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Collection of the Past- This painting is of a collage, with each picture from a different magazine, book, or article. I found it interesting how completely different forms of art could come together and create a completely new piece of art, telling a new story, open to interpretation.
Sleepover Cake Frosting
by
Sherry Wang

When spring comes, Lizzy is the first to leave their sleepover-knit group of bows and ribbons. She says she has to go away now, one shoe only half-shucked on when she slips on pink twinkle toe light ups.

The barrette in her hair is not hers, not even her mother’s, and the ribbons in her hair are fraying at the ends. The other girls kept her awake the night before with pillow-muffled whispers and half-remembered giggles all the way until one by one, they fall asleep at midnight and leave her to drift off alone. The loudest sound in the room is the sound of the blades of the fan turning, churning, grinding. Industrial. Mechanical. Methodical. She falls asleep after an hour.

“Why do you have to go away?” Hattie says. Her eyes are wide and innocent and Lizzy feels sad, suddenly, for having to leave the party so soon. They didn’t even get to have time to eat the cold leftovers of cake for breakfast. Didn’t get the time to giggle over cut and paste pictures of old magazines that’d been saved a long time ago in cardboard moving boxes.

“Dad wants to go look for paradise,” she says. It’s true, But in their minds none of them quite understand what paradise is. For Lizzy, paradise is sitting in the back of a car listening to a CD with the same three English songs on repeat, driving towards some destination that they never quite reach. Out on the old interstate, the mileposts are faded and burnt out, scratched paint and rusted metal, so they just keep driving and driving.

On the road, her dad turns the radio on, and for a second what fills the car is crackling static. He curses, fiddling with buttons too stuck-on by old age to respond immediately.

“Sorry,” he says, when the static finally dies out. There’s never any stations to tune into anymore, besides the tinny, metallic one that blasts the same Mozart opera over and over again. That has never stopped her dad from trying. Old habits, she thinks, maybe. After all, the end of the world wasn’t too long ago.

“It’s fine,” she says. She stretches across the backseat of the car, her ancient seatbelt strung out loosely around her waist somewhere.

“Stop that,” her dad says. “You’re going to get yourself killed like that.”
“There’s no other cars on the road here,” she says. She sticks out her bottom lip, a petulant, childish gesture she’d outgrown at Hattie’s last birthday party. Supposedly, anyway. The truth was that immediately after Hattie had done her best to cut the cake, Sammy came and took the piece that was supposed to be hers—the bigger one of course, because Sammy was always like that. The kindergarten-sandbox king who threw sand and woodchips in the eyes of anyone who disagreed with him. She’d cried then, over that smaller piece of cake that she was left with.

“There could be,” he says. She can never quite tell what it is in his voice when he talks about this kind of thing. It’s like the radio. Her dad just does things. And well, the teacher who came over two days a week always said that people had to work harder to break habits they’d learned over a lifetime. “You never know. People used to die all the time on the road. From collisions I mean.”

“Weren’t drivers careful?” she asks. She tries to imagine the amount of cars it would take, to crowd the dusty interstate. “It seems like it was very dangerous back then.”

Her dad pauses. In the silence, she can allow herself to focus on the opera playing haphazardly in the background. Mozart. The bass belts through a series of demands for the protagonist’s repentance, pentiti, pentiti—the half-memorized Italian words she has learned to listen to with one ear. Filtered through the wind whistling through cracked car windows.

“It was dangerous back then,” he says. “There were more people. People lived closer together too—so bad things seemed to happen more often. Now well, you worry less about people and more about—everything else.”

The thing is that Lizzy has never known anything other than late night sleepovers and falling asleep to the mechanical fan, sickly acid green-and-gold light children followed and got lost in, half-eaten cake that never got divvied up right. The thought that there was something else once, here along the interstate, has never existed outside of nostalgia-filled silences and hushed sleepover stories.

“Where are we going, dad?” she says. The question she already knows the answer to.

“Out.” he says. “Paradise. Somewhere that isn’t this hellhole on earth.”

“I want to go back to Hattie’s place,” she says. Lizzy likes Hattie’s place better than the car, because even with the thick scent of sulfur filling the air every other night, at least there were the other girls there.
“We can’t. Liz, I know this place exists somewhere. I’ve seen it. I’ve seen it so often I could tell you right now that it’s just ahead of us if I squinted hard enough.”

If Lizzy were anyone else, if she were Hattie, who eyed all of the adults who weren’t her mom with a kind of narrow-faced suspicion, she would think him crazy. “The old interstate is really long,” she says.

“Yes, but at the end of the road--somewhere at the end of the road there has to be something. Beyond the lights.”

“People don’t go there.”

“Just listen to me, alright? Trust me.”

“Okay,” she says. Because she does. Her dad isn’t Sammy at all, and there are no woodchips in the car to throw. The opera on the radio has looped around to something softer by now. Strings.

She glances out one of the windows again, watching shriveled paper mache shrubs and flying plastic bags swirl past. Everything about the interstate is so incredibly lonely.

When she closes her eyes, she can almost imagine being back with the other girls in their threadbare pajamas, gathered around the window in the room to watch the radioactive light shows at night. The grown-ups never let them out of the house to see them up close, but she remembers the dancing bright school bus yellow from the old picture books their teacher had brought over once.

“You came back,” Hattie is saying. She’s wearing a cheap party hat. The top isn’t even pointy anymore, but party hats mean cake regardless of how pointy they are, so Lizzy doesn’t mind as much. Hattie is always celebrating something at her house. It’s what makes sleepovers there so fun.

“Yeah,” she says, “Dad finally gave up and drove us back.” And that’s what happens, always. They never drive far enough off the old interstate, never far enough that they can’t turn around and drive back to isolated suburban plots where the only people who have stuck around are those with children. Those who couldn’t afford to do anything but dig their roots in and hope for the best.

The strings on the radio are abruptly cut off by the sound of her dad’s muffled cursing. “Liz, your
The car lurches forward, and Lizzy wonders briefly, absently, why her dad hasn’t pressed the brakes yet. It shouldn’t be too hard to stop the car now.

“Dad, where are we going?” she says.

“I’m getting us out of here Liz. Just hold on, okay? This might get a little rocky.” He sounds so certain, so sure, even as the car careens forwards along the cracked out roads, and the sound of metal screeching against something that shouldn’t be screeching makes her close her eyes again. Hattie’s voice is just there, beyond the window of the car, if she can just reach it. She’s smiling as she lets Lizzy help her put the candles in for her birthday party, plunge them deep into messily formed frosting.

Her eyes are shut but she can feel it when something crashes into the car, smell it when something starts burning, but she’s still at Hattie’s house, at Hattie’s sleepover with thick cake-frosting spread all over her fingertips. Like always, it’s a little too sickly sweet on her tongue. Lana suggests a game, lips bright blue from sucking the frosting off her fingers one-by-one, and everybody agrees. After all, games were the best part of sleepover birthday parties.

Then the lights go out in Hattie’s house.

Lizzy isn’t afraid though--she’s learned not to be afraid when it gets dark, learned to be more afraid of the bright lights instead. The lights are the ones you can follow and get lost in; they’re prettier, easier to see.

“Hattie,” she calls out. “I can’t find my flashlight.”

She fumbles around a little, humming Mozart under her breath as she searches for somebody else. Somebody else to hold onto, until the lights come back on. But there’s no one there. And this had always been the worst part of the sleepover--when someone, usually Sammy, would say “let’s all tell scary stories” and they would all talk about the lights and the shadows and all the things that children should be afraid of.

“Hattie,” she calls again, and the lights flicker on for a brief moment and she smells smoke, acrid and bitter, in the air. A hand grabs her arm. It’s Hattie.

“What?” she says. There’s a sickly yellow glow traveling up Hattie’s face when Lizzy looks up
again. It must be from her flashlight. She looks around, but unlike Hattie’s room the walls are a
dull, washed out beige, and the other children have disappeared. The taste of cake on her tongue
is the only thing that lingers, the thick aftertaste that had always left her wanting more, had
always left her wishing for more than just the sliver of a slice Sammy left her with every time.

“Where is this?” she asks Hattie. She has so many questions. Are the crashing cymbals on the
radio or in her head now? Are you coming with us too, after all this time?

She expects an answer like nowhere, silly or your dad’s car, duh, like the games they’d played,
squashed together in a one room bathroom and a wooden tub, Marco, Polo, Marco, Polo. Call
and response. Question and answer. Simple. There’s comfort in the familiarity here, in a world
where strangeness is mystifying and all-encompassing. Except this time Hattie doesn’t play
along. She smiles a little, covering it behind her fingers in such an obvious manner that
everybody could see what she was thinking.

“In the future, after college, we’ll live together. We’ll definitely have a bird.” he said.

I stared at him. It was probably a joke, but honestly, yeah I couldn’t think he really meant it. Like two years back in freshman year, back before he got himself a cute girlfriend, it was something I said to him. You know, in a completely platonic way to escape the realization of how lonely I would be in a few years time in college.

Anyways, because I thought it was a joke I decided to respond to it seriously. You know, like how you pretend to miss the joke so when all your friends start laughing at you, it doesn’t hurt as much.

“I agree, I want a small apartment. We could share it together,” I said cheerfully with a grin, but made sure not to sound too excited. Didn’t want him to get the wrong idea. He didn’t seem surprised by my response, nor did he start laughing. I dunno. Was there something to be suprised about?

I don’t know if his words meant anything. We were still teenagers, and another year of school before us. Then college. Wasn’t that such a long time to wait? In college, things would change. He’d probably find another girl he’d like or make other friends. Weren’t promises like this tenaciously fragile and meant to be broken? I’m pretty sure that’s how little children grow up; you keep breaking their dreams and hopes and beliefs by shoving the harsh spiteful world at ‘em. Then they grow and get all bitter-like. Cruel. Probably get all sorts of issues and mental problems. It’s a quickly globalizing world Johnny, everybody’s suffering.

Anyways, when I was told to think of my future life, I could only think of coming home from a so-so job. Not unsatisfactory but nothing exciting either, something that would pay the bills and keep me from the streets. I would live in a small apartment without any unnecessary clutter or furniture. I would sit down on the floor at the table and eat rice with dried seaweed. I would visit a friend once a week who’d already have started to raise their children and maybe have a dog. I’d be fine. Sometime soon I would pay the bills and then die, you know?

I can accept this sort of future because I knew I was mediocre by nature. The only particular feature about me was my overwhelming loyalty and undying jealousy of other people. Let me tell you this, these two traits get along like a house on fire (for other people and myself).
My psyche at this point is severely twisted or detrimentally traumatized, but I dunno. I’ll probably be fine someday.

It was funny to think that he’d ask me such a thing. Because I knew I wanted to believe him, that his words had weight. He was the sort of guy who always had something to say and something to do with some sort of grand purpose; he wasn’t much of a trickster. And he probably only mentioned it again because I said it to him freshman year like the little idiot I was. I suppose we were special to each other that way, but in college anything could happen. What would happen if I was left dreaming endlessly of a future that ended the moment he met someone else? Nothing was set in stone.

I did want to believe him. I can’t help but want to, you know? There would be nothing else that would bring me happiness. But I can’t.

He was the kind of guy that attracted the lonely and the broken, probably because they were reflections of himself. And I suppose he found himself reflected in me. Friends were like that, key pieces that tried to make up for the faults of oneself by meeting people with similar interests and ideals. Or something like that, or that’s what I believed in. Made sense and all. Did that mean that he was like me? I didn’t want to think that. There was a certain safety in knowing that you were different from the people you admire. You admire people because you want to be like them, and you currently aren’t like them at all.

But because I didn’t have enough tact in me to shut up and stay shut-up, I asked, “What about your girlfriend though. Or ex-girlfriend. Don’t you see yourself in a future with her?”

“No, that is different. We’ll go into different colleges and long-distance relationships wouldn't be. . . it just wouldn’t.” he trailed off with a sort of trance-like words. I stared at him and his hypocrisy.

He was the kind of guy that would apply to Yale, Berkely, or whatever high top-tier colleges and would get in. What did that mean that he couldn’t imagine a future with his ex-girlfriend (who was smarter than me and pretty if you squint hard enough)? I felt a sort of smugness in me, that burned deeply and selfishly like a man hoarding the camp-fire on a snowy night.

“Isn’t that the same for us?” I couldn’t help but ask. It was a deeply burning selfishness that I had. I had it since I was little and it kept burning since. Because you know, lonely people are always lonely. Never letting go of things they get, not until they die. I’m one of those people, if I ever decide to follow you, I will follow you to the end of times. Doesn’t matter how many
things go wrong, I’ll be right behind.

“No, it’s, well, different,” rather awkward looking expression and all, added with looking
down at his hands.

He missed my absolute beaming smile.

Of course, that could mean nothing in the passage of time. But his words reassured
something inside me. Validation. And it sparked perhaps, for the briefest moment, the idea of a
future with another person in the empty apartment I saw myself living in. I would be a normal
person who had a normal future. That I could be loved and liked as much as any other backwards
person out there.

Of course though, I knew that just because we wanted it now didn’t mean it’d come true.
He wanted to live in California. I just. . . didn’t think I could. It was too expensive and how was I
supposed to find a job there? I would be leaving home behind. I would be leaving things. I think
I’m losing things all the time, so really does it matter if I lose more? You know, that’s a really
good question I want the answers to. I really do. But I dunno.

And not to mention, the high possibility that we would clash and not get along at all. That
we’d hate being in the proximity of each other. But for now, I smiled. A real big and goofy grin.

I didn’t believe him of course, but yeah. It was a nice thing to dream about.

Honestly this entire conversation wasn’t romantic or anything. I can swear. He was a guy,
I was a guy, there was nothing really between us. He’s had girls throwing themselves at him, and
I was the loner kid that was too loyal for my own good. There was no urge to kiss him or
something like I had with other girls. Honestly though, it was the sort of conversation you’d have
between kids if anything.

Completely naive and well-meaning, but like anything a kid says; completely fragile. It’s
not like he was thinking too deeply (or so I hope) when he said that, maybe just a cute little
passing by comment. A desperate attempt to stay close when we were going to the complete
unknown of the future without each other. Maybe I could see that, but really, I don’t know. I’d
like to have this future, but really it was just a passing whimsy. I swear.

Maybe I was overthinking it.

Maybe it was just something really well-meant between two guys and I was making it
into something romantic and sappy. I wouldn’t know, he was the one with like forty admirers and
I was a nobody. It was a joke probably.

When I went home that day I just kind of sat in my bed and stared at the ceiling. You
know, sort of deep in thought, like when you get told you failed a test. A test you studied really hard for. When I think about it, even if he was joking, it made me feel nice. That somebody wanted me in their future. That maybe somebody wanted to live in my empty apartment with me, and maybe visit that friend with a family once a week. Maybe have a little bird to check on.

Then I laughed, you know? I couldn’t help it.

What cruel thinking. I’d better be off wandering the world than seeking these sorts of dreams. It was something to try and sate how lonely I would be in the future, a fever dream. Doesn’t nobody know that the future is never certain?
Darkening Pines
by
Marie Grace

One gentle step forward.
The trees rustled,
bringing a midnight wind that was fresh with the heat of the setting sun.
Another step.
The bridge creaked under foot;
every inch forward brought the smell of cedar and time.
She reached the rusted railing and grasped it tightly in her hand,
imprinting years of grime into her palm.
The night was powder blue; perfectly twilight.
Something rich and ancient surrounded her and filled every crevice of her wanderlust heart.
She reached for the darkening pines.

    They reached back.
As Much as We Can Get- While most people agree that poverty in third world countries is a huge problem of today’s world and more should be done to address it, this artwork is more about how appreciative and grateful people with less given to them are, compared to those living around us.
Angry Grief
by
Isabella Ferrero

Lost
I’ve lost so much
Almost more than I can bear

Who could have told me
That one event would be the root to all my fears
The root to my future anxiety
The root to me being stuck in this horrible loop going back and forth

Like a swing.
Back and forth.

And sometimes I can sing
But most times
I can’t

My voice has been stolen
It’s lost
He took it with him,
My grandfather did
That day when he died.

And these tears well up in my eyes but before they fall
They get lost

In this endless cycle you would think I would know what’s next
But I’m still lost
Emotions change within a second

I’m curling in on myself and then I’m hit with some stress and then I fall and then I can’t get up
and I’m screaming inside and no one knows that their voice, the way they talk

Hurts me

Lost
In an endless cycle of grief
My throat has closed up.
I can no longer represent how I feel
It only leads me to tears
And I sit
Still numb
Thinking wow I’m dumb

Because it’s been six months and how can I not get over death when it’s been so long

But that’s why I can’t get over it.

The memory is so fresh that it keeps me thinking
That there has to be something I missed
Something other than him that I lost

Because how can this pain be so unbearable?
How can my family be almost fine?
What did I lose when he died?

My inspiration
Died
With him.

It’s lost like me and him.
Lost
Letters to the Past
by
Alina Chisti

CHARACTERS

RONAN Independent 17 year old, bitter about her childhood.

YOUNG RONAN A 9 year old, mature for her age but can be irrational and very emotional at times.

YOUNG IRIS Sister of YOUNG RONAN, a wise 15 year old, very caring and understanding.

MOM Adult in her 30-40s, selfless and caring.

*COLOR-BLIND CASTING: All characters can be played by actors of any race or ethnicity. Any violations to the color-blind casting policies or discrimination against actors due to their race, ethnicity, religion, or sexuality will result in the retraction of the rights to perform this play.

~Playwright, Alina Chisti

SETTING
A small and minimalistic apartment with a bed, table, and window

TIME
Modern Day. Flashbacks take place throughout.
(In her small apartment, ADULT RONAN is sitting on her bed downstage right and sorting through a pile of mail while talking to her friend on the phone)

RONAN
Bills, bills, and more bills. Who knew moving out at seventeen would be so hard? Apparently, you have to pay to get your garbage disposed. (Beat) I should’ve expected this; I don’t know what I was thinking when I left. To be quite honest, I just couldn’t keep living with my mom. After everything she did to my dad-

(Flashback with YOUNG RONAN, MOM, and YOUNG IRIS takes place upstage center)

YOUNG RONAN
(walks in from upstage left with an ice cream cone in her hand)
Iris, look! Dad just got me the limited edition double chocolate fudge brownie ice cream cone from Cold Stone!
(takes a large bite)
Ahh Brain Freeze!

YOUNG IRIS
(Forces a smile) That looks really good Ronan.

MOM
That looks delicious Ronan. Iris, take your sister upstairs to bed and make sure she brushes her teeth.

YOUNG RONAN
Where did Dad go? Why is he waiting in the car for so long?

MOM
Ronan, dad had to go finish off some work at the office. He may not be home for a while.
YOUNG RONAN
But dad said he was going to read me a bedtime story. (Giggles) He said he was going to try really hard not to fall asleep before finishing the story.
(excitedly runs toward the door, which is next to the window)

MOM
Iris, now!

YOUNG RONAN
(Looks out the window)
Mom, why are there police cars outside?

YOUNG IRIS
(YOUNG IRIS rabs RONAN)
(With a sense of urgency) Ronan, we have to go to bed now. I promise I’ll read you two of your favorite stories.

*IRIS is aware of what’s going on outside

YOUNG RONAN
What are they doing to Dad? Why are they handcuffing him? Iris, they have guns! Dad!
(run toward upstage left and tries to open the door, but MOM stands in front of the door)

MOM
Ronan, I said go to your room! Now!

YOUNG IRIS
(YOUNG IRIS runs toward YOUNG RONAN and wraps her arm around her)
(Voice slightly shaking) It’s gonna be ok. Dad will be ok.

YOUNG RONAN
(YOUNG RONAN falls to the ground and starts sobbing)
Didn’t you see? Those big guys in their uniforms have guns attached to their belts. What if they hurt him?

YOUNG IRIS
No, all police officers have guns. They’re not gonna hurt him. I promise.
YOUNG RONAN
(YOUNG RONAN gets up from the floor and grabs MOM’s hand)
(Crying) Mom, we have to stop them! They’re gonna take away Dad! Mom! Why aren’t you saying anything?

YOUNG IRIS
(Somberly) Ronan.

MOM
Ronan Sweetie . . . I— I was the one who called them.

YOUNG RONAN
(Angrily) What are you saying? How could you do that?!

MOM
(MOM kneels down in front of YOUNG RONAN and IRIS)
I’m so sorry baby. I hate that you kids have to witness this so young. It’s just that—(Beat) Your father, he’s a good man at his core; I know it. (Smiles Bitterly) That’s why I married him. But he made some bad choices, and I admit he was put in some pretty unfortunate circumstances at work, but it had made him take out all of his anger on this family, on me..

YOUNG IRIS
(YOUNG IRIS sits next to MOM and leans against her shoulder)
Mom, don’t cry.

YOUNG RONAN
(In disgust) So you just let them take him away. I can’t believe you’re just going to let them lock him up in a dirty jail cell. He didn’t even get to take Teddy with him.

* Teddy is the name of YOUNG RONAN’S dad’s favorite stuffed animal. It was a gift from YOUNG RONAN.

MOM
I know that this hurts, and I understand that it’s hard.
YOUNG RONAN
Understand?! This is all YOUR fault. He’s gone because of you. I hate you!

YOUNG IRIS
Ronan!

MOM
Ronan, how dare you! I am your mother. (Angrily) Your father is a stranger who only recently came into your life! He was never there for you. Tell me Iris, can you remember the last time your father came to a parent-teacher conference or helped you with homework? When he went on month-long business trips, he never even bothered to call you kids. I had to force him to get on a simple Skype call with you guys. And now when your dad takes you on a Saturday joyride, all is forgotten?

(YOUNG RONAN covers her ears)

YOUNG IRIS
(Quietly) She’s not wrong.

YOUNG RONAN
I don’t care what you have to say. He’s my dad no matter what, and you took him away because he wasn’t good for YOU!

(Flashback ends)

RONAN
I know they’d fight a lot when I was younger and sometimes he’d get angry, but he never-
Anyway, I’m sorry for ranting. It’s just that wounds like that never truly heal.

(collapses on pile of mail with phone in hand)

(squints) Hmm that’s weird. I got a letter from Iris.

(slowly gets up with the letter, opens it, and then reads it aloud with her friend on speakerphone)

It says: Dear Ronan, I hope you’re doing well. I talked to mom this morning, and she mentioned that you moved out last week. I guess she wasn’t quite ready for her smallest chick to leave the nest so quickly. She said she misses you a lot. I know you two aren’t on talking terms though. I promised mom that I’d never tell you this, but Ronan, I’m just so tired of watching you and mom grow farther and farther apart, especially when there’s so much you don’t know. Remember that
day when Mom said she fell down the stairs.

(Flashback starts with MOM entering upstage left with a limp and with bruises all over her arms and legs)

YOUNG RONAN
(runs toward MOM)
Mom! What happened are you ok?

YOUNG IRIS
(kneels down next to MOM)
Mom!

MOM
I’m fine. Mommy’s fine. Ronan sweetie, can you go get Mommy some ice?
(RONAN runs off stage through upstage right)

YOUNG IRIS
Mom, did Dad—
(MOM puts her fingers over her lips to shush her)

MOM
(YOUNG RONAN returns and puts the ice pack On MOM’s arm)
I tripped over something on the stairs and took a fall. That’s all.

YOUNG RONAN
(Flinches) Does it hurt a lot?

MOM
No baby, it just hurts a little, (Smiles) but when I see you, all of my pain suddenly disappears. Like magic.

(Flashback ends)

RONAN CONT’D
(continues reading the letter aloud)
Mom didn’t fall down the stairs. She was—
(drops the letter, sinks onto the floor from the bed, and then slowly reaches her hand up toward the bed to grab the phone)

Hey Clara, I have to go. There’s something . . . there’s something I need to do.

(RONAN ends call, dials a number, and waits)

Hey Mom, it’s Ronan. (In tears) Mom, I’m so so sorry, (pauses) and I wanna come home.
Hello, again
by
Rachel Woosley

It’s been a few days since I’ve had a dream or two. Not like I was counting. I normally never have dreams. The dreams I have had are so weird it's almost concerning. Like, “hey is your mental health okay” kind of concerning. But for some odd reason, I remembered these two. The dreams were even acceptable for my mental state. They were so real, yet seemed too far in the future for me to worry over.

I knew as a small kid I worried over every little detail about my future. I worried about having a roof over my head one day, and not having one the next. That kind of future. Having a partner was always the last thing on my mind. That’s why I'm sharing a house with six people. Olivia and Noah can cook up a storm, so I never have to worry about going hungry. Adam and Dave were on repair duty if anything in the house falls apart. Then there's Sara and I who try to keep tidy and fill in for what else is really needed. Everyone has jobs of their own so money flows in like crazy. Everyone has their place and there’s very little time and space for romance, although it does happen to my roommates every once in a while. It hasn't happened to me yet thankfully. I have no room in my brain for that kind of an emotional rollercoaster.

Yet, here I am trying to figure out who ended up in my dreams these last few nights, and worrying over when I’ll see him. I didn't fuss over the first dream when it presented itself.

When I dreamt the first time I strolled to the nearby lake, I wasn't feeling the greatest and needed some fresh air and peace. The lake was always quiet; just being there was like sitting in a painting, trees were decorated around the lake’s opening. Small streams trickled out of the woodwork and blended into its great open waters. Fins and little webbed feet poked out every once in a while. The sun hit the water just right making the ripples sparkle like glitter.

I plopped down in the nearest bench that didn't have bird poop on it, that was the only real problem going to the lake. I leaned back and remember just being drawn into a trance by the ripples from the popping bubbles made from the fish hidden down under the sapphire water.

That's when a small tap on my shoulder broke me from the water, I twisted my head to find a man with no face. He was a bit lanky, wearing a bad T-shirt and some tan jeans, short black hair. He asked me if he could sit next to me. I nodded, too dizzy to talk from whipping my head so fast. His accent softly echoed in my head, yet I couldn’t put a finger on where it could be from. The two of us just sat in silence. It never felt unsettling, it felt like sitting next to an old friend. I made little conversation, from what I heard he was taking some time out to be alone.

As we were both entranced at the lake perform its trancing dance, he asked if I knew the time. I pulled out my phone to give him the answer.

That’s when I woke up, beeping emerged from my alarm clock just as I closed my eyes again. The dream must of been just another spoof in my sleep from eating popcorn before bed
last night.

After finishing my full work day, I passed out again on the bed, ready for an uneventful night sleep. I didn't get that; instead I had another dream.

I wasn’t heading towards the lake this time but down the hall of my own home. I felt so energized and ready to start a new day. I’m in my pajamas and bright blue puffy slippers. I made a turn into the kitchen smelling someone else's breakfast. I thought it was either my roommate Noah or even Olivia since they’re the only two who can cook out of the six of us.

It just had to be him. The same lanky bad T-shirt guy from the previous dream. I panicked, how did you get in my house and why are you wasting decent groceries thoughts flew through my head, and then I spotted Adam. For crying out loud out of all people this knuckle head to be friends with. I remembered wishing Adam a good morning before snagging a protein bar.

“Aren’t you going to say hello?” Adam said before stuffing his face full of food.

“Hello” I said with a mouthful of food and just as I was stepping out of that kitchen I heard,

“Oh. Hello, again. I remember you, weren’t you sitting on a park bench with me?”

That's when I woke, chills crawling up my spine along with the alarm screeching at me. I slammed it off and flung myself out of bed. I nearly hit the wall flying out of that dream. It took a second for my head to stop screaming gibberish and something along the lines of; How in the world does that rando remember me? And what is Adam doing letting a complete stranger eat my food? I should of known not to talk to strangers!

“Ok it's just a dream, nothing more, your fine, breath,” I said to myself a couple of times. I sat and rested for a moment, letting the shock deflate. I shook it off and walked out of my cozy room to the kitchen. There wasn't any point to sit and ponder on it, it wasn't real anyways I thought to myself. The house we all lived in had a long hallway from my room to the kitchen. The kitchen was moderately small with shiny granite countertops and a big open fridge ready to be filled with groceries and mostly left overs. High Tech microwave, and a shabby oven. Those brown cabinets and a cover hanging by a hinge. With a small pantry, though big enough to play hide and go seek in. If it weren't for the shelves. That's also where we stored all the junk food and my favorite protein bars.

When I went in to just grab a protein bar, Adam happened to be there. Blocking the fridge. Texting. I assume to be a girl or a fast food restaurant since he has the biggest grin on his face. I could care less, So I asked him;

“Hey have you met or seen a guy that's kind of lanky, short black hair, uhh wears a bad tee-shirt, bad jeens-”

Adam interrupted me, “Yea I know a guy like that. That's like every other person on the street.” He said while grabbing leftovers from last night. He was definitely texting a girl then.

“Oh c'mon” I said back,

“I’ve been getting really weird dreams. Wanted to know if it was just me or if I’ve seen
him somewhere.”

“It's just you” Adam said before he shoved the cold food into the microwave and pounded 30 seconds into it as if he became a new drill sergeant.

“Someone woke up on the wrong side of the bed” I said, before I crammed the newly unwrapped bar into my mouth and scurried out of the kitchen before I could hear any distant crying about how his day went yesterday. I went to go pop some jogging clothes on because I needed to start getting ready to do my weekend run. After changing I bounced to the front door ready to do my laps when I turned the doorknob, took a step out being greeted by fresh air.

Then I look onward to the concrete path that leads from the crusty welcome mat to the driveway to start my run. Until I bumped into someone.

“Oh. Hello”

“Not again.”
No Escape- This artwork touches on the mental state of young kids in our generation and the pressure some of them have to face on a daily, making them feel trapped. These kids are too young to even understand the world and develop their opinions and they already have controlling factors in their life that they cannot do anything about.
For Liberty. For Freedom.
by
Isabella Ferrero

We had been fighting for years. The war was almost at its end. It started as a nonviolent revolution which turned into a full blown war as foreign powers staked claims to land, supported opposing sides, and bet on who would have power in the end. All we wanted was a return to democracy.

We were called the Last Hope. I was the East Commander, making decisions and coordinating attacks with the West Commander. The land we had collectively gained back was almost the entirety of the country. The opposite side had one stronghold left. Our last attack would be a surprise. Planning to head towards the coast by cover of night, my army prepared for battle.

“Watch for misplaced grenades. They have more supplies than us. Don’t shout out. Lose any extra weight.” I shouted my final commands at my weary military.

“Are you ready, Commander?” The West Commander said into my earpiece.

“One second, sir.” I replied.

I yelled at my warriors for the last time, “Ready, soldiers? What do we want?”

“Freedom, sir! Prepared for battle!” The Last Hope was as united now as it had been when this war started. A chorus of encouraging shouts filled the hall.

“Prepared for battle, sir.” I radioed to the West.

“We’ll meet you there. Remember the plan. Don’t engage until I arrive.”

“Yes, sir. For liberty. For freedom.”

“For liberty. For freedom.” West replied.

Arriving at the coast, I could smell the salt in the air. As I turned to my soldiers, shots rang out. Bombs began to fill the air and the floor shook. Warriors dropped left and right. Smoke rose. My battalion needed help. The West was nowhere to be found. Had they gotten sidetracked? Who had warned of our secret attack?

“West, do not proceed forward. I repeat do not proceed forward. Losing soldiers. May be captured. We’ve been attacked by forces who knew of plan. Mission compromised, sir.” I said, hoping West was alive to hear. No reply reached me. I assumed West Commander was dead or compromised. The scales of the war had tipped against us. Suddenly stabbed with pain in my side, I looked to see a gunshot wound. I was quickly losing blood. My last act was calling my remaining soldiers to retreat. As the lights faded, I could only hope that there were warriors left.

“You thought you could win. That’s funny. How could a rebel force of poor, malnourished young men defeat an army funded by countries around the world?” A voice said as I awoke. Straining to stay focused, I realized the voice was familiar. The corrupt president was speaking to me. My arms tensed to break my bonds and show him what this poor soldier could do.

Reaching for a gun, he continued, “It’s over. Peace agreements were signed. The country is back in my hands. Everything will be back to where it was before this whole mess started.”
“We won’t give up! You will never win.” I spat out, barely concealing my pain.

“Are those your last words? You’re the only rebel left and I’d like to finally quash this rebellion.” He said, aiming the gun at my head.

“For liberty. For freedom.” I said as his finger pressed down the trigger to end my life. Let the revolution live on, soldier.
A Week Without The Internet?

By

Siddharth Vaidyanathan

A day without internet seems unimaginable today as everything functions around it. What if you were given the opportunity to avoid using the internet for one whole week? Would you be up for the challenge? The internet is a wonderful place where a bottomless pit of information and knowledge is stored for users like us to use. Search engines such as Google or Yahoo enhance the experience of the internet to enable you to find anything you possibly want to know. Social media platforms like Facebook or Instagram let you post adventures and memories for people to view. It's a wonderful place where old colleagues, former schoolmates and everyone can get in touch with one another and stay connected. As of today, over four billion people use the internet which encompasses for over 50 percent of the world's population. Many jobs today require you to know how to access and use the internet. Without it, life today would be very difficult.

The internet is the least expensive way of entertainment. Think about all the free content there is that you can binge on and just watch non-stop for hours, such as Youtube. YouTube is one platform where people can post videos of helpful and educational content or extraneous content in which one can debauch on. But to every good there will always be a bad. With networks such as social media and YouTube, the wrong content can change one's perception of the world, and not for the better. First and most of all, the continuous use of social media causes addiction which later on leads to all sorts of negative issues. Depression and anxiety are a key factor to avoiding social media as it is proven that longer periods of time on social media can only worsen one's psychological distress. This can also be done through neglecting your body image while trying to meet “society’s standards”. In today’s society, influencers and celebrities place a placebo into which we think we should look a certain way where instead as each individual should accept what they look like and rock with it!

Cyberbullying is another downside to the internet. People can be ruthless and hurtful especially since they’re sitting in a chair and saying something online instead of face to face. This only gives the bully more power as they can cower behind a screen and say what they choose to say. With cyberbullying, there is a key factor of anonymity. This enables a “bully” to say what they want to say thinking they won't suffer consequences as they are not saying it directly to the victim. This is actually not the case as with advancements in technology, anything and everything you say or do online can be backtracked, which will show every bit of information on the person who sent it.
The internet is meant to be a resourceful and educational tool to help with our everyday life but it can be toxic and misused. If you do ever get the chance, try to see how long you can withstand without the use of online communication and entertainment. If ridding yourself of all technology for 1 week is impossible, try to use your device for no more than two hours and go outside and enjoy the beauty of mother nature. It will force you to be creative and open up the world to you as many take it for granted. For instance, you can take up an outdoor exercise such as running, jogging, or even biking. If you’re feeling a little adventurous, you can go mountain climbing, hiking and several other exercises. This can promote one’s mental and physical health as it’ll motivate you to go do something where you’d get a good sweat and meet other people who are trying to leave the cramped and claustrophobic indoors. As we cannot live without the use of technology, we should avoid it once in a while and just go outside to relax and clear our minds.
Silenced- “Silenced” shows the corruption around us and how many people are eventually bought off, even if they don’t want to be. This piece shows that everybody has a price, it just differs how high or in what form it is, and how their guilt continues to haunt them.
Plague of the Past
by
Keegan Diaz

PROLOGUE

2000 years in the future, there lived humans, just like us- except different. They had more knowledge about the world, had discovered new species of plants and animals, and had even built an artificial atmosphere to protect all life and especially earth itself from incoming objects from space. However, the people didn’t live on different continents: Africa, Asia, or even the Americas. No, they lived on a supercontinent called Kyro Maximus. This supercontinent was culturally diverse, had a population of 7 billion people, and a total of 200,000 cities that benefited the continent through trade and transportation between people and goods. However, death came upon the continent as a plague arose from its coffin. After 3700 years passed to the crowded city after people thought it was gone for good.

In a city called Alfa Yatari, there lived a sixteen year old orphan boy named Ronin. When Ronin was two years old, his parents suffered a severe cranial injury in a car crash. After his parents recovered, they both lost memory of Ronin and weren't able to take care of him anymore. Ronin wasn’t just a normal boy though. He had a very high IQ status of 328, 160 points higher than the average population of Kyro Maximus. He won hundreds of science fair contests; when he was five, he created the first functional light that didn’t require any chemical or electric current. In fact, he was one of the inventors of the artificial atmosphere. One of the aspects of the atmosphere was that it could control the climate to spread evenly throughout the continent.

On the morning his life irrevocably changed, Ronin woke up one morning and walked over to his hologram television, and turned on the news.

Out of the corner of his eye, Ronin watched his dog chew on a bone that he had given to him the day before, he pulled up a flash back from many years ago. Ronin’s dog came into his life when he was only 5 years old. Ronin had stress issues and had to walk in the alley between the orphanage and the butchers shop to relieve himself. One day in alleyway, he found a little Husky pup chewing on scraps of meat of the butcher’s scrapped bones. He took him home and named him “Haiku”. Ronin’s disability often gave him panic attacks, but Haiku, his new therapy dog, helped him calm down and control his stress. Thus, the orphanage allowed Haiku to stay and Ronin got better over time.

The news anchor’s voice forced him back to the present with the most shocking story that he had
ever heard.

CHAPTER 1: SPREADING NEWS

“Breaking news!” said the reporter. “A man uncovers a glass jar of ash from the Hedari gold mines. After being exposed to the substance for too long, the man showed severe symptoms including; horrible coughing, endless pain in the heart, and sudden death of brain cells. He was rushed to the Jebalta hospital but died two hours after arrival. The substance is now under research in a containment lab and currently under superior containment protocol to make sure that absolutely no one is exposed to this substance ever again.”

Ronin turned off his hologram television then walked over to his window in his dorm, and stared into the distance. Ronin was worried, and didn’t trust that the substance was safe. He knew that the world did have many crazy people out there that would be able to somehow obtain the substance. His dog looked at Ronin if he had understood what he was thinking.

“I-I don’t understand,” Ronin said to Haiku. “How does a powder end up killing a person in less than 12 hours?”

Haiku cocked his head as if he were listening.

“Well, it can’t reach us here. It’s already contained in an area far from here.”

Ronin picked up his bag and headed out to his new job at the medical center to make new medicine for the sick. Since the Ronin was learned so quickly, he had mastered all of his education by the time he was a teenager and didn’t need schooling anymore, so he was able to start working at a young age. News had spread about the death of the man that touched the powder. In Kryo Maximus the news was very important to watch, so many people had already been talking about the fatality and they started worrying.

“Will there be more substances that we would find that could kill us? Where did it come from?”

When he was walking home from work after listing out gene patterns in viruses, he saw a secret meeting between the Elders. They are a suspicious group consisting of a variety of religions at least over one hundred years old. They were all talking in their secret language when Ronin heard the Elder in the black robe say the word “virus”. Ronin felt his heart stutter and prayed that the word “virus” in their secret language meant something else.

At night, Ronin had a hard time sleeping. He kept moving around trying to get comfortable, but
he couldn’t. He was still thinking of the word *virus* that the Elder said right before they ended the meeting. He sat up in bed and turned on his light next to his nightstand. It was 12:35, just after midnight. He picked up his tablet and pulled up an online book about dogs to keep his mind off of the things he heard that day. He stared reading and kept reading. Then, he slept.

The next morning, again, Ronin pulled up the news. He was terrified after hearing what the reporter said.

CHAPTER 2: STAY INSIDE

“Breaking new! More deaths due to the black powder,” said the news reporter as she looked sternly at the camera, but this time she had a slight look of fear as she shuddered and fiddled with her paper in her hands. “The first responders who helped the man all died with the same symptoms at the same time. This could mean that the new substance is contagious, experts say that it might be a disease. Authorities are already on the scene and containing the area before it could spread.”

Ronin looked at his dog, and his dog looked at him with the same amount of fear in their eyes. Haiku paced around the room and shook with fear. He turned off the news immediately and called his workplace to tell them that he was going to skip work.

“I’m not able to go to work today, boss,” Ronin said over the phone.

“Why?” his boss asked suspiciously as he sat up from his seat.

“I-I don’t feel good enough to come today.” Ronin stuttered.

“Good answer. I hope you get better,” said his boss.

That day, Ronin didn’t go out at all, afraid that he might catch the illness. His dorm was like his blanket that isolated him from the outside world and the only thing that could protect him from the disease. He was afraid to go out, not did he even want to open his window to get a nice breath of fresh air. He was in his own prison.

Days when by one by one. Then this one day changed not only Ronin’s life, but the whole world’s. Ronin, for the last time turned on the news. He was shocked to hear these words that came out of the news reporter’s mouth.
“Alert to all people of Earth! The substance that killed the man and first responders were all exposed to a devastating plague. This maybe the end of the world and the whole population. There are only a few people that can be exposed to the plague that can’t die. Their names are Ronin Nobunaga, Richard Khan, and-. Ronin clearly didn’t listen to all the names the reporter called out, but he was supersized that there were very few people immune to the plague. Through an IQ test that he has taken, it shows that he has an IQ of 3028. He may be smart enough to create an antivirus. If Ronin Nobunaga is watching this right now, our lives are depending on you,” announced the news reporter.

Ronin shut off the news and immediately got a call from his boss at the medical center.

“We have all watched the news today,” said Ronin’s boss. “There is only one last question for you before we and this call. Are you in?”

“Yes sir!” Ronin said in a clear and powerful voice. He imagined himself finally finding the cure to the plague and behind him would be a crowd of cheering people idling him as a savior. Then, he realized something: what if he didn’t find the cure? Everybody would hate him. He tried to keep the bad thoughts away from his mind, but he couldn’t.

“I accepted the agreement,” said Ronin, “The only option to put forth all I have, all my money, all of my knowledge.”

His dog whimpered as it was trying to tell him not to leave.

“My people need me,” he said to his dog.

He packed his bag and headed down to the medical center. He felt honored to take on such a big duty like this. Then he stepped outside.

“Look! It’s Ronin Nobunaga! My dad works with him!” shouted a little boy as he pointed him out.

Everybody’s eyes were locked on him as he walked down the street. He would occasionally hear a “good luck” or a “we are depending on you” as he walked. When he got to the entrance of the medical center, there were hundreds of people cheering for him. There were lots of news reporters all asking him questions at the same time, and photographers flashing their cameras in
his face that he felt dizzy.

“Is there security anywhere?” Ronin asked. Soon enough, there were security guards that closed in all around him, and guided him to the lab.

As Ronin and the guards walked through the hall, there was a man that breached the barriers, went up to Ronin, grabbed his shirt and suspended him up into the air, choking Ronin.

“You better save us or else-,” said the man, but he couldn’t finish. One of the guards punched him right in the head and knocked him out. Ronin dropped to the floor, but got back up again.

“This way, Mr. Nobunaga,” said the guard casually as he pointed over to the doorway. All of the guards left after they arrived to the room that had a sign that read Authorized personnel only! At the entrance, his boss met up with him.
“Greetings Ronin!” said Ronin’s boss, Junto. “This is the enclosed lab where we examine things so we don’t get exposed to any sort of biohazardous materials. Have you had any experience with scanning viruses and finding a cure for them?”

“Yes. I learned about scanning viruses at the old medical center that I originally worked at when I was 12 years old.”

“Great! We will be putting a radio on your so we could hear you while you are experimenting with any of the materials provided. Since you are immune to this plague, your body will not be contagious to any human being. Once you are done testing the plague. Jump into the capsule that would spray you down with a disinfectant solution to take off any excess virus off you before you go outside.

Ronin attached the radio onto him and then walked into the room, slowly and carefully.

“Sealing doors,” his boss said from the other side too the radio.

“Copy,” Ronin responded.

Ronin saw the jar of black power that he had heard on the news. He first put on the protected gear on the back wall. He approached the jar slowly. He picked up the jar and examined it. He set the jar down, opened it, and took a sample of the powder and placed it on a glass slide and slid it into the microscope.

“Get the scanner and scan the sample of the plague,” said Ronin’s boss.

“Ok,” responded Ronin.

He scanned the sample and read the readings on the device.

“What the?” Ronin said through the radio.
All of the journalist and his boss all stood up on their feet.

“The symptoms of the plague are; vomiting, coughing, sore throats, dehydration, and puss filled tumors on the skin,” Ronin said slowly through the radio. The journalist were all ready typing the symptoms down on their tablets.

Ronin stared in awe as he looked at the genetic facts about the plague.

“One of the genetic facts about the virus is that if one cell evolves in a different place away from the other cells are, all other cells would gain the same evolution of that cell,” said Ronin.

Everyone was silent and almost everyone stopped what they were doing. The journalists all paused for a brief moment and slowly typed the facts on their notepads.

“The only organisms that cannot be infected or that can pass the virus are dogs, cats, birds, and me,” said Ronin through the radio.

“Alright, that’s enough for the day Ronin,” said Junto, “Take off the suit and put it in the metal barrel that says BIOHAZARD and shower of in the lab shower to take off any viruses off of you before you come out.”

Ronin then took off his equipment and took a shower. After he put on his clothes, a robotic voice said, “Unsealing doors.” A gust of air blew out of the door way and Ronin walked out of the door way and into the hall. There the security met Ronin there and led him through the thick crowd of reporters and fans asking him questions. He then walked down the street to escape the ruckus that filled the town and streets.

He got home, threw down his bag in the corner, and went up to his dog.

“You can’t get infected. Yay!” Ronin said to his dog in a slightly depressed way.

His dog seemed satisfied and went over to its bed to rest. Ronin made himself a cup of tea and stared out the window of his dorm.

Then, the phone rang. It was his old friend that he met in middle school when he was 12. He answered the phone.

“What’s up Ronin?” yelled Richard. Ronin shirked away from the phone and turned down the
volume after realizing that it was maximum volume.

“Too much.” Ronin said as he carelessly threw himself on top of his bed.

CHAPTER 5: TOO DUMB

“Well, now your famous all around the world! I wonder why I wasn’t picked with you,” said Richard sadly.

“Maybe because you aren’t as smart as me,” Ronin joked with a slight chuckle.

“Like when?” Richard asked as if he was trying to find a way to prove him wrong.

“Well in sixth grade, there was a problem that simply was 9 times 9, but you answered 0.” Ronin said as he was laughing, “And in eighth grade you were reading a poem about a duck.”

“Oh. So,” said Richard like it didn’t matter.

“But instead of pronouncing the word duck, D-U-C-K,” laughed Ronin, “you said f-.”

“Okay!” Richard interrupted loudly. “We don’t need to relive that particular memory right now. Can you at least see if I can help?”

“I’ll check with my boss,” said Ronin as he inhaled deeply like he didn’t want him to help at all.

“Alright, thanks!” said Richard, and he hung up.

“Did you hear that buddy!” Ronin said to his dog, “I’m employing a dummy to come help me work! He’s going to kill everyone on the planet!” His dog looked at Ronin as if it agreed.

Ronin picked up the phone and called his boss.

“Hey Ronin! What do you need?” his boss said with excitement.

“Hi. Well, do you think I am able to have a good friend that is immune to the virus help me?” Ronin said with regret.

“Sure.” his boss said, “Is he smart?”
“A little bit.” Ronin said slowly.

“Well, he could watch but not go inside the testing chamber,” his boss said.

“Alright, thanks,” said Ronin, and he hung up.

He picked up his phone and texted Richard.

“My boss agreed for you only to watch me.” Ronin texted and put his phone down.

He threw himself onto his bed and started reading. Trying to keep his mind off the fact that there was the fact that a friend was going to watch him either cure the virus or make it worse was the biggest thing he had on his mind. Slowly, he dozed, and dozed, and slept.

CHAPTER 6: LATE FOR WORK

Ronin woke up and again turned on the news. He expected for the news to be bickering about the plague, but the only thing that the hologram television pulled up was an ad about Flex Tape with Phil Swift. He looked up at his clock on the wall, still half asleep. His eyes widened as he realized he should have been out the door already. It was 10:00am and he was late!

He quickly grabbed his stuff and ran out the door as soon as possible.

Then he ran through the halls and down the elevator, which in his mind was far too slow. He ran through some other halls, and down some stairs. As a matter of fact, it took Ronin twice the amount to get down five floors than it took the elevator to go down ten floors. Ronin’s mind didn’t think as well when he was stressed. After a few minutes, he headed out the door running.

Out of breath, he arrived at the medical center. There was a pretty big crowd at the entryway that morning cheering as he arrived. There were police restraining people from reaching out to shake his hand, and there were the guards, huge, muscular, and nicely dressed, waited for him to walk down to the containment room.
Efforts
by
Garrett Young

You want to be better?
Your trifling efforts seem dismissed
You feel an emptiness.

You become saddened
Your hope dissipates as you feel
You wonder if anyone cares

But you look up and lock eyes
And you realize your attitude
So you say no

You conjure a finale of efforts
Your enthusiasm amplified,
You become optimistic

You are at least attempting
You are doing this
Contributor’s Bios

Alina Chisti
Alina Chisti is a junior honors student in high school. She has been named student of the year for her class for the past two years. She founded her own non-profit tutoring organization called A+ Tutoring. In addition to tutoring, Alina also volunteers for Hospice of the Valley, Friends for Life Animal Rescue, Helping Hands, ICNA relief, FMSC, and Red Cross. When she is not studying or volunteering, she loves theatre and script writing. She has been actively involved in theatre for seven years. Alina’s other hobbies include archery, cooking, hiking, guitar, ukulele, listening to music, spending time with her family, creating unique looks with makeup, and playing with her two orange tabby cats.

Keegan Diaz
Keegan Diaz is a seventh grader. He plays the piano, French horn, and guitar. Keegan loves to make people laugh, play guitar, and write. When he grows up, he wants to be an ophthalmologist.

Isabella Ferrero
Isabella Ferrero is a junior in high school. She participates in the symphonic wind ensemble as a trumpet player. As Vice President of the Tri-M Music Honor Society, she has helped create and run events that bring music to the community. In her spare time, she likes to play ukulele, spend time with her friends, and write. Isabella hopes to study creative writing in college to advance her dream of becoming an author.

Marie Grace
It was an insatiable love of reading that inspired thirteen year old Marie Grace to begin writing her first novel, Bound in Silver, which she self-published at the age of sixteen. "I wanted to create a world of characters and adventures that an avid YA fan like myself would love to read," Grace divulged. At that time, she also discovered a love for writing short stories and poems. She spends the rest of her time pursuing the creative and beautiful things in life such as photography and the culinary arts, as well as hanging out with her family and two adorably annoying Pomeranians in her hometown of Boise, Idaho. You can find out more about her, and her work by following her on social media:
Instagram: @mariegracebooks
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/m.gracebooks/

Ava Kim
Ava Kim is a junior in high school. She spends most of her time thinking in endless circles that lead nowhere. She also enjoys procrastinating, writing, and drawing. For her, the future seems
very far, so she instead focuses on living today in the best way possible.

Sahitha Vuddagiri
Sahitha Vuddagiri is a high school student at BASIS Chandler. Recently, she started an organization called Easel Arts Inc. that raises and donates money through art instruction, weekly classes, workshops and selling art. In 2017, she donated over $2000 and continues to do the same for 2018. She holds week-long workshops over fall and spring breaks, makes greeting cards and sells them, and teaches regular, private lessons to students of all ages. She’s been passionate about art from a very young age and realized that she could turn her hobby into a means of helping others. Her goal is to start an organization that would raise money through art education, with the proceeds donated to outreach programs assisting others locally and in other countries. She has been painting from an early age and over the years, she mastered a variety of techniques and mediums. Her goals this year are to expand her outreach and double the funds earned and donated last year, teach at community clubs, schools, and retirement homes on a regular basis. Please find her portfolio, and donation page, at https://www.easelarts.com/read-me/

Sherry Wang
Sherry Wang is currently a long-suffering senior in high school. Besides grinding schoolwork and Quizbowl competitions, she enjoys writing and scrolling through WikiArt to stare at Rene Magritte paintings. Her dreams include one day being able to create a more effective way for high school seniors to navigate the rigors of standardized testing and the college application process. Sherry would like to study innovative ways to reform the higher education system.

Rachel Woosley
Rachel Woosley is a junior in high school. She enjoys drawing, writing, and spending time with her friends. Her short stories and poems have been published in The Blue Guitar Literary and Arts Magazine, and Blue Guitar Jr.

Garrett Young
Garrett Young is a junior in high school. He likes rollerblading, fish, music, and video games.
Editorial Staff

Lysette Cohen, Editor-in-Chief

Lysette Cohen holds a M.Ed. in Education from Northern Arizona University and a M.A. in English and Creative Writing from Southern New Hampshire University. She is currently working on a PhD in Curriculum, Assessment, and Evaluation. She has been an educator for almost 20 years teaching ABE/GED, English/Composition, Creative Writing, and American History. Lysette has traveled extensively, but currently makes her home in Phoenix, Arizona. Her nonfiction essays, short stories, and poems can be found in Page & Spine, The Penman Review, The Scarlet Leaf, Unstrung, and The Blue Guitar Literary and Arts Magazine.

Alina Chisti, Managing Editor

Alina Chisti is a junior honors student in high school. She has been named student of the year for her class for the past two years. She founded her own non-profit tutoring organization called A+ Tutoring. In addition to tutoring, Alina also volunteers for Hospice of the Valley, Friends for Life Animal Rescue, Helping Hands, ICNA relief, FMSC, and Red Cross. When she is not studying or volunteering, she loves theatre and script writing. She has been actively involved in theatre for seven years. Alina’s other hobbies include archery, cooking, hiking, guitar, ukulele, listening to music, spending time with her family, creating unique looks with makeup, and playing with her two orange tabby cats.

Jillian Bartz, Editor

Jillian Bartz is a senior in high school. This year she is her school’s DECA president and French Club treasurer. She is also involved in Thunder Buddies, Link Crew Administration, and FBLA. When she is not studying or editing, she enjoys spending time with her two cats and sleeping—she really likes sleeping. After graduating from high school, she plans to visit Paris before entering college as a finance major.

Ava Kim, Editor

Ava Kim is a junior in high school. She spends most of her time thinking in endless circles that lead nowhere. She also enjoys procrastinating, writing, and drawing. For her, the future seems very far, so she instead focuses on living today in the best way possible.

Surabhi Sajith, Editor

Surabhi Sajith is a junior in high school. She has been pursuing her passion for dance for past ten years and enjoys learning Carnatic music and writing. She participates in diverse events and had won the Phoenix Rotary 100 speech contest, the regional school bee, and several dance competitions. Surabhi has worked to raise money for many charity events, and continues to give back to the community through peer tutoring as Math Sprouts tutor in Tempe, Arizona, volunteering at Chinmaya mission and Maricopa Integrated Health, and teaching dance to younger children. At school, she is a Student Representative and is part of the Leadership
Society, which plans school events.

Rachel Woosley, Editor
Rachel Woosley is a junior in high school. She enjoys drawing, writing, and spending time with her friends. Her short stories and poems have been published in The Blue Guitar Literary and Arts Magazine, and Blue Guitar Jr.
Open Call to Artists and Writers

Ink & Feather Literary and Arts Journal is seeking art, prose, and poetry submissions by and for young adult writers (ages 13-18). Submissions are open to all genres—fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, plays, novel excerpts, and art.

Details:
- Deadline for submissions is 3/20/19.
- Simultaneous submissions are accepted, but please let us know if your work is accepted at another literary magazine.
- There is no charge to submit.
- Writers and artists may submit in more than one genre.
- Please review the Submission Guidelines page at www.inkandfeatherliteraryjournal.com
- Please email your submissions to inkandfeatherliteraryjournal@gmail.com