

The Creation Aerie



Lanier Middle School

Literary Magazine

2015-2016

The Creation Aerie

A cross-curricular collection of artistic expression

LMS Literary Magazine

2015—2016

Sidney Lanier Middle School

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Fairfax, Virginia 22030

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NaNoWriMo

In November, Lanier Middle School participated in a modified version of National Novel Writing Month. Here are our top completed stories:

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Personification Poems

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Artistic Talent

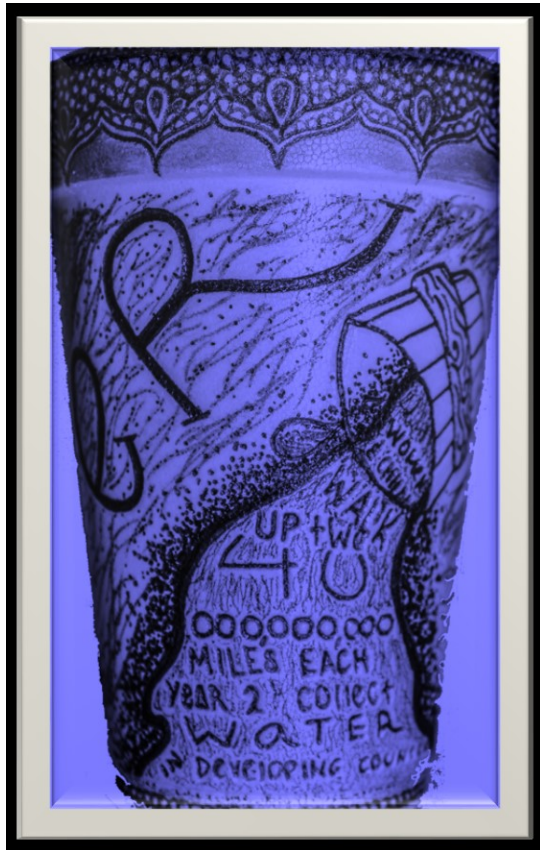
Many thanks to the talented illustrators, doodlers, and graphic designers!

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Grief

by Austin Eilbert

My name is Grief, Hope is gone
This might be brief, but it's my song.
I rip your heart in half, in two
Waking up you might rue.
I help you heal, but with a toll
You are totally in my control!



Art credit: Sylvia Nguyen

Trust

by Sara Guckenberger

Hello my name is Trust
You know me
I'll always be there for you, see?
When you turn a corner
I will be there
Remember: always play fair!



Art credit: Keisha Anne Enriquez

Eyes: Darry

Pale blue-green ice
a window to the soul
determined and set
his other side
full of hatred for the world
tough, mean, and cold
Pale blue ice

Eyes: Dally

Pale blue ice
tough, mean, and cold
full of hatred for the world
his other side
a window to the soul
determined and set
Pale blue-green ice

Poem by Riley Rhoder

“My poem eyes is a reverse poem where when read one way it is about Darry and when read the other way is about Dally. We talked about how Darry and Dally are two sides of the person when faced with the problem of the Socs. The poem compares and contrasts them by showing both sides of them. Dally’s pale blue eyes and Darry’s pale blue-green eyes. Dally being tough and full of hate for the world while Darry is determined and set where he is.”



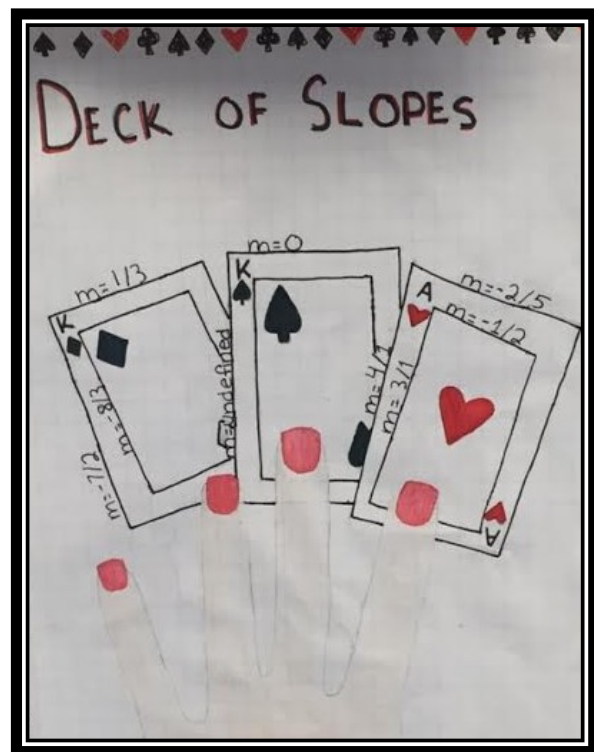
Art in Mathematics

Art credits:

Catherine Ewell

And

Trinity McCall



Escape to Rhode Island |:| Historical Fiction

By Brendan Smith

"Newport Gardener!" shouts Hugh Gray, my owner. "Are you done cleaning the outhouse? I have another chore for you!"

Help me. I am a slave named Newport Gardener. I live in Virginia, and my only wish is to be free. I live with my slave owner, Hugh Gray. I am put hard to work every day because I am his only slave, and he is poor. He spent all of his money on a five-acre farm which he could make money off of. So I am cleaning the outhouse right now, and I hear his yell.

"What is it?" I ask.

"Go pick the tobacco! It's growing out early this season!" he yells.

What's up with these Virginians and their tobacco?

"Alright, I'll be there soon!" I yell.

So I wipe up the last smudge, and I look at my work. It's sparkling clean. I wipe the sweat that built on my forehead with the dirty rag. This was a hard day, and it's about to get harder.

I go to the farm. I see the tobacco, which is bursting out of the ground. This day just gets worse. First dirty outhouses, now picking overgrown plants that dry out the amazing soil that was already here. Why do these people destroy such beautiful land?

So I pick the tobacco. It is very time-consuming, and it is indeed hard work. But I just tell myself, "One day you'll be free, Newport, and you won't have to put up with this anymore."

Oh, thank goodness! I'm finally done! I look up at the sky. Judging by the sun, it will be dark soon. My days are numbered. Doesn't he realize that? Hugh isn't letting me do much at all in life, but I am only twelve. So I have time.

Plus, I have an escape route. While cleaning the outhouse every time, I dug a hole with a shovel. Hugh let me use it to cover the holes that we make. Sorry, I meant the holes that I make.

This hole is an underground tunnel under a large portion of the state. Digging it was a pain, let alone trying to avoid the big holes filled with dung. Yes, try.

But this goes all the way to Maryland, a free state! We are up north in Virginia, and so the tunnel isn't extremely big. But I'm smarter than Hugh assumes. Sure I can't read or count, but I have strategies to survive. The tunnel takes me right to a carriage that serves by picking people up and taking them places. This is just one of the stops, and there are many. One of them is Newport, Rhode Island. Far enough north to get away from Hugh.

So tonight is the night. While Hugh is asleep, I will sneak into my tunnel, get on the carriage, pay the driver with money I will steal from Hugh, and get to Newport. Oh, it's already turning dark. I check the position of the sun. I see that it is eight-twenty, just ten minutes before the time that Hugh goes to bed.

Ten minutes later, I sneak into Hugh's house. Normally at this time I am either pulling this dumb tobacco or sleeping on the cold, hard ground. But not tonight. Tonight is the night where my whole life changes.

I look around. Perfect! I see his coat. That's where he always keeps his money! I look in the pocket. I see about one dollar in there, just enough to ride the carriage! I go back outside, and through my tunnel. I am back at the carriage stop. The carriage is right there, and so is the driver! Great! All is going according to plan!

I ask the driver, "May I have a ride?"

"Where to?" asks the driver.

"Newport." I say.

"Rhode Island?"

"Yep,"

"Sixty cents."

"What about food and drink?" I ask.

"An extra twenty," says the driver.

So I give him the dollar, and he says, "Are you a slave?"

"More like a refugee," I say.

"Okay then," he says. "Then you count out the change that I give you. Whatever you come up with, I will give you back."

Oh, no! I can't count well! I think about it for a while. One hundred cents are in a dollar. One hundred minus twenty for the food means that I get eighty cents back. Then eighty minus the sixty that I gave for the travel fee means that I get twenty cents back. I think.

"Twenty cents?" I say, as if it was a question. I wasn't sure.

"Correct. I'm surprised you can count!" says the driver. "Not many slaves do!"

Ugh. Five entire days have passed, and I'm still in the carriage. It is about noon, according to the sun, so I ask where we are.

"We're in Connecticut," says the driver. "Real close to Rhode Island."

"Great," I say. By now, we have gone through many diseases, obstacles, and accidents, so we have become close friends. I now have eighty cents, since we got a job selling peaches in the streets of Philadelphia. So we both got money from that. Now we're in the home stretch.

"Only about a day left on this journey," says the driver, whose name is Andrew Goodman.

"Great," I say. "So it's almost over, and we won't see each other unless you stop by?"

"Pretty much," Andrew says. He's in his thirties.

"Oh," I say. "So goodbye, then."

"Not yet."

So a day passes. We see many docks nearby. We are on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean for sure.

"We must be close," I say. On the way here, Andrew taught me how to count up to fifty, how to read, and how to sell things. It will be sad leaving him, but I will never forget him.

Andrew pulls over the trotting horse and asks a civilian nearby, "What town is this?"

"Newport, Rhode Island," says the civilian.

"Your final destination," says Andrew, looking at me.

I tear up a little bit. "Yep," I say. Andrew started to tear up, too.

"Alright, see ya, then," says Andrew.

I get off, and Andrew leaves. Right after, though, a cloaked man came riding on horseback. He lifts off his hood. I see who it is. It's Hugh Gray.

He points at me and says, "Slave! Get behind my horse and walk home with me. There are many chores to catch up on!"

Oh, no! Hugh's back!

"No!" I say.

"What?" Hugh sounds shocked. "I didn't want to have to do this."

Hugh pulls out an iron short sword. He gets off his horse and swings his sword. It missed my chest by a centimeter. My whole life flashes before my eyes. Then I see a figure run in front of me. I find myself in shock, and I black out.

I wake up. I see a man lying down in front of me. I see that it is Andrew. Andrew has a large gash in his left leg. I yell, "Does anyone have any tobacco?"

All of the nearby people go back to what they were doing before except for one. A little black boy runs out of a house and yells, "I do! I do!"

The boy looks like he is six or seven. He gives me nine tobacco leaves.

I have learned some medical skills at the farm if I got gashed, cut or beaten. I wrap three leaves tightly around the gash, and then I wrap six leaves very tightly around his stomach. Andrew starts waking up. He's alive! Yes!

"Newport Gardener?" Andrew whispers.

"Yes, it's me," I say.

"I don't feel any pain in my leg anymore. How'd you do that?" says Andrew.

"I wrapped tobacco leaves around your leg to stop the bleeding, and I used other tobacco leaves to move the pain from your leg to your stomach. Your stomach gets much less pain sent to it. Thank this boy, too." I say.

The boy blushes. Andrew says, "Grab thirty cents out of my bag and give it to this boy."

Instead, I disobey Andrew. I pick out forty cents of my own money and give it to the boy. To him I say, "I give you more money than he will, because your deed was worth more to me than him, even if it was his injury."

"Thank you very much, mister." says the boy. He runs back to his house.

I carry Andrew to the nearest hospital. I have grown very strong from pulling plants and scrubbing hard.

I finally reach one. I see a sign in front of the hospital. It says:

Medical Services: \$0.30

Thirty cents? This isn't good, because if I give the hospital thirty cents, then I won't have enough money to free myself. I need to make my decision quick.

"Are you sure you want to use your money for this?" says Andrew.

"Yep," I say.

After Andrew's surgery, Andrew pays for my freedom, and he adopts me. I become his son, and he becomes my dad. So now we live in a nice cottage in Newport, Rhode Island, and occasionally we get threats from Hugh Gray, but we ignore them. One day, he was caught by the police for attempting to enslave a free person. That free person is finally me. That is just amazing to me, especially since my beginnings were so humble.

That is how I became from a slave to a free man.



Art credit: Evan Dick

Love
by Amber Harrison

My name is Love, heard you got my note
In that note, I put in a quote
Did you hear our darling Hope is lost?
Into the snow and under the frost.
I, Love, am now so broken
From the words your boyfriend has spoken.



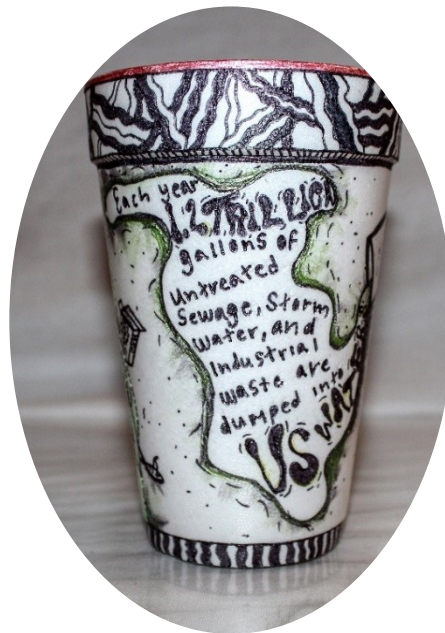
Art credit: Nezila Ibrahim

Fear
by Abby March

My name is Fear, Hope has died
It's time to put him aside.
Now I must go, I have to find
Some of the bad thoughts hidden in your mind
You'll need some luck- go find a horseshoe,
'Cause I'm bringing all your worst nightmares back to you.



*Art credit:
Kirsten Kautz*



The Church

Like fiction out of a book I couldn't believe this was our reality.

Locked up like wild animals we spent our days holed up in a world of darkness

I guess this is just what happens in wars, people filled with the guilt of what they've done

I couldn't grasp the fact that I was capable of such brutality.

For what seem like ages, we filled ourselves with days of blandness

Until one day we were set free, to eat food and roam the open.

But when we returned to our former home, it was no more almost gone

I had to do something to save, that was my only focus.

I went in and my friends followed me gallantly.

Just as we were leaving, pain encapsulated my body and I thought I was no more.

But sure enough, my friends still cared just like before.

Poem by Hajera Hayat

"This poem is from the church after Johnny kills Bob.
This poem also describes what it was like for them inside the church."

Midnight |:| Thriller

By Kate Coffin

Sweat dripped down his clammy hands, the warm summer night made him even sweatier than he usually got. There had been a small rainstorm earlier that night, making the ground wet and difficult to run on. Gracie had slipped trying to run from him. The victim lay under him, pinned to the ground by the sweaty man. The victim was named Gracie Worthington, a weak teenage girl. Why Lady Montgomery had a problem with her, the man had no idea. All he knew was that he had to do what she said because he wouldn't live much longer if he didn't. He looked at the victim's soft green eyes, the devil dancing in his. Her eyes were full of fear, unlike the times he met her where Gracie was smiling largely and had a friend hanging out with her telling each other jokes. Not thinking about how Gracie was when she was alive, he thought about how she would be dead. The man grabbed his blade from his side pocket, gripped it with both hands, and held it in the air. He sat on Gracie's midsection with a lot of pressure to keep her fidgeting to a minimum. As he gripped the blade with sweaty yet delicate hands, he thrust it down into her stomach, a pool of blood surrounding her. The man looked down into her once soft green eyes to see the lifeless eyes of a teenager passed its prime. The cold, lifeless eyes were greyer now, her face paled, and she looked like she wanted to say something. Well, if Gracie Worthington wanted to speak, it would never happen. With a sick grin, he placed a black rose on her chest to symbolize himself; Midnight.

Gracie didn't know what to think of the situation. She thought that Jason was her friend, not a murderer. In her small town in the Midwest, psychopathic murders weren't common. She couldn't help but think about how relaxed Jason looked when he thrust the blade into her. No, not relaxed; calm. It was almost as if he'd done it before. As the blood spilled out, Gracie wanted to ask why he did it, but her consciousness cut off before she even opened her tear stained lips.

Midnight was known as Jason in the small town. Everyone knew him in the town, and they all thought that he was just a nice little boy from northern Indiana whose dad got a job down in southern Indiana. Really, he was a hitman for the Montgomery Association. Lady Montgomery was the leader and she told the hitmen who to target, but never why. The biggest rule of the Montgomery Association (other than that there isn't a Montgomery Association and if anyone asks you about it, you've never heard of it) is to never ask questions. Even if the target is someone you knew personally before being recruited, you don't ask why they have to be killed. You simply ask to trade assignments. The next rule is that nobody knows your name, not even Lady Montgomery. She finds a way to forget it, and the hitmen want to ask why but can't because of the rules. Never ask questions. The last one who asked, well that was too graphic for even Midnight to think about. He thought about all of this as he walked back to headquarters, decked out in all black so nobody could recognize him.

"Hello, Midnight," Ocean said. Their names were based off of when they got the job done. Midnight only took lives at midnight, Ocean by the seaside, Silence when all noise has ceased, so on and so on.

"Hello, Ocean. Did you complete your assignment?"

"Yes. And you?"

“Of course I did. I have to say though, it was hard to make Gracie Worthington to trust me. She’s a very skittish and meek girl. Of course, that made it all the easier to complete the assignment.”

“Yes, from what I saw on the mission description, she seemed weak.” Ocean then nodded at the mission board and instructed him to go to it.

“Another one? Lady Montgomery must be in a good mood this month.” As he walked over to the board, he looked at all of the people around him. Other than Silence who was his age, they were all older than him- at least twenty-three years old. Midnight was only seventeen. His parents died when he was fourteen, so he lived with his aunt. She never liked him, so he did whatever he wanted to. Midnight started to act up and break the law. His first offense was grand larceny, which made the Montgomery Association see his ‘potential,’ and hired him at age sixteen. At seventeen, he’d already become a three star hitman whereas some who’d been there for years and years were only one or two stars.

“Dang, Midnight,” Silence started, “You’ve been doing well lately. I’ve got to say, I’m impressed.” Silence smiled slightly. Silence was an odd case; he had a light, welcoming nature, yet he was a two-star hitman.

“Why do you say that?” Midnight asked.

“Look at your mission!” He also pointed to the board the same way Ocean had.

Midnight looked at it skeptically, almost afraid to see his assignment. Is it really that difficult? He asked himself. I’ll look after I turn my mission report into the officers, Midnight decided as he walked over to the officers. As they always did, they read the report over in front of him and congratulated him. Why can’t they read slower? Now I have to go look at the mission board.

Why he was dreading looking at the mission board, Midnight had no idea. He would usually jump up at the opportunity to see what he’d be doing next. With a heavy breath, Midnight looked at the board. There was a slot with his name on it, and people moved out of his way as he moved towards it. People surrounded him, staring at him. Anticipation dripped in the air like the rain the night before. What could be so bad that these experienced people would be so... I don’t even understand what they’re feeling. Finally, with one more heavy and nervous breath, he reluctantly looked up to his name slot. His eyes widened at the words written there. They were words that he’d never seen on some-one’s mission.

“Well, go on, Midnight. Read it aloud!” someone yelled.

Shakily, he drew words out from his nervous breath. “Midnight, you are to go to the head officer and show him this card. Allow him to read it, and he will bring you to my room. I have a very special assignment to give you. Sincerely, Lady Montgomery.” He could barely speak the last words. His body stiffened and face paled. His breath hitched. Midnight just stood there for a minute before finally processing what he had read. Nobody ever went to see Lady Montgomery. She’s like the manager that never comes to see how the business is doing, but constantly looks at the reports. With robotic legs, Midnight walked to the officers to find the head of them. Shakily, he handed the card to him. With a small laugh, the man started to lead Midnight down a series of halls.

The man didn't speak, which made Midnight's legs feel even more like lead. If he tried to speak, the officer gave him the most frightening death glare he'd ever seen. To add to the horror of it all, the hallways were so dark that Midnight kept thinking about the night prior. The thing he couldn't stop thinking about was the look in Gracie's eyes. The way they danced with life and happiness, and then the way they turned to stone. How can someone's eyes be so tragically beautiful and telling?

"Here we are," the officer stopped at a door decorated with...Christmas decorations? There were wreaths and ornaments hanging from it. Christmas lights lined the door. "The Lady is festive," the officer explained.

Midnight raised an eyebrow. "It's the middle of summer," he deadpanned.

"Not to the Lady. It's always a holiday to her. Right now it's Christmas. Next week it's Hanukkah. Then Halloween." Midnight refrained from laughing. It was ridiculous looking; an extremely dark hallway with one door full of Christmas décor. It just seemed hilarious. "Well, go on it." He gestured inside of the door he opened while Midnight snickered.

The room was dark, and the moment he walked in, he got the same buckling feeling in his legs. "Hello, Midnight," a silky voice welcomed from across the room. The door slammed shut behind him, and he was suddenly enveloped in darkness. "Oh, how I hate how he never turns on the light when he comes in here. Honestly, how can you have a dark Christmas?"

"It's the middle of summer," he muttered under his breath.

"Hmm?" Lady Montgomery asked.

"Nothing," Midnight lied.

"Okay. Now, dear, if you would turn on the light. It's right by the door, to the left by your ear." The teenager skated his fingers over the wall until he found a light switch. He switched it on, and he saw the most beautiful woman he'd ever seen in his short life. Her long hair was raven black, which complimented her electric blue eyes pierced his own through his own. Her skin wasn't tan, but not pale either. It was just beautiful. She had a pixie nose and a beautiful smile. She wore a long, violet dress. The room was barren and cream colored, with her standing in the middle. The emptiness seemed to be filled by her, though. "L-Lady Montgomery?" He stuttered.

"Oh, please, just call me Raven. Lady Montgomery is so formal." Her voice wrapped itself around Midnight like Raven's silk gown did to her. "Now, as for the special assignment. You, Midnight, have gotten much too attached to some of your recent assignments. With Jack, you actually became friends with him. That's unacceptable. One of the men who worked with you on that mission reported to me that you've been thinking about the way she looked dead and how tragic it was," Raven explained.

I knew I shouldn't have told City about that, Midnight thought.

"So, you will go back to same place and your next victim is named Ren Montgomery. As you know, one person never does it in the same place twice, but it's necessary." Raven said.

Midnight stopped breathing for a second. "Ren was her best friend." *And has the same last name as you.*

“Yes. You obviously are having second thoughts about killing Gracie, and since Ren is upset about her, you relate to her. The ones you relate to are the worst. So, that should help you get back into the swing of things. This is not able to be traded. Now, leave. Do not say a single word as you go. Just leave and go back to the officer, he knows what to do. Your stuff is all ready, just go on the train. You already know Ren, so this should be quick and easy. Be back in three days, or you’re out. And you know what being fired means.” Those electric blue eyes shot darts of electricity into Midnight’s own brown eyes. Then, her face softened. “Bye, Midnight. It was nice to see you.” Terrified, Midnight turned around to the door. “Oh, and also, turn out the light. Christmas is over. Hanukkah has started. Ask the officer to get me a menorah.” He gulped and shook his head as he turned out the light and scurried away from the horrifying room, and into the dark abyss of the halls.

The train ride felt longer than anything Midnight had ever been through. It was really only two hours, but Midnight thought that he would grow old and die on that train. He picked up his phone to play some games to pass the time, but caught sight of his reflection in the glass. His black hair was a mess, sticking up everywhere. His earbuds looked worn out from playing so much music. There were bags under his eyes. His eyes. They were tired and sad. They looked desperate to get out, like they wanted to leave. Gracie had really taken a toll on Midnight’s thoughts. Consciously, he didn’t know why. Subconsciously, he knew it was because of the way she looked. He never noticed the vast difference between how the living and the dead look. The living’s eyes are dancing with brightness, whereas the dead’s are stone cold and desperate.

It’d been two days since Gracie’s death, but none of the school seemed to care. They just went about their day, not even paying attention to the memorial that the school had made for her. The only things at the memorial was a few roses and a picture of her. It was pretty sad looking.

“It’s sickening how little they care,” Midnight, or Jason as he was known in the town, mumbled. He stopped himself when he remembered that he was the reason that she was gone. He walked over to the memorial, wishing that he had something to put on it.

“It looks pretty bad, doesn’t it? The school wasn’t even going to put one up until I freaked at them. I’m glad to see you care, Jason.” A sad and hollow voice said from behind him.

“Ah!” Midnight jumped up, frightened from the voice. He turned around and saw Ren standing there. She looked hollow and sad, just like her voice. Her eyes looked like those of the dead, not of the living.

“Good to see you, Ren,” he smiled the best he could, but it wasn’t sincere. How can you smile at someone when you know that they’ll be dead tomorrow? The warning bell rang through the hallways, reminding the students to be in class in one minute.

“And you Jason. I’d love to talk more, but I have class.” His words were about as sincere as his own had been.

“Yeah, well we have seventh period English together. See you then.”

Midnight walked off, but Ren stayed there. A single tear fell down her cheek as she looked at the picture of Gracie Worthington. “I love you, Gracie. Just re-member that. I’ll find the psycho who did this to you, and give him what he deserves,” Ren assured the picture and herself.

Midnight quickened his pace to class.

The whole day, he found himself thinking about Gracie and Ren. His teachers yelled at him to pay better attention, but he couldn't. *I have to kill her. How do you kill such a heartbroken girl?* he asked himself during lunch. *By breaking her heart some more,* Raven's silky and persuasive voice invaded his thoughts. *Yes. Yes, I will put her out of her own misery. That's what she wants.*

Since Ren had a therapy appointment to cope with losing her best friend, Midnight couldn't go home with her. So, he had to stalk her on her way home. He followed her to see where she lived, what kind of security system she had, etc. Luckily, she walked to and from school, which made it easier. Midnight didn't have to worry too much about being heard or seen since Ren's music was so loud you could hear it through her earbuds and her eyes were glued to the area in front of her, presumably so she wouldn't cry.

Eventually, Midnight got tired of the silence and put in his own earbuds, which started to short out. They would skip a loud part of the music and couldn't handle big changes in dynamics. Ren took a turn into a neighborhood, surprising Midnight. *She lives in a rich neighborhood?* he pondered. *Why would someone who lives in Harbor Hills go to a bad public school like Jackson High School?* She could easily go to the private school. She's smart enough, that's for sure.

Ren looked around, so Midnight ducked into some bushes. She turned into a driveway and fished around for a key. Midnight noted the security sign, showing that they had ADT Security. "Great," He muttered. ADT was the toughest one he'd ever come across.

Ren took out her headphones and looked through her bag some more. "Ugh where did I put my stupid key?!" She shouted, kicking the door. She looked around again to make sure nobody was watching as she pulled the spare from behind a false brick in the wall. It's behind the one straight to the left of the door by her ear. He furrowed his brow. Why did that sound familiar? He disregarded the thought as Ren opened the door.

When she went in, Midnight stood up. He took note of her address, "1225, Candle Drive. That's an odd street name." 1225, candles, why is this so...familiar? The thought was bothering him, but he once again decided against thinking anything of it.

At midnight, he went over to the house. He was in all black and had a black rose, per usual. His knife was tucked in his boots. He got the key, and walked in. There was nobody awake, all of the lights were off. Midnight walked up the stairs and wandered around until he came across a door labeled 'REN'S ROOM. IF YOU WANT TO COME IN, SIGN YOUR NAME ON THE SHEET BELOW. I WILL HEAR THE PEN SCRATCHES AND COME TO YOU.'

Midnight laughed through his nose as he silently opened the door. Ren was sitting on her bed, a small reading light next to her as she read a book. A few tears fell down her cheeks. Midnight caught sight of what the book was: 'Ren and Gracie's Book of Memoirs.' They must've been young when they made the scrapbook, because that's not what memoirs means.

Ren looked up at him, her eyes red and scared. "Who're you?" she asked.

Midnight turned on his voice modulator with his finger, making his voice sound much deeper than it actually was. "Come with me and I'll make it easy. Resist and I won't think twice

about hurting you.” He threatened. He felt a small pang of guilt, though. This was his friend, someone who cared about him. How could he just throw all of that away?

Ren’s eyes got wide and she nodded, putting her hands up and the book down. She followed Midnight out of the house silently. As they went down the hall, Midnight saw something. A door labeled ‘Raven Montgomery’s Room. AKA Mom.’ He stopped moving for a minute, everything clicking. It was Christmas for her. Their address was 1225, which could also be seen as 12/25, Christmas day. They live on Candle Drive. She wanted a menorah for Hanukkah, and candles go in the menorah. The light switch location was the same as the key location. *But why would she help me kill her own daughter?* he asked himself as he kept on moving along. Who wants their wants daughter dead to prove appoint?

Midnight brought her to the same alleyway that he killed Gracie in. It had no name, it was just the alleyway. He kicked Ren to the ground, and she fell obediently. It was like she accepted her own death. She was a lot more lenient than her friend had been, which was probably why they complimented each other so well. Gracie cared a lot more and made Ren more passionate about things, but Ren brought Gracie down to Earth and made her realize that not everything would go the way she wanted it to.

“First, before you kill me, tell me why you did it. Why did you kill Gracie, Jason? You were friends. We were friends. Why do you do this?” Ren inquired, catching Midnight off guard.

“What? How did you know?”

“The black rose. It was left on Gracie, and you had one in your bag. Why are you doing this? Who’s making you?” Ren asked.

“I don’t have to answer that,” Midnight stated.

“Please, just make a dying girl happy.”

“The leader. The leader is. That’s as much as I can tell you.” He sat on her midsection the same way that he had to Gracie. He felt something odd fall down his cheek as he pulled out the knife. Underneath his mask, he was crying. In his pocket, he felt his earbuds and cell phone. His earbuds started to play music on their own, but they kept shorting out. His earbuds broke. Midnight started to cry more, until he was sobbing.

Ren pulled off his ski mask, tears making their way down her own cheeks. “I know it’s hard, Jason. And I also know that you have to kill me. I’ll take it willingly, as long as you promise to stop. I know this isn’t the life you want to have. You’re a teenage boy and you have an alias. What kind of seventeen-year-old should have to be called by a fake name? Tell me, what’s your real one?” Ren begged.

Shakily, Midnight gripped his knife and held it up in the air. “My name is Midnight, Ren Montgomery. I am broken, and this is the only life I will ever live. Nothing you say will change that.” And with a single stab to the heart, Mid-night cracked Ren’s already broken heart. He placed a black rose on her stomach delicately, and looked into her eyes. They were cold, dark, and dead. They were gone, so far gone. So was Ren. Midnight felt the way he had when he had killed so many times before. He was empowered, dangerous. The world feared him, or at least the idea of him. “You were a smart girl, Ren Montgomery. But not smart enough.” The moonlight reflected his face off of the blood surrounding the area. His eyes weren’t sad or hollow anymore. They had meaning, they were empowered. “I don’t do this because I have to. I

do it because I want to.” Midnight looked off into the distance, knowing what Raven Montgomery meant. “And now, I’m back to my old self. I have your mom to thank for that.” Ren’s once smiling lips were tear stained, the same way Gracie’s had been. “Huh. I guess you two really were best friends. You even died the same way.”

Tragedy comes in many different colors. Sometimes, it’s when everyone dies, or maybe it’s in the way they die. Other times, it’s when someone doesn’t succumb to society’s own idealizations, like the way that Midnight didn’t stop working for the Montgomery Association. To him, he won. To society, he lives a tragic life of murder. To him, Ren dying is his way of symbolizing him winning against his own thoughts. To society, Ren’s death is tragic and shows that Midnight is a desperate young boy who deserves much more. So, what really is tragedy if the other side is the complete opposite?



*Art credit:
Linda Ziamanesh*



Art credit: Evan Dick

The Darkness

The darkness had come with no stray light,
I fell vulnerable, into the hands of the greatest might,
The hands of jewels showed no clemency
Continuing to give me pain with no leniency,
But that was the excruciating past
Which scarred me, and that will last.
When finally it seemed the sun had risen,
It sunk, leaving the darkness with another mission.
Now the wild Mustangs have returned
And I have learned,
They want to bring back the pain and for that they will strive
So in the darkness it seemed, the blade was the only way to survive.

Poem by Rachel Nelson

“This poem represents all of Johnny’s feelings about how he was jumped by the Socs in the past and when they attacked both him and Ponyboy. In the poem, when it says wild Mustangs” it is referring to the Socs, who show up in a blue Mustang both times Johnny was jumped. The poem talks about the light and darkness, symbolizing the hope Johnny had and the Socs who seemed to be full of darkness and hatred.”

Maturity

by Ryan Johnson:

My name is Maturity, and Hope said, "So long!"
I will be here for you so you can be strong
I will help you out through thick and thin
I am here to cease more sin.
I will make you grow and make you sprout
The old me has grown anew and found a new route.



Confidence

by Haneen Yousif

My name is Confidence, this is my song
I might not be here for very long.
But while I'm here I'll grant you some magic
For my effect is a classic.
On one last note I will say:
If you don't use me wisely you'll be in dismay!

Art credit: Anna Gershenson

The Voice in the Dark |:| Thriller

By Ikraam Mahamed

Part One-The Kidnapper

“A person you never knew could have a fate just like yours” -Unknown.

I read the quote from the book I was reading wondering what it meant. Why would someone you never knew have a fate like yours? I didn't ponder on it any longer instead put the book down and went to pick up another. My hand felt empty space as I realized that I had no more books left to read. ‘Well then.’ I thought glumly, ‘Looks like I need to go to the library.’ I slowly got off the soft silk couch I was sitting in and stretched my now aching back. I had been reading for hours and not left the spot. Slowly I walked to my room and got ready to leave. Getting into a plain sweater and jeans and went to the mirror to check my outfit, and was greeted by my image. A young girl with dirty blonde hair and baby blue eyes.

“Time to go.” I mumbled to myself. I walked down the stairs and quickly made my way to the door. It creaked slightly as it opened, and I was hit with a cool frosty breeze. Stepping onto the porch I heard the soft ‘click’ of the door as it locked behind me. Walking down the sidewalk I slowly made my way to the library. It was getting darker every second, and soon it was so dark I could only see a couple of feet in front of me. I kept on walking and soon got to a short forest path that lead to the library. It was an old library that was built a long time ago in the woods, and the town mayor decided to keep it there instead of moving it into town.

I sped forward wanting to get through the forest as soon as possible. The problem was it was even darker in the forest, and the trees seemed to block out any source of light. Shadows danced through the long trees that were reaching for the sky. I soon could barely see a thing. The path that just seconds ago was visible is now gone. Losing all sense of direction, I barreled forward feeling eyes on my back. Suddenly light seeped into my blurred vision and I noticed I was no longer in the forest but at the stairs to the library. I sighed glad to be out of that death trap they called a forest, and slowly walked up to the library doors.

As I opened the doors to the library I could have sworn I was being watched, but when I turned around there was only a piece of paper on the ground. Looking closely I noticed there was writing on it. Bending down I picked up the parchment from the muddy ground. It felt old and seemed to have been used many times, because of the amount of wrinkles that were on it. Slowly I unfolded it and read the words that turned my blood cold.

“Do You Want To Go In, You May Not Come Out, Do You Wish To Continue, Or Do You Have Doubts”

What was this? Who wrote this? The questions kept coming, but soon I came to a conclusion. This must have been for someone else, not me. I put the note back so that whoever it was meant for could receive it. As I turned around to go into the library I suddenly wondered if whoever wrote the note was waiting for someone was it safe to go in at all? I quickly dismissed this though. Why would this person hurt me if they obviously weren't looking for me? I decided to go into the library anyway. The door creaked as I opened it, just like the door to my house did. If only I was there instead of in this situation.

Slowly I walked in cautious at first, but soon warmed up. I was in a library the best place in the world who wouldn't want to be here. The smell of books and paper filled my nose, and I

took deep breaths. I loved the library and it was definitely my favorite place to be. I ran my hand over the spines of multiple books as I browsed the library. So many sections so many genres, and I wanted to read them all.

I picked out an array of books and headed to the counter to check out. To my surprise there was no one there. I walked around the rest of the library looking for the nice librarian who always worked here, but she was nowhere in sight. I came to the resolution that she must have been on break or her shift was done. I wasn't sure if I could take books without checking them out, but I seriously needed something to read so I started my way to the door. I was walking down the horror section of the library when it started to get a little darker. 'What was going on' I thought. Suddenly a fog of some kind seemed to pool around my feet reaching to my knees. "Whats going on?" I shrieked frantically clutching my books to my chest for dear life. Then I felt as if someone was watching me from behind again, but before I could turn and look the fog seemed to grow. It was now reaching my thighs and still spreading. My hips were soon engulfed in this trap, and only then did it stop.

I tried to move, but the strange black fog would not let me out of its grip. 'I'm stuck' I thought, now what would I do. That's when my breath caught and my skin turned pale. I felt a hand clutching my shoulder. It was cold and my shoulder already seemed frozen, but that wasn't the worst part. The hand seemed to have replaced nails for claws, and the claws dug into my shoulder. I could feel liquid running slowly down my arm. I opened my mouth to scream only to have another hand cover it. I struggled under the creature's grip wanting to be free, but it just held on tighter.

I felt a hot breath next to my ear, and a deep, but soft voice whispered. "***I warned you, did I not?***". I shivered remembering the note. It was for me, and I had ignored it. The two hands slowly unclashed from their grip and I thought I was finally free. Then I re-remembered the fog. It was still there and I couldn't move. To my utter demise the fog started expanding again. It pulled me in and I knew I couldn't escape. "NO!" I screamed "NOO!". As the fog enclosed me the creature whispered one more time. "***I warned you, and you didn't listen***"

My head felt foggy as I slowly opened my eyes. I looked around, trying to find out where I was. My surroundings finally came into focus and I realized I was in a room. Though, it wasn't just any normal room. The walls were made of steel. In fact the whole room was steel, and had nothing in it. Except, for two paintings. I sat up still feeling stiff, and looked at both paintings. One had a picture of what seemed to be a sidewalk with a dark blanket of darkness around it. 'The fog' I suddenly thought. That's what it is. I looked at the rest of the painting to see there was a girl in it too. She looked so afraid, so fragile. I tilted my head to look at the other painting exactly parallel of the first. One glance at it and my blood turned cold. It was an image of a girl, and behind her was pure darkness. Reaching out of the darkness was a hand, if you could call it that, gripping her shoulder. Fear etched the girl's face to match the expression now on mine. This girl was me, and this was a painting of me.

I stared at the painting for quite some time when I heard a low groan. My breath caught as I slowly turned my head to see what would greet me now. What I saw surprised me. There laying on the floor was a girl. The girl was also the same girl from the first painting. Who was she? Was she dangerous? I thought in my head. Suddenly the same voice from the library filled my ears and a shiver went down my spine. "***I hope you enjoy it here, because you won't be leaving soon***" What did it mean?!? I couldn't stay here forever! I looked over at the girl who

was now sitting up and looking at me. Then the quote from the book I was reading this morning came back to me and I suddenly blurted it out.

“A person you never knew could have a fate just like yours.”

Part Two-The Dreams

It Was Dark.

Even with the street lamps on the sidewalk in front of me seemed dim. Where was I? There in front of me I spotted an unnatural looking fog. Looking at the fog it slowly seemed to spread. The air around me got cold as the fog enclosed me in an endless abyss of darkness. It seemed to swallow me whole with no mercy at all. I looked up into the strange area around me suddenly feeling vulnerable. Panic swell up inside as the blanket of black got thicker and thicker. I took rigid breaths as it was suddenly hard to breathe. The lack of air seemed to dizzy me greatly and I started to feel weak. THUMP! I fell to my knees as the world rapidly spun. A voice deep but soft seeped through my ears. I could just barely make out what it was saying:

**“You try to keep away
Think that we are gone
But we are here to stay
Which makes you very wrong**

**We hide under your bed
Waiting to attack
And all you ever said
Was they’re not coming back**

**You think that we will leave
But that’s not very true
We have something to retrieve
And that you see is you”**

Chills went down my spine as my vision blurred. Who was this? What did they want? What was under my bed? Question after question zipped through my mind but none could be answered. My head had gotten cloudy and I couldn't keep my eyes opened. As my eyes closed a cool breeze swept over me and the fog disappeared.

I jolted awake, breathing hard. My head hurt and I felt a buzzing in my ear. My eyes slowly focused and I noticed the T. V’s bright light flashing. I reached the remote and clicked the T.V off. Slowly I sat, my head turning in all directions, and checking my surroundings. I was sitting on the couch “Must have fell asleep” I mumbled to myself. I stood up my bare feet hitting the soft carpet underneath.

I maneuvered myself around the house and up the stairs to my room. I was tired even after that nap. I shivered remembering the dream. What was it about? Who or what was that voice I heard? What did it want with me? I quickly dismissed the questions. It was only a dream, not reality. There was no strange unnatural fog, no weird voice, and nothing under my bed.

I stepped through the door and into my bedroom. I quickly saw the stacks of CDs and music tapes. I really enjoyed listening to music in my spare time. I looked around and noticed the rest of my room Light brown walls, a black desk in the corner, and a small bed against the wall. I was still tired so I slowly walked to my bed. I slipped in and pulled the covers over my head. The bed sank under my weight as the world became fuzzy. My eye-lids were drooping, and slowly I fell asleep.

I opened my eyes still feeling tired. "What?" I mumbled as I slowly realized I was-n't in my room. Where was I? Was this another dream? Slowly I stood and looked around. I was in a small room with no windows and no doors. Oddly everything was made of steel and nothing was in the room. Except, on one of the steel walls hung a painting. I walked up to it dragging my hand on the steel wall until it came to contact with the painting. In the painting was a sidewalk. The sidewalk seemed to be covered by a dark fog. Though, the fog itself wasn't the creepiest part of the painting. In the center there was a girl she seemed scared, afraid, also confused. Suddenly it clicked, and I gasped in fear.

A shiver ran down my spine. This girl in the painting I knew her, I was her. The vibrant green eyes and rusty brown hair. It was me. The room got darker as the air behind me suddenly got cold. I turned around and was faced with pure darkness. I stared at it and wondered what it was. Then I remembered my other dream, and I remembered the fog.

I jolted awake and almost fell off the bed. My heart hammered as I slowly focused on what was around me. I was in my room safe and sound. Yet I still felt eyes on my back watching me. It's only a dream, I told myself, it had to be. My mind slowly cleared, and I looked around to see it was still dark. I got out my phone to check the time, 1:57, it was pretty late.

Still shocked from the dream I couldn't go back to sleep. I sat on my bed and pondered what was going on with these weird dreams. They seemed so real, so frightening. They couldn't be real, right? What was I doing? Thinking about dreams becoming reality. That could never happen. Happy with my resolution I ducked under the cover to go to sleep, but then I heard a sound. It was muffled and I barely hearable. Then it came again a little louder. It sounded like a whisper, but I still couldn't make out what it was saying. It came again a third time and I finally heard it. "*Under the bed*" "*Under the bed*". The whisper carried out through the room and echoed off the walls. "*Under the bed*" "*Under the bed*". What was under the bed? I honestly had to know what was there whispering.

Slowly I climbed onto the cold wooden floor and flinched as it creaked underneath me. "*Under the bed*" "*Look under the bed*". The voice said a little louder than before. I hesitated, did I really want to know what's there? Should I run, but never solve this mystery? The voice seemed to sense my hesitation for it yelled at me this time. "**UNDER THE BED**" "**LOOK! UNDER THE BED**". I flinched at the harsh tone wondering if I really should look. Finally curiosity took over and I decided to take a glance. As I bent down on my knees the voice said once more. "*Under the bed*" "*Under the bed*".

I looked down to see what the voice was and what was under the bed. Looking down I saw nothing. Where is the voice, I wondered? Then I spotted a dark area in the corner and felt a strong sense of *deja vu*. Then it hit me. The fog in my dream looked exactly like this one. My blood turns cold and my eyes grow wide. I sat there paralyzed as the fog grew and expanded to fill my room. My dream was real. The fog was real! The fog that had almost killed me in the dream. That thought snapped me back to reality, I had to run.

I scrambled to my feet trying to exit through the door. The fog suddenly shot itself in front of me blocking my way out. The window, I thought I could get out through there, but as I turned my hopes slipped away as I saw the fog had covered there as well. It started to grow faster and faster, and I now stood in the only territory it hadn't taken over. Slowly it started to spread to me and swallow me whole. Again I was in the black abyss of my nightmares. I tried breathing, But still I could only take shallow breaths. Air slowly leaked from my lungs. Breathe, I thought to myself, BREATHE! Slowly I got dizzy, and my eyes were getting heavy. I struggled not wanting to let darkness take over, but I was simply too faint from the lack of air. Just before my eyes closed I saw the faint outline of a hand reaching for my shoulder.

My vision was foggy as I slowly opened my eyes. My head was throbbing as I let out a soft groan. I sat up and noticed I was in the steel room again. 'This must be another dream' I thought 'It has to be'. I looked over and noticed the painting of me on the side-walk and shivered remembering the dream. Looking around the rest of the room I noticed another painting. A new addition to the room. It was an image of a girl, and behind her was pure darkness. Reaching out of the darkness was a hand, if you could call it that, gripping her shoulder. Fear etched the girl's face and she looked so worried. I looked around the rest of the room and suddenly noticed a girl. No, the girl in the new painting. I stared at her wondering what this was all about, why I was here, and if this really was a dream.

Suddenly the voice from my dreams filled my ears once more. *"I hope you enjoy it here, because you won't be leaving soon..."* 'Oh no...' the thought raced through my mind. I was still staring at the girl as she turned her head to me. Our eyes made contact as my head started getting cloudy again. She opened her mouth and spoke clearly at me *"The person you never knew could have a fate just like yours"* My eyes started to close and the world started to fade. I fell to the floor as my eyes fully closed.

It Was Dark.



Patience
by Sabina Nguyen

My name is Patience, Hope said to wait.
Now he's gone out; he'll be back pretty late.
I want you to be patient for me,
Then good things will come, you'll see!
I hope you follow my advice,
Then everything will turn out nice!



*Art credit:
Chris Heath*

Procrastination
Jaxon Roberts

My name is Procrastination, I just took down Hope
And now I know you're at the end of your rope
People take my advice and get punished
For all the assignments that are not finished.
I am the death of grades and now you know
I'll help you with that my friend... wait, never mind, No!

Danger Is Coming

Looking at the sky blue war horse
Seeing a big white ghost turn worse
Darkness arrives at the doorstep
He starts to walk towards me in steps
Suddenly the world is normal
This day is really abnormal



Art credit: Sarennna Guerts

Poem by Eunice Lee

“This poem is related to the novel *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton because this is the moment that Ponyboy and Johnny are in the park. Also included in the poem is when Ponyboy was drowning and Johnny kills Bob, the Soc, to prevent Ponyboy from dying. The “sky blue war horse” represents the blue mustang the Socs drive, “white ghost” represents Johnny when he is scared, and the “darkness” is Bob because he is trying to get into a fight.”

Mythical Creatures | Fantasy

By Zoe Thompson

Chapter 1

Feeling the wind in my ear is the best feeling I ever felt. I jumped over some tree branches and rocks as I race down the rocky ground. I looked behind me seeing my companions trying to catch up to me. I laughed as I ran even faster than ever before. Up ahead there was a cliff separated from another cliff that I always go to when I want to howl up at the moon. A grin broke out on my face, knowing that my friends that were behind me wouldn't dare jump to the other side. I picked up my speed wanting to get a good jump out of it. As I was running my companions shouted at me to stop.

I didn't listen.

Once I was halfway there, I got ready to jump. Unknown to me there was a small, unnoticeable tree branch sticking out of the ground where I was going to jump. My foot got caught in the branch when I was trying to jump. My body flew down the cliff as I tried to find a branch or rock so that I could hold myself. I couldn't grab onto one. My vision blurred when I looked up, seeing my friends scream trying but failing to catch me.

I saw my tears flow up as I continued to fall. I scream erupted from my mouth when my back hit small but sharp rocks. I rolled down the cliff, landing in a small river. Blood coated the river turning it into a crimson color. Black dots covered my vision. I desperately tried to stay awake but I wasn't strong enough. I let out a dark small laugh. I was only eighteen and already I was going to lose my life. Maybe this is what I deserve for not protecting my mother and father.

I closed my eyes letting darkness consume me.

Chapter 2

I grabbed onto some rocks before dropping down onto the ground. My name is Erza Scarlet from Fairy Tail. I was sent on a quest with my team to find a missing rare diamond that was either between these two cliffs that I was in or the muddy planes that was on the other side. Enough about me let's get back to the story.

I summon my sword from my pocket dimension just in case there were monsters down here. I looked up signaling my team it was safe. My blonde haired friend Lucy swiftly jumped down a 5 foot cliff along with my other teammates, Natsu and Gray. I continue on my way with them following me.

“Hey Lucy do you smell that?” I stopped and looked at Natsu with question eyes. Lucy lifted her head and sniff the air before widening her eyes. Natsu nodded and took off with Lucy hot on his trail. I looked at Gray. He shrugged and ran after them with me following him.

Once we were there I narrowed my eyes when I saw what Natsu and Lucy was chasing after. Everyone was looking at the body lying on the ground in a pool of blood. A girl maybe Gray's age was covered head to toe in blood, her arm was twisted, her head was facing the other way. The worst of all was her back, rocks sticking on her back that was coated in blood. I quickly ran up and saw that there was gushing blood coming out of her head.

“By looking at this and seeing the rocks around her, she must of fell off the cliff,” Gray said.

Natsu nodded still sniffing the air. “I smell other people but it leads towards the top of the cliff. They smell like wet dogs.”

Lucy looked around the girl. “The question is how did she fall?” Lucy questioned.

I nodded my head agreeing with her. I lifted her up in my arms. “Happy!” I called out. A blue haired cat came flying down.

“What happened?” He asked.

I handed him the girl and he looked at me confused before seeing the wounds she has. His big black eyes grew larger. “Take her to the guild immediately! She’s very injured as you can see. Tell Wendy to heal her. Okay Happy?”

Happy wrapped his tail around her neck and placed his paws on the girl's shirt. “Aye Sir!” He shouted quickly flying away to the guild.

I turned around to look at everyone. But before I could speak Lucy interrupted me. “Erza, I found the diamond.”

I looked at her shocked. “Where was it?” I demanded.

“It was under the girl. I think when the girl fell she landed on the diamond causing it to sink further into the ground.” She explained.

I smiled at her. “Well let’s give it back to the client then quickly head to the guild.”

Once we were out of the forest we headed to the client house. “Thank God you found our diamond! Now I can give it to my daughter who is getting married in a week!” The client shouted in glee. I smiled and gave him the diamond. “Here is 4,000,000 Jewels I promised you!” I split the money and handed everyone 1,000,000 each. As we were riding on the train I kept on thinking about the girl we found barely alive. I sighed and looked out of the window though the rest of the ride.

Chapter 3

Natsu opened the door with a powerful kick. “We’re back!” With a stern look I headed to the bar to tell Mira about the mission.

“How was the mission?” Mira asked with a smile but not like her usual ones.

“It was good until we found a girl lying in her own pool of blood. About that how is she?”

Mira’s smiles fluttered. “Wendy was able to heal her but she said that it will take a few weeks for her to wake up. She was barely alive when Happy flew in her screaming.” She told me. I simply nodded and headed to the infirmary. I opened the door seeing the girl sleeping on the infirmary bed. I pulled up a chair next to her bed and sat down. I looked over her body seeing her wrapped up in so many bandages.

Mira stepped into the room carrying a tray of water and some food. “Hey Erza here is some food. Also Team Natsu is wandering about you, they want to know if you want to go on another mission?” She said as she set the tray of food next me.

I sighed and nodded. I stood up and left the room and went over to my team. “What’s the mission about?” Lucy spread out the mission paper on the table. “Help take down a Dark Guild that had been terrorizing our kind?” I said confused.

“I was confused on that one too so I asked Levy about it. Apparently there are these creatures, there are all kinds of them. Wolves, Demons, An-gels...and even dragons, etc.” Lucy was interrupted by Natsu.

“Dragons?! Maybe they know why our Dragons disappeared!” Natsu said excitedly.

Lucy rolled her eyes. Gray smacked Natsu in the head. I glared at them before they can start fighting.

“Well let’s get going. It’s our job to help them in any way we can.” I commanded.

Natsu fisted pumped the air. “Let’s get going! I’m all fired up!” Natsu yelled. We all left the guild and headed back to our own homes to pack up.

Chapter 4

In the infirmary; the girl’s point of view

I groan in pain as I tried to sit up.

“No! You should lay back down! You’re very injured. You had a big gush in your head but I healed all you injures, but with all your injuries it’ll take some time for you to be fully healed again. And I’m surprised that you woke up. With your injuries it will take some time for you to wake up,” said a blue haired girl with two twin tails and a blue with yellow and light blue zig-zags around her small waist. She looked about 12 or 13 years old.

I looked at her before nodding. I spoke with a stain voice. “Where...where am I?” I asked getting comfortable in the bed.

“You’re in Fairy Tail!” she said. The blue haired girl sat down next to my bed and placed her hands over my body.

“Sky Dragon Healing.” She muttered. A warm feeling washed over me taking all the pain with it. “Oh! And my name is Wendy Marvell, I’m a Dragon Slayer,” Wendy said with a bright smile.

Suddenly a knock came from the door. A girl with snow white hair with short pony tail in the front. She had a red, long dress with a pink bow wrapped around her waist. “I’m glad you’re awake! I thought you were going to stay unconscious for weeks! But I’m glad that didn’t happen.” She said smiling. I just nodded. She walked over to my bed and a tray of food next to me. “My name is MiraJane by the way. But you can call me Mira.” She told me before waving goodbye and left the room.

I looked at Wendy who was oddly quiet, working on something in a wooden bowl. “What is Fairy Tail?” I ask.

Wendy turned around with a smile. "Fairy Tail is amazing guild! We treat each other like family. No matter what you did in the past we will always accept you." Wendy said with excitement.

I thought about joining this guild. It seems to be good guild that will protect me no matter what. "May...I join the guild?" I said shyly. Wendy jumped up and raced out the room. I stared confused at the door.

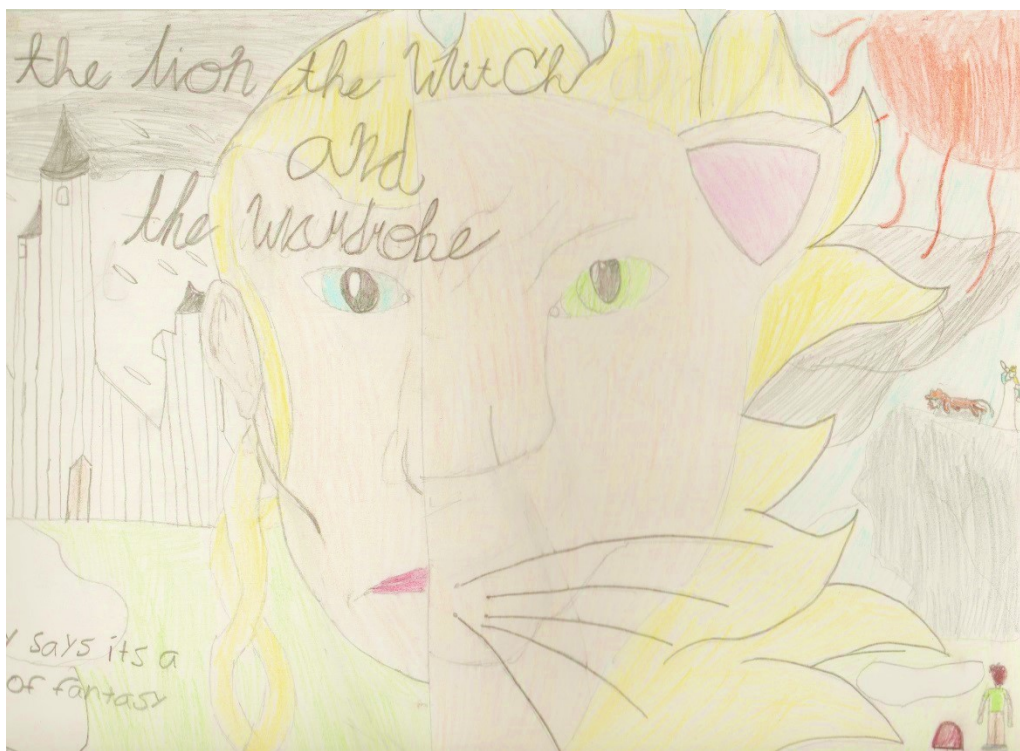
A minute later a short man with grey hair around his bald head ending at the sides. "I heard from Wendy that you wanted to join the guild?" I nodded my head slowly. The man jumped up on my bed and held out a stamp. "My name is Master Makarov Dreyar. What is your name child?" He asked sitting down on the bed. I got comfortable and told him my name.

"Kuro Kiryuu, Master."

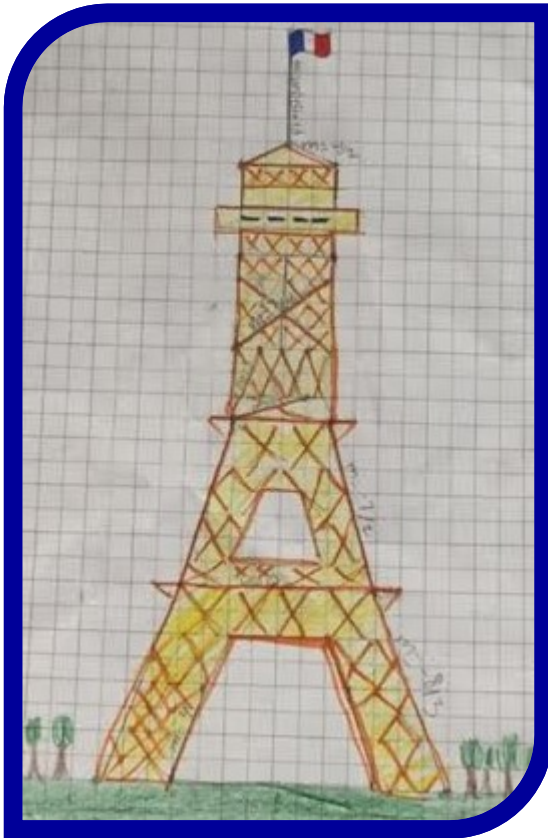
Master waved his hand back in forth. "Just call me Gramps child. I sense that you use a rare kind of magic I'm safe to assume?" My eyes widen. How did he know that? I slowly nodded my head. Gramps smiled before holding his hand out. "Where would you like your guild mark? And what color?" He asked with a smile. I lifted my shirt up revealing my flat chest. "I'm not flat breasted. I was born like this. I want my guild mark here in black." I said looking down. Gramps pressed the stamp on my chest and pulled away revealing a black Fairy tail mark. I smiled when Master said those 4 words everyone loves to hear.

"Welcome to Fairy Tail."

Art credit: Chase Lyerly



Art in Mathematics



Art credits:

Temujin Choijilsuren

Jovana Pineda

Ty Blankenship



Fame and a Good Game Aren't Worth the Pain

Silky long hair
Ties and khakis there
The line that stands between
Young adults and teens
Hate divides us now
But when there is one foul
Nothing will be the same
It won't feel like a game
Although the paper may bring fame
When the suits and gadgets arrive
Life will be deprived



Art credit: Keisha Enriquez

Poem by Dylan Gagen

“My poem relates to *The Outsiders* because it tells how two groups with differences in lifestyle do not get along and that that can cause death. The Greasers and Socs hate each other and use violence frequently against each other. My poem shows that through symbols representing the different groups.”

Mother | Realistic Fiction
by Mary Walton Peterson

Mother's skeleton hands shook the television remote as she aimed it at Ned's brand-new 40-inch television. She looked slightly confused as she flipped through the channels, the screen's blue light reflecting back on her draining face. She settled on a show and leaned back in her grand velvet armchair.

I sat beside her on the other matching armchair and couldn't help but stare at her head. What was going on up there? Were her thoughts kinetic and scary, or were they slow and dreamy? What did she think of me? What does she think of my house? What does she think of our new television? Is she enjoying herself in my home?

Mother caught me staring and turned to face me, her body moving like a rusted knob. "Gina, what troubles you?"

That was funny, because I had the same question. When I tried to answer, my throat went dry and I found the words caught in my chest. I wanted to know everything about my mother.

"Nothing, Mama. I'm going to go start dinner, Ned will be home soon."

"Oh. I didn't know you cooked. What shall we be eating?"

"I'm ordering pizza. Or if you don't want that, I can find something else."

"No, we can make dinner. I can cook." Her hopeful look made me want to shrink into my chair. I have a very limited cuisine.

Before I could reject her offer, she got up from her chair and inched her way to the kitchen. She wore Father's engagement ring and her house key hanging on a chain around her neck, and I could hear them chime with each slow step she took. Her golden hair shadowed around her head like a cloud, and it reminded me of my sister, her daughter, Lilliana.

Mother started searching my kitchen cabinets, carefully rummaging through each one.

"You don't have flour? How do you ever cook?" She said as she shuffled around the contents of my spice cabinet, which was a sad collection of salt, pepper, Stevia, and cinnamon.

"I don't do a lot of cooking. But if you want to eat something, I'll get it for you."

"No need for that." She moved from my spice cabinet to the fridge, where disappointment clouded her face when she saw a plethora of take-out boxes, yogurt tubes, and half-drunk water bottles.

"Where's the meat? Do you have any fruit?"

"No. I told you, I don't like to do a lot of cooking."

Mother nodded and turned to face me, staring into my eyes. "Luce dei miei occhi," she said as she cradled my face in her hands. "My dear Gina, so beautiful. You look like such an older woman now. So elegant, my stellina."

Tears started rolling down her cheeks, making her deep brown eyes look larger than they actually were. As I stared into her loving eyes, I couldn't produce one tear and a smile was too foolish for such a serious proclamation of love. All I could do was keep my eyes locked on hers and reply, "I love you too, Mama."

We sat down in our armchairs with hot mugs of peppermint tea and had small conversations about Father, Lilliana, the family, and Ned. I hadn't connected with my mother in two years, and we had only met for the first time a week ago for Father's funeral. On a dumb and stupid whim, I invited her to spend the next few weeks with me and my boyfriend, Ned. Now here we were, her first week here. Tears, television and tea being the keywords.

"I sent Lilliana home with your father's fishing pole because I knew she'd want it. You should've seen her face, we were both crying and I ended up sending her home with Father's fishing tacklebox as well. I'm just wondering how she'll manage to get all of that on the airplane."

She laughed and held my hand in hers, carefully inspecting it as if it was a letter from a loved one. "Oh, Gina. This ring is so beautiful. Did Ned give it to you?"

"No, Lilliana sent it to me for Christmas last year. I wear it all the time."

Mother smiled. "When you and Lilliana were little, I'd go the store and buy one bar of chocolate that was always pre-cut into three pieces. I'd show it to you two and you both would be the sweetest little angels for the rest of the day. You'd sweep the floor, open doors, and rub rags on the window even though that did nothing," she said through a chuckle. "And one time, I gave each of you one piece of chocolate, and when it was time to give the third piece, I ate it. You were so angry, but Lilliana was crying and I felt horrible. So I went back to the store and bought a chocolate bar for each of you."

I didn't think that story was very funny, but I laughed at the end when she did. I told Mother about Ned. His family in Vermont, his job, and how we met on a blind date nearly three years ago. Mother had only met him once when Ned and I stopped by their house on our way to a wedding in Indiana. The visit was just long enough for Ned to shake hands with both of my parents and say what he did for a living. I regret not having Ned get to know my dad. I regret not getting to know my dad.

Ned came home from work with a bag full of Italian food from the restaurant next door, and we all sat at the dining room table, very little conversation being engaged.

"So...Ned, how is your family?"

"Good."

"How is your job?"

"Good."

"How is life?"

"Good."

His one-word answers weren't relieving the painful silence at the dinner table that could only be filled in with the squeaking of Styrofoam and the clinking of ice-cubes in glasses.

Mother excused herself from the table and went to bed at 6:30. I got up from my chair to invite her to stay up later with us but Ned touched my arm and insisted that I let her get a good rest after the long day.

Ned checked his phone while I browsed the television's selection of on-demand movies.

"Are you in the mood for comedy, action, drama...." I looked over at Ned who was still scrolling down on his phone. He looked up and squinted at the bright screen.

"Uh...surprise me. I don't care."

He looked back down at his phone and slouched deeper into the armchair. I didn't feel like watching a movie. I could tell he didn't feel like watching a movie. So I got up from my armchair to go to bed and left the room unnoticed.

On my way to my room I passed our guest room, the door was left a creak open, letting the light from inside flood our dark hallway. I knocked on the door.

"Mama?" I whispered.

"Yes, bella. Come inside."

I opened the room door and slowly closed it behind me. Mother was under the floral cover and in bed, wearing her long modest nightgown and glasses, looking through a small palm-sized scrapbook. A single bedside lamp was left on, illuminating her old sage face. She warmly smiled at me and gently patted the other side of the bed. I climbed under the floral covers and fit myself in beside her warm and honey-scented body, not leaning too far on her so I couldn't break her fragile figure. She held her little scrapbook in one hand and gently laid her arm around me, huddling me in.

"Lilliana made this and gave it to me at the end of the funeral. It's a lot of old baby pictures, and pictures of Dad, and there's even a school photo in here."

I took the scrapbook and inspected its pages. There were different grainy pictures and old Polaroids taken outside our childhood home in Cleveland, or on the church steps, and some in front of Lake Erie. I held the scrapbook up to my face, trying to bring a tear to my eye. The scrapbook smelled like my Mother.

"My amore, you don't have to cry." I embraced my mother and felt more than just the soft cotton from her nightgown but felt her living heartbeat, her wet tears, her worry, and her happiness.

For the past two years, I didn't miss my Mother. I don't have apathy, but I do have a need for companionship and love. Her love. My Mother was putting in the last piece and completing the puzzle. My Mother was dropping the keys on the kitchen counter after a long trip. My Mother was waking-up early in the morning and going back to bed, remembering that it's a weekend. I didn't miss my mother because she was always here in some way, always present in my life through simple little joys and small daily happy occasions. Here she is, in the living flesh. Her complexion is not the same as it was she combed my hair or packed my school lunch, but the love is still the same. Her love never aged, and will remain young like her...I love you, Mama.

Bossy

By Kingsley Lopes:

My name is Bossy
People hate to cross me
Others think it's not fine, but
I like to keep things in line.
They might call me crazy
It still doesn't faze me.



Art credit: Chase Lyerly



Art credit Leila Moutawakil

Jealousy

By Anna Gershenson:

My name is Jealousy
I can't stop watching beauty pass me.
I wish I was like them all,
And when I try to climb up I always fall.
Envy is on my team, he's my friend,
But everyone is on a better team in the end.

Ruby

Ruby, where have you gone?
My paths are soon being drawn.
I know you're trying your best to escape,
But I'm going to find you like an old, dusty videotape.
I won't taint you no more,
Oh, your true color I much adore.
That crimson drop of paint left a flaw on you,
But my love for you involuntarily just grew.
All of your glint has faded away,
But all I'm really asking for you is to stay.



Art credit: Sarenn Geurts

Poem by Kellie Truong

“My poem symbolizes Darry’s affection for Ponyboy. Even though Darry doesn’t express his feelings to Ponyboy fairly well, he still low-key cares about him. When Ponyboy went missing, I’m certain that Darry was deeply concerned of where Ponyboy was and if he’s okay or when he’s ever coming back. When Darry saw Ponyboy for the first time at the hospital, he bursted into tears and embraced him, tightly. He was euphoric that Ponyboy was safe and was in his arms.”

Mr. Winston

With cold, hard eyes he would stare,
pulsing hatred into the air.

And when he didn't get his way,
anyone blocking wouldn't see the next day.
Though almost nothing could make him tear,
when he lost someone, his grief was clear.



Art credit: Sabrina Berzin

Poem by Joey Loislet

“The poem describes Dallas (Dally) Winston. I used eyes as a symbol since Ponyboy uses that in the beginning to describe each main character. Dally is mean and cold-hearted, so that's why I described that in his eyes.”

Bonus Story: Transferrer | Dark Fantasy
by Kate Coffin:

The silence washed over Noah like water in the pouring rain. He was tired and wanted to know what was happening, but was too afraid to talk. The room was pitch black and silent, like something out of a nightmare. Each passing silent moment was like seeing his life pass over his eyes over and over again; so mortifying that you just want something to come and scare it away from your mind. There wasn't even any tension in the air, just silence. Then, a sudden light appeared at the other end of the darkness. It wasn't bright, but much whiter than the surrounding world. This is it. He thought to himself, *I'm dying and going into heaven. I must've had a heart attack or something. Why did I eat all of that fried food?! I knew that it would mess me up, especially since my family has a history of heart diseases and problems...* His thoughts trailed off into pointless jibber jabber as the light slowly moved closer.

Noah could see that the light wasn't a light at all, but a human with blindingly white skin compared to the darkness. They came closer and closer until he saw that it was a man with light brown hair and handsome facial features. His eyes were a great contrast to his light skin and hair; they were such a dark brown, that they might've even been black. He wore a very expensive looking suit, a Westwood, maybe? Once the man was right in Noah's face, he grinned. The mouth part of the grin looked genuine with little crinkles around his mouth and dimples. Then, you saw his eyes. They had no expression in them. They weren't sad or heinous or anything. They were just like little glass beads in a doll. Paralyzed with fear, Noah stuck to his spot. He'd already been too terrified to move before the man came, but now he was even more scared.

"Nice to see you, Noah," the man started in a subtle Irish accent, "Sad to see you go so soon." The stranger winked at the wide-eyed teenage boy, and there was a sudden rush of blood to his head as he fell to the ground.

"Hi Noah!" Someone with an expression way too perky for this early in the morn-ing greeted him.

He jumped up and yelped. "Oh, uh, hi Sarena," Noah yawned, taking a look around. He was at school, how'd he get there?

"You slept through the last part of his-tory. Mr. James took ten points off of you for the poster assignment for that," Sarena explained, her curly red hair bouncing around as she started to walk out of the classroom door.

Reluctantly, Noah stood up and followed her. "How could you possibly know that?"

"Well, you know how he is. He likes to announce everything," Sarena answered, smiling. Sarena was his best friend, someone he could always trust. "What'd you dream about?" she asked, opening up her locker.

How'd we get here? Noah asked himself, not realizing they'd walked down the stairs. "I don't remember," he lied, "but whatever it was, it was better than listening to Mr. James talk about the Spanish-American war that we learned about in seventh grade." His red-haired friend laughed a little bit before they parted ways until lunch.

The rest of the day passed by in a fast blur, but Noah wasn't quite as quick as the day. He thought he was in Chemistry when he was in English and got the lunch bells mixed up. He left for lunch in the middle of orchestra, making his teacher very upset. When he finally got home, Noah collapsed on the couch and fell asleep for a little while, not waking up for a couple of hours. This made him late on his homework, but when he woke up, that wasn't what had him spooked. What did make him scared was what happened in his sleep.

This time, the room wasn't dark. It was normally lighted and furnished, making the boy think that he was just in a normal dream. He started to walk around until he realized that it looked like his old house. He'd totally forgotten what it looked like since he moved when he was a toddler, so how had he dug it up from his memories?

"Recognize it?" an Irish voice called out from the arm chair. Noah jumped, there hadn't been someone there before! "Ooh, did I scare you? Sorry about that, I really don't mean to be scary. Oh, who am I kidding? I totally love scaring people," the sadistic man laughed condescendingly.

"Wh-who are you?" Noah stammered, shaking with fear. Although the man wasn't a horrendous creature or something like that, he had a scary air to him.

"Well, why would I tell that? It's no fun if you know me, only if I know you. I want to be a parasite to you, not a friend." The man stated matter-of-factly. "I don't need a friend, I need an identity," Noah was getting annoyed with him. The Irish man just looked at Noah with a provoking look, so finally he decided to just call him 'Irish Man.' A bell rung from the old kitchen that Noah barely remembered, and Irish Man looked at it with a fake pout. "Well, that seems to be my cue. See you in a couple of days," he explained. "Good day, my good sir," Irish Man put on a Cockney English accent and tipped a make-believe hat before disappearing.

In fear of Irish Man, Noah tried not to sleep, but failed horribly at that when he fell asleep at midnight. Although, time seemed to be moving faster than usual which was odd since he was anticipating something. Irish Man kept his promise of seeing him in a couple of days, since there wasn't a single trace of him that night. Noah dreamt of normal things, not of anything freaky. He continued to think that maybe Irish Man was just a figment of his imagination. A really, really realistic figment of his imagination.

"Honey, are you alright?" Noah's mother asked at the dinner table. *Did the day really go by that quickly?* Noah asked himself. He barely remembered the day he had. All he could recall from the day was waking up and eating lunch with Sarena.

"Uh, yeah. I'm good." Noah lied and took a bite of his spaghetti.

"Are you sure? You're twirling your salad around your fork like it's spaghetti."

Noah blinked down at his spaghetti, and it turned into a salad. He looked at it and his parents' food incredulously. He could've sworn they were eating pasta. He looked back up at his mom and dad and laughed awkwardly, "I guess I'm more tired than I gave myself credit for." His parents exchanged a look before starting to eat again. *What is wrong with me?* He thought while finishing his dinner.

The next day, Noah called Sarena. "Hey Sarena?" Noah said into the phone, "Have you noticed anything odd lately?"

“What do you mean?” She replied with the question Noah least wanted to hear. He was just hoping that she would be like ‘Oh, yes! Time has been moving extremely fast and I can’t remember anything from my day!’ and he’d say ‘Thank goodness I’m not crazy!’ and then everything would return to normal.

“Nothing. So, how’re you?”

“No, Noah, I want to know what’s going on. What’s abnormal?” Sarennia pressed.

Noah thought about how loyal and trustworthy she was, then about how crazy what was going on was. “I don’t know; I just can’t remember anything about my day or anything. I can’t remember how I got somewhere or what time of day it is,” he hoped that he didn’t sound too crazy.

“Dude, aren’t you a little bit too young to have Alzheimer’s?” Sarennia’s eyebrow raise and sarcastic smile was practically audible.

“I’m being serious,” his voice all of the sudden became very serious, and Sarennia stopped snickering. “I just...I can’t deal with this anymore. And there’s this man in my dreams that scares me to death and is Irish and I feel like I’m going crazy and...” Noah rambled on and Sarennia listened to all of it.

“Dude that sounds pretty rough. Just stay where you are and I’ll come over to your house now. Just, don’t go anywhere, okay?” Her voice was concerned and urgent sounding, and you could hear the sound of her rustling her covers and getting up before hanging up.

He stood in front of the mirror as he waited for Sarennia to come, constantly asking himself one question: *Am I crazy?* He was afraid that he was losing his mind, so he looked at himself, noticing every detail about himself and trying not to forget it. He saw his short brown hair, hazel eyes, patch of freckles across his nose, and his tall lanky body. *This is you. Don’t forget that. You are Noah Davis, and nobody else. You are not going crazy, I repeat, you are not going crazy.*

“Oh, but aren’t you?” an Irish voice said from behind him.

Noah turned around with a jolt and his eyes immediately widened. “You,” he said angrily. “You have ruined me. You’ve been making me go insane about everything lately, and I not even apologizing for it!” Noah yelled at Irish Man.

“Oh, stop complaining. And be happy that I visited you in physical form while your mum and dad are at work. They would want to know who you were speaking to,” Irish Man said proudly.

“Don’t congratulate yourself for visiting at a convenient time! If you wanted to make me happy, you’d just put me back in the normal world.” Noah steamed.

“Don’t you get it? This is the normal world. I’m doing you a favor.”

“How can you consider making me miserable and insane doing me a favor?” Noah screamed at what appeared to be empty air. “Wha-where-how?” He whispered, grasping at the air. He looked around the room, and his eyes landed on the doorway, where his best friend was standing.

“Man, Noah, you said that you were having some trouble, but I didn’t think it was this bad,” Sarennna looked at him, sort of scared. Of course, Noah must’ve been quite the sight to see. A vein was popping out of his forehead and he was sweaty. But the thing that really got to Sarennna was his eyes. They were filled with insane rage, with small what looked like tree roots of red around the edges going towards the center. He started to mouth a bunch of words quickly, and you could hear wispy fragments of words as he waved his hands around.

“He was...where did he...how?” Noah’s voice was breathy, and Sarennna slowly moved towards him like he was a wild animal. She’d never seen him in a state like this. “Sarennna, I promise I’m not going crazy. I promise I don’t have schizophrenia or something like that, I just...he was right here.” Now he looked at her helplessly.

“Noah, just calm down. Sit on your bed and breathe,” Sarennna gulped.

“Ugh, can’t you just call him crazy and move on with your lives?” Sarennna turned around and saw a handsome light-skinned man with dark eyes. He was standing by Noah’s dresser, and Sarennna didn’t remember him being in the room before. The man smiled insincerely at her as he walked towards her, sticking a hand out to shake. “Rigby,” he said, “The name’s Rigby.”

She put out a shaky arm and shook his hand. The first thing she noticed was the soulless eyes that didn’t match up with his smile. After he pulled his hand away, she kept hers there, too scared to move.

“Oh, so you’ll tell her your name but not the dude who’s mind you’ve been intruding for the past couple of days? Rude,” Noah scoffed.

“A few days? Noah, I’ve been messing with you for years,” Rigby laughed, making Sarennna’s friend’s eyes narrow. “You just had no idea. Besides, you always have to be polite to the ladies. Isn’t that right, Sarennna?” Rigby winked at her, making her blink. She didn’t realize that she was still stuck to her spot.

“How do you know my name?” Sarennna inquired, her voice trembling.

“I’ve been in your best friend’s mind for the past two years, do you honestly think that you didn’t come up in his thoughts even once?” Sarennna just nodded, unable to do anything else. He was just so intimidating to her.

“Okay, Rigby, enough torturing my friend, okay? Now, just please tell me why you’re here,” Noah walked over and slung a protective arm around his frightened friend.

“Well, I think we should sit down for this. Maybe some tea as well?” Rigby suggested, pointing to the general direction of the living room. Not wanting to test him, Noah sighed and walked him and Sarennna over to the kitchen to make some tea.

“This is some good tea,” Rigby approved, looking at the plastic cup. “Horrible taste in serving style, but good tea.” When neither of them answered, but just looked at him expectantly, he sighed. “No small talk? Just cutting to the chase? Alright then,” Rigby paused to drink his tea, “Allow me to start from the beginning. You see, for centuries, there’s been an ongoing war between those with the Transfer and those without it. The Transfer is being able to see what’s underneath all of those layers of what the Normals see. I’m not saying that there are things like vampires or warlocks, just things about the world that don’t seem right. The Salem Witch Trials?

They burnt the people who had it because they could see the world in strange ways and manipulate it by sharing the Transfer with others, like ‘magic.’ The ones who can have the Transfer from the moment they are born are born into a family where the Transfer runs in it. Other people have the potential for it, such as you. Those people just need a push to get to it, and after you get it, you need someone to guide you once you have it. Oh, excuse me, my throat is a wee bit sore,” Rigby paused to drink some tea before returning to his explanation.

“So, you’ve been taking a very long to complete, but I was almost done with you before you decided to freak out on me. I took a small break to prepare some stuff for helping you when you see the world for what it is. I was going to teach you how to control it, like how to have selective Transfer. Once you see the world for what it really is, you’ll want to either stay or leave immediately. Some of the world is the most beautiful thing you’ll ever see, but the other parts are the worst. Right now, fortunately for you, we are in one of the good places. Do you want to see the world in its most stripped down, vulnerable, and simplest form, Noah Davis?” Rigby asked, slipping more of his tea.

Noah looked at him, his throat going dry and his face draining of all color. “Um,” his voice was raspy, so he shakily brought his tea up to his mouth and tried to drink it, but some of it spilled down his chin. He gulped it down, his grip tightening around Sarennia’s shoulders. He felt safer knowing she was there, someone who he knew. “Yes,” he whispered. “Yes, I do,” Noah looked up at Rigby, his voice getting louder as he did so.

Rigby grinned, his perfectly straight and white teeth showing. “Oh, goodie!”

Noah looked at Sarennia and smiled meekly at her, apologizing in advance for what was about to happen. Rigby stood behind him, putting his index and middle finger on Noah’s temples. “Close your eyes and relax,” he whispered softly, closing his own eyes. Noah shut his eyes slowly and felt his heart stop racing so much. He felt himself start to shut down a little bit as Rigby said one more thing to him, “You only have to go through this the first two times, then you can do it automatically. I just have to share my Transfer with you before using it liberally.” Noah’s heart skipped a beat before feeling a warm summer-like breeze, which was very out of character for the end of March. He opened his eyes and saw the most beautiful thing he’d ever witnessed before.

The time of day was obviously that time in between dusk and sunset, because the colors of the sky were gorgeous. There were splashes of coppery orange, along with pastel purples and pinks. They all blended together to make a masterpiece in the sky, like paint on a canvas. There were buildings that loomed overhead of them, but they weren’t like the New York City buildings that Noah had gone to visit all the way from his hometown in Ohio a few years prior. They were made of what looked to be amethyst and diamond, and the limited soft evening sunlight shined through the windows and carved purple and clear gem, making it glint beautifully. If you looked away from the stunning city, you could see a deep blue sea and beach with a diamond cliff stretching over part of it. The entire place was the most alluring sight that Noah had ever seen.

He was abruptly pulled out from where he was when Rigby removed his hands from his temples. Noah stumbled forward as he got used to the world he was sadly now in. “Wha-what was that place?” he asked, staring at the boring, wooden, and white wall in front of him. *It was diamond*, he thought to himself. *Diamond*.

“That was Pulchra, which translates to ‘beautiful’ in Latin. It’s not even the most beautiful place in the First World,” Rigby said with child-like wonder in his eyes for the first time, rather than his cold and sarcastic look. “The First World is what we call that place. The Second World is the bad places, and the reality that Normals live in is the Third World. It’s all the same world, just in layers.” he shook his head and returned to his usual derisive look. “Anyway, that’s what the best part of the world looks like. Also, some things work differently in the First and Second Worlds. For instance--” Rigby was cut off by Sarena yelling.

“Noah? Is that you?” She ran down the stairs from his bedroom. “You guys disappeared for hours! You just evaporated into thin air, and I was worried sick!” Noah got scolded.

“What do you mean hours? We were gone for less than a minute,” he looked at Rigby, bewildered.

“Yeah, what I was about to say is that time works differently if you don’t manipulate it. You can only do that when you go through the Worlds alone, but it isn’t hard to do. All you have to do is remind yourself of the time before you go to and from the Worlds and time will work in the same way as wherever you started out at. It works that way because you have to either focus completely on the time or on the person, or else the person will be horribly disfigured in the Transfer.”

Noah stared at Rigby like he’d just told him the basics of rocket science. “I-I just need a minute to process all of this,” he stammered, sitting down on the couch with his fingers pressing against his temples.

With a sigh, Noah decided to allow Rigby to continue explaining the ‘rules’ to whatever it was he could do. “So, as your pretty little redhead said earlier,” he started, “We disappeared. When you go to another World, you do that. It’s so you don’t mess around in your World while walking around and talking in another one. It’s just a convenience thing. For instance, when I randomly went away when Sarena walked into your bedroom, that was me going into the first world.”

“You can just go to and from between that quickly?” Sarena inquired, her eyes full of wonder.

“Why, yes I can. It just takes practice.”

“How did you know the time though? You weren’t gone for hours then.”

“I wear a watch, of course,” Rigby held up a golden Rolex watch.

“And apparently rob banks, too,” she murmured under her breath.

“So, it takes two times before I can do it on my own, yeah?” Noah asked, seeing Rigby nod. “Alright, let’s do this again.” And they did, and Noah didn’t even stop to look at the view, since he just wanted to back to his reality.

For the next couple of days, Noah worked on going between worlds quickly and alone in his bedroom, making sure to check the time before going. He always stood in the same place, not wanting to go to the Second World that he’d been warned about. Rigby came by and checked on his progress on the third day he was working on his Transfer. He was surprised by how well he was doing, and told him to try and do it somewhere else than his house and with someone else.

Noah decided to stay after school the following Friday since his family would be gone all weekend, so nobody would notice that he was gone for hours. Rigby taught him how to Transfer someone else, and told Noah to bring Sarena since she already knew about everything.

They met up at the football bleachers, and Sarena was literally buzzing and shaking with excitement. "Oh, man, I can't wait to do this. That place that you described to me sounded absolutely stunning," she looked out at the horizon, making Noah laugh a little bit.

"So you do want to do this?" he asked, standing behind her and putting his fingers on her temple, replicating what Rigby did to him previously. She nodded quickly, so he focused very hard but also relaxed. He thought of nothing but the person he was Transferring, and then felt a swirling feeling as they moved between worlds. This time, though, the wind was cold rather than the warm summer breeze from Pulchra. Then, he opened his eyes and saw the most desolate place he ever had.

The sky was the swirled color of different greys and blacks, and the ground was black. There were no breath taking buildings, just black shriveling trees and bushes. "This doesn't look like Pulchra," Sarena stated.

"Well no duh," Noah retorted with a raspy voice. "Well, I guess that we should walk around and, uh, try to find somewhere that's not here."

"Yeah," she gulped.

The place got even more of a depressing sight as they moved forward. The sky got blacker and the amount of dying trees lessened. "It always gets worse before it gets better?" Sarena suggested, trying to make the mood of the walk less tense. Noah just looked at her exasperatedly. "Well, at least I tried to lighten the mood. You could have a little less angst; I'm the one who's never even seen the pretty place. I just get a cold and black desert. I thought we were going to somewhere like the Emerald City, not Kurt Cobain's head," Sarena snapped.

"Sorry," he mumbled.

After walking for a while longer, the two teenagers got tired. "Mind if we sit down for a while?" Noah asked, leaning against a large rock.

"Not at all," his friend answered, sitting next to him. "Why don't we just go back home?" Sarena whined.

"Because, I need to find somewhere else. We can't just give up."

"We can go to your house and get to Pulchra from there."

"No. We will find it from here."

Sarena rolled her eyes at her stubborn friend, deciding to abate. "Fine, but if I die, I am so killing you."

"It's a deal," Noah shook her hand as they stood up to take off for somewhere else.

About an hour after, Sarena and Noah ran into their first creature. It looked like a dog with horns, and it scared them to death.

"What is that?" Sarena inquired.

“Why would I know?”

“I don’t know; didn’t Rigby give you a manual of the Worlds or something?”

“No, Sarena, he didn’t.” The thing looked over at them, barring its sharp teeth. It let out a piercing screech, and then there was a loud rumbling that sounded behind it. The dust kicked up from the source of the sound, and hundreds more of the animal appeared.

Quickly, Sarena looked up at Noah and asked if they could go back now. He nodded back at her, getting in the position needed. He tried to focus everything on her, but he was too afraid of what was coming to do anything.

“Hurry up!” Sarena yelled.

“I can’t. I’m too stressed about the animal.”

“Well, get not stressed!” “Wow, you should write an advice column!”

“Stop being sarcastic and run,” She turned around and started to run from the situation, Noah quickly following behind. Even as they ran, the animals didn’t slow down.

The two of them ran for about ten minutes before finding a small cave tucked away. They hoped the things weren’t smart enough to look in the little cave. Luckily, they ran past without even glancing at the cave.

“Th...ank...goo...dness...” Sarena panted. “I ha...ven’t run th...at much si...nce the mile run,”

Noah panted back. They stood there, holding their stomachs for a long while trying to catch their breaths. Once they finally did, they decided to step outside of the cave. “Do you want to try going back now?” Noah asked.

“Yeah,” Sarena replied. “After that run, I’m kind of thankful for this cold now,” she stated. “Same,” he said as he stood behind her. With a sense of full relaxation and focus, the swirling of World Transfer ensued.

They walked back to Noah’s house in hopes of going to Pulchra, but his parents, who weren’t supposed to come back until Monday night, had some different plans.

“Noah, where have you been? You and Sarena didn’t go to school today, and her parents say she didn’t come home all weekend! Were you out raving or something? You know schoolwork comes before everything, especially parties!” His mother went on a tirade.

“Raving? What is this, the nineties? Of course I wasn’t out ‘raving.’ I guess that I just lost track of time,” Noah answered.

“What do you mean ‘lost track of time’? Where were you two?”

“Mrs. Davis, trust me, we didn’t do anything bad. My grandma is contracting Alzheimer’s and we went to visit her, and we had to stay another day. We didn’t think about calling our parents, I’m sorry. It’s all my fault,” Sarena lied. Well, her grandma was getting that disease, but they didn’t visit. “I can even prove it to you. I’ll call her.” She pulled out her phone as Noah’s mom stood there expectantly.

After several rings, Sarenn's grandma picked up and Sarenn put it on speaker phone.

"Hello?" and old voice asked.

"Hi, Gram? This is your granddaughter, Sarenn."

"Oh, Sarenn! I love you so much. You're my favorite grandkid!"

Disregarding the fact that she was the only one, she continued. "I know it's hard to remember, but can you recall to when Noah and I visited you this weekend?"

"Oh, yes! You were excellent, you know? Fed me applesauce and everything." Sarenn grinned, happy her plan had worked. After the call, his mom bought the lie and called Sarenn's mom to tell her where they 'were.' The two went upstairs.

"You know what's great about having a grandma with Alzheimer's?" Sarenn asked.

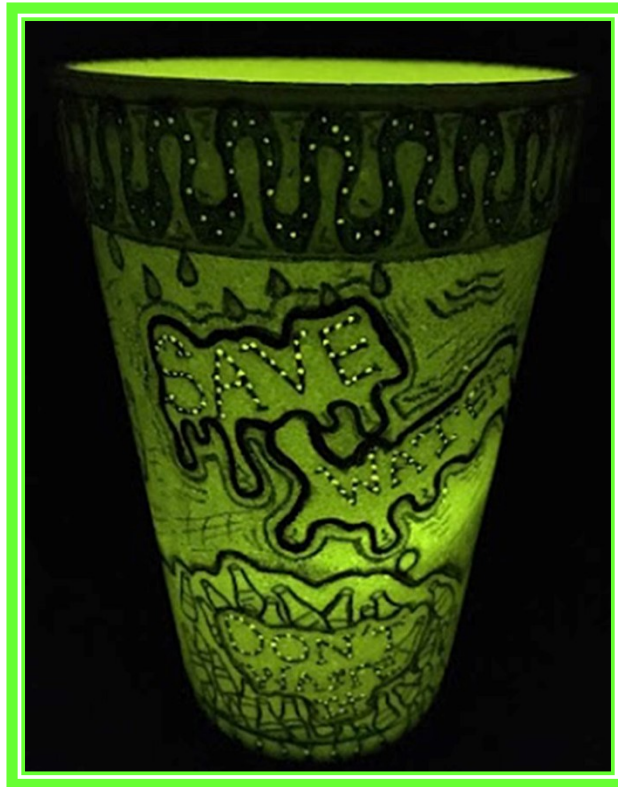
"Don't ever start a sentence with that ever again, please," Noah said in between her sentences.

"The fact that she can't recall what happened, so she just believes what I tell her happened." Noah sighed and called her a horrible person, just like any good friend should do.

"Next week is spring break. So, Pulchra?" he asked. Sarenn grinned widely. "As long as there aren't any vampire Chihuahuas, I am so in."

The Park

The cold alleys filled with the night
Standing at the park not wanting to fight
The park is dead silent, no sound in the air
The wind blowing through their oil slick hair
Speeding to a stop, a sky colored car
Hearing the spikes from afar
This battle is won, and although it's not fun
This war has just begun



Art credit: Kenyon Kirn

Poem by Chloe Hernandez

“The cold ally filled with night symbolizes when pony and Johnny slept in the alley after Darry hit pony. The spikes/ studs symbolize how the Socs wore them because they could afford it and they wore it at the park and when Johnny got jumped. This battle is won/ war has begun symbolizes when Johnny hurt the Socs and how they had to run and now they are facing a bigger problem, court justice and the possibility of being split up. Not knowing how to stop it.”

Bonus Story: UnderBus |:| Fiction
by Brendan Smith

1/8/14

Hey. I'm Edward Marriot. People just call me Ed, though.

So I go to Prince Chester VIII High School. I only have two friends, really. Jeff and Brent. Jeff is definitely misunderstood, although he is really smart. A lot of people don't like Jeff very much. Brent is a whole other story. He is an athletic person who doesn't have much in that head of his. But he normally hangs out with his other friends now, so I really only have Jeff.

But at Prince Chester VIII, we have a yearly event. That event is picking a couple seniors (which I am this year) to join in on the biggest racing event of the Spring! It takes place in Europe, in multiple areas like London, Paris, Rome, San Giovanni, or Nice! You have to win ten entire championships in this event to make it to the URV (Ultimate Racing Vehicles) Finale! Only one person has ever made it as far as the Finale Championship, and it was Markus McStanford in 1995. He didn't win, though. So to be eligible, you must have a vehicle of your own and a drivers license. That means that Brent can't go, since he doesn't have either.

Jeff doesn't have a car.

I have both, but I'm not too excited about it because my only vehicle is a Volkswagen Bus Type 2. It's main color is red, and Jeff and I ride around in it all the time. I've even camped in there before. We named it Bus.

Don't get me wrong, I love Bus. But he isn't that fast at all. The only shot I might have at winning is that Bus handles really well on-road and off-road (surprisingly). But there's no backing out of the competition.

BBBBBRRRRRIIIINNNGGGG!!!! The final bell just rang. The Reaping is today. All of us assemble in the main auditorium. After we all settle down, a man in a suit and tie goes up to the microphone. He has an envelope in hand.

I look around. Many people are biting their bottom lip, hoping they get chosen. I'm not.

The man at the front opens the envelope.

"And the first person randomly chosen to compete is... Steven Maniburgus!" He says.

We all call Steven "Manburger" because of his last name and the fact that he's a big, buff dude.

"The second chosen out of five is... Caren Ternugalnik!"

"The third... Eddie Johnson!"

"The fourth... Jeff Nelson!"

That was Jeff. He isn't eligible!

"Sorry, that was a mistake. It seems that Jeff Nelson is not eligible for the race, so the fourth person is... Jaqui Morris!"

"And the fifth and final person is... Edward Marriot!"

I want to scream my lungs out. This can't be good.

3/19/14

It's been a couple months since the Reaping. I've been training my driving skills a lot, but Bus just won't pick up enough speed. He can only go to 135 MPH, and I think that other people will have hypercars or something like that that go to about 200 MPH! I'm so afraid, but I feel confident in Bus. I think he can pull it off.

But I get picked up in a private jet tomorrow, so I wanted to write in this journal again. I had kinda forgotten about it for a while.

All of the cars are going to be picked up by a cargo plane as well, tomorrow.

All I can do is try my best and hope.

3/20/14

Tomorrow the actual races start. Everyone else from my school has, like, sports cars. Luckily, I'm signed up in a different championship than them. I am in a Cult Classics Championship. I won't be competing against hypercars, though. So I nailed my driving skills, so I stand a chance. We have a couple radio stations connected to the main race hub. So we have an all-expenses-paid hotel rented out just for us. Our crew arrives tomorrow, as well. Only two random members per group. So I feel like I'm at least not going to be alone through everything.

3/21/14

Phew! My team members are Jeff and Brent, two people that actually understand me and know me. I ride my wheelchair over to them as they come out of the plane. Jeff asks, "Did you enter Bus or did you get a new car?"

"Bus," I say.

"Wow," he says. "Bus doesn't stand a chance."

"Actually, he's in a different championship. One just for cult classics." I say.

"Oh, okay."

So we go to Bus. I must go to my first event now, in Paris. It's about fifteen minutes away.

We are now in Paris.

The first event is a street race. Many older cars line up, some Volkswagens, but nothing like Bus.

We must make it to the finish first.

Red light.

Yellow light.

Green light. Go!

I start off in eighth. There are twelve people racing here in all. Turn left. Turn right. Another left. The directions flow through my head, and I am one with Bus. I change my foot over to the emergency brake. I have to make an E-Drift to pass this guy and do the whole turn. Successful.

I'm now in fifth, and I'm about halfway there. Those other people don't seem very good at driving. I am now gaining some speed. 50 MPH. 60. 70. 80. 90. 100. 110. 120. 130. 135. I'm at top speed now, and I'm in third. We're about three-quarters of the way there. A sharp right, I suddenly see. They see it before me, and I crash into a tree. Bus isn't very banged up, however. Everyone else speeds past me. I was doing so good. I went into reverse. I turned around. By then, everyone was already out of sight. There was a road going straight, and a road going up. The way I think the race is going is the more flat area. I drive down there. The finish is in my sight now, and there is another road coming from the same side as the elevated area. I pass through it. I hear the announcer now.

"And Edward Marriot, driving his 'Bus', has come in... First place!"

I am so confused right now. I see many other cars, my fellow Cult Classics competitors, race across the finish line. They were coming from the other direction then what I came in. I accidentally took a shortcut and won my first race! This is awesome!

I see on a scoreboard:

Cult Classics Championship: Race One Out of Two

Total Scores:

Edward: 20pts.

Frank: 16pts.

Joe: 14pts.

John: 12pts.

Tarren: 11pts.

Mep: 10pts.

Carl: 9pts.

Emory: 8pts.

J'kae: 7pts.

Nafferlakit: 6pts.

Natasha: 3pts.

Wallace: 1pt.

So they did it by points, huh? They added it all up, according to your standings.
My next race is five minutes away, at the Eiffel Tower. It is an off-road race.

Now I'm here, at the wondrous Eiffel Tower.

Red.

Yellow.

Green. Go!

Off road right away. I find a dirt path going to a clearing.

"<And Bus is in first now, because of that dirt path!>" I hear on the radio.

I'm in first. And Bus was actually mentioned on the radio. This was awesome!

"<Bus is now halfway there! Oh, Wallace passed Bus!>"

"<Wallace and Bus are neck-and-neck, and they are both ninety percent there!>" The forest soon blends with the clearing, and I see a small car driving right in front of me. "Wallace," I say.

I finish second. I still might win, luckily.

Cult Classics Championship Final Scores:

Natasha: 4pts.

Nafferlakit: 9pts.

J'Kae: 15pts.

Emory: 15pts.

Carl: 19pts.

Mep: 19pts.

Wallace: 21pts.

Tarren: 23pts.

John: 23pts.

Joe: 28pts.

Frank: 32pts.

And the winner is... Edward: 36pts.!!!!

I won my first championship. This was awesome, but it's almost six o' clock, and the hotel is a half hour away. My next entry will be tomorrow.

3/22/14

Wow, I'm in Nice, France! And also, Nice is pronounced NEESE. I won the last championship, but I have Bus, and these people might be a little bit better.

And let me just say, it's nice knowing Bus got an award.

But this one is a championship winners championship. Three races instead of two.

So I'm gonna go to Monument aux Morts, a monument in Nice honoring citizens of Nice who have been killed in World War One. It was carved into the actual cliff wall, and it is beautiful. I have never seen it in real life before, though. It is so cool!

"<And all those people racing in the championship winners championchit - er, championship. Sorry, it's a tongue twister. So those people: There is a twist to the first race. Since you are honoring fallen citizens in World War One, you will have a living military citizen of Nice riding in your passenger seat. Thanks for listening! Now back to Ducksauce!>"

And so, a broad man in a camouflage army uniform with a sniper rifle came into Bus and sat in the front seat. This was weird. He had strong-looking cheekbones. I was a little intimidated by him. Yikes!

"I remember this race," says the man, in perfect English.

"You do?" I say.

"Yeah. This exact race happened in this exact championship, and it was the second championship, too. That was nineteen years ago, though." says the somewhat charming man.

"Cool. What kind of car did you drive?" I say.

"A 1995 Lotus Esprit S4S. It was really nice!" he says.

"Was yours a fast one or a cruddy one?" I ask.

"Quite fast. Went up to 170 MPH. I loved that thing. Hey, is there space in your team?"

"What's the maximum?"

"Four,"

"Then I guess there is." I say.

"Cool."

Green light. Go!

"Wait, did you hear what kind of race this is?" I say. I didn't hear what the race was going to be happening.

"Extreme off-road," says the man.

"<Now to TobyMac's *Eye On It*/>" says the radio.

I realize I had been stopped the entire time, and everyone else was far ahead. TobyMac's song totally matched the scenario. I was starting to go off, 10 MPH, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80. I stop paying attention to the speed. I speed up to 135 MPH, and the rest of the racers are in sight.

The man looks at the dashboard, carefully.

"You want nitro?" he says.

"Bus doesn't have nitro," I say. "Does he?"

"Bus is this bus, right?" he says.

"Yeah." I say.

"Cool. But it - I mean he - actually does have nitro. Pull over."

"Is this sabotage?" I yell.

"No! Of course not!"

I pull over.

"Look here," he says.

I see a red button, hidden in the corner of the dashboard.

"Press it." he says.

I press it. Everyone is out of sight by now.

Soon, everything is a blur. I feel sick. I open the window. I think I barfed at a certain point. We stop suddenly. We then get launched back into our chairs.

The announcer says, "And Bus somehow makes a surprise comeback, and lands in first place!"

"Thanks," I say to the man.

"No problem. So since you have a couple slots left in your team, can I join?" he says.

"Sure." I say.

In this championship, there is one race per day. So that was it for the day.

"Hey," Jeff says as soon as I get back to the hotel.

"Hey man. We have a new member." I say.

"That guy?" he says, pointing at the man.

"Yep. Him." I reply.

"Dude, that's Markkus McStanford, a finalist in the 1995 event!"

"Really? He said he didn't even make in through the third championship," I say.

"He didn't. He became a wild card finalist, randomly chosen. It is great honor to be picked for a wild card." says Jeff.

Suddenly I felt better about maybe losing a championship.

I already raced, but the nitro and the gas weren't working on Bus. So I was disqualified from that race. My so far total is 21. I'm in eighth place right now, though. Not last, at least.

So I'm gonna check on Bus to see what's wrong.

Someone took out the engine.

I asked to get a new one and for them to hook it up to Bus and his nitro. So I'm ready for next time, except for the first place person having a score of 36. This can't be good.

I decide to take a stroll in the hotel. On the twelfth floor, I notice someone. A woman, and she is rushing through the hallway. I say hi.

"Hello," says the woman, and she rushes off again.

3/24/14

I raced. I won. I got third place in the championship, though. I lost in Nice, France.

3/25/14

I'm back home now, and I still watch the event on television. Someone must have sabotaged me. Maybe that French army guy. No, he is too nice. Well, I guess that I'll write in this the next time something important happens to me.

4/2/14

Something important just happened. I was picked as the wild card person! So I automatically get into the finale!

There are six parts to the finale:

1. The Street Race
2. The Off Road Race
3. The Race Against the Clock
4. The Circuit Race
5. The Coffee Run
6. The Head-On-Head Race, Two People Can Qualify

I need to make it to the head-on-head race, or else I'll be long forgotten.

I'm now back in Paris, France. I see my team. I wave to them, and they wave back. The paparazzi around me shouts out questions. I answer none of them.

My first finale race is tomorrow.

4/3/14

The Street Race.

"<And our wild card racer is in it to win it!>" says the good old radio station.

Go!

I press nitro. A lot of other people used theirs, too. Now I am halfway there, and so are four others. I'm in third.

120 MPH. 130. 135. 140? 150? 160? 170? 175? I may not be very confident right now, but Bus is. And I forgot that Bus kind of has a find of his own. He reached 175 MPH. This is an awesome feeling. I speed ahead of one person, but the person in first has a hyper car.

180. 190. 200. 210. 220. 225. Bus goes faster, still. In these races, only seven people compete, and I'm beating five of them, nope, six, five, six, five. We are neck-and-neck.

230. 240. 250. 260. 270. 280. 290. 300. I didn't even know that this was possible with any car. We have the finish line in our grasp.

500 MPH. That's exactly how fast Bus was going when we passed the finish line. I almost forgot what it felt like to win.

One win down, five to go.

Scores:

Edward: 20pts.

Wallace: 12pts.
Maria: 9pts.
Elijah: 7pts.
Nafferlakit: 3pts.
Jay: 2pts.
Tarren: 1pt. OUT!

4/4/14

This is amazing. I am moving on to the six-racer off-road race. I have a good score already, but I have to get more.

I am walking over to Bus to go to the next race. I see the lady who was rushing in the hallway tweaking at Bus. "Hey!" I scream. "Get away from my bus!"

She suddenly runs, and I go to see what she did. I see my new engine and everything as good as ever, but I see a sticky note attached to my gas line. I pick it up. It says these words exactly: *Wallace's Team Wuz Here*. What kind of sick joke is this?

Then it hits me. She sabotaged Bus! That's against the rules!

So I go to the race, and to the announcer's stand.

"Disqualify Wallace!" I say.

"Why?" says the announcer.

"One of his team sabotaged me!" I say.

"Okay, I'll confront him. You're Edward, right? Bus Ed?" he says.

"Yeah," I say.

"Go back to Bus now." he says.

So I did, and sure enough, the announcer confronted Wallace and his team, including the girl. He goes back to his stand and says, "Wallace is disqualified for cheating! Bring back Tarren!"

Then Tarren comes back in with his pretty cool Honda Accord.

Go!

We turn off of the road right away, and everyone is avoiding trees. I swerve back and forth, and avoiding trees is hard when you're in a large camper van. Left, right, two side wheels up, other ones up. I can't stay straight.

"<Bus is in second place, being beaten by Tarren! They are both almost there!>"

We both go into a clearing. Then I see the cool Honda Accord driving next to me, literally going at 180 MPH like me. The finish line is in our grasp, just half a mile away. Tarren speeds up to 210 MPH, and I go to 220 MPH.

I do a fancy E-Drift at the end. It is still neck-and-neck at the finish line, so we both don't know who won.

Everyone else comes in, and the scores are shown:

Scores:
Edward: 32pts.
Tarren: 21pts.
Maria: 18pts.
Nafferlakit: 10pts.
Elijah: 10pts.
Jay: 4pts. OUT!

I got second place. I'm still in first, though. Overall.

4/5/14

Today is the individual Race Against the Clock. It's where you make it from start to finish in less than a minute.

So now it's my turn. It's only one mile, but one mile is longer than you might think. It's up and down, left and right, so it'll be hard. You get your points dependig on how long it takes to get there.

Go!

Left, right, slight left, swerve, hard right, up, down, get air. I got a time of 53 seconds. I see the scoreboard since I was last to go:

Scores:

Tarren: 41pts.

Edward: 41pts.

Maria: 30pts.

Nafferlakit: 17pts.

Elijah: 13pts. OUT!

So I'm tied with Tarren for first. Tarren must have won another championship, as well as Wallace and Nafferlakit. But I'm in the top five racers in the entire world! Next is the Circuit Race, so it is going to be pretty long.

4/6/14

Today is the Circuit Race! There are only me, Nafferlakit, Maria, and Tarren left. I hope Bus does me well.

Red.

Yellow.

Green. Go!

Bus goes to 135 MPH in the first three seconds, then stops there.

"Bus, why are you only going at 135 miles per hour?" I ask.

Bus controls his horn and honks twice. That means "I can't go any faster!" in car speak. Yes, I can understand Bus most of the time. And as I said before, he has a mind of his own.

Bus honks three times. At least I'm in first. It looks as if everyone else is experiencing motor problems.

Wait - Bus honked three times? That means he has to go to the bathroom. Oil slick time!

All of the other cars skid out. Ha ha!

Two cars recover from the skid easily. Man, they have a lot of traction. They speed past. Now that Bus has that bad oil out of his system, he's going at 180 MPH now. The two other cars ahead of me are going at something like 230 MPH. this can't be good.

I swerve right. Hard. I then realize that I'm on a cliff road, and a guard rail is on the edge. The only car that was behind me bumps into me. Hard. Bus breaks through the guard rail.

4/10/14

I was in a coma for four days, so they had to postpone the races for me. But I was still counted as last place in the Circuit Race. That won't be postponed since the event organizers didn't have a heads-up. Today, though, I wake up in the hospital. I see a doctor and the announcer standing in front of my hospital bed.

"Jeff, Brent, and Markkus are waiting outside. Jeff seems the most concerned." says the announcer.

"We've had you on many medications, and thank goodness they worked! You are able to race today." says the nurse.

I say, "But what about my Volkswagen?"

"We had restored. It's waiting for you at the hotel. It had an oil leak a couple times, though." says the nurse.

"What're the scores?" I ask.

The announcer pulls out a giant piece of posterboard that he had leaning on the wall. It says:

Scores:

Tarren: 53pts.

Edward: 50pts.

Maria: 50pts.

Nafferlakit: 29pts. OUT!

I realize now that I'm tied for last place. I could be going home in this next race. Now it is the famous Coffee Run. I need to win this to achieve my goal.

I get back into Bus for the first time in four days.

I am at the starting line now. It seems as if just yesterday everyone had been at the starting line. But now I only see Tarren's Honda Accord, Maria's Bughatti Veyron Super Sport, and my Bus. A regular car, a speedy hypercar, and a camper van. Who will lose? It's obvious who. Me.

Red. Yellow. Green. Go!

I go easily to 20 MPH. The thing about the Coffee Run is that you're in morning rush hour traffic. You need to go to a specific coffee shop on the other side of town, get a ninety-nine cent coffee, and go back. I know that 20 MPH is just about the right speed to go at. Tarren sees it too, but Maria goes at 250 MPH. She finds a shortcut which is less crowded. I go in morning traffic and stopping at every red light.

- Two long hours later -

Rush hour is more like rush eight hours. I finally reach the coffee shop and I go in. I see Maria there.

"Where's Tarren?" I say.

"He left. Now buy your coffee."

She leaves with her coffee. I get mine and leave with it.

- Another long, boring hour later -

I am finally at the finish line. I see Tarren there. He sees me and then looks at the scoreboard once Maria arrives. So do I.

Scores:

Tarren: 73pts.

Edward: 62pts.

Maria: 59pts. OUT!

I made it to the final race. I'm over whelmed. I have one day to prepare for the race that is not decided by points. Whoever gets first on this next race wins. The Head-To-Head Race. We have one day prepare.

4/11/14

I need to reflect on what I've done. I've discovered a new potential for Bus, won a championship, got a great honor of being the wild card member, and made it to the end.

I need to take a nap.

I wake up. I'm back in school somehow.

"Edward!" says my English teacher. "How could you fall asleep in the middle of my lesson?!"

"N-no," I say. "This isn't real!"

I see my journal on my desk. "Read it!" I yell.

"I'll do it after school."

"No!" I scream.

I wake up again. This time I'm back where I was, at my desk.

"Edward!" says my English teacher, again.

"Oh, thank goodness!" I yell. Now I know this is just a dream. I blink really hard. I wake.

4/12/14

Today is Jeff's friend's little brother's friend's little brother's birthday. I'm sure he's probably watching us right now, even though we never met. Or does he even know I exist? Oh well. Whatever. I go to the London Eye, where the final race begins. We have to go to Nice from London, then to Paris, then to San Giovanni, then to Rome, and back to London from there. You must follow the recommended path. In Rome, you have to stop at the Colosseum to do a challenge. We both don't know what the challenge is.

"<And now to TobyMac's *Steal My Show!*>" Boy, was I feeling that song.

Final red light of the competition.

Final yellow light of the competition.

Final green light of the competition. Go for the last time!

150 MPH right off the bat. I speed ahead of Tarren. I go so far, but I make it to the Atlantic Ocean, which we have to apparently circle back around over. I have an idea.

I go to the other end of the dashboard. Nitro. I press it. I am risking drowning. Sharp left!

I survived. I'm back on the mainland. I see Tarren right behind me. He must've used nitro, too.

"<Now to TobyMac's *Me Without You!*>" It's an awesome song, by the way. It fit my mood. I stay on the TobyMac channel.

Tarren goes ahead of me. I try to go faster. 160. 170. 180. 190. 200. 210. 250. He seems to go that fast, too.

260. 270. 280. 290. That's not me, it's Tarren. His suped-up Honda Accord is so fast. I pass by the coffee shop. We're in Nice, then. I see a paper fly into my window. I paste it in my journal.

I saw the weirdest thing ever. A Honda and a camper van going as fast as a Bugatti can.

I pass Tarren, he passes me, back and forth, so on and so on, et cetera.

300. 310. 320. I go that fast. I speed ahead of Tarren, and I find myself in Paris. The Eiffel Tower is in my sights. I swerve right, then left. I check my rearview mirror. I see Tarren right behind me, and he's going a little bit faster than I am, and he is inching near me.

Soon we find ourselves in San Giovanni. Next stop: Rome.

I check the time. 10:00 PM. I decide that I'm going to go to sleep in Bus after 10:30. Tarren stops at a hotel. A half hour later, I park at a McDonald's. Then I go into the back and set my alarm to 6:30 AM. I pull out the pull-out bed. I flop onto it. I fall immediately asleep.

4/13/14

I wake up and hear the *beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!* of my alarm. I go to the driver's seat, turn off my alarm, and drive. I take it easy and go at 70 MPH. I reach Rome at last. I see the famous Colosseum. I am amazed at this once-in-a-lifetime-unless-you-live-in-Rome view. I park at the Colosseum visitor center. I get a ticket to get in, and inside I see two tables that both have a pitcher of steaming water. Next to it were three vials: a green one a blue one, and a red one. Next to the vials was an envelope. At one of the tables, I see Tarren mixing multiple vials into the pitcher. I see a judge behind both tables.

I go to the other table. The judge says to me, "The challenge is to mix whatever vials into the pitcher to make it turn orange. When you figure it out, you will get to open the envelope. If you do it wrong, nothing will happen."

I think about it: I know from chemistry class that a red chemical compound mixed with hot water created the orange color in the Autumn leaves. So I dump all of the red vile in, also because it's Bus' color. The hot water gradually turns more orange. "Judge!" I yell.

The judge comes over. He sees my pitcher and says, "You may open your envelope now."

I feel a rush of excitement go over me and into my spine. I rip open the envelope.

Stop by the coffee shop in Nice and get another coffee, bring it back to London, and give it to the announcer. Whoever does that first wins! Remember, take the recommended route!

I run to Bus. Tarren must have seen what I did, because he ran right to his Honda. I am only about two seconds ahead. I go at 190 MPH, and I go through San Giovanni and Paris fairly quickly. Tarren is right on my heels as I finally get to the coffee shop. Three seconds later, Tarren comes in. I pull out my money and order the coffee. I get it and run out. I get into Bus and drive away at about 180 MPH. I speed out of Nice. I reach the Atlantic Ocean. Tarren is nowhere in sight.

Oh, no! I forgot to fill up my nitro tank! Tarren could be coming any second now!

"<And now to TobyMac's *Feelin' So Fly!*>"

I get my nitro juice out of the back and climb out. I dump it into my fuel tank. I get back in. Tarren is nowhere in sight still. Where is he?

Nitro! I press the button, and I see myself in England. I go to 200 MPH, and Bus won't go any faster. I finally get back to London at 8:00 PM. I run up to the announcer's booth and hand him the coffee. I run back down. I look at the scoreboard.

Finale Placings:

7th. Wallace Franor

6th. Jay Reno

5th. Elijah Hector

4th. Nafferlakit Schmidt

3rd. Maria Intormia

2nd. Edward Marriot

1st. Tarren O'Connor

CONGRADULATIONS, TARREN! YOU'VE WON!

Tarren already was there? How?

"Tarren O'Connor is disqualified from winning on account of not following the correct route!" says the announcer. Then the scoreboard changes.

Finale Placings:

7th. Wallace Franor

6th. Jay Reno

5th. Elijah Hector

4th. Nafferlakit Schmidt

3rd. Maria Intormia

2nd. Tarren O'Connor

1st. Edward Marriot

CONGRATULATIONS, EDWARD AND BUS! YOU'VE WON!

That last line makes me a little bit teary-eyed with joy. They mentioned Bus. Jeff walks over to me and hands me my trophy. I can hear the TobyMac song *Made to Love* playing in the background. It is the most amazing moment of my life and I am carried around over people's heads by many hands. We celebrate until dawn. Now it's time to go back home.

4/14/14

I made it back to the airport, and I'm now going back home in Bus, with Pink Martini and TobyMac playing on my stereo.

This has truly been an amazing experience with Bus. We started out as the underdogs, but we came out as the one and only famous UnderBus.

