the door to find a letter on the door mat. *The mail should be in the mail box, not on the floor*, I thought. I opened the envelope and took out a piece of paper. It was a lilac color, and the paper was very thin and lightweight. It said:

You are invited to a Diwali party on: October 21
You will go to 889 Sawgrass Street
BRING FRIENDS!

I thought about that for a second. I knew who I should take...Snickerdoodle!

Snickerdoodle was a long-haired teddy bear hamster. She was a brownish-yellow color, and she was the size of my hand. The next day, I got ready for the party. I put Snickerdoodle in her carrier and put some treats in and headed off.

It was fall, and the air smelled of cinnamon buns. Leaves swirled around us. The trees were red, gold, orange, yellow, and even a little purple. Snickerdoodle squirmed in her carrier as I turned on Main Street. I think she smelled the cinnamon buns. I decided to go to the bakery and get some. When we got there, I put Snickerdoodle's carrier down on the counter. I got one cinnamon bun and a pumpkin latte. Then, when I walked out, I peeked in Snickerdoodle's carrier. She was not there! I opened the carrier to see if she was under the bedding. *I hope she's here*, I thought, getting a bit panicky. I stirred the bedding, but she was not there!

I ran up the sidewalk on Main Street, but I could not find her. Good thing there were not a lot of cars about or she would've gotten crushed! I decided to look for Snickerdoodle on my way to the party, but that part of my plan did not work. I was wandering from street to street and block to block. I noticed that I was lost! I wandered around looking for Snickerdoodle. I was so worried. Then the wind gushed and the invitation flew out of my hand! It seemed to be leading me somewhere, so I followed it. I looked at the street sign in front of me. It said Sawgrass Street. I turned around to find a house fully decorated for Diwali.



I looked at my invitation and then the house again. It was the party house! By then I had forgotten about Snickerdoodle, so I walked in and a surprise greeted my eyes!

Snickerdoodle was on the table eating some ladoos! I went over and said, “Oh Snickerdoodle,” as I put her in her carrier and popped some more ladoos in.

Someone walked over to me. “Hi,” I said. “Could you watch Snickerdoodle for me?”

“Sure,” she agreed.

I walked around. There was a table with ladoos, cups of chai, and a little bowl of pistachios. The table was lined with marigolds. They were also strung on the curtains and ceiling. Rangoli was drawn in the corners of the house. Twinkling lights were on the outside of the house. Sparklers were put on the table for when the fireworks were going off. I felt so happy that I had found Snickerdoodle and that I had gotten to the party safely.

Hours later, I was leaving the party with Snickerdoodle in hand and a box of ladoos in the other.

At home, I got ready for bed, and I put Snickerdoodle in her cage.

“Wasn’t that fun, Snickerdoodle?” I exclaimed.

I swear I heard a faint squeak.

As I put myself into bed, I pondered about my fun day. *I wish I could go back to the party,* I thought.



The Mysteries of the Undead

Ethan jumped out of the way, just as a zombie was about to kill him. He rushed in with his blade, which he called Zombie Cutter. Just as he was about to slay it, the zombie parried his strike and pinned him to the ground. "Help!" he cried, and his friend Ian stabbed the zombie in the head.

"I can't believe you almost died in a practice fight!" said Ian.

"I almost died anyway from the smell of the rotten flesh! And besides, I'm still getting used to the whole zombies trying to kill me thing," Ethan argued.

"Oh yeah, I forgot how jarring it can be suddenly going from regular life to zombie hunting."

Part of what's hard about the life of a zombie hunter is that they don't get a choice. If you are destined to become a zombie hunter, then one day, a zombie will find you.

It happened to Ethan only a few weeks ago. He was walking home and saw a suspicious-looking person. He noticed that the person seemed interested in him, so he said, "Is there something you want from me?" The only response he got was a creepy moan. Then he noticed that the person was acting weird, so he started to walk away. That's when the zombie attacked. Right when it was about to hit him, a stranger knocked the zombie out of the way and slayed it.

"My name is Ian. Is this your first time meeting a zombie?"

"That was a zombie!?"

"Yeah, it was. What's your name?"

"Ethan."



"I'm warning you, Ethan, this might be a lot to process," said Ian. "I am a zombie hunter, and since that zombie attacked you, that means you must be trained to fight or go into hiding."

"Do I seem like the kind of person who would run away and hide!?" Ethan yelled. "Of course I'll learn how to slay zombies if it means not running away!"

"I thought you might say that," said Ian. "You don't seem like a person who backs away from challenges." He handed Ethan a blade. "You will need this to slay zombies."

"I think I will call it Zombie Cutter," declared Ethan.

"I think it is good you thought to name it, but I must say that it is not a very creative name."

"It's my blade, so I will call it whatever I want!" exclaimed Ethan.

"Honestly Ethan, I really respect that," admitted Ian.



After failing to kill the training zombie, Ethan was eager to try again. "When can I fight the next zombie?" he asked Ian.

"Wait a second," said Ian. "I will admit, that zombie you fought for practice was a pretty powerful zombie. I had you fight a zombie I knew you couldn't defeat because I wanted to humble you."

"I can't believe you would do that to me!" exclaimed Ethan. "Can I fight an easier zombie now?"

"Yes, I think I have the perfect zombie in mind," said Ian.

Ethan noticed that this zombie was much smaller than the first one he had fought. He felt confident, so he made the first move. He snuck up behind the zombie and stabbed it in the back. He thought that maybe he had already won, but it seemed to have no effect on the zombie.

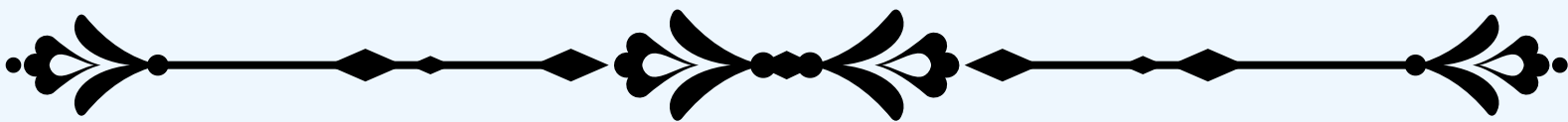
"That won't work," laughed Ian. "You need to hit it in the head to slay it. Hitting it anywhere else won't do anything."

It annoyed Ethan that his friend seemed to love to watch him struggle, but he wouldn't give up. The zombie tried to grab him, but he was faster and finally slayed his first zombie.

"Are you going to brag about how great you are at zombie hunting?" said Ian.

Ethan raised an eyebrow. "Actually, I don't think it is very important because it will be just the first of many."

By Skyler



Fay and Moose: The Origin of "Famous"

by Gabriel P.



Moose was having fun playing with his friends at the cat park when he felt his belly grumbling. He was hungry.

Moose padded over to his owner's house, who was a poor citizen, to get his daily food, but when he arrived, there wasn't any food. Instead, there was a sign that said, "Sorry, Moose, we are out of cat food and can't afford more yet." Moose didn't know what to say. He wouldn't be eating cat food anytime soon, which meant that he would have to get money by himself. He went to a police station and asked if they could pay him to become a police cat, and one of the policemen said, "Yes."

Meanwhile, Fay was slowly padding through the town, looking for poor cats to taunt, when Fay saw Moose, alone, padding away from the police station. Fay ran across the road to Moose. "Hey Moose! Do you want some money? After all, I have a LOT of money!"

Moose said, "Actually, yes!"

Fay laughed. "You actually thought that I was going to give you money? Wow, you poor cats really are stupid!"

Moose looked down at his paws and slowly padded away in the direction of his owner's house. Moose wanted to show Fay that he could be rich too.

Two days later, Moose was in an alleyway, chasing after a person that stole a pizza from a restaurant, when he smelled something tasty behind him. He turned around to see a cat treat. It looked tasty! He ate the cat treat and slowly looked up to see the policeman, staring angrily down at Moose.

"You're fired!"



About a week after that, Moose was painting a sculpture at an artist workshop when he saw a cat treat. He ate it up when he knocked over his sculpture. The sculpture hit the ground and broke into a bunch of tiny pieces. He looked up to see the artist, staring angrily down at Moose.

"You're fired!"

After only three more days, Moose was cleaning the windows of a nearby apartment when he saw a cat treat next to his cleaning bucket. He reached for the cat treat, when he half-fell through the window. He was lowered down to see the window cleaner, staring angrily down at Moose.

"You're fired!"



Moose was padding away from his latest failure when he had a great idea. He would rob people to get money, just like Fay! He went to a big white building. This building had to have a lot of money! He ran in and he saw people talking next to a sideways cat flap that led to a lot of jewelry and green paper! He ran in that direction when he saw a cat on the TV. It was Fay! The headline read, "Fay the royal cat does all the jobs!" The news reporter said, "I've never seen such an extraordinary cat! Fay is an expert policeman, artist, and window cleaner! We're so happy to have Fay on this channel for you people today!"

While the people were looking at the TV, Moose walked over to the cat flap and sat inside. He shoved the money out and made it one step toward the exit when he saw all the people looking at him.

Moose said, "Meow."

The people didn't listen. They kicked him out of the big white building, while Moose didn't even get to keep ONE green piece of paper!



Moose dug his claws deep into the soil. Everything that he failed at, Fay was succeeding at, including robbery!

About a week and a half later, a hungry Moose got invited to star in a new play, and he was performing on stage. Moose was saying one of his lines when he saw a cat treat. He looked down at the cat treat and stopped speaking. He reached one paw down and was about to put the cat treat in his mouth. Moose looked forward and saw Fay. Right then, he remembered that every time he got fired from a job, it wasn't because he wasn't trying. It was because of a cat treat. He realized that Fay was the cat that was

pressing him to eat the cat treats. Fay wanted him to fail so that he wouldn't be the richest cat in the neighborhood.

Moose wasn't friends with Fay anymore, so he didn't have to be friendly. He looked at Fay as people were already starting to leave. "You made me lose my job, and now you are even trying to ruin my play! You're just being a selfish cat, frightened of someone becoming richer than you!"

Fay smiled a brutally happy smile. "I already did, Moose. Nobody wants to see your play and nobody wants to see you."

Moose looked around. Almost all of the people were leaving. He was going to get fired again. The play manager walked up to Moose.

Moose said, "I know, I'm fired," and began to pad away.



Moose was padding away while thinking about the cat treats. Fay gave him those cat treats because it would make him lose his job, but it was his choice to eat the cat treat. If he didn't eat any of the cat treats, he wouldn't have lost any of his jobs!

He had a new idea. He immediately went to the big white building and decided that he wanted to be a "banker," whatever that meant. When he arrived, he heard people talking about him. He heard, "Didn't this cat get fired like 1758 times?" and "Didn't this cat try to rob from us like a week ago?" but they couldn't resist when Moose said, "Meow." It was fun, because with his new job, he could count green pieces of paper, but he knew that this was his last chance! He heard a noise and began to pad in that direction when he saw a huge trail of cat treats leading the other way.

Moose was following the cat treats when he heard the same noise again. He had a feeling that it was wrong to follow this path. Moose finally thought, Maybe I shouldn't go this way. I might as well check what is over that way. He ran in the other direction and saw... Fay?

Fay was next to the big sideways cat flap, startled. Fay threw one pawful of cat treats. Moose didn't go for them.

Fay threw another pawful of cat treats.



Moose didn't go for those either.

Moose pressed a button next to the cat flap, and it closed. Fay didn't get a single piece of green paper!

People began to arrive at the scene. Moose asked, "Am I fired?"

The bank manager said, "Of course not! You saved the bank." The bank manager handed Moose a pawful of cat treats. "You deserve these."

The next day, Moose was having fun playing with his friends at the cat park when he felt his belly grumbling. He was hungry. He pulled out a sack of cat treats and began to eat with his friends. They tasted even more delicious because he bought them himself. Then, Moose decided to be nice and give some to his friends too!

Moose was happy until he looked at the house where his owners lived. He went to their house and gave them all the money that they wanted. When his owners met him, they were so excited! "Moose, you're famous!"

Moose was confused. "Famous?"

Moose's owner replied, "Yes! It's like what you and Fay are!" Moose said, "But you don't know how I got famous!" Moose's owner asked, "How did you get famous?"

Moose replied, "Well, I learned that taking the treat isn't the right thing to do. If you don't take the treat, you get thousands and thousands of treats!"



H4CK3D BY: SIMON S

BEEP BEEP BEEP!

“UGH AH WHERE HUH. Is that my alarm?” At first I am confused, but then I realize that my newly installed brain chip had a preset alarm that I forgot to turn off. Now I am awake.

Slowly I get out of my bed and climb down the ladder of my loft bed. I walk out of my room and say hi to my family; my family consists of my brother, who has been a bit crazy with his brain chip, my mom, who still refuses to get one, and my dad, who has had one since he was three. His family made him get the surgery when he was so little he can barely remember it. He uses it for every aspect of life.

My brother got his chip when he was 14. He’s 15 now, and he uses it for every imaginable problem. Getting bored? Use your brain chip for someone to talk to or just to find something to do! Need jelly for your sandwich? Use your brain chip to order it the fastest way.

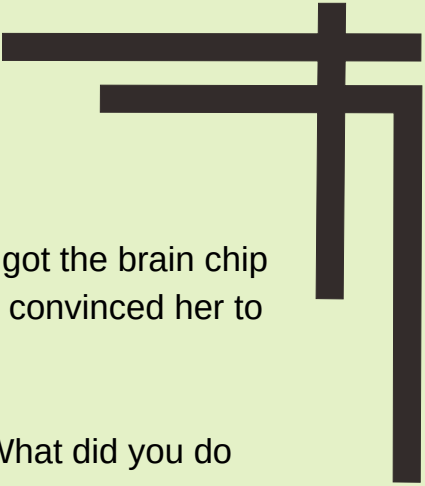
I am 12, and I just got my brain chip yesterday. Now I need to figure out how to use it. The surgeon said just to think what I want and a screen will appear out of nowhere and get me what I want. I’ve been thinking as hard as I can, and nothing happens; I ask my dad, and he says, “Do you need water?”

I just say, “No?”

Then he says, “Then get thirsty!”

I walk away confused. Then, well, I get thirsty and want water, and it works! Somehow my brain chip makes an image of my water bottle on my desk where I left it last! I’m really happy, so I test it more; I think of Safari popping up in the middle of air and it works. I think, search YouTube and it does that too. I run back to my mom and tell her, “IT WORKED!”

“What worked?” my mom asks.



I reply, "My brain chip worked!"

"Oh good," my mom says halfheartedly. My mom doesn't like that I got the brain chip surgery; she never wanted me to do it in the first place, but my dad convinced her to let me do it.

My dad walks in and says, "How good is that? You got it to work? What did you do with it? Did you make an image of your water?"

"Yes, and I also made it open up YouTube for me," I respond.

"Alright, alright, that's cool," he says. "Can you order something with your chip?"

"Maybe," I say. "I do need jelly for my sandwich." I close my eyes and imagine opening Amazon and searching up 'jelly.' I open my eyes, and I see that it worked; I click on one that looks good and then click "order." "I did it!" I exclaim.

"Nice," says my dad...

A couple seconds later and I hear knocking... in my head! I open the door and my jelly is there! The Amazon drone must have just dropped it off and signaled it through my chip.

But also there's something I didn't order, a newspaper. "Did you order this, Dad?" I ask.

"No, I don't think so," he says.

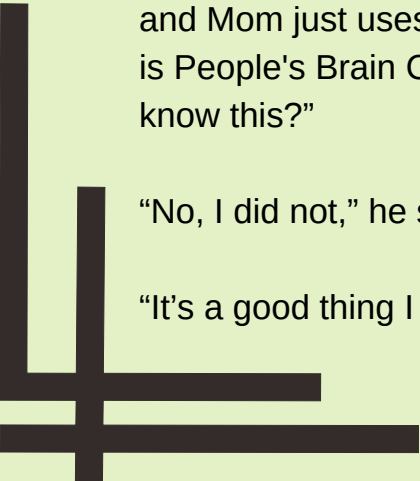
"Did you order it, Mom?" I ask.

"No, I definitely did not."

We don't need newspapers because our brain chips just tell us all of the information, and Mom just uses her computer. I grab the newspaper and look at it. The headline is People's Brain Chips Are Getting Hacked. I look up and ask my dad, "Did you know this?"

"No, I did not," he says back.

"It's a good thing I didn't get surgery," my mom says in a sarcastic voice.



"Ugh, what was I thinking getting a brain chip!" I say.

"It's probably just some weird propaganda—"

"Then why is it on the newspaper?!" I cut my dad off.

"Well, sometimes that garbage can get on the news," my dad says. "And it's in the headline; how do you explain that?!"

"I don't know—wait, I think I remember now. I did order that newspaper," my dad says. "Error, um, I mean, no, I did not order that." Pstttttss, bump. My dad falls to the ground, smoke coming up from his head. Dead...

"Did Dad get hacked?" I say, my eyes teary.

"I thought that it was propaganda as well," my mom says, sobbing.

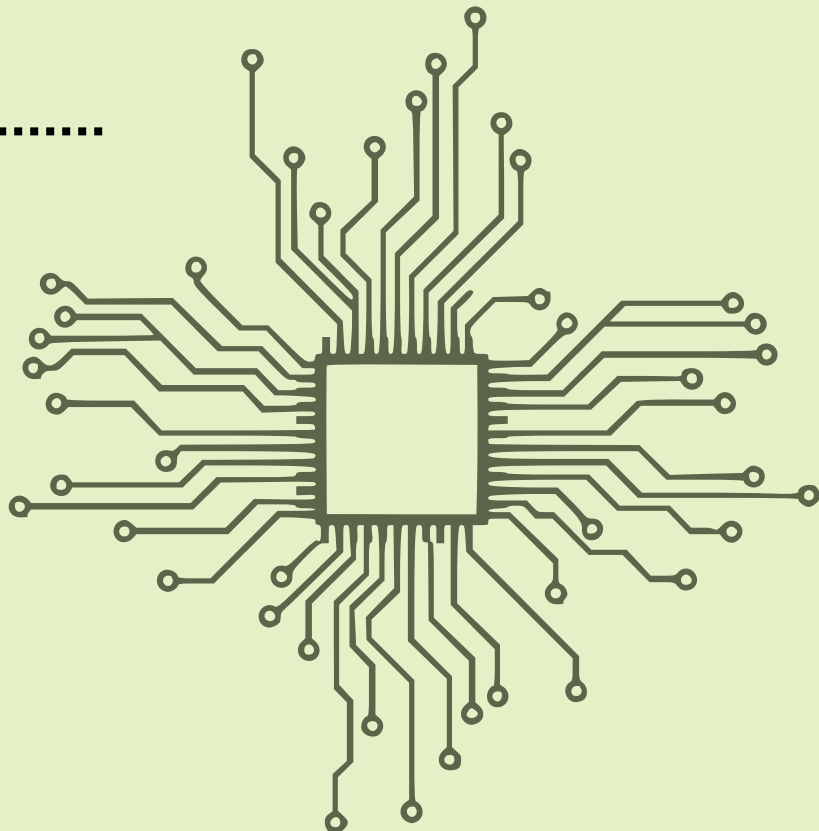
Knock, knock, knock. "Did you order anything?" I ask.

"No," she responds.

I open the door and see a man robotically come up to me and grab me. Error, screech, tap, tap, tap—I hear within my head. As I feel myself getting hacked, my last original thought is "help..."

THE END

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In the Throes of Despair Part I

By M. L. Bella

The eyes. Everyone always says that the first thing people look at is the eyes. I didn't see their eyes. My gosh. Their eyes were the last thing I looked at. Why? They were covered by a mask of pure, pitch-black Ferrum-Aes.

The face was on my monitor. They spoke volumes, truly. Their posture was controlled and deathly still. That told me that they weren't afraid. They were a predator, waiting for their prey. Of course, I could tell a hunter when I saw one. So where do I go from here? I press the bright, glowing red button, of course.

I knew they were watching me. The display inside my mask showed me that much. The glow was green and showed me a perfect view of the street overlaid with a picture taken at this time last night. The heat signatures were displayed with precision on my display. Their EKGs were available from this distance, and TAGS highlighted the bounty. The list of information that popped up in a box next to the target was mostly blacked out, except for the name, EKG, bounty price, face, and status needed for delivery. It was a fine list, indeed. Most of the time, I only have the bounty's face and status for delivery.

I slung the automated weapon over my shoulder and pulled the sniper unit and its tripod from off my pack, a simple black cameo in a military design. I arranged myself in a secure position and loaded a clip into the slot. I had two with me so that there was no chance of failure.

The deed was done in the time it took me to blink twice. A smile spread wide across my mouth before I ejected the spent round and pulled out the clip...six bullets left—perfect. The sniper unit and tripod were disassembled in the time it took my heart to beat five times.

I then took out a TED and was about to click the button and send it over the edge and onto the street below when I heard the faint click of military boots coming up behind me.

I slowly turned round and observed the figure on the roof with me. Their armor made it impossible to tell their sex, and, as was customary for covert agents of the intelligence community, they didn't wear the gender pin that was required for

everyone else. The same was true for me, although our armor was slightly different. My faceplate was pure black, same as my armor. Their face plate had red crosses over their eyes and a blue band around their forehead. The same pattern of red crosses and blue bands was repeated periodically around their armor.

I casually pressed the button on the TED and threw it over my shoulder. I removed my helmet as the TED shook the ground and tossed it to one side. I knew the explosion illuminated my face, casting my tanned skin, long purple, blue, and blonde hair, and ear piercings into the sudden light. I signed, "We meet again," in IRSLCA (Internationally Recognized Sign Language for the Covert Agent). I knew that they, like me, had had their larynx removed so that they couldn't share secrets.

My hair was soaked with the rain as I pushed it out of my eyes so I could watch them sign in return. "We meet again. Same-old trouble you?" I signed the quick reply of "Always" before drawing the pistol at my side. They let me know that they found it amusing by twitching their first two fingers up and down: "Funny." They then reached up and removed their helmet. They set it to one side and drew their pistol in one fluid motion, holding it loosely at their side.

I raised my eyebrows and signed one-handed, "Me arrest?"

They threw their head back in silent laughter; old habits die hard, I guess. They then narrowed their eyes at me and signed, "Always."

I cursed silently and then in IRSLCA. Then I bit my thumb in their direction and signed, "Can catch me? Do it."

I then scooped up my helmet, secured it over my face, and leaped to the next roof over. Just before I leapt, I heard their audible sigh as they bent over to pick up their helmet.

I sighed with relief as I munched on my popcorn. Wherever this was gonna go next, it was going to be completely worth it.

To Be Continued In: In the Throes of Despair Part II by M. L. Bella.

In the Throes of Despair Part II

By M. L. Bella

I could feel my heart pounding against my armor as I fastened my helmet over my head. I clicked the button on the side to activate the display with one hand, the other tightening around my pistol. Why must they always run?

I raised my hand for the gesture to enable my infrared filter, but, spotting the hunter out of my peripheral vision, I froze. They stood on a roof a few buildings over, watching me. Are they waiting for my next move?

They flashed me a small smile, then signed, "You wait for what?"

I raised my hands as if to sign a reply, then ran straight at them, leaping across the gaps between roofs like hopping between stepping stones in a stream. They turned and sprinted away with an impressive reaction time. I thought I would at least catch them off guard.

As I chased them over the rooftops, my stride punctuated by the slight clink of my boots on shingles, my mind whirled like a cyclone. If death by a thousand thoughts were a thing, I'm sure I would've been suffering it right then. They sent an agent from the Delta Squad to arrest this bounty hunter...they thought a Delta could get a job like this done?

An image flashed into my head: the Delta at our local pub, treating himself to a beer. Bribery always works on a weak mind.

Of course, if the Delta talked, my general would assume I wanted the extra credit. They could never know my true reason for coming here.

My legs started to burn from lactic acid, but the hunter didn't seem to show any signs of fatigue. All of a sudden, they dropped down, landing on their hip, and slid down the angular side of the roof. Popping up in the blink of an eye, they leaped off the rain gutter. They landed on the next roof and continued running to my right, headed towards Main Street.

I'm not letting you get away that easily. I copied their move and bolted after them, willing my legs to speed up. If they got to Main Street, I could lose them in the crowd, and then this all would've been for nothing.

I could hear my sister's voice in my head like a mantra: "Promise me—promise me you'll make them pay—promise me—"

If I broke that promise, I would be beyond repair. Her voice filled my ears till I wanted to cry out in agony, but I didn't. I couldn't. I just looked up, realizing the fleeing hunter was only a few paces ahead. I resisted the urge to use my weaponry and instead reached out a hand to grab them, like a child reaching out in a game of tag. Just as my fingers brushed their shoulder, they dropped out from under me, landing on the pavement below. We'd reached Main Street.

Vendors lined the sides of the road, calling out about various goods and handing out samples to passersby. The road was swamped with pedestrians: humble workers hauling boxes on their shoulders, mothers wheeling their babies about in covered carriages, and children darting around the adults' legs, eyes set on the candy stalls. And there was my target, weaving through the crowd just fast enough to put some distance between us, but not fast enough to draw much unwanted attention. I swear internally. I had to give it to them; they were clever.

I jumped to the ground, wincing at the pain that shot through my feet, and followed the hunter into the fray. As I pushed my way through the crowd, a few people recognized me and shouted curses in my direction. I considered taking off my helmet but decided against it; my face would probably attract more attention. I caught up to my target right as they were about to slip between the vendors' booths. Grabbing their shoulder, I whipped them around to face me. In one swift move, I snatched their pistol from the belt around their waist, swept their feet out from under them, pinned them to the ground with a foot to their chest, and yanked off my helmet. I heard a petrified gasp from an observer behind me, but I paid no mind.

I threw their pistol to the side, where it skittered to a stop a few feet away, then raised my hands and signed angrily, "You think you escape? Me??"

The pinned warrior removed their helmet as well, replying, "You need not."

My teeth clenched as I signed. "You say same-same-same! Wait—finish rid you.

My sister, she finally have revenge.”

The hunter’s eyes widened slightly. Their hands shook (with rage or fear, I couldn’t tell) as they told me, “Your sister, what happened...my fault, not.”

My mouth dropped open in a soundless scream, and I whipped out my gun, pointing it at their head. “Liar!”

They signed, “If you say 'yes'..." and closed their eyes—not squeezed, closed—and tilted their head to the side. A straight shot. A clean shot. Just pull the trigger. But I didn’t. I stood there for a whole sixty seconds and didn’t fire the gun. If you say ‘yes’...

Tears started to roll down my cheeks without my permission, and my hands began to quiver. I’m sorry, sister.

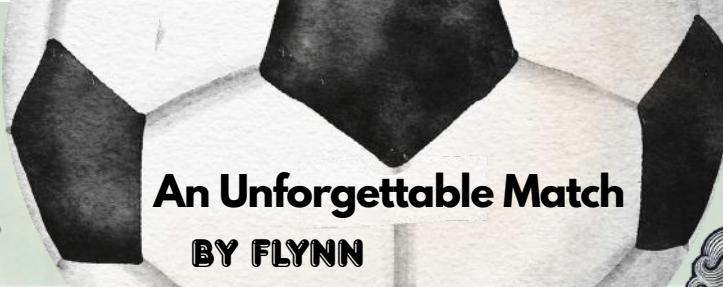
Letting my arm fall to my side in defeat, I slid my pistol back into its holster. I stepped away, and the hunter took a deep breath, getting to their feet warily. Their eyes never left me as they signed, “You free me why? I don’t know. You free me?”

I nodded slowly, my eyes cast to the ground.

Sighing, they signed, “General, give my respect to them.”

I raised my fist, flicking my wrist forward decisively. “No.” I paused.

“Me go with you.”



An Unforgettable Match

BY FLYNN



“Marvin, over here!”

Swerving around a defender, my cleats pounded the turf as I closed in on the goal, ball at my feet. Hearing Rick, my co-captain of the Hurricanes, I passed to him around the last defender, the perfect setup for a goal. Rick rammed it into the back of the net, and the crowd went wild. In the first minute of the game, we’d already scored! The bottom-seed team, the Spiders, jogged back to their positions to resume game one of the playoffs. Hopefully, this would be an easy win. We were the top seed, so we got the home crowd and field, best in our twelve-year-old travel soccer league.

The whistle sounded, and the Spiders’ striker, a guy named Steven, passed the ball back to begin play. I advanced on the midfielder with the ball, and he made a wonky pass up to their left winger. Rick slide tackled him and swept the ball away clean. Unfortunately, Steven got to it first, clearing it up to a big kid near our goal. He dodged our best defender and shot the ball hard. Our goalie dove for the save, deflecting the blast with his hand as he flew through the air. Now it was a corner kick for the Spiders, but I went over to our goalie and patted him on the back. “Great save! You know I could’ve never done that!” He smiled but didn’t respond. I noticed he was clutching his wrist tightly.

Steven launched the ball back into play to another Spider in the box. I jumped in the way of his shot, but I felt no impact. My eyes opened to see the ball in the net and the Spider team going nuts that they’d scored. Oh no, it had gone through my legs. I’d been nutmegged.

“Come on, Marvin! Can’t you do any better than that?!” Rick scolded harshly. I hung my head. Now the score was tied 1-1.

I looked past the accusing stares of my teammates to the game clock, where it told me there was an hour and forty-five minutes left to go. Players subbed in and out as they took places around half field, but luckily, I stayed in. I needed to score and gain back the dignity the ball had previously wiped into the goal.



Rick, playing striker, grudgingly passed the ball to the right winger instead of me, just for Steven to come in and steal his long dribble. Coach had told me that he was my man to mark, so I ran over, keeping him from passing, but he kept me from taking the ball away. Eventually, he backheeled the ball to a running Spider, and that rather quickly progressed back to our defense.

A few minutes went by until our star defender cleared the ball up to me, and I exploded down the turf, doing tricks around the Spider midfielders that left them seeing stars. No one could stop me as I weaved through two defenders, eyes on the goal. All of a sudden, my legs were taken out from under me, and I hit the ground hard. I'd just experienced a dirty tackle from Steven. Rick helped me up as the referee gave the signal for a penalty kick.

"I'll take it, guys," I told my team. They nodded. This was my goal. But then, just as I was lining up the shot, Rick tapped me on the shoulder. "Sorry, Marvin, but Coach wants me to shoot it."

No! He had to be kidding! This was my redemption shot! But as I glanced at our coach frantically waving his arms, I stepped aside. "I'll get the next one," I reassured myself. Little did I know how soon that would be.

The whistle rang for Rick to go, and he reared his leg back for a powerful shot at the goalie. Once he made contact, I ran into the box for a possible follow-up, right as the ball bounced off the top of the crossbar, leaving it shaking. As the ball started its descent, memories purposefully flashed into my mind.

I was nine years old and suddenly back at the most memorable game of my life. Though only in the rec league at this time, I knew soccer was my passion. I'd dribbled down the field, swerving around other players, intent on scoring my first goal at the time. When I got to the defense line, I let it rip. The ball, kicked ferociously, had slammed into the crossbar and flew back toward me. I knew what to do. I'd done it millions of times in those soccer video games I used to play. I turned around, leaped up, and scored the first bicycle kick of my life.





And now here I was again, three years later, where a missile of a soccer ball was coming at me. I spun on my heel and, in the nick of time, launched myself up and threw my leg back, laces colliding neatly with the center of the ball. I fell heavily on my back, and all I needed was the crowd's cheers to know that I'd scored it. 2-1.

After lots of high fives and compliments, the game started again at midfield, but there were no significant plays by halftime. My team and I walked over to the sidelines, pumped up by the fact that we were winning. I'd played the whole first half! After the ten-minute break, Coach kept me on the bench to rest. I was disappointed but saw where he was coming from.

To start the second half, Steven passed it back, and he and one of his teammates fed each other short passes until they reached our line of defense. Rick bounded into the picture with a slide tackle, but Steven jumped over and took a shot on goal. Our goalie winced as he blocked it, and after he punted it upfield, he hugged his hand to his chest. Meanwhile, our coach was assigning subs.

"Coach! I think our goalie's hurt!" I exclaimed, causing him to look over to the net. At once, he rushed over. The game was paused as our goalkeeper was helped off the field.

"Quick! Someone play goalie!" Coach shouted, and when no one ran over, I didn't know what to do. I myself was horrible at the position, but nobody else was stepping up. I'd already scored. It was time to take one for the team.

Goalie gloves strapped onto my hands, I was at the ready between goalposts. I won't let a single ball go in, I told myself firmly. The action remained on the Spiders' half of the field, and after a while, I was more watching the game clock than anything. Still, no one had scored. With fourteen minutes to go, the opposition finally came near our defense, and it was kept there for a bit. The whole time, I was left to hope that my teammates would take care of everything, since I was terrified at the thought of blocking a shot.





With five minutes to spare, a Spider kicked the ball at me weakly. It rolled into my outstretched hands, and I punted it upfield rather aimlessly. Of course, it found its way to Steven, and he wasted no time getting past our defense until it was just him versus me. Right when he prepared to shoot, Rick dove in and swept his legs out from under him. A hard foul. All the color drained from my face as the ref called a penalty kick and Steven stepped up to take it.

My palms grew sweaty in my gloves. I nervously looked up at the game clock. Thirty-seven seconds remaining. I gulped, straight out dreading the moment the referee blew the whistle. I remembered back to when our real goalie had made his save. I said I could've never done that, but here I was, hopefully about to. If he scores, we'll probably go into overtime. If I save it, we'll most likely win, and it will be an unforgettable day. The whistle sounded. Steven ran up to the ball and gave it the hardest kick I've ever seen. I reached out, hoping to save the goal. I looked over just as the ball hit the inside of the post and hammered into the front of my head, knocking me out cold.

I opened my eyes to see my coach's face peering down at me. "He's awake!" That was Rick. I sat up, curiosity outweighing dizziness. I looked around. My teammates were crowded around me, enjoying juice boxes and gummies. Past them, and an empty field, was the scoreboard. It read: 2 Hurricanes, 1 Guest. We'd won! I had actually saved a goal with my head!

"Now that you're awake, Marvin," Coach said, "I'd like to award you as Man of the Match. You scored an incredible goal and really stepped up by playing goalie and making that... erm... interesting save. We're all glad to have you on the team." And he was right. As my teammates congratulated me, it was as true as my passion for soccer that I had achieved not only being a great team player but also unlocking the new most memorable soccer game of my life.

THE
END



The Adventures of Tongs-Man, Greatest Hero in the Universe

By Theodore

Like a sable comet streaming through a starless sky, the jet-black landing craft of toad-man Dread Lord Zarkathon flew toward a certain blue and green planet. His objective: food that could stop a raging Bliblatt in its tracks, food tastier than the Prune-Grapes of Shorteth-Goh (which wasn't that hard to be, honestly). Food made only on Earth. Pizza.

Motioning for his crew to activate Landing Mode 4.987, Zarkathon looked out of the state-of-the-art Space Window to see a large sign with the following words: McLuigi's Pizzeria. He had finally made it. As soon as he and his crew landed on the roof, they grabbed their Lazer Gunzz™, broke down the door that was on the roof. They didn't jump down or anything and rushed in, zapping the closest pizza delivery man, who fell with a groan. Zarkathon's cronies grabbed the closest boxes and accidentally bumped the giant pizza spoon ladle thing that gets the pizzas out of the oven. Zarkathon and his grunts ran into the street, pressing buttons on their Space Watches for the landing craft to meet them at the nearest cave, and hid in the crowd that had just appeared.

The ladle thing had fallen into the oven and caught fire, the deadly flames spreading throughout the building. McLuigi's, the owner (yes, his name does have an apostrophe s), ran out of the burning building, evacuating his crew. He was crying because his brother, the pizza delivery man who had been stunned, was trapped inside. He cried out, hoping somebody, anybody would answer.

Tongs-Man did.

Perched on a building, overlooking the fire, Tongs-Man leapt down. People gasped, thinking he would plummet to his doom, but they forgot about his sidekick, whom Tongs-Man pulled out of his pocket.

Garbanzo Pellinzi the 3rd, heir to Pellinzi Estates, richest earthworm in the world, flew out of Tongs-Man's hand like a lasso and wrapped around the closest streetlamp, landing Tongs-Man safely to the sidewalk.

Tongs-Man ran to the scene of the fire and asked around for why he should go in a burning building in the first place. McLuigi's told him his brother was trapped inside, and Tongs-Man nodded. He ran into the flames without a second thought, because he was a hero, after all. Gripping Garbanzo like a fire hose, he squeezed his wormy pal a little, and Garbanzo understood. He began spitting on the flames, dousing them quickly.

Tongs-Man made his way through the building, Garbanzo spitting on any flames that got too close. He found the pizza delivery man passed out on the floor.

Tongs-Man dropped Garbanzo, still spitting, and picked up Zarkathon's victim. Garbanzo cleared a path for Tongs-Man as he ran through the burning pizzeria, giving a forlorn look at all the wasted pizza on the way out.

Tongs-Man exited the building and dropped the rescuee on the floor. He awoke with a gasp, and crying, McLuigi's hugged his brother. They both looked happily at Tongs-Man, but the delivery man's smile faded when he remembered the toad-men. When Tongs-Man asked how the fire started, the delivery man told him the entire story.

Looking angrily into the distance, Tongs-Man swore he would catch the pizza-filching criminal.

Find out what happens next episode, at the same Tongs-time, the same Tongs-channel!

The MedivaSeries I - The Frog Pond by Sebastian

It was silent in Sebastian's home.

Sebastian's parents had gone to dinner, and he and his brother were home alone. He giggled and took his medivipad and turned it on. He was winning some games of Medivalosaken on Medivalox on his medivipad (a rock slate that you can play medivalo games on), on his medivasofa. Medivalo games were so fun for Sebastian because he could just have the thrill of running around, growing a garden, doing parkour, and so much more! He likes to be challenged by doing hard experiences on Medivalox on his medivipad.

Sebastian heard the medivadoorbell, and he quickly put the medivipad away where it always was.

Sebastian's parents opened the door to him sitting on his medivasofa. They looked to their left, and what they saw made them frown. They investigated the space around the medivipad and saw that the medivipad was a little bit misplaced and angled the wrong way, then checked a medivipicture on their mediviphone that they took before they left. The rule was that he could only play after the frogs in the pond next to his house croaked (about 5:00 p.m.). His parents yelled at him because it wasn't 5 p.m. yet, and he was playing Medivalox.

Sebastian just smirked.

"I didn't give you the privilege to play Medivalox! The neighbors even have said that they will see you playing Medvialo games when they go for their walks over there by the frogs' pond hours before the frogs croak! They recommended that we make you do things that aren't Medivalo games, and we try, but you won't listen!"

Sebastian stomped his foot, and his parents said that he was grounded for a week. His parents put his medivipad in a high cabinet.

"You can't play any more Medivalox until we say otherwise."

Two days later, Sebastian was sitting down with two wooden blocks.

"Blah blah blah, I'm bored," Sebastian said, banging them together. "This is so stupid. I just want to play some medivalo games."

Sebastian decided that two stupid inanimate wooden blocks would not be any fun. Sebastian had an idea. He walked into his parents' bedroom with scissors and glue. He walked into their closet, cut up their clothes, and glued them together to make a

costume, but he still wasn't satisfied at all. He stomped out of the closet, slammed the door, and left his parents' bedroom. Sebastian just got a genius idea. He was going to play Mediva'Grow A Garden, In Real Life. He walked outside to his parents' garden and ripped out all the growing plants. He replanted them his way (him just throwing them on the ground where he wanted them instead of actually planting them back into the ground), but it was still stupidly boring. He walked to his front door when he got an idea. He spammed the medivadoorbell as fast as he possibly could.

"I can get faster," he thought. Sebastian spammed the medivadoorbell with both pointer fingers as fast as he could.

Sebastian was still bored. He decided to tap it to the rhythm of his favorite song, but he was still bored. He decided that trying to separate the front door from its hinges was probably fun, but he just ended up with no fun and a broken door.

"Oh. My. Gosh. WHY ISN'T ANYTHING FUN WITHOUT MEDIVALO GAMES?!" Sebastian said, throwing the door on the ground. He wanted to have fun without medivalo games, but it was like they were torturing him, because the only thing fun was medivalo games.

Sebastian **COULD NOT LIVE** without his medivipad. He was going to die to lack of medivalo games. He needed to get it back, so he searched.

Gabriel, Sebastian's big brother, who was vacuuming, walked into the kitchen and saw Sebastian.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you," Gabriel said.

"Whatever," Sebastian said, rolling his eyes.

Sebastian crawled up onto the countertop, opened a cabinet, and found the amazing contraption. Sebastian cackled and walked over to his medivasofa and started playing some more Medivalox. Sebastian's parents walked into the house. They saw Sebastian playing Medivalox when he was grounded.

"YOU WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO PLAY MEDIVALOX!!" Sebastian's parents yelled. They were red in the face.

"But I wanted to!" Sebastian responded.

"I DON'T CARE IF YOU WANTED TO!! I DIDN'T GIVE YOU THE PRIVILEGE TO PLAY MEDIVALOX!!" Sebastian's parents said, snatching the medivipad from him.

They threw the medivipad away right in front of him after smashing it to pieces, so he couldn't dig in the trash and get it back.

"I've told you that playing medivalo games when you're not supposed to doesn't help you at all. You affected your life, and you just hurt yourself," Gabriel said from the medivasofa, on his phone.

"But UGHHHH! Nothing is fun without medieval games!" Sebastian responded.

Sebastian ignored Gabriel, and for months, block banging after costume making after garden wrecking after doorbell spamming after door breaking (and lots of boredom), Sebastian found himself lying on the ground of his bathroom, after trying to stick his hand all the way down the hole of his toilet through the pipe into the sewer, completely out of ideas. He stared at the rock ceiling in tears. Overcome by both sadness and the stench that covered both of his arms (yes, he tried it with both arms), Sebastian realized he needed to come up with an idea.

"I need a medivpad," Sebastian thought.

Sebastian realized something.

He realized that his parents would know if he bought a new medivpad, so the only way to play

Medivalox was to have his parents let him get a new medivpad, which meant he would have to do something really good so his parents would approve. He knew he had to be honest.

Sebastian decided to listen to Gabriel. He did all his responsibilities, then did chores, earned his allowance, and eventually, he had enough money to buy himself a new medivpad with his parents' approval! It took until their pig doubled in size (about half a year).

A month after he bought the medivpad, Sebastian was doing his things, when he saw the medivpad. He badly wanted to check out the new update of Mediva'Grow A Garden, so he reached for the medivpad, before the frogs had croaked.

He grasped the medivpad. He reached for the power button. After pressing the power button, there would be no turning back. His finger felt the button. He slowly pushed down. He felt the outside button top on the medivcase touch the button. He was going to press it. He pushed down, looked away when he heard the click of a button, and his finger could press no further. He looked at the screen, and it gleamed bright as it always had. He pushed the home button, and his finger levitated over the Medivalox button. He pressed down.

He looked away and then looked back at the screen, but it was off. His parents walked into the room just seconds later. "How did it turn off?" Sebastian wondered. He looked up and saw his big brother Gabriel's finger on the power button. He had saved him. Gabriel walked away, and Sebastian set the medivpad down and continued doing his chores. Sebastian smiled as the frogs croaked.

A year after his parents threw away his medivpad, Sebastian was chilling on his medivasofa, playing Medivalox. His parents walked into the room, but Sebastian didn't run. He didn't even flinch. His parents said hello to him and just walked into the living room. The frogs had croaked already.

How To Time Travel

(And Not Die) By: Soren P.



ONE: Lilli 27 BC

It was NOT my fault. Okay, fine. Maybe it was a little my fault. MAYBE. But it was certainly not my fault that the three of us were currently standing in a giant pile of cow dung in the middle of a Roman street.

"This is the grossest thing that has ever happened to me," Marian said, inspecting her once-purple-now-brown sandals.

"I'm with you on that," Kaiden agreed, grimacing.

"Come on guys, it's not that bad," I lied, hopping out and wincing at the squelch that followed my landing.

"Lilli, as much as I appreciate your optimism, I don't think it's working," said Marian.

"We're completely lost."

Marian then proceeded to scrape her shoe along the edge of a hay cart.

"Wait." Kaiden said, looking around. "Where's everyone else?"

He was right. The other kids who'd gone into the time machine with us were nowhere to be found.

Marian temporarily looked up from the cart and commented, "Great. Now we're lost and missing our friends."

"Uhh, guys?" I said, noticing the two red and gold-clad guards pointing and whispering at us. "We should get going."

TWO: Nova 167 million years ago

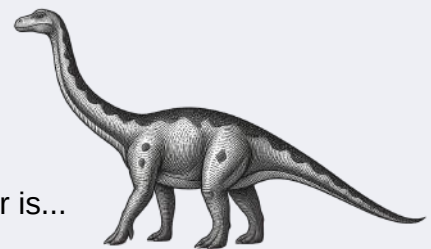
"Nova. Nova, wake up."

I open my eyes to see Quinn hovering over me. And behind her is...

I bolt upright.

"Quinn!!" I shout. "There is a literal dinosaur behind you!!"

Quinn laughs. "I know! It's called a Cetiosaurus. We're in the Jurassic period—hey!" She interrupts herself, waving her arms as the Cetiosaurus sniffs a frozen and terrified Ethan. "Get away from him! You're scaring him!"



"Q-Quinn. H-help me," Ethan stutters, feebly hitting the dinosaur on the snout.

Quinn and I jump up and draw the overgrown lizard away from him.

"Ethan, the Cetiosaurus wouldn't have hurt you. They're herbivores," Quinn points out, helping him up.

Ethan backs up, smacking himself in the face with a giant fern.

"Ouch! Quinn, I could have sworn he was TASTING me. I felt his tongue!!"

"You did not."

"I did."

"Did not."

"Did too."

"Did—"

"Guys!" I interrupt. "Ethan might not have been eaten by that Ceti-thing, but the thing behind the bushes is growling."

Before Ethan could scream, I clapped my hand over his mouth. "Shhhh. Let's move."

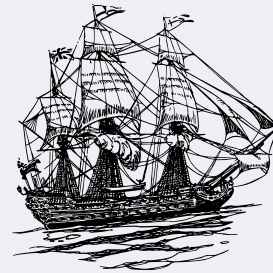
THREE: Stella 1720

Splash

"Ian!"

Splash

"Adam!"



Apparently, I was the only one who had landed on the ship. I rush to the side to see Ian and Adam flailing around in the water.

"Just swim!"

They continued flailing, and I came to the conclusion that they were pretending not to hear me because they couldn't swim very well. I considered jumping in to save them, but then again... they only wanted my help because I was on the ship. They were never very nice to me before. So I decided to casually lean against the side of the ship and watch them struggle. It was quite funny.

Finally, after about 100 years, they managed to climb onto the ship.

"Why didn't you help us??" Ian asked angrily, attempting to squeegee the water out of his clothes.

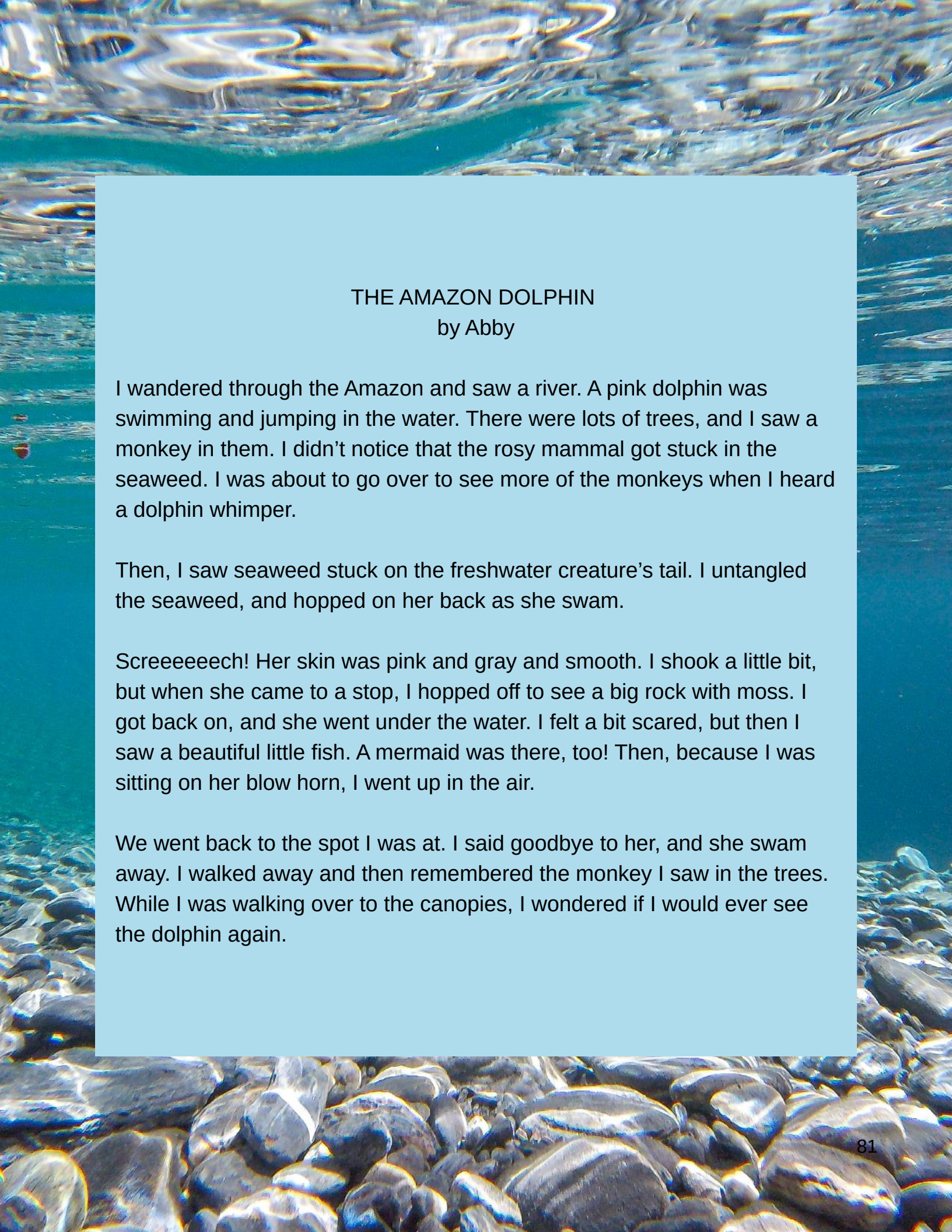
"Well, it looked like you didn't need any," I said, smirking.

"Yes, we did!" Adam said from the deck, clearly not picking up on my sarcasm.

It was only then that I realized we weren't just standing on any old ship—this was an honest-to-goodness, skull-and-crossbones, weather-worn pirate ship that also happened to have some extremely scary-looking pirates staring at us.



TO BE CONTINUED...



THE AMAZON DOLPHIN

by Abby

I wandered through the Amazon and saw a river. A pink dolphin was swimming and jumping in the water. There were lots of trees, and I saw a monkey in them. I didn't notice that the rosy mammal got stuck in the seaweed. I was about to go over to see more of the monkeys when I heard a dolphin whimper.

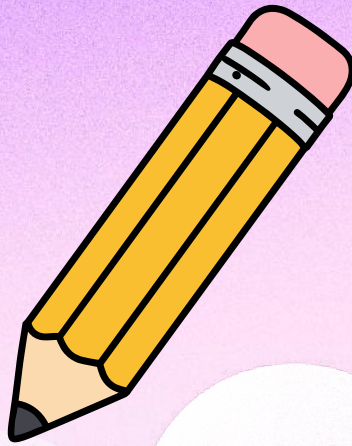
Then, I saw seaweed stuck on the freshwater creature's tail. I untangled the seaweed, and hopped on her back as she swam.

Screeeeeeech! Her skin was pink and gray and smooth. I shook a little bit, but when she came to a stop, I hopped off to see a big rock with moss. I got back on, and she went under the water. I felt a bit scared, but then I saw a beautiful little fish. A mermaid was there, too! Then, because I was sitting on her blow horn, I went up in the air.

We went back to the spot I was at. I said goodbye to her, and she swam away. I walked away and then remembered the monkey I saw in the trees. While I was walking over to the canopies, I wondered if I would ever see the dolphin again.



NON-FICTION



Cover by David

I NEED MY CLEATS



I began playing soccer for fun at a very young age. Not until June 14th, 2025 was I selected to join a team. This team was created by David Villa, a great soccer player who played for Spain's National soccer team. He also won the 2010 World Cup for Spain.

I was super excited to have been selected for this team, but I needed to buy new cleats. I asked my dad if I could buy new cleats, because the pair I already had did not fit me anymore. My dad was reluctant to say yes, he had spent too much money on soccer fees already. However, he agreed.

I did my extensive research, and the one pair that I liked the most was the one in the picture above. My dad purchased these cleats, and they arrived the day before my first game.

I know you have many questions, such as "Did you play the game?" Did you score a goal?

Unfortunately, I did not play the game due to extreme weather (lightning, thunder, and rain). Thank God, I was invited to another game the next day. I was so relieved, because if I were not invited, I would have had to wait till the following week for my next game.

The next day, I got ready for my game, and this time, it was sunny. Once I was at the field, I was ready to give it my all to this match.

First, I had to wait for my brother's game to end, which was about an hour. In the meantime, I warmed up with some of my teammates who came early. Once my brother's game ended, we went on the field to warm up for our game. We did some stretching, jogging, twisting, and turning so we could be ready for the game.

The ref blew the whistle to start the game. This was the start of my debut. From the beginning, I got possession of the ball. I dribbled, passed and shot the ball many times, but I still didn't get my first goal in. I would try, and try, over and over again.

I ran towards the goal post, where my teammate was creating a play. He's looking to pass the ball to me so that I can strike and score for our team. I ran as fast as I could. The goalkeeper came rushing to get the ball, but I shot faster than he could react, and I scored! I got my debut goal!

It was so special to me. This was my first game, and I was already scoring! The game ended 3-1. We won that game! Those cleats are super special to me because I scored my first goal with them. On December 16, 2025, I scored 8 goals out of 13 games, so those cleats are definitely special to me.

By: David J

HOW I LEARNED TO SOLVE THE RUBIK'S CUBE

3 YEARS AGO, MY BROTHER LEARNED HOW TO SOLVE 3 CUBES: THE 3X3X3, THE PYRAMINX, AND THE 2X2X2 IN HIS WHOLE LIFE. SINCE THEN, I'VE BEEN CURIOUS HOW TO SOLVE THE EASIEST CUBE (WHICH IS THE 2X2X2) THAT HE KNOWS HOW TO SOLVE.

2 YEARS LATER, I WAS STILL CURIOUS HOW TO SOLVE THE CUBE. ALL I KNEW THEN WAS TO SOLVE THE WHITE SIDE. ABOUT THREE DAYS LATER I CREATED A FORMULA TO SOLVE THE FIRST LAYER AND, AT THE SAME TIME, SOLVE THE WHITE SIDE! AFTER I CREATED A FORMULA (WHILE MY BROTHER WAS IN SOCCER PRACTICE), I WAS LUCKY BECAUSE THE SECOND LAYER WAS BASICALLY SOLVED! ALL I HAD TO DO WAS TURN THE SECOND LAYER TO THE RIGHT TWICE, AND THAT WAS IT! I SOLVED THE CUBE AND HE WAS VERY HAPPY FOR ME. I HAD TO CALL HIM BECAUSE MY BROTHER WAS IN SOCCER PRACTICE.

I CALLED HIM, AND I SAID I SOLVED THE CUBE, AND HE WAS HAPPY FOR ME. WHEN HE ENDED THE CALL, HE SAID, "YOU SOLVED THE 2X2X2! GOOD JOB." WHEN HE ENDED THE CALL, HE SAID, "THAT'S CRAZY, MY BROTHER ALREADY KNOWS HOW TO SOLVE THE RUBIK'S CUBE!" THAT WAS JUST PURE LUCK.

AFTER THAT, I DIDN'T SOLVE THE CUBE ONCE. WHEN HIS SOCCER PRACTICE ENDED (WHICH WAS VERY LATE), HE TAUGHT ME HOW TO SOLVE THE TOP LAYER. MINUTES LATER I SOLVED THE CUBE!

SOMETIMES I WOULD MAKE MISTAKES, AND SOMETIMES I WOULDN'T. AFTER THAT, I LEARNED HOW TO SOLVE THE SAME EXACT PUZZLES



By: Noah

My Chess Tournament

“Shake hands and start your games” My heart was pounding wondering if my opponent would be very good and would beat me.

I was in my car at 7:00 AM on a Sunday trying to order food on our way. It was a bacon egg in a wrap to eat. Me and my brother were going to the Right Move Chess Tournament. We were looking for a spot where they sell wraps. We found a spot so we decided to order on the phone to go.

Good morning, what would you like to order?” The waiter said.

“I would like to order 4 bacon egg in a wrap, please.” My dad responded.

“Ok, would you like a drink?” The waiter replied.

“No thank you.” My dad said.

“Ok, that’ll be \$27.30 when you arrive.” The waiter responded.

“How long will it take?” My dad asked.

The waiter said, “30 minutes.”

We were just going to make it to the chess tournament, so we couldn’t wait this long to wait and eat, so we canceled the order and looked for another place that sells and cooks breakfast wraps fast. We arrived at a place where they sell wraps that took them ten minutes to cook. Once we had the food, we hopped into the car and drove to the tournament quickly. I started to eat the wrap with my family and talk a lot during the hour drive. When we got to the school where they held the tournament, me and my brother were so nervous because he was also competing.

We entered the school, and we saw about 400 people, 200 competitors and 200 parents. It was madness inside that school because everybody was finding their seats, practicing chess with their school, and people who were looking at the instructions.

My mom said to the director, “Where would we look to see who we’re playing against?” He said that they will post it in 5 minutes. We were taking the attendance for who was competing.

Once we settled, we knew what was going to happen. There were 4 rounds; each and every player plays 4 rounds each. Me, my brother, and everyone would get a number of the table we’re playing in. Once we found our seats, we waited till the host said to start our games. I was ready and determined, with a full stomach and a muffin for a snack, ready to play chess.

I got my number and went to my seat, waiting for my opponent to arrive. Once my opponent arrived and everyone sat on their seats the host told us to shake hands and start the game.

My opponent was trash-talking and said that I was an easy win because I was not rated. It didn’t bother me because I just wanted to play.

I started to play carefully by developing my pieces into the middle of the board by pushing my center pawn two squares forward. I brought my knight out from the starting position to out in the open by the knight jumping over my pawns. He would tell me not to make this move or for me to play this move. My bishop swooped through all the squares, fighting for the center. My queen jumped above, defending my king and being defended by my pawn up front. My pieces were beginning to work together, applying pressure towards the king and at the same time defending our king. I protected my king by taking my rook in the middle and switching the spot where the rook was with my king. It was like my pieces were talking to each other to fight in the battle and win this war.

At last, I won the game and gave checkmate by my queen touching his cornered king being defended by the rook.

The next game I played against someone who was from a school who taught chess well, but he was one of the greatest of his classmates. He knew I was unrated, so he wanted to destroy me. He brang his queen out to try to capture my rook. I tried to adjust my pieces, but I forgot to say "Adjust," so I had to move that piece. I already lost the game because I moved that piece and he captured my rook and my knight. Due to this, I resigned.

The third game I played against an undefeated champion. She won 5 trophies before and thought she was going to win. I was nervous, but I stayed focused and played my game. I played the same first move every game because that first move I'm clear with, and I play very well with it. I brought my pawns forward, my bishop in the middle, and my queen on top of my rook, preparing a checkmate. She started to play scared and eventually I gave a checkmate because my threat was inevitable.

I entered the finals. "Shake hands and start your games." My heart was pounding wondering if my opponent would be very good and would beat me. If I win this game, I would win a trophy. I worked so hard to be here.

I played against a girl. She was the second highest ranked opponent I played in the tournament. I started playing simple and firm on my moves, nothing fancy. She started to play really good in the middle of the game but I realized that I was here because I wanted to have fun, so as my royalty, I started to sacrifice all my pieces to give checkmate. I left 3 pieces on the board when she had 7. Even though I was outnumbered, I still had a chance. Her king was stuck on the corner. My knight moved an L shape and got closer to the king and gave a check. The king wanted to move out of check, but that square was occupied by the queen. At the time my opponent realized that her king couldn't move anywhere, I stayed silent. I glazed at the board one more time and realized something. I gave checkmate!

It was unbelievable! I won a chess tournament! I tried not to celebrate out of respect towards my opponent but I was elated.

We had a ceremony of who won the trophies and the medals. There was only 20 of the people that won the trophy, and I was one of them! Sadly my brother did not win it but there's always next month!

The End

By:David J

THE GOAL OF LIFE

by Gabriel

In an excerpt from his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle claims that happiness is the ultimate goal in life, but nobody knows what the ultimate goal is, since happiness means different things for different people. Aristotle claims that the good is the ultimate goal in life, which is a goal that everyone wants to achieve, and they want to achieve it because of itself, unlike goals that are achieved for another purpose. He says that we always choose to be happy because we wish to be happy, and not for any other reason, so happiness is the final goal, with no following goal. This makes it the ultimate good.

However, describing the good as happiness does not change the fact that nobody knows what the good is. Happiness has different meanings for different people, such as wealth for the poor or medicine for the ill, and at different times, some things may make one person happy, and other times, it will not. Another ultimate goal is to guide others toward their ultimate goal of happiness, sometimes by not being able to achieve happiness yourself. You cannot achieve happiness without the help of others, and the most honorable kind of help is when someone sacrifices their own happiness for you.

Another factor is that this excerpt was translated, and the fact that this is translated makes it seem that there is definitely a change in translation, whether intentional or unintentional. For example, if there is a sentence that does not make sense, the translator may write the sentence differently. Time also changes meanings of words, and over time, these words could mean different things and could feel differently, with a new emotion behind them. Therefore, it is hard to accept the ultimate goal in life as happiness without further clarification on the current meaning of happiness and what Aristotle meant by happiness.

MY VIOLIN



When I turned 8 years old, one of my dreams was to have a violin. My birthday was approaching, so I decided to ask my mom and dad for a violin. They were surprised by my request. They responded, "Let's talk about this birthday gift after the party, give us some time to think about it."

The party was the best! Afterwards, we went to eat burgers with fries at my favorite burger place. Fortunately, my older sister joined us to the burger place. She usually asks me what I want, no matter the price. When she arrived, she took a seat to eat. I asked her if she could get me something for my birthday. She responded, "What do you want for your birthday?" With a crackling voice, worried to ask, I told her that I wanted a violin. She said, "I will buy it for you, but only if you take good care of it." I was so joyous and grateful. I said, "I'll take good care of it".

The next day I started looking for violins for hours and hours until I found a really nice one at a reasonable price and good quality. My mom surprisingly did not pick that violin. She picked another one that was more expensive but a much better quality. Of course we chose the violin that my mom found because she did not look for it for hours but for about a month. We sent the link to my sister, and she purchased it.

A couple of days passed, and my mom received an email that the violin is on its way. The next day, I heard someone ringing the bell, so I notified my mom; she came and received the package. The package was so big, it was as tall as me! Inside was a big case with a lot of bubble wrapping, instructions, and guides on how to care for a violin. I opened the case, and the violin was surprisingly half the size of the box!

The violin was beautiful, better than on the internet. I tried to play it, since it was my first time playing the violin, it didn't sound so pleasant. After hours of attempting to play the violin, I accidentally snapped a string. I didn't know how it happened, but it just snapped. I was sweating and didn't know what to do. So I went on YouTube to try to find a video on how to fix it. I found out that the exact string I snapped was actually the most difficult string to fix. I checked my new case to find the specific string that I snapped to replace it. Thank God, I found my string and replaced it after many hours of trying.

A year later I learned to play it; I learned to play many complex songs. My mom enrolled me in an orchestra to learn how to play with an orchestra. Thanks to God, I now perform with my orchestra in a high school auditorium. I'm going on my second year with them.

By: David J



In honour of the osprey

Osprey: it's a word which, for most of the public, incites only some vague idea of a hawk (or else a military aircraft). I am probably one of few people who finds this rather niche bird so interesting that I've written multiple pages about it. My love for the osprey stems from seeing them so regularly. A pair of them live by my house and they often perch in a tree just a few meters from my back door. Over the years, I've seen them fly, hunt, eat, and unrelentingly make adorable noises that are quite reminiscent of little songbirds. Although my love for them is sadly unreciprocated, I wanted to share it and educate people about this amazing species.

3 reasons why you should care about ospreys

The osprey is a highly adapted bird species which lives on every continent other than Antarctica. It's estimated that there are 1.2 million ospreys in existence. Their success is due to a combination of their resilience, adaptability, and their incredible adaptations to eating fish! I care about them, and here are 3 reasons that you should do too:

Hunting:

The central part of an osprey's life is hunting. They hover up to 30 meters over water, scanning for fish below. Then they dive, pulling their wings back and fall feet-first at 80kph with their claws extended, impaling the fish that make up 99% of their diet. They catch and completely digest 2-4 fish per day and are understandably adapted to this. They have special glands that spread waterproof oil onto their feathers and can even close their nostrils! They can also rotate their sharp claws around to carry fish more easily and align them with themselves as they fly.

Resilience:

Although ospreys have barely changed over millions of years, they have faced numerous threats in modern times. In the 1950-70s, a pesticide called DDT went through the food web and poisoned many animals, like ospreys. DDT made bird's eggshells thinner, reducing births. Fortunately, it was banned in the United States in 1972, and ospreys and their fellow raptors have made a comeback. They are now classified as least concern. Ospreys have adapted extremely well to urban coastal areas. For example, they often make their nests on manmade poles such as cell towers.

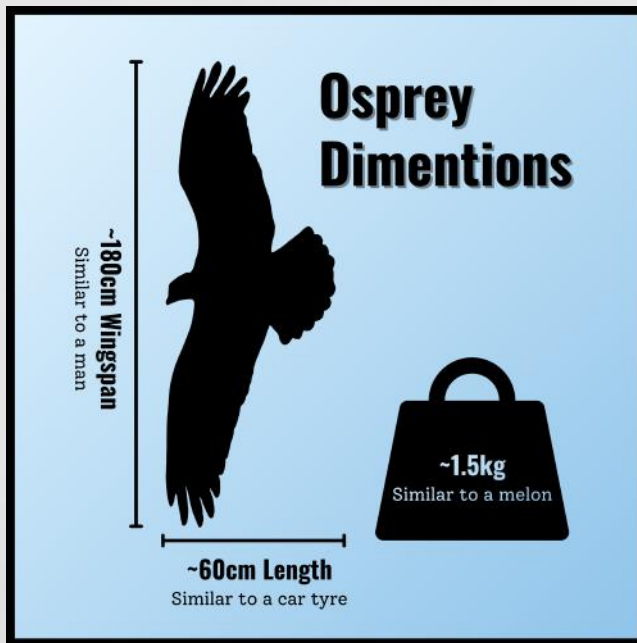
Threats:

Despite their success, ospreys might be in danger once again. In some areas, osprey populations are falling dramatically. For example, in Chesapeake Bay, the world's largest osprey population, pairs are producing increasingly fewer young. Scientists believe that the reason for this has to do with the decline of the Chesapeake Bay osprey's main food source, Atlantic menhaden. Unfortunately, menhaden are harvested by humans and ospreys are not encountering enough food to bring to their young, leading to starvation. Thankfully, this is far from the case everywhere – osprey numbers are generally increasing.

So, the next time you see an osprey, take a moment to appreciate just how special it is. And say hi from me!

Did you know?

Ospreys are monogamous, and pairs will return to the same nest site annually, from January to May, and build large stick nests in high, flat places near water. Female ospreys will, on average, lay between two to four speckled eggs per breeding season, with 1-2 chicks surviving.



The Ospreys

They don't know that they're friends to me,
Up high, soaring gracefully.
They don't know what they mean to me,
Diving down majestically.
They don't know that they comfort me,
Perching calmly in our tree.
Nor do they know of the harms they face:
Of the smog that's in the air,
Of the plastics in the fish,
Of the humans that kill them slowly.
Humans like me –
Travelling in cars,
Using plastic bags.
They don't know that they're good friends to me,
And that I'm not a good friend to them.

***By
Aran***



Some Pictures

These are pictures I've taken of the ospreys that live by our house. I also sketched one of the ospreys with drawing pencils.



What is LEGO?

By Teddy C.

LEGO is a famous construction toy that has entertained kids and adults alike for many years. The company began in Billund, Denmark, and is still based there today. However, the factory in Billund isn't the only one. Because of its popularity, LEGO has many factories around the world. This way they can make and sell as many sets as possible. But when LEGO started in 1949, it wasn't a major toy company. In fact, it was just a humble wooden toy business created by carpenter Ole Kirk Chistiansen. LEGO didn't start selling LEGO bricks until the 70s, when Ole bought a plastic mold. He was inspired by a toy block design by the company Kiddicraft. He thought that with some major improvements, the toy bricks could be a big hit; so he bought rights to the design and created the LEGO brick, which was just as popular as he had hoped. Today, Ole's grandson runs LEGO, which is now the most successful toy company in the world.

LEGO has many health benefits. Playing with LEGO develops fine motor skills and encourages creativity. You can make over 915 million configurations with just six 2x4 bricks! LEGO is also good for adults! It can be stress-reducing and promotes mindfulness. Building LEGO is a great way to recharge and get creative after a long day, whether that a bad day at school, or long work hours. LEGO is creative and beneficial toy for all.

How to Sound Like a Pro

1. Many people refer to plural LEGO parts as "Legos." However, the plural version of LEGO is actually just LEGO!
2. Instead of referring to a singular LEGO part as "a LEGO," you could say "a LEGO brick."
3. Avoid calling other brands LEGO. Although there are many brands that make toys similar to LEGO, LEGO is a single company.

My Greatest Accomplishments This Year

By Eli

I have made many accomplishments this year, but there are a few that are especially noteworthy that I will cover. Two of them have to do with a program called Job Training, where I participated in a film camp and did a fashion show, and the last is about making RC aircraft at a program called Wings Aerospace Exploration.

One of my favorite accomplishments this year got me into making movies. I go to a program called Job Training at a place called DAVA, which also has free art classes. I go on Mondays and Tuesdays, from 6 to 8 pm, and I get paid for the number of hours I work each month. In the summer, JT (Job Training) has a film camp at a local college, where we spend a month or so making a short film from start to finish, including planning, storyboarding, making shotlists, filming, and editing. You get paid a lot more for that, because you work more than five times longer every week. The film I made was called *Revenge of the Pickle*, about a pickle that comes to life and seeks revenge on the kids who said he was gross. I really enjoyed every step of the process, even though it was hard and my actors were somewhat uncooperative.

One of my other major accomplishments also has to do with JT. We had a fundraiser that was a fashion show, with all of the outfits being made by the various classes at DAVA. Many of them were made with leftover costumes from film camp, including mine. There were twenty or so kids, all with their own outfits. I was a mad scientist who had barely survived a failed jetpack flight. After several practice sessions, we went to Stanley Marketplace, a nearby mall, where we all walked out on a catwalk, posed for some pictures, and walked back. I was very nervous beforehand, but it turned out well.

I've always wanted to learn how to fly drones, so this next achievement was especially exciting. I attend another program called Wings Aerospace Exploration (WAE) at a local aerospace museum, Wings Over the Rockies. I take many classes there, from game design to flight simulators, and two of my classes involve building and flying RC aircraft. One of those classes, in my second hour, is Intro to Drones. We spent the first half of the school year building the drone—which our teacher designed himself—out of carbon fiber, various circuit boards, motors, and many wires. As part of the project, all of us learned to solder, which we used to secure various wires to the circuit boards. The rest of the year was spent learning to fly the drones. My fourth-hour class, RC Warbirds, focused on building RC planes—specifically warbirds, hence the name. Again, we spent the first half of the year building, and the second half flying. The planes were made out of a very durable, stiff foam that would prevent damage when crash-landing, which happened a lot. It was really fun both making and flying them, and I'm excited to continue learning.

Those were the three achievements that really changed my hobbies and interests. I haven't taken up fashion design, but I really enjoyed the fashion show, even though I was nervous. I had been creating animations beforehand, but after the film camp I really got into making films. I had been wanting to try drone flying, and WAE not only taught me how to do that, it taught me how to build one. My interests may change in the future, but I'm grateful to be given the opportunity to do these things.



STAFF Pages



AMY

14

Designer, Editor

I got yelled at by a sheep in Ireland while visiting a Stone Age fort.



ARAN

14

Designer, Marketing

"My days of not taking you seriously are certainly coming to a middle."

-Malcom Reynolds (Firefly)



BEN

11

Designer, Layout

"I penetrated the outer cell membrane with a nanosyringe." "You poked it with a stick?" "No!" I said.

"Well. Yes. But it was a scientific poke with a very scientific stick." Andy Weir, Project Hail Mary



BRAELYN

15

Marketing, Staff Pages

"But what the world fails to realize is that a *villain* is just a *victim* whose story hasn't been told. Everything I have done, my life's work and my crimes against you, has all been for *him*." The Land of Stories



CORALINE

11

Marketing, Designer

We have two cats named Artemis and Apollo; we named them after the Greek gods.



DAVID

11

Designer

"We are all different." The Unlikely Heroes Club



STAFF Pages



FLYNN

13

Designer, Layout

I can continuously juggle a soccer ball over 300 times while brainstorming book ideas.



KEELY

15

Designer, Editor

Gizmo, you're my favorite.



LIV

13

Marketing, Layout

"A poem is a whisper, a shout, thoughts turned inside out. A poem is a laugh, a sigh, an echo passing by. A poem is a rhythm, a rhyme, a moment caught in time. A poem is a moon, a star, a glimpse of who you are." - Charles Ghigna



MAKA

15

Editor, Staff Pages, Staff Pages Art

"You can go ahead and love or hate me, leave or stay. Cause baby, I'm a weirdo!" -Neoni, *Weirdo*



MIA

11

Editor, Layout

Sarah McBride, the first transgender senator, inspires me because she is a cool and brave person.



NATHANIEL

11 1/2

Designer, Editor

"Who doesn't like Oreos?" - Aru Shah, from Aru Shah and the End of Time



STAFF Pages



NOAH

8

Designer

"Be strong!"

-Animorphs



REEGAN

15

Marketing, Designer

"Everything will work out as it is intended to. Fretting over the future will only make you miss the present, and by the time you realize that, it will all be in the past."

-Matthis from Storm of Blood.



SEBASTIAN

12

Designer, Editor

Likes to play and compose music.



SETH

14

Marketing, Staff Pages

"If more of us valued food and cheer and song above hoarded gold, it would be a merrier world."

-J.R.R. Tolkien



SKYLER

13

Marketing, Designer

Someone who inspires me: Victor Wembanyama.

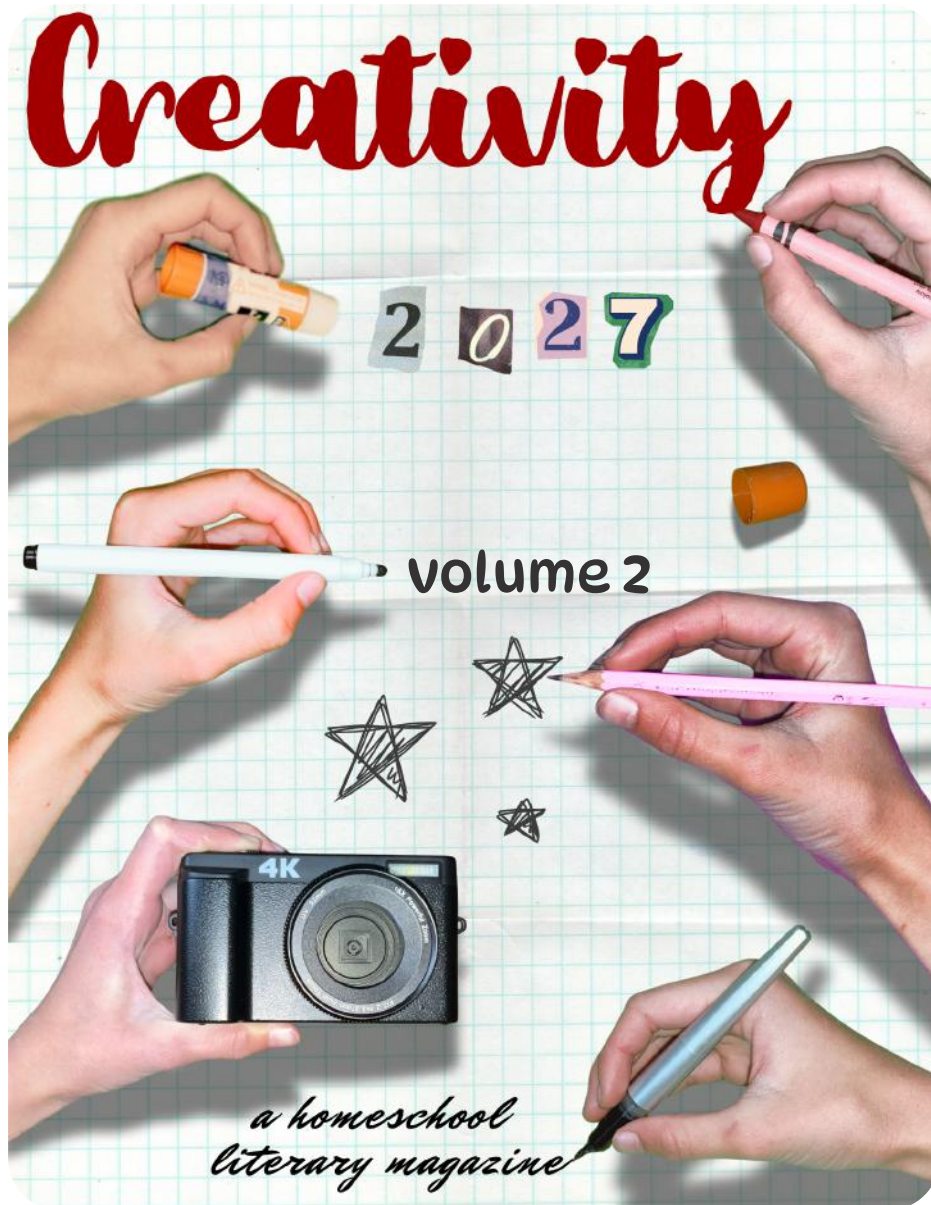


THEODORE

12

Designer

I am learning how to competitively solve a Rubik's Cube.



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