

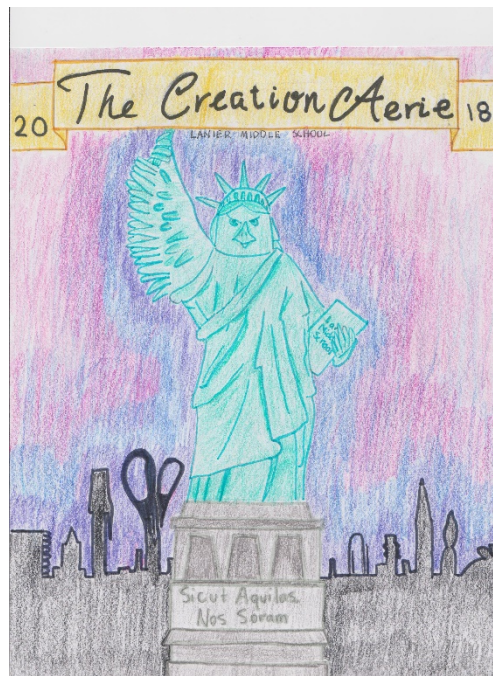
# THE CREATION AERIE







***The Creation Aerie:***  
***A cross-curricular collection of artistic expression***  
**LMS Literary Magazine**  
**2017—2018**



***The Creation Aerie:***  
***A cross-curricular collection of artistic expression***  
**LMS Literary Magazine**  
**2017—2018**

**Sidney Lanier Middle School**  
**3801 Jermantown Road**  
**Fairfax, Virginia 22030**

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Seventh-grade AAP students completed a joint capstone project for their history and English classes. They were tasked with crafting a narrative from the point of view of a young immigrant coming to America in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Students had to include key details of being processed through Ellis or Angel Island and represent the immigrant experience while clearly adhering to a plot diagram. There were many wonderful stories; please use the QR codes to find even more great work—there are Choose Your Own Adventure tales on our website!

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## **Nonfiction: If I Were Mayor Essay Contest**

From the Virginia Municipal League's website: *Each fall the Virginia Municipal League (VML) invites all Virginia 7th Graders to participate in its "If I Were Mayor" essay contest. The essays describe what the student would do as mayor to make their cities, towns, and counties great places to live.* This year, the Region 5 winner was Lanier's Gideon DeMarco!

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## **NaNoWriMo**

In November, Lanier Middle School participated in a modified version of National Novel Writing Month. Young authors pledged to write 1,500-word stories in 30 days. Here is a sampling of works which exceeded the word goal.

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## **Artwork**

Special thanks to the yearbook sponsors for submitting all of the gorgeous yearbook cover contest entries!

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## **School (Couplet)**

by Ali Alimujiang

Why we go to school, the question remains.  
Some people think it's to exercise our brains.



## **School (Haiku)**

by Aylin Gil de Leon

In the school I learn  
English my teacher helps me  
To know many words.

## **Haiku**

by Aysenur Etlik

A girl likes sunrise  
Happy, she watches sunrise  
Orange, yellow, red.

## **The Creak**

by Kevin Johnson

I am in my bed at night so safe and so sound  
But then I hear a creak, and my heart starts to pound  
I start to get hot, so I take my blanket off real quick  
Then it gets dead silent, and the clock starts to tick  
Then the clock rings at 12:00, and my heartbeat quickens  
It gets hard to breathe, and the plot thickens  
Then the creak comes back but it is more of a wail  
Forget about sleeping I wanted to bail  
The creak was getting closer and it was also getting louder  
Then it rose from the darkness, with unlimited power  
Then I woke up from a dream late in the day  
At least I hope it was a dream, for that I pray.

## **Snow (Haiku)**

by Urielle Kaho

White and cold as milk  
Soft as a feather, falling  
In the meadow, wet.



## **The Storm**

by Kevin Johnson

The storm. First there is the calm, so silent and easy.  
But then comes the wind, so rough and so sleazy.  
Then the rain starts to come, and it is wailing and roaring.  
Then the lightning strikes, so fast now it is pouring.  
Then they all combine, it is a scary sight.  
The rain and the wind, and the lightning's might.  
But then the storm grows quiet, So big to so small.  
It gets so quiet we can't hear it at all.  
Then there is a rainbow, in the storms place.  
It is filled with wonder and also grace.  
The storm went away, but it will come another day.  
It smells outside like the ocean and mud.  
So much for a day outside, that was a dud.

## **Sun**

by Urielle Kaho

Sun rises and the dark goes away  
Noon, the sun is at its peak.  
At four o'clock, he makes his gold and orange glow.  
And at bedtime, he goes away.  
When he disappears, the happiness of the people is gone.  
His sister takes his place, the moon.



**Find Your Fire  
LMS Yearbook Cover Submissions**

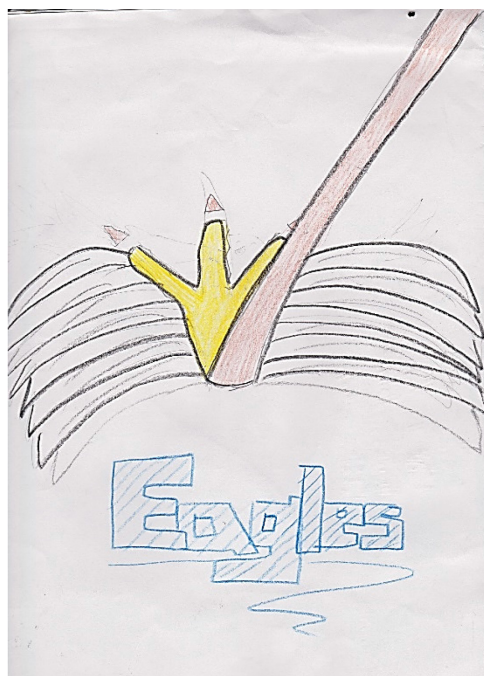
**Grace Collins; Josh Chua, Jack Hoaday & Griffin Bryce;  
Jennier Esponosa**







**Find Your Fire**  
**LMS Yearbook Cover Submissions**  
**Kalea Conje and Kaylani Gibbs**



## *Personified Noun Poems*

My name is jealousy and this is my song,  
I'm always mad cause you're never wrong,  
You are beautiful and perfect in every way!  
Oh how I wish I looked like you every day,  
I hate you, I love you, I can't make up my mind,  
But you always make me feel so behind,  
I don't know why I can't be just like you,  
I can't wait for my big breakthrough!

by Bailey Fox

My name is Stress  
I am a mess  
I make people tear out their hair  
I go with them everywhere  
Mainly from school  
I'm really not cool.

by Caitlyn Intermill



My name is Bravery, Courage is my friend,  
I will be with you till the very end.  
Even when I may seem lost,  
You mustn't give up at any cost!  
I will never run, I will stay by your side,  
And will always be there to help, to guide.

by Christina Elliott



## *Personified Noun Poems*

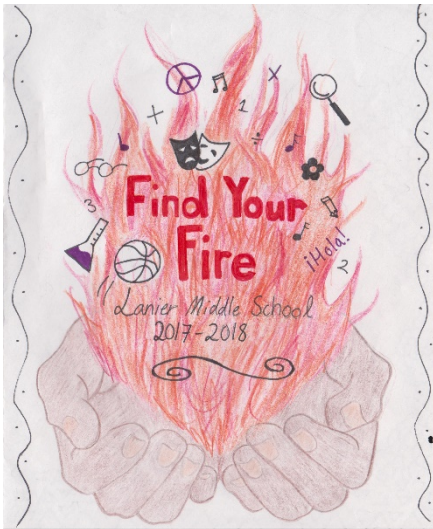
Bravery is my name, this is true  
I'm here to help find the courage within you.  
I'll help you face your fears,  
Even when you may shed a tear.  
Believe in yourself you must  
You have faith in your heart, I trust?

by Colby Lane

My name's Envy and I know what you want  
That kid's new shoes which he always flaunts  
Jealousy and I are partners in crime  
I had everything once upon a time  
Kindness and I are enemies  
Don't act like you don't know me; I've been around for centuries

by Sahana Patta

## **Find Your Fire LMS Yearbook Cover Submissions**



**Kimberly  
Medarno**  
and  
**Kendall  
Malesky**



**Bye!**

Ali Alimujiang

Bye my friends.

I will miss you.

I hope I can see you guys again,  
but it's impossible.

**Find Your Fire**

**LMS Yearbook Cover Submissions**

**Leah Hamakey**



**CS G.O (a Video Game)**  
**by Ahmet Agcakulu**

Silent as the wind  
My enemies unaware  
Chickens everywhere

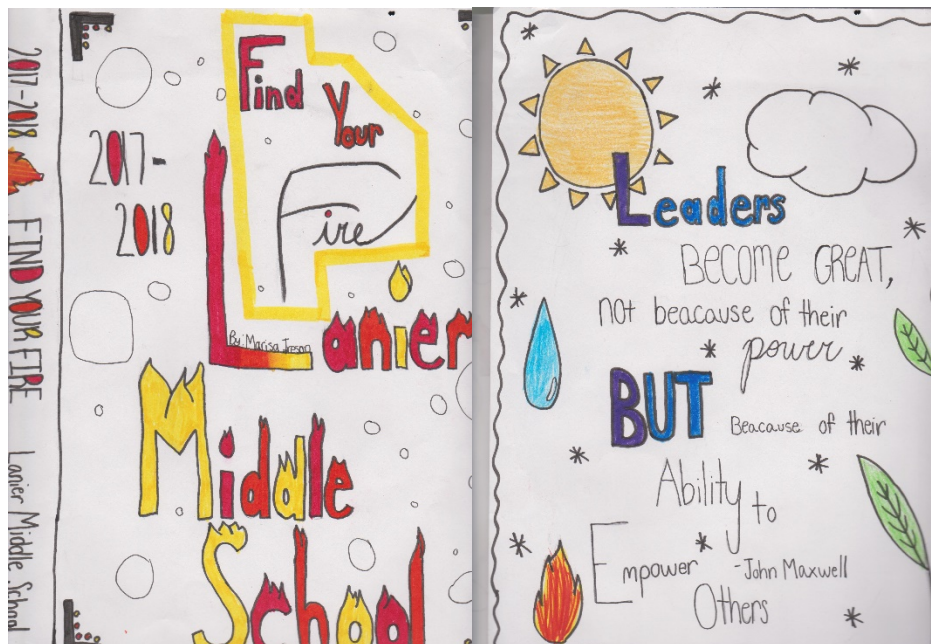
**Brothers**  
**by Boldbayar Unurjargal**

I said ,“Where is mother?”  
“Over there” said my brother.  
Go faster!!! One and two.  
I’m going to go there too.  
Mom said, “Don’t bother”.

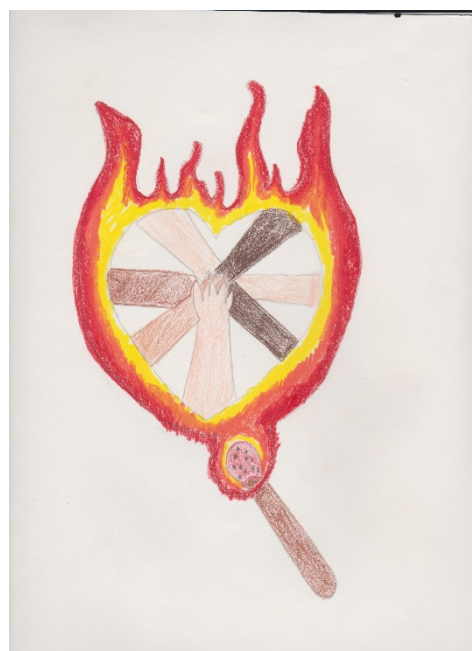
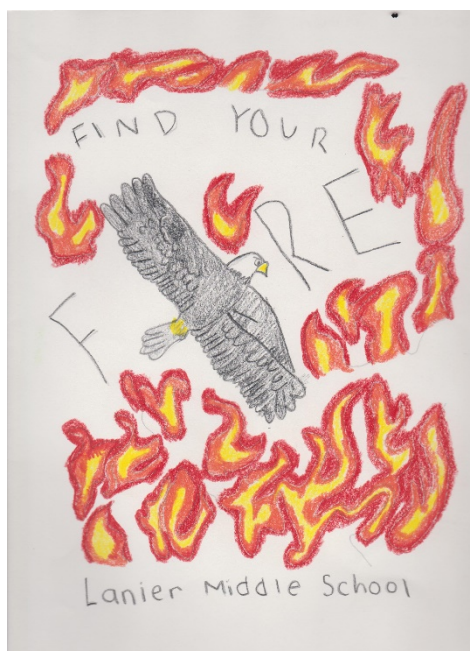
**Candy**  
**by Urielle Kaho**

Morning and evening I eat sweets.  
Delicious as a piece of paradise.  
I love them so much, a rainbow of taste and color. Strawberry,  
plum or apricot taste.  
I love you.  
Sweet in my mouth, delicious.





**Find Your Fire  
LMS Yearbook Cover Submissions  
Marisa Ireson and Michelle Martin**





## **Title: Choices**

**Theme: One should be willing to sacrifice for the person one loves.**

**By: Ahn Bui**

Phuong was working in the warm rice fields in Saigon, Vietnam. Her mother, Kim Anh suddenly called her saying “Phuong, come in here right now, your husband sent you a letter!” Phuong ran inside as fast as a lightning bolt at the mention of her husband’s name, since she hasn’t been hearing a lot from him recently.

She immediately opened the letter as she read it out loud, “Hey Phuong! I have amazing news for you, after few years of working in the terrible mines, I’ve finally raised enough money for you to come to America with me! You’ll travel through Ellis Island and go to New Hampshire. Try to come as soon as possible, good luck!”

After a minute of awkward silence, her mother angrily said “You will absolutely not go to America and leave us here, your sister has already left to another country. I will not have you move away from us too, that will be like losing another arm of the family!”

“Why are you always against me mom?! Is it because I didn’t get a scholarship like my little sister did, she’s always been the favorite and I’m sick of it. Can you let me make my own decisions for once?”

As Phuong stormed away, her mom sighed. Phuong has been like this since her husband Trung left, she now has a short temper and became antisocial. Kim Anh wanted Phuong’s old self back and the only way was to let her live with her husband, but she loves her daughter too much to let her go.

Phuong woke up early next morning and went to the kitchen to write a letter back. She grabbed a piece of paper and started writing:

*Dear Trung,*

*Mom doesn’t want me to go, so I guess that I have to convince her. Tell me everything about how it’s like there, I really want to get mom’s permission!*

*Write back to me soon,*

*Phuong.*

She reread the letter a few times before running to the post office. When she got home, her mom told her to feed the buffalo. Sheesh, why doesn’t she feed them herself, am I like her slave or something? Phuong thought as she fed the buffalo.

A few weeks went by and Phuong finally received her letter, she ripped the envelope open and started reading:

*Dear Phuong,*

*I’ll be honest with you about this, the things here aren’t all that great. We are living in a tenement house like most people do. The conditions there are terrible. It’s very unsanitary, the walls are broken down, we’re lucky that we get an indoor toilet now! Pretty much all jobs makes you work for about 12 hours with little pay. A lot of people also try to discriminate us immigrants. Even though we have to go through a of these stuff, I promise that the future will be better for us!*

*Love,*

*Trung*

As she read that, Phuong felt all of the hope that she had drain out of her, she wouldn’t be able to convince her mom with this information. Her anxiety started kicking in as her mind was blank and her body became stiff, her husband was so important to her, she would rather die than not being able to meet him. Finally, an idea popped up in her head, Just write a letter back asking about the good things there!

Phuong nodded to herself and violently grabbed for a sheet of paper which was lying peacefully her dad’s desk. After a few minutes of writing, she ended up with a letter that read:

*Dear Trung,*

*Don’t worry, I trust you with our future together. Are there any good things happening there though? I’m really desperate to be able to convince mom about moving to America with you. It’s just been so long and I need to see you again!*

*Love,*

*Phuong.*

Life went on the same as it did since 5 years ago after she wrote that letter. Phuong was getting very impatient which made her become more snappy towards other people. Her mom has been avoiding her lately to think about Phuong’s decision and so far, she’s been leaning towards letting her daughter go. Kim Anh actually felt

guilty at one point because she thought that she was being inconsiderate about the unfair decisions that she made with the 2 sisters. Her dad however, was oblivious about the things that have been going on between the mother and daughter since he was always busy with work. Millions of kilometers away from them was Trung, who has been thinking about what he should put in the letter that would convince Phuong's mom. In the end, he just thought that he should just wait and let time decide for him, which is why he took so long to write a letter back.

As time went on, labor unions were becoming a big thing, the people fought for less working hours, a higher wage, better working conditions, and also creating an end to child labor. That didn't stop other bad things happening though, political machines still tried to help immigrants in exchange for their votes, crime still broke out in cities and especially ghettos. People became ill because of the Chicago meat packing industry, which didn't care about the quality of their food, because they only did it for the money. The conditions in tenement houses were still as terrible as ever. Trung finally decided to write a letter back after experiencing these events.

*Dear Phuong,*

*I apologize for taking such a long time to write back. I decided that only time can unfold the events and actions here in America. Finally after about a month, here's what I have. Labor Unions, which are group of people coming together to fight for better rights. They've been fighting for less working hours, higher wages, better working conditions, and an end to child labor. Recently it has been looking pretty good, but there are still bad things going on like political machines, who tries to help people, especially immigrants, to find a job or a place to live in and in return, you have to vote for the person that they tell you to. This one is something that you have to be careful of, the Chicago meat packing industry, when you go out for grocery shopping, their products can look like any normal can of food. While really, the content might not even be what it says on the label! Hundreds of people have died and became ill because of ingesting their food. Lastly, the tenement houses haven't changed at all except for the toilets, it's still incredibly unsanitary and unsafe. I hope you can come up with good reasons so that mom can let you come and live here!*

*Good luck,*

*Trung.*

Phuong received Trung's letter after a few weeks, after she read it, she came up with a list of pro's and con's to show her mom. The pros that she came up with were better job opportunities, better environment since the air qualities in Vietnam were very poor, better government, more diversity, more resources, and most importantly for Phuong was to be able to meet her husband. The cons were less space/land since Vietnam specialized in farming so families had a lot of room for farming, chance of more violence, and diseases. She even planned out the conversation that she planned to have with her mom the next day if her mom responded like she expected of course.

The next day rolled around and Phuong sat down at the dining table with her mom. "So what did you want to discuss with me?" Kim Anh asked.

"Mom, I think you already know."

"Alright, I've been thinking about for quite some time now."

"And?" Phuong cocked an eyebrow.

"I've decided to let you go to America." Her mom said with a sigh. "But first, tell me what's been happening there so I know that you'll be safe." Phuong tried to hide her smile, she was actually disappointed because her mom didn't ask her anything about America because she didn't want all of her planning to go to waste.

"So, right now, there's something called labor unions. They're made up by a group of people, supposedly workers who fights for their rights. They're currently fighting to have shorter working hours, higher wages, better working conditions, and to end child labor. Some cons in America are political machines who try to help you in exchange for your votes, Trung warned me about the Chicago meat packing industry because their food quality has made people sick and even die. There's also crime in cities, especially ghettos, but don't worry, we're living in the city." Phuong explained.

"What is your job going to be?"

"Trung lives in New Hampshire and coincidentally, there are a bunch of textile mills there. I'm really good at sewing, so I'm planning to work there."

"Good, now since I know that you're in good hands, I'll go tell dad and you should start packing." Her mom said as she stood up and went to find Phuong's dad.

Phuong began packing her valuables and wrote a letter saying that she got permission to go to America. Trung sent back a letter containing money and instructions when she goes through Ellis Island. Her dad gave Phuong permission too as he always agreed with what her mom said. Then before they knew it, Phuong was in line to go on the boat while her mom was crying a whole river, she waved to her parents one last time before disappearing into the boat.

Phuong was in the lowest class obviously but she didn't mind, she was used to it. After years and years of fishing on boat and poverty, the lack of food seemed normal and she didn't get sea sickness, though she did get

bored after staying in the same area for such a long time. To prepare for Ellis Island, she brought an English vocabulary book and practiced for most of the time that she was on the boat. It was a normal afternoon when Phuong heard a loud rumble and shouts of excitement above her. She climbed up to the deck which was when she saw the Statue of Liberty, she started at it in awe as in her peripheral vision she saw people on their knees, crying, and children trying to force themselves up their parent's backs. She's never seen such a sight before, the Statue of Liberty seemed so large and welcoming that Phuong felt safe.

As they passed the Statue of Liberty, she could start seeing Ellis Island becoming closer and closer each minute, she ran back down to where her room was and organized all of her belongings together and ran back up. The ship was so crowded that one of the passengers knocked down her bag that contained her clothes. She tried to reach for it but other passengers started pushing her forwards as they were also desperate to get off the boat. Guess I just have to sew some myself, she thought. After what seemed like forever of trying to not get squished between the passengers, Phuong finally walked down the railing and into Ellis Island.

She saw a lot of people following the direction that the officers there pointed to so she did the same. There was a tall building that had a sign on the top that read Registry, once she entered, she felt so tiny because since she was already short, the people next to her seemed like giants. The line went through a room that read Health Inspection, when Phuong walked in, she was asked to walk a short distance and the doctor immediately told her to continue once he saw her walk.

As Phuong continued to wait behind what seemed like an endless line, she saw the last inspection, the legal inspection. She started to tense up slowly as she started to get closer and closer to the officers sitting on the high stools. Phuong only saw 4 more people in front of her and that was when she started shaking. Then she tried to remember what Trung always said to her "If you're ever stressed or scared and I'm not there, count until you feel calm." 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6... Phuong started counting in her head. 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25...

Phuong snapped out of her thoughts when one of the officers said "Next." She hesitantly walked up to the officer as he scanned the number that was given to her right after she got off the boat. "First of all, can you understand English?"

"Yes I can." She replied shakily.

"Good, so where did you come from?"

"I came from Vietnam."

The officer nodded, "What is your job going to be here in America?"

"I'm planning to work at a textile mill."

"Do you have a place to stay?"

"Yes, I'm going to live with my husband."

"Do you have any other relatives here?"

"No I don't, it's only me and my husband."

The officer nodded again, "Have you ever caught a disease before?"

"I've only had the flu before but some of my family members have had cancer before." Phuong tensed up as the officer furrowed his eyebrows together.

"Alright, how much money do you have along with you?"

"I have about 8 dollars with me." Oh no, that's bad isn't it? Phuong thought as the officer paused for a second and clicked his tongue before continuing.

"Have you ever committed a crime?"

"No, I haven't."

"Good, last question. What is your destination?"

"New Hampshire." Phuong sighed mentally but then started staring at the officer since he looked unsure about a decision, letting Phuong go or make her a detainee. Phuong felt like her heart was about to burst out, but that quickly ended as the officer nodded and motioned her to continue on. She felt as if a million weights have been taken off of her shoulder as she happily walked straight towards the staircases. The staircases were separated into three aisles, Phuong wasn't sure which one to take but she remembered Trung's letter. She fumbled with her backpack for a bit and found the letter, he informed her that the center aisle were for the detainees, the one on the right were for people traveling west or south, and the one on the left were for people traveling to New York or north. She remembered that New Hampshire was north so she walked towards the left staircase.

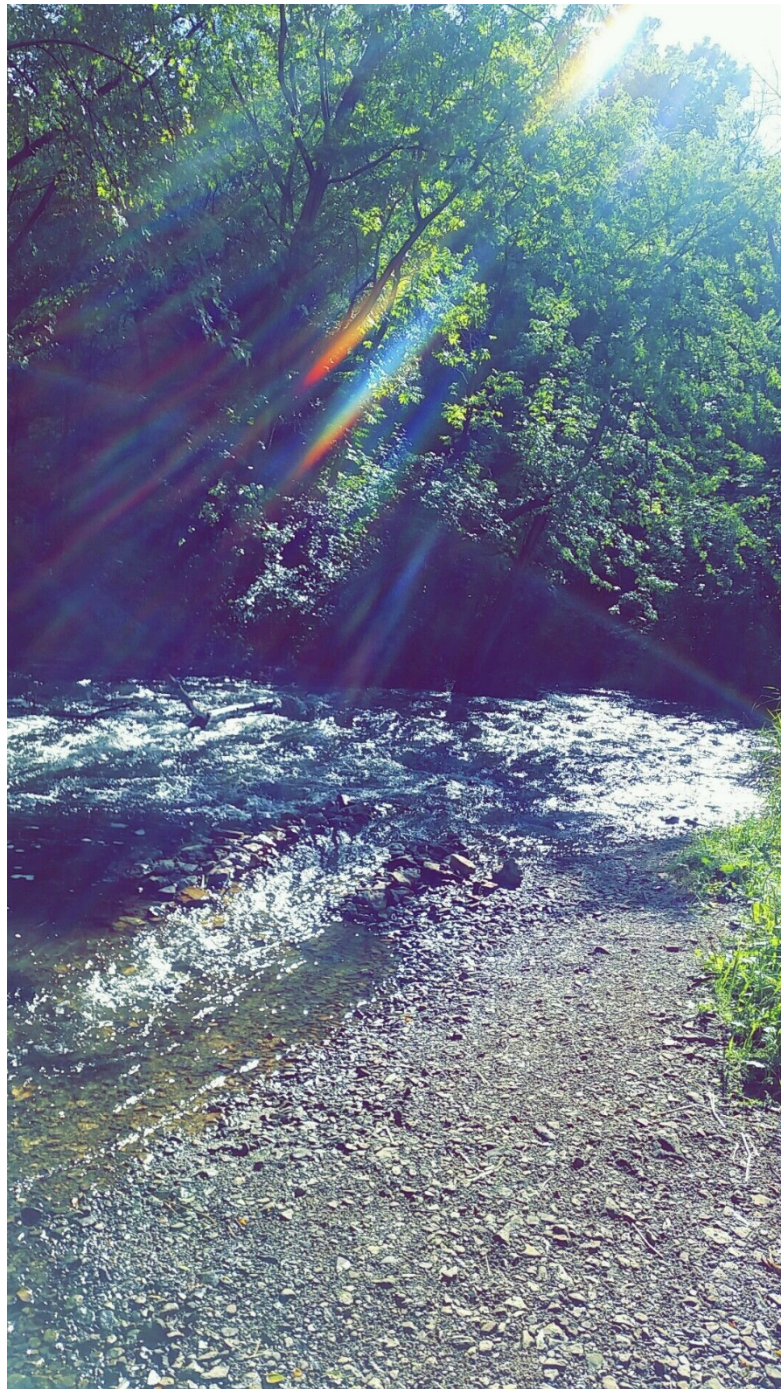
Phuong was waiting for the train to New Hampshire, she admired her surroundings, the breeze calmed her down and the people around her who came from different parts of the world. The train arrived after a few minutes and Phuong dragged her luggage along, she found an empty seat and settled herself down. As she looked out the window, it seemed like the train was flying freely across the land, passing trees, houses, and farms. They arrived at the train station in New Hampshire after a few hours, as Phuong stepped down onto the platform, she heard a voice that she missed dearly "Phuong, over here!" She looked to the right and there he was, her other half, her source of energy and happiness that's been gone for years. She felt all of the anger and stress that she ever had drain out of her, she was truly happy after all of these years again.

Phuong ran quickly to Trung and gave him a warm, loving hug. They stayed there for a few minutes before Trung spoke up, "I missed you."

"I missed you too Trung." Phuong said as they slowly broke the hug.

"Let's go before the sun sets, you must be exhausted after that trip." Phuong nodded and followed Trung back to their tenement house.

The couple continued on with their lives happily, Phuong became a cheerful person and rarely got mad or upset at people anymore. They wrote back to their parents often and joined labor unions. A few years later, children were given the education that they deserved, workers received better treatment, and tenement houses slowly became more sanitary and safe. In the end, they started a family of their own which continued on from generation to generation.





## **Title: An Immigrant's Story**

**Theme: True friends can make an absolute difference in your life**

**By: George Huynh**

The morning sun rose and shined down its rays on our dreary yet excited faces. The boat ride was terrible and extremely dirty, and worse, the entire trip felt like an eternity.

My sister, Christina was miserable through it all, I tried to comfort her, but she just ignored me. "Why couldn't we stay home?" asked my sister in a whiny voice.

"Because it's better for us here in America, we have more opportunity, and more freedom, right Samuel?" exclaimed my dad.

"Yep!" I replied. I knew why we left Spain though, people were escaping from a civil war, and dad just wanted to get away from that too.

It was a very bright morning, and I was happy, a new life in America! I'd heard stories about this country, and they were all great! We had already seen the Statue of Liberty, just a while back, and I remember the wave of excitement, and happiness rush through the crowd on deck. I'm feeling just that right now, as the boat docked onto the island. I walked down some rickety old stairs, followed by my grumpy sister, and very excited dad. America, we're escaping Spain for more religious rights, and escape from war, and yet the entire trip, I kept looking at America as our Savior, our enormous opportunity.

The island was somewhat very man made like, it had sharp corners and straight sides. A large building occupied it, and I could see many other people present on the island as well. I could see immigrants, like us swarming the island. I could see a city in the distance, buildings, like nothing I've ever seen before, higher than the buildings back in Spain. The buildings looked like enormous spikes rising out of the ground, reaching for the sky. The next few hours went by in a blur. We were handed tags, and we entered the enormous brick building. We climbed stairs, and the weirdest thing was, was that as I looked up, I could see men looking down at us, as though they were examining us.

We went through an enormous room, which was packed with people, but what stood out to me the most, was the massive American Flag hanging on the wall. We waited for hours, and then we were examined by doctors. Then, we went through another room where a man with an extremely dark suit, asked us questions. Then finally, after waiting for hours, we walked to a stairwell, which split three ways. The area was jam-packed with people, and I found myself, getting extremely dizzy, I've never seen this many people in one place. And no longer wanting to be here, I ran up the left stairwell.

The station was jam-packed with people rushing by, getting on with their business. Men in colorful suits, men in dark suits, women carrying their babies, families reuniting. It felt as though the entire world's population was in one place. A newspaper stand featured a paper about political machines, and someone named Boss Tweed. Corruption was a big word on the paper, even though I knew very little about English words, I knew that was bad. I then saw a train, which fascinated me. The train was a mythical beast, as it roared through the station, its horn sounding like a lion's roar, even if I knew what that sounded like. I've never left my hometown until now, and I was scared.

The train stopped, opened its doors, and a flood of people rushed out of it. I was suddenly engulfed by people, rushing about. We were supposed to go to Texas to meet some family member, I remembered. Then it occurred to me: I was lost, dad and my sister were nowhere in sight it was like they disappeared, swallowed by the mass wave of people.

Well, they were probably on the train that was departing, I reasoned, as I looked at the clock, and told the time, with the very little knowledge I knew about clocks. I dodged through the flow of people and reached the train. "Where is this train going?" I asked the man standing by the door, escorting the passengers on the trains.

Surprisingly, he heard me through the thunderous noise echoing through the station, "To New York City!"

Oh good, I thought, now I didn't know a lot about cities, but this city was probably in Texas where my family member was, I think it was my dad's aunt. Then I remembered dad and my sister. *I'll see them on the train*, I thought, and with that, I stepped onto the train car. That would then carry me to New York City.

The train ride was awful, knowing that I had gotten on the wrong train, I had screwed up. I miserably miss my dad and sister, and I was going to New York City, in a completely different state than Texas, and nowhere near Texas, Dallas, where my family was going to stay with our relative. The train stopped, and I was in New York, with no money to buy another ticket to Dallas. I was stuck in New York, with no money, and I was starving.

The station was massive. The room was nothing like I've ever seen, it had clocks, the size of a chair hanging on the walls, the area was packed to the core with people, rushing about.

One person caught my eye though; he was leaning against the wall, alone, he looked somewhere about ten years old, he had a black jacket and old pants. His hair was messy and blond. I approached him; he looked friendly enough I thought, he was the only child that was alone here.

"Hey," I said in a friendly way, hoping to earn a companion in this enormous world.

"What do you want?" he replied, in a somewhat rough way, more of a voice for an adult, though it wasn't in an unfriendly way.

Now, I didn't know that much English, but I could speak some of it, with a heavy accent though. I was afraid he was going to turn me down, or worse, misunderstand my words.

"Uhhh, Do you know where I can find some food? I asked, in my best English, hoping he would understand.

"Over there near the south wall, do you even have money to buy any food?" he asked, in a slightly suspicious way.

"Umm. No..." I replied, having no idea what to say now. I'd heard stories of pickpockets, who pocketed money from busy train stations just like this one, and I knew from the start, that he was one of them. I knew this was bad, but I needed the money, and this was the only way, I knew how to make fast money.

"I know what you want, follow me," and he rounded the corner. I followed him outside.

The sun shone brightly in the afternoon sky, birds flew about, singing songs, and everything looked nice, but then I looked ahead. The streets were full of grime, and I could see factories in the distance, billowing out smoke, almost looking like it was choking the sky. Houses lined the streets, and people walked about, the houses looked abandoned and dirty. This was nothing like how I had imagined America.

He was ahead, and I jogged up to him, "Hey, I didn't quite catch your name," I said.

"Call me Tom," he said, now in a more friendly voice.

"I'm Samuel, but I go as Sam," I said. We walked around another corner, and into a building, the paint inside was peeling, and a steep stairway lined one of the walls. We climbed the stairs, we climbed three levels, until we got to the last one, a platform and a door was all there was.

Tom opened the door and walked inside, I followed him, "Chris, Ben, this is Sam."

"Oh great! Now we have to take this kid in?!" complained the kid I assumed was Ben. He had dark curly hair and wore dirty clothes. The other kid, Chris was somewhat settled about the idea of taking me in, he had black hair and a more youthful face.

"Come on, he can work, he can care for himself, we're just supporting him," said Tom.

"Alright, but nobody else, got it?" said Ben.

"Sure" replied Tom.

The apartment had only two rooms, one bedroom, and a kitchen, combined with somewhat of a living room. The living room held only a table that looked like it was about to shatter into a million pieces, a few chairs, and that was it. The kitchen looked like it was unused, and dirty, with grime everywhere. The paint on the walls was peeling off, and I could see rats dart into a hole in the wall. The bedroom had two bunks, with four total sleeping spaces, in a cramped room, that wreaked.

"Hey, who has that bed?" I asked curiously, wondering if another person was living here.

They all looked saddened at the moment I had said that. Had I upset them? Why did they look sad?

"Andy slept there." Chris whispered, "but he died, working in the factory,"

"I'm sorry to hear that," I replied, "but shouldn't you do something? Why not complain that this factory's workplace is killing people?"

"We all work there, if we told the world, the manager would fire us, and we would have no money."

"Wait, I thought you were pickpockets, not workers, well that doesn't matter," I exclaimed,

"Can you get me a job at this factory? I need to make some money, for...uh... personal things."

"We planned to, and we'll do it for you, you need to take care of yourself in that factory though, it's dangerous in there," warned Chris.

Dinner was terrible, but I knew they were giving me all they could, we had some bread and canned soup, but that was it. We sat at the table and talked about things that came to our minds.

"Hey, I gotta ask you, what type of personal business were you talking about?" asked Ben

"Come on, you don't ask people things like that," said Chris, giving him a friendly shove.

"No, it's alright, I'm an immigrant from Spain, and when I came here with my dad and sis, I remember seeing the Statue of Liberty, and I was amazed. We then got off the disgusting boat to an island, they called Ellis island we went through some processing, we made it through, and we arrived at a train station. I was stupid enough to get lost and get on the wrong train, which brought me to central New York City. So I need money to buy a train ticket to get back to Texas where my family is."

"You should have told us this earlier; we'll be glad to help!" Tom exclaimed, "Right?"

"Sure."

"Fine."

The next morning I woke up to find everybody else was already up, eating breakfast. I joined them, and we talked about the day ahead of us. We're going to a glass blowing factory, just outside of New York City. Now I've heard about cities, which have different primary industries, like Chicago, is based on meat packing, Pittsburg with steel, New England with textile mills, and the west coast specializes in agriculture, and oil.

It was an endlessly tiring walk, but we arrived at just about sunrise. On the way, they had told me that this was a glass blowing factory, and they also informed me of the basics of the different jobs.

The factory was nothing like I had imagined, it was an enormous building, with several pipes billowing out smoke. As we got closer, I could see cars and trucks going about the factory. As we arrived at the facility and entered through the creaky doors, I felt an enormous wave of heat almost knocking me down.

"Yeah, that always happens when you first enter, but you'll get used to it, all that heat is coming from the furnaces," said Tom.

As we entered the factory, I noticed large round furnaces lining a wall to the right, and to the left, was a line of workers that were mostly children wrapping up the glasses that were made, and loaded it into a truck. In the middle, was workers, looked like teenagers, blowing out glasses, and working with the furnaces. They led me to a corner, occupied by a small room. We entered through a door, and we found a desk, and a chair behind, which was currently being used by a middle-aged man, he was a little plump on the sides and had a slightly childish face, but at the same time, looked very mean, and menacing.

"What do you boys want? And who is this boy with you?" asked the what I assumed was the manager, in a rough voice, that almost scared me a bit.

"Well, we thought if you could hire this boy, he's a friend of ours, and needs a job, can you do that for us?"

"Ugh, another immigrant! All they do is take our jobs! They take our competition in the business world! They're like animals, looking for a better home that we created!" he shouted, ranting on, and on. He finally calmed down, and said, "look, I'm not supposed to hire you, but I could always use another worker, alright, you look pretty young, you're going to be in wrapping and delivering, with your friend here, Chris."

"Now, you'll work here for 10 hours. I want you here at sun break, and you leave at 4 o'clock. Your pay is 2 cents a day, and you're all set now!" Follow Chris, and he will show you what to do."

2 cents a day! I thought as I followed Chris to the packaging area, I'm going to have to work here for more than two months to buy the train ticket, and support myself.

We arrived at the area, and Chris taught me how to wrap the glass, and according to a sheet of paper, and a document attached to the glass, deliver it to the right delivery truck.

The work conditions were terrible, heat waves came at me every second, and I was breathing in smoke.

Chris must have known what I thought because he then said, "Don't worry, you'll get used to it, I did by the end of my first three days."

I felt reassured by this, but only a little bit.

I met other children as I worked, some younger than me, some older, they were all very nice, and I made more friends, all the talk, and laughter almost made me forget about the hard work I was doing, and the heat, almost, and I say almost.

The heat still pounded me, and the hot glass burnt my fingers. I was exhausted at breakfast, in which each of us got a slice of bread, we had 5 minutes to rest, but then after that, it was back to work. I no idea how I was going to get through the day, and impossibly through 2 months.

By lunchtime I was downright exhausted, we had 20 minutes to eat what they had for us, which was bread, and tomato soup, which tasted nothing like tomato soup. While we ate, we talked about our families, and our homes, but an older kid told us a story, about a man who worked her, and had fallen into a furnace and was burned alive. This story gave me shivers, and Chris and I came over to Tom, Ben, and the older kids. I mostly only talked to Chris, Ben, Tom, and some of the kids that I spoke to, while we worked.

Working there was a nightmare, by the end of each day, my fingers looked black and charred, and I was covered in soot.

Every day was the same, for me, wake up at dawn, and work, while heat waves blasted me, and have my fingers burned, from the hot glasses, and have little food as lunch. I noticed that I was getting skinnier by the day and that my fingers, were with no nails, and were severely burned. At first, I was downright scared I was going to die, but then the others showed me their fingers, and I almost threw up, but seeing them alive with those fingers, reassured me a little bit.

I turned 8 and we had a feast for my birthday, or what was a feast for us, all I could say that they had gotten the food for me, and I was very thankful and that the food was better than what we usually ate. Days went by, then weeks, and then months. I had saved part of my money for the train ticket, and the others chipped in too which I was incredibly thankful for. I used the leftover money to buy food, and new clothes, well not new clothes, they were dirty, but it was better than what I was wearing from the journey, which had turned to rags.

Two months have now passed, and I had enough money to buy a train ticket, it felt like a better birthday to me.

The morning I woke up earlier than everybody else was the day I've been looking forward to, the day I was leaving New York and the factory for good. We all woke up bright and early, ate our breakfast, and made our way to the train station, with all the money in my pocket. We walked for 30 minutes, and with every step, I knew that I was one step closer to seeing my family again.

We arrived at the train station, and it suddenly brought back memories. We walked down a pair of stairs, and entered the enormous room, with large clocks, and shops, lining the walls, and trains yelling at the top of their lungs as they came to a halt in the station.

Waves of people came out from every train car, People rushed about, with their business, and people sat at restaurants, happily eating their farewell meal with their friends, or their families.

"Whoa, excuse me!" I shouted, as somebody who was running, shoved me aside, and almost knocked me down."

"Get him!" shouted Tom, and my friends started chasing the kid who was running. I joined, not knowing why. The kid who was running had melted into the crowd, and we stopped.

"Why were we chasing him?" I asked.

"He stole your money," replied Tom.

I was horrified at this, I reached into my pocket, just to make sure, and felt emptiness. Instead of feeling like my birthday, it felt as though it was the worst day of my life.

Back at the apartment, I was sitting on a chair, head down, and crying, thinking about my dad, and sister, brought me to tears, thinking of working in the factory again summoned more tears. I had no idea how hard life was here in America.

"Hey, Sam, we were thinking, we have enough in our savings, we could buy you another ticket. We know how bad you want to see your family again, our families are long gone, and we'd love to see them again, but we can't, so we do want to grant somebody else that luxury," said Chris.

They were my saviors. My friends were granting me a wish that I thought a god could only give me now, they were miracle makers, things that friends do can surprise you. I had no idea how I could thank them.

The train was moving across the plains, and I could see farms, left and right. I'm still thinking of the farewell of my friends, and how much they have helped me.

I arrived in Dallas, Texas, and started asking around, about my family, the Dimatteo family. An old man approached me on the street, and asked: "You're looking for the Dimatteo family are you?"

A wave of sadness came over me, as I learned the events that had happened. What had turned from feeling like my birthday to feeling like the worst day of my life, then switching to my best, now have just set to the day which felt like my last day on Earth.

Sadness spread its arms around me, drowning me in sorrow. I cried and cried, I had no family, and I was alone in this enormous world. I just wanted to sit in the corner and cry a million tears, but I knew I couldn't just do that. I would have to work hard every day, just to get enough food for survival. It was like being punched in the gut and feeling the pain for the rest of the day, but in this case, it was going to stay with me for the rest of my life. I looked up to find the man still standing right beside me, peering down at me. I suddenly stood up, surprised I was kneeling.

"I know how deeply sad you are right now, and I don't want to disturb you, but are you the man's son?"

"Yes," I replied, sadness decorating my voice.

"Well, let's go sit in the park, and let me tell you of what has happened."

We sat down in a park, just as the sky got dark, and clouds loomed above us. The lights woke up, and shined its light, cutting a slit through the dark evening.

"Do you want to know what exactly happened?"

"OK, but how do you know them?" I asked suspiciously.

"I was one of their close friends, and it was sad when I found out what had happened. When your dad and sister had gotten here you see, they had found out that you had been left behind. They hurriedly got on another train to New York Station, to find you, but without any luck, they came back here, hoping you would find your way back here too. The conditions in this town are very unsanitary, and so your father had sent your sister to live in upper New York."

"Wait, is she still alive?" I asked as hope filled my mind.

"I'm extremely sorry, but she died in the Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire, and your father, died in a mining incident. There is one thing I have for you that your father has left, for you just in case you ever did find your way here." He gave me a wad of cash in my hand. "\$200 it is, you can start a new life with me, I can take you in, and



care for you, or you could stay at the orphanage.”

I stuffed the wad of cash in my pocket, and said, “No thanks, I think I’m going back to New York.”

“Alrighty then, I’ll walk you over to the station.”

We walked over to the station, not saying anything, as we walked. I kept looking down at the ground thinking of my family, long gone. My mother was in Spain, and probably thought I was dead too.

I bought my ticket to New York, and with nothing left in Texas, I got on the steel beast, waiting for me to be engulfed, and brought back to New York.

The trip was long and sad, but I was reminded of my friends who were my family in New York, and my face grew into a lighter mood of satisfaction with my life in America.



**Title: A Women Who Stood**  
**Theme: Believe in the Impossible**  
**By: Maya Littman**

The sun set that afternoon like fire, bathing everything in its golden light. Marie sat doing laundry with her fifteen-year-old daughter Nikki waiting for her husband, Jean, to come home. They lived in a small tenement at the Roger House in New York City. The space was neat (some of the time) and had two rooms with a curtain in between them instead of a door.

Nikki took after her mom. They had the same soft brown hair and brown eyes like chocolate, a treat they rarely had. The only difference was Nikki was half a foot taller, almost as tall as Jean. They heard a knocking on the door, signaling he was home. Oddly enough, there was a moaning sound like the house settling. Marie leapt up to open the door with Nikki right behind. Marie opened the door, which gave off a creaking sound so shrill it nearly burst her eardrums.

The door opened, revealing the hunched form of Jean. He was about six feet tall with dark brown hair and a thin moustache. His voice was deep and gravely.

"Father!" Nikki cried. "How are you?"

His only response was a moan. He held up a bloody, mangled hand, which looked like it had been torn apart by a bear.

"Goodness!" Marie shrieked, coming very close to fainting. She could see black encroaching on the edges of her vision. "We must get you to the doctor!"

She pulled out their most prized possession, a phone, and called the doctor.

"Hello?" Marie said. "Yes, my name is Marie, and my husband's hand is mangled. You must come help!"

The doctor asked her if she was an immigrant.

She had come through from Ellis Island two years ago. Funny, she thought. I remember seeing the Statue of Liberty, then going through those big doors and getting stopped because we didn't have twenty dollars. We had borrowed it from a person selling twenty dollars for two dollars, as long as we returned the twenty dollars after we went through the gate. We got stuck again because Jean had a limp from getting jostled on the boat, but when I said what happened the inspector let him go. Wait, Marie thought. What am I thinking about? Jean needs help.

"I am an immigrant, Doctor, but none of that matters; my husband needs help!" she yelled into the phone.

The doctor refused, saying that all immigrants were stupider than mules and couldn't pay. He hung up the phone.

Marie was in an outrage, but more important matters came first.

"Nikki, get my medical bag," Marie said, "I'll go get an ice pack!"

Nikki came rushing back in right after Marie, carrying a white bag decorated with a red cross. Marie sat down and started dabbing disinfectant on the severed fingers. Jean moaned and closed his eyes. After a while, she started wrapping it in clean, white bandages, the color of freshly fallen snow. The bandages quickly turned the color of blood. She applied more, trying to beat out the spreading pool of crimson. After five minutes of this the blood stopped seeping through. Jean sat up looking dazed. Marie placed an ice pack on his hand.

"What happened?" Marie asked softly.

"I wasss workking at the mmeat facctory," Jean said, slurring his speech. "I was wooorking the meat cchopping machine aand it cut myy fingers," he finished, taking a gulping breath of air.

"Did anyone help you?" Marie asked.

"No," Jean replied.

"This will not go unknown. The factory has gone too far this time."

"What shall we do?" Nikki asked, peering with questioning eyes.

"I don't know," Marie said, "but I will find something."

The next morning the sun rose, its colors burning through the ceiling, giving the room the feel of a painting. The breakfast bell sounded downstairs, signaling the owners and their children of breakfast. Marie stepped out of bed and nearly fell through the floor. A hole had opened up in the apartment floor, and sunlight, was showing through to the Fishcer's apartment. Marie sighed, not at all surprised by this. It was only a matter of time before it happened.

"Nikki!" Marie shouted across the small, cramped room to her daughter, "Can you patch up this hole while father is unwell?"

Marie went and checked Jean's bandages. They were already soaked through with blood. She quickly changed the bandages and walked back up to Nikki who had finished fixing the floor.

"Thank you," Marie said, a grimace twisting the lovely features of her face.

That morning Marie walked to work. She usually enjoyed work if not for the abusive owner Mr. Higgins, the wealthy white man who owned the textile factory. She thought of her husband and the tiny meat factory. How he had gotten a job in such a terrible place was beyond her. Of all the choices..... Suddenly she tripped. She looked, seeing a large foot in stone gray shoes poking out in front of her. Someone had tripped her.

"Beat it, immigrant scum!" a young voice called from behind her. The voice cackled. Marie sighed. She had gotten used to this.

When Marie arrived at work, she was greeted by an unpleasant surprise. A whip cracked across her legs. Pain drew through her like fire. "You're late, you useless immigrant." Mr. Higgins yelled in her face. She sighed. This was going to be a long day.

When Marie got home she was livid. Work had been terrible. She had red welts all along her legs from that day. She had, however, thought about what she was going to do about her husband's accident. She sat down with a piece of paper and a quill, and began writing an article to send in to the newspaper.

Dear Newspaper staff, I am an immigrant and I have a story from the past few days. I will send it in with this note. Please consider publishing it. It shall be one of the many steps toward us assimilating. We need to raise awareness of these terrible things we have to face. Sincerely, Marie Boule.

Marie continued on to write an article highlighting the things that had happened. She was pressing so hard the quill broke like glass, and she had to get another one. Finally, she finished. The article had a strong feel to it. It highlighted the importance of what she and other immigrants felt, and how the last few days had been.

"Nikki!" Marie called, "Would you deliver this to the mailbox, please?"

"Sure," Nikki replied, "What is it?"

"Hopefully you will find out soon enough," Marie said.

The next morning the sun rose like a phoenix from the ashes, lighting the sky with red, orange, and yellow. Marie waited anxiously for her response from the newspaper. Today she had a day off from work because it was Sabbath day for Mr. Higgins. The business Nikki worked for did not rest for the Sabbath Day.

"I'm heading off to work!" Nikki called from the other room, slamming the door. The door was big, heavy, and wooden. When you slammed it, it was an elephant. Nikki worked in a basket weaving shop just off Canal Street. She was blessed with a good owner and twenty cents an hour. Unfortunately, it was not the safest building, and rain often dripped through the shabby roof, causing mold to grow.

Marie, tired of waiting, went off to tidy up the room nearest to the door. It was always as messy as a pig sty. No matter how much straightening she did it never stayed clean. As she was cleaning out the small, wooden desk she felt a small, square object about as big as an envelope. She pulled it out and immediately teared up. It was the picture of her parents taken just before they died. They were posing in their small house with shabby gray walls. They both had smiles wider than Mount Everest.

At that particular moment the mail boy decided to knock on their door. She wiped her tears away and got up.

"Letter for Mrs. Boule," the mail boy said. "From the press."

"Thank you," Marie said, shutting the door.

She attacked the letter like a starving raccoon in a trash can. She read the letter:

*Dear Mrs. Boule,*

*We thought your letter was very well written and are pleased to inform that your letter has been put on the front page of The New York Herald for this Tuesday. Thank you for sending it in.*

*Sincerely,*

*The New York Herald newspaper staff*

"Yes!" Marie cried, "Yes!" She walked into the next room where Jean was lying in bed. His fingers were looking better, though his ring finger could not be saved. Fortunately, the stump was healing up well.

"Jean!" she said, a grin still lighting up her face. "I got a response! They put me on the front cover!"

"That's great!" Jean said, a smile that was long lost after his accident returning. "If I'm feeling better I can go pick the newspaper up tomorrow while you are at work."

"Great!" Marie said.

"Congratulations!" Nikki had said when she got home.

That night, to celebrate, they had Chicken Basquaise. It was a special treat from their homeland and they rarely had it.

The next morning, Marie was more restless than a litter of kittens as she went to work. Nobody stopped or tripped her. They only stared at her with newfound respect, after reading the newspaper. She desperately wanted to read the paper, but Jean was going to pick it up later.

That day, her boss did not whip her once. He just avoided her.

On her walk home from work she met up with Jean. He handed her the five-cent newspaper. There the article was. Her article, with a picture of her face on it. She had no idea how they had gotten that picture but it did not matter now. Immigrants were going to be helped. Her life was going to get better!

The next day the mail boy came again, this time with a new letter.



"I wonder what it is," Marie mumbled to herself.

She opened the letter. It was from Senator Russell. Senator Russell! The letter said this:

*Dear Mrs. Marie Boule,*

*I am pleased to inform you that your article has caught my attention. We will take steps to help immigrants like you, and we are listing you as one of the founders of a new company called the Federal Food and Drug administration, or the FDA. The FDA will work to help the conditions and safety of factories and food. Thank you for your concern.*

*Sincerely, Senator Russell*

Marie had never smiled a wider smile. She had helped her people. She had gone through a lot to do it, but she had done it. And she was grateful.

## **Title: Dinner in America**

**Theme: Believe in yourself. To succeed, we must first believe that we can.**

**By: Sophie Nave**

Bessie was as tired as her friends after a long afternoon of playing outside. But instead of running around in Greece, Bessie was stumbling to her new home in a new city, in a new country. It had been cold and early in the morning when she arrived in Ellis Island, and now it was dark and even colder. The process of immigration took hours of being tossed around, closely inspected, and signing papers all by herself. Bessie's older cousin, Selena, who she had only seen a few times in Greece, unlocked the rusty door that had a cold expression, different than the smiles her Greek home welcomed her with. It was late and Bessie was ready to fall asleep in a comfortable bed. Of course, the apartment had different plans. It was what Bessie had imagined a death bed would look like: a metal frame, sheets that couldn't keep anyone warm, and a mattress that sounded like a frog when you sat on it.

"Did you bring anything?" Selena asked, also very tired after waiting forever for Bessie at Ellis Island. Bessie had brought only a small case of what she considered to be her necessities: an old book from when she was little, a brush for her long and dark hair, two outfits, one being a very nice dress, and paper and pencils, just in case. After placing the brush on her little table and keeping the rest in her case, Bessie sat on the creaking bed and got as comfortable as she could. She was still in the clothes she had worn for more than a week, but she had already fallen asleep and didn't care much at all.

After a very slow morning, Selena finally woke up Bessie. That morning, Selena had planned to take Bessie into the city and show her around. Selena had lived there already for one month, and had become friends with nearby shop owners, who sometimes gave her a free slice of cake or cup of coffee. Bessie was a slug when she got ready to go out, and brushed her hair one million times before it was smooth like when she left Greece. Selena, on the other hand, was a falcon in the small apartment. She knew how to get ready quickly and look presentable to the new world. It was almost noon when they left the tenement, and Selena hoped to stay outside and far away from the cramped room for at least a few hours. The two explored the dirty streets, and walked until they found a little store selling newspapers. There were other kids in the store, unpacking boxes of smeared papers. Bessie wanted to talk to them, but her shyness held her back and kept her close to Selena. She tried to hold a paper, black ink smearing her hands like makeup she had seen smear on girls' faces. Bessie began to start a conversation as they left the store.

"Do you miss Greece?" she asked.

"Yes," Selena replied, happy to see she was talking to her, "it pops up in my mind sometimes. But I find New York very exciting, don't you?"

"No." Bessie grumbled, "It's dirty and loud here."

"It was dirty and loud in Greece, right?"

"It was a different kind, one that was more...welcoming."

Selena reflected on what she said. It was certainly different, She knew that, but she wanted to show her that it could be a nice place too, which was going to be hard to prove.

The short visit into the outside world ended with an unintentionally loud door slam. Selena was determined after their talk. She grabbed a box of orzo pasta that she brought from Greece and had specifically saved for the occasion, and struck the table with it.

"Oh," Bessie noted, "that's κριθάκι. Orzo pasta. Are we going to make it?"

"Yes." Selena bent down to get an old metal pot and began to fill it with water. "You're starting your new job today. Let's make some dinner!"

"Hmm? Greek cuisine? I can't say I ever had it." A neighbor stopped and admired their little apartment room setup. After being served their dish, the neighbor complimented them and went on their way.

"Sales are going quite nicely," Selena declared as the day became darker, "our first dollar in only a few hours!" Bessie tried to hide her smile, but she was proud. The one thing she wanted, though, was for her parents to be with her as she took the next order.

"I have some money for...that stuff." a little kid said as they offered some coins and bills, "Everybody's talking about how good it is, and I think I've earned myself a plate of it."

"Alright," Selena smiled, "Bessie, we need one plate of orzo!"

Bessie was in the small kitchen apartment, handling the food. She was far too shy to take the orders of the small collection of people. As she added some tomato sauce to the plate, she noticed the sudden lack in customers. The order must have been the last person in line, so she decided to bring the dish to the door and meet the diner.

"Thank you," said the little boy as he was handed his meal. "I can't believe you don't work in a factory!"

"Factory?" Bessie had seen children early in the morning and late at night, but never had she thought that they were working in factories. Selena butted in.

“We make enough money here.”

The next days were slower than usual, and Bessie was beginning to miss home and her parents even more. She still persevered. Selena had taken another job so they could survive through the sudden decrease in customers, and they were still doing somewhat well, but Bessie was upset. One day, Selena came home with a letter in her hand. They took a break from the absence of customers to open it.

Bessie tore open the letter like a boat ripping through water, filled with excitement and fear of disappointment. It had been two months since she had seen her parents, and this was their first moment of communication. Bessie was only scared it'd be the last.

A quick drop of the paper envelop was the only sound, besides the sounds of emotion within the room. Selena let Bessie handle reading the letter herself, because they were her parents and only Selena's aunt and uncle. Not letting Bessie read it first would be denying a child to go out and play.

Bessie held the paper in front of her and studied it before reading. It was the stationery paper she left at home, and it transported her to her room in Greece. The writing helped transport her, being the first time she'd read in Greek instead of English for the longest time. The letter was short, but had stopped time when Bessie read it.

“Well?” Selena asked after a few minutes, “Can you tell me what it says?” Bessie looked away from the letter and up at Selena, who had been patiently waiting for her to finish. A smile twirled across her face and she happily announced the letter's contents.

“My mom and dad, they can come to New York! They said that by the time the letter arrived, they would be on a boat!”

Selena smiled and looked at the note herself. Surely enough, it stated that they'd arrive sometime by this week, and that Bessie and Selena should meet them within a few days at Ellis Island. Selena knew exactly what this event called for; a Greek dessert, to celebrate.

“Bessie, I know it's nowhere near Easter yet, but do you want to make some koulourakia? I think I have all the ingredients-”

“Yes!” Bessie excitedly interrupted, “We need to celebrate!”

The air was colder than it was in Greece, and the wind felt just a bit harsher. Bessie and Selena had taken the railroad for ten minutes and were now at the gloomy Ellis Island. The large windows displayed sunlight shining in the early morning sky, hope shining with it. Today, Bessie would be reunited with her parents, and hopefully a small part of Greece they may bring with them. Anyone would know that waiting for someone there would take hours, and it was smartest to go early in the morning. Apparently Ellis Island was busy all the time, because several people were waiting with Bessie and Selena. People flooded out of doors and off of boats, the population seeming to be more than Bessie remembered. They felt like they were under water; so many people were trying to get past them, but it all seemed muffled. The first day Bessie arrived, it was the loudest she's ever heard. Thousands of voices from thousands of places were all discordantly clashing that day, but today it was all softened by the anticipation. Soon, two taller figures emerged, each carrying large bags. Their faces became more defined as they moved closer. They moved as fast as the train that sped down the railroads, and Bessie and Selena ran towards them to see who they were. Surely, they were Bessie's mother and father.

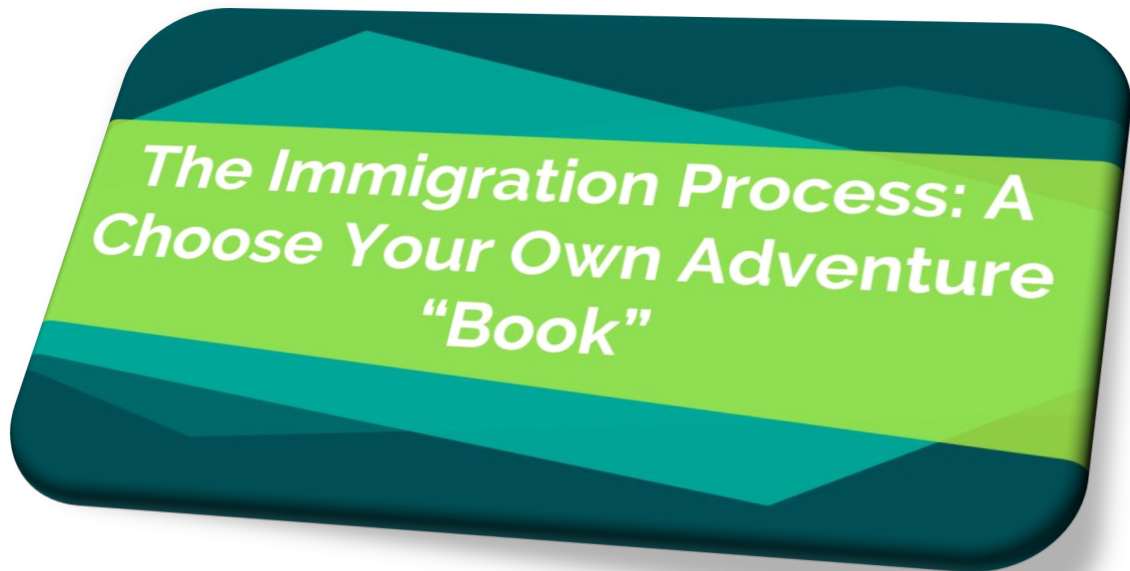
## TWENTY YEARS LATER

“One spanakopita?” Bessie's daughter asked over the loud and lively restaurant. She had finished preparing an order, and began working on the next. The kitchen was a beehive, cooks and waiters buzzing everywhere. Only twenty years ago, a few orders were taken in a small apartment. Now, the expanded Spylios family had bought a larger space in New York City and had customers everyday. Some kids still worked in factories, that hadn't been changed, but it seemed like there was more freedom.

As a waiter ran across the restaurant with an order of prasorizo, and a cook in the kitchen flipped some octopus in a pan, Bessie Spylios herself was taking a break in her office. She was 31 now, and had attended settlement house cooking classes and advocated for Women's Rights a few years back. She got married and had one child who worked in the family restaurant, and her parents were alive and healthy. Selena had helped start the business and handle the transactions when it developed into a larger place. The Spylios Greek Restaurant was a very popular place in New York, and would continue to be for several years.

**The Immigration Process**  
**By: Andy Parr**

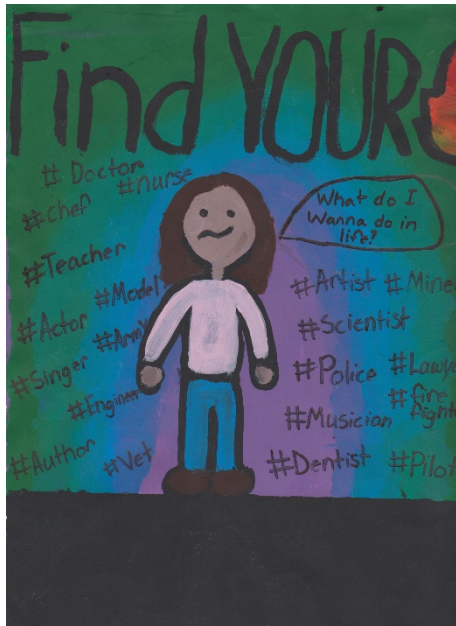
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**Find Your Fire  
LMS Yearbook Cover Submissions**

**Natalia Vargas Camargo  
and Natalie Dominguez**



# If I Were Mayor

By Gideon DeMarco



*Gideon DeMarco received an award for his essay at a Fairfax City Council Meeting in April.  
Image courtesy of his English teacher, Ms. Tara Sanz.*

Being a mayor is strenuous. The role of mayor has helped Fairfax city function properly since 1805 (formerly known as the Town of Providence). If I were mayor, I would lead by example. Working hard to keep my community working together is my goal. I would respect everyone and hear everyone. One of my first acts as mayor would be to hold a city council meeting to discuss goals and challenges related to making our community a better place and how to raise funds for the city's needs. I would act with care for citizens, acting with honesty and responsibility and working to make every citizen feel welcome, happy and safe. If I were elected, I would make sure every branch of service is doing its job in our community. These branches include the fire and police departments and city maintenance. I would go to the stations and centers of each of these branches to see if each had the necessary resources to function well. If one of these branches was not adequately prepared for its role in the community, I would make it a priority to attend to its needs

To make sure every community member is happy, trails and bike paths would be added for entertainment, including installing bike lanes to most roads, promoting biking, and walking to help the environment. Starting a campaign to get volunteers to assist with cleaning up our city would be a goal.

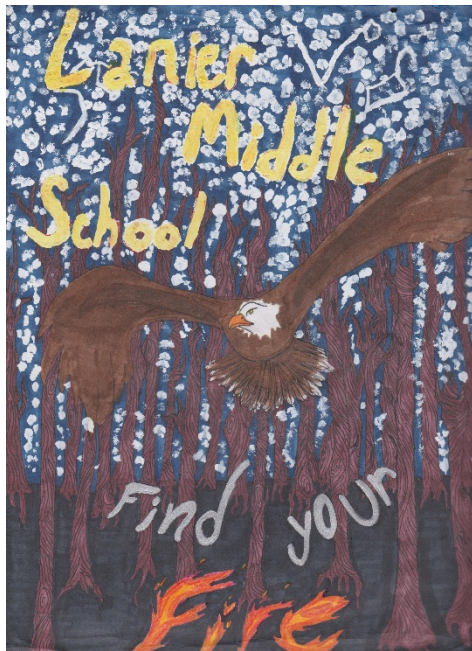
Endorsing the establishment of jobs in our community would be one of my main goals. If a business moved in, I would make sure they have everything needed to thrive in our city to promote industry and small businesses to help our community grow.

If I get elected, I would address crime and bullying. I want all citizens to feel safe here. I especially want students to feel safe at school, inviting presenters to go to public schools to provide healthy presentations to discourage bullying. To make sure we live in a healthy community with extremely low crime rates, I would strengthen our police force. I would talk to each station to meet equipment and staffing requirements. As part of meeting these requirements, a city council meeting would be executed to discuss funding methods. To help the fire department I would build local fire stations not more than one mile from each other

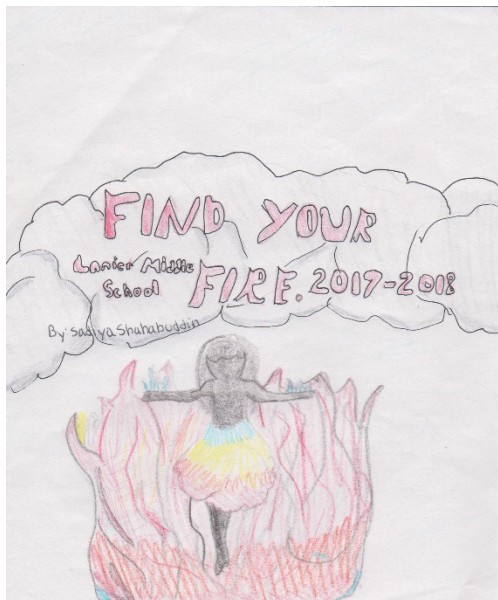
The survival of our city depends on having good education, and thriving economics. If we are lacking resources, I will invite businesses who provide those resources to our community. I would support the education system the most, though, because without an educated future generation, our hard work to keep this community healthy and prospering will dissolve. To further help education, libraries will be built to give students enhanced studying opportunities.

If I were mayor, promoting the wellbeing of each individual citizen in our city will be my biggest goal. I would make this city a pleasant environment for everyone.





**Find Your Fire**  
**LMS Yearbook Cover Submissions**  
**Natalie Sullivan,**  
**Sadiya Shahabuddin, and Sama Al Wawi**



## Nature's Stand

### By Madeline Doan

This story starts with no one but Mother Nature also known as the Earth. She had created the blue sky. Soon, she created her five children. There was Rocky, Atlantis, Blaze, Chaos, and Wendy. Rocky controlled the rocks. Atlantis controlled the water. Blaze controlled any kind of light, which also counted the Moon, and Wendy controlled the wind. Which for Wendy, that included clouds. Soon, the nature family expanded to make our world. And soon enough, people came into the world which pretty much made our future. And then there was Chaos, which made chaos, as you can tell. Chaos also told prophecies. One day, Mother Nature decided to visit him for some advice. Chaos seemed to be expecting her. Right when she walked in, he said this:

*I smell chaos but not from me  
A one of thy own creators bleeds a boom  
A blaze of hope sparks from the lost  
Destruction to come at light and dark  
The fate of the world.*

Chaos slumped towards his rocking chair and slept. As for Nature, she stood there, startled at first. But then her emotions mixed and it seemed to make her worried, but curious too. Somehow, she knew that it would not happen right now. She also somehow expected this prophecy to take place when there was a complete balance of chaos and peace.

Right around our time, at the year of 2010, all five children, were doing their regular routine. Wendy recalls of the same lesson given every thousand years her mom would remind her children of a special ability that they could all do but could cause problems.

She remembers when it would always happen when all of those humans were asleep. Time would kinda stop, but not really. All the children would gather above the clouds since they found the core too hot and dangerous. They all waited for their mother to give them their lesson.

"Today children, I am here to remind you on how to use your special ability," Nature would say. "I will first demonstrate, then teach you what to do, then have you try it. If you need any help, come to me when I am not busy."

So anyways, the special ability that they could all do as their mother could do was transform into a human. When human, you would never die although you could be harmed. The only reason anyone never really transform into a human was because of the consequences.

If a real person were to find out that you were not a regular human, then many things could happen. The things that could happen included being hunted. It can also cause people to destroy nature so that the nature people could come out of hiding. This could lead to other major problems and may cause the destruction of the world. At this time, time would be "frozen." So until all the children were able to transform into a human at least 10 times, time would be kept still. When all are able to do it, time will unfreeze and the regular routine would resume. The last time they had this lesson was about 10 years ago. Wendy recalled helping her brother, Blaze. Wendy seemed to start daydreaming until all of the sudden, she had crashed into a school building. Wendy looked up and finally thought of trying something new.

"I never thought about taking school," Wendy thought. "I wonder if mother would allow me to attend school with my other siblings. I feel like we should take huge risks at least once in our life." So at night when the whole nature family would come together, Wendy announced her idea. At first, most of the nature people felt uncomfortable. But after some convincing, the nature children liked the idea. It was all up to their mother now.

"This idea makes me worry," Mother Nature said. "However, I do like the idea of getting to know these humans. I will give you the choice of if you wish to attend a human school. I will get your required items. However, you will need to do your daily routine before or after school so consider that."

Wendy, Blaze, and Rocky decided to go to the school. Chaos did not like being surrounded by humans. It seemed to make him get overwhelmed. Atlantis prefers staying in the water than going on a school that is on land. Mother Nature told them, "you will be going to Ancient Oak Middle School. Here are your supplies and you start school in a week."

On the first day of school, they were told to land in the forest right next to the school and walk in school. They all had to make sure they were not being watched and also be in human form. They all went into human form and walk towards the school. Rocky looked like one of those emo guys where he had black hair with the black hoodies and jeans. Blaze was quite the opposite. He had blonde hair with yellow long sleeves and bright blue pants. Wendy had long, black hair with a lavender long-sleeve shirt and a baby blue skirt along with black leggings. When they walked in, it was very loud. Students were chatting while teachers were trying to get students to calm down. But it seemed as if when Wendy and Blaze walked in, it gave a in a hot breeze, since Blaze pretty much had



heat powers and Wendy had wind powers. All the students and teachers noticed the breeze and turned towards where the breeze came from. Wendy, Rocky, and Blaze walked in and had a seat. The teachers and students seemed to have forgotten about the breeze and continued on. The teachers gave all the students a speech about middle school and gave all the students their schedules and locker combinations.

Wendy, Rocky, and Blaze did not have any classes together so they went their separate ways. Wendy first went to her locker to fill her locker with all of her supplies. She took out the items she did needed for her first class and closed her locker. Wendy went to her first class, which was gym. Luckily, she was very good at navigating so she got to gym early.

In gym, the teacher, Coach Frunt, gave his students their gym uniforms. And made them run outside. In Wendy's next period, which was Science, they learned about the science classroom safety rules. Then there was home economics, english, lunch, history, math, and French.

At lunch, she did not see any of her siblings so she sat by herself. A girl came by with her lunch and asked, "Can I sit here?"

The girl had brown hair with freckles on her face. She wore a flower shirt and plain blue jeans. She seemed nice so Wendy replied, "Sure."

The girl sat across from Wendy. For the first ten minutes, they ate in silence. Then, the girl asked, "aren't you Wendy Nature, that girl that always seems to carry a breeze?"

"Um," Wendy said, "yes, but how did you know?"

The girl did not reply, but said, "I'm Kristen."

"Nice to meet you," Wendy said, "but how did you know it was me?"

"You were with those other two boys when we all felt that warm breeze. It seemed to be coming from you."

"Well, I felt it too," Wendy lied. She did not want her suspecting her and her brothers.

So the girls started chatting about school and other things. Wendy found out that Kristen was in most of her classes, so that was a relief. Lunch finished and Wendy got through the rest of the day.

Wendy, Blaze, and Rocky met up in the same forest and left to do their routines. They went back home and talked about school at dinner.

"So how was your first day of middle school?" Mother Nature asked.

"It was great!" Wendy exclaimed.

"It was also very cool," Rocky added.

"It was fine," Blaze said. Wendy knew that there was something wrong but did not want to make things worse.

"Aw, now that you say that, I kinda regret saying no," Atlantis complained.

"As long as you are good," Chaos said, "I'm good too. Besides, I would've cause a lot of chaos if I was there."

"So as long as you can keep this up for the rest of the school year, I may just allow you to take another school year," Mother Nature said. "Now, you should do your homework right now and also take a bathe. It must of been a bit overwhelming to be with a lot of humans."

"Yes, mother," They all replied.

So each child took turns taking a bath. Rocky, Wendy, and Blaze finished their homework very soon and they all went to their cloud beds. Before Wendy went to sleep, she wondered if she could make more friends while keeping her grades up. It seemed to have felt good to feel human breath. All that thinking made Wendy fall asleep. The next day, it went as an almost regular middle school day would go. Wendy, Blaze, and Rocky did their daily routine. They then went into human form and walked to school. They went to their classes and then went home. Wendy and Rocky said it was great. Blaze seemed very suspicious every single day they had school.

Although Wendy and Kristen were best friends, they rarely visited each other. Wendy also had other friends, though rarely visited them too. It seem to make Wendy's friend suspect there was something odd, though they never questioned about it. However, Wendy already knew about this. She knew that there was things that were changing. Blaze didn't seem to be as bright as he used to be. Rocky is not so shy anymore. Atlantis actually wants to be on land. Chaos always tries to stay away from humans and is also very busy everyday. And Wendy liked feeling something other than the wind.

Months went by, and this became a regular day. The only thing that would always change is Blaze's comment about school. He would always seem to be in a bad mood everyday. Wendy knew that he mentioned that he had friends and was doing good in school, but she felt like there was something he was not telling them. Soon enough, it was a week before school ended. Wendy was pretty much the popular girl in school. Rocky was the athletic kind of kid that did not care much about his grades. Blaze seemed to turn into the guy that does not want any attention nor does he want to be with anyone.

At school, they all made it through the school the usual way. Except for the fact that Wendy and Blaze along with their friends were going to a soccer field across the school. Wendy and her friends went to the soccer

field to get ready for the county soccer competition coming up soon. Blaze and his friends went behind the bleachers in the soccer field to hangout.

"I am so excited to be hanging out with you!" Kristen exclaimed. "It's not every month this happens, you know."

"Like I said, Kristen," Wendy said, "I am normally very busy and my mother does not want me being out here very often."

"Why are we talking?" A girl asked. "Less talking, more practicing!"

While Wendy and her friends were practicing, Wendy smelled a slight scent of blood. Wendy realized that someone was being hurt and the wind was picking up the scent from behind the bleachers. This also made Wendy know why Blaze was always in a bad mood. Wendy blew her whistle.

"Stop!" Wendy screamed. "There is something wrong!"

"What's wrong?" Kristen asked. "Did we do something wrong?"

"No," Wendy replied. "I smell blood! Follow me, and be sure to be quiet."

The girls decided to not question and the girls sneaked their way, like ninjas, towards the bleachers and peeped through an opening. They found Blaze on the ground, bleeding. They also found his "friends" smirking as one was holding a bat. The boy holding the bat got ready for his blow and the bat went towards Blaze. Right when the bat reached an inch from Blaze, the bat was forced back. Blaze started glowing.

"Oh no," Wendy muttered. She knew what had just happened and remembers what Mother Nature had told her about a prophecy. Wendy's friends backed away slowly and the boys just stood there.

"Run towards that soccer net!" Wendy screamed. The girls ran and so did the boys. All of the kids except for Kristen were terrified.

Wendy look at Kristen and saw she was slightly glowing. Right when Wendy was going to run towards them, Wendy was too late. The bleachers under her exploded and Wendy blacked out.

Wendy saw herself in a meadow. It was night time. She saw a shooting star and heard voices nearby. Wendy looks and sees a young man and lady near a campsite. They see the star too, though they remain there. Wendy follows the star and finds it.

What she sees is a small hole with a glowing child in it. The glow fades away to just show a baby girl. It seems weak, though Wendy knows it is strong since it survived the crash. Somehow, the baby looked like Kristen. Wendy picks up the baby and carries it away from the hole. She carries the baby to a patch of tall grass near the couple and blows a breeze towards the couple.

The couple notices the breeze and look at where it came from. Luckily, Wendy ran away before they could see her. She hide in a different patch of tall grass and watched. When she looks, she sees the couple cradling the baby, looking happy. Wendy walks away as soon as they reach their camp. She sees a forest nearby and walks there.

"I wonder when I will be out of this dream," Wendy mutters, remembering this was a dream. She wondered if she was really just remembering a memory. That would explain why she felt like she had been there before. But it would make things very complicated, so she assumed it was a lost memory. While walking, out of nowhere, a stick came out and Wendy tripped on it. She fell into a hole and only saw darkness. Soon, she sees light. Wendy realized she was waking up! But when she wakes up, she kinda wishes she was back in the dream.

Fire was blazing throughout the whole field. Wendy's friends and the bullies were still behind the net. When Wendy looks up towards the sun, she sees Blaze, his eyes on fire and his body glowing. Then, she looks across the field to still find Kristen glowing. She looks up again and now sees some kind of forcefield around the whole field.

"Kristen will not be able to keep that forcefield on for long," Wendy tells the kids. "Kristen! Make a forcefield just around this net!" She knew it was time to determine the future of the world.

Wendy, still away from the net, starts to glow into a huge cloud. She blows away the flames and sends a cloud message to home. She is then hit with a fireball.

"I am so sick of this world," Blaze booms. "Sick of chaos, blood, and especially the fact that the beauty of this world covers up the true evil of this world." This made it clear to Wendy that Blaze is going insane. Blaze shot a fireball at the forcefield. The forcefield stood still. Wendy blew sharp pieces of cold wind at Blaze, stunning him. And of course, the police along with the SWAT team arrived at the field. Blaze came to his conscious and engulfed the whole field with tall flames. Wendy blew a huge gust of wind.

"This could go on forever," Wendy muttered.

Blaze shoots another fireball at the forcefield and this time, the forcefield shakes. Right when almost all hope was lost, a hole opens up from the sky, filling the field with light. There, Atlantis, Rocky, and Mother Nature comes in. Atlantic creates a new forcefield using water so fireballs can not destroy the forcefield. Kristen fainted, just making the people in the forcefield get more scared. Rocky threw rocks at Blaze, Mother Nature tried to calm the human kids down. Wendy was scanning the area.

“Huh,” Wendy thought, “that’s odd. Where’s Chaos?”

As if it was answered, Chaos comes in as a dark cloud and comes over to the forcefield. He starts to fill the forcefield with the dark clouds. That was, until Kristen stopped him. She shoots a beam of light at the darkness filling up. The dark cloud started to fade away.

“What are you doing?” Wendy asked. She knew there was something was going on. All that Chaos did in response was bring in more dark clouds.

“This world is not destined to stay forever,” Chaos said. “I’m just finishing this world up. And I can not have my opposite preventing me from doing my job.”

He shot a stream of darkness at Kristen. Kristen sidestepped and shot a stream of light back at Chaos. Wendy look up at Blaze, he was standing still, just waiting. Using wind, Wendy pulled Blaze towards her and punches him in the face.

“That was for not telling us anything,” Wendy says as she wraps him in a cold breeze, “you should have at least told someone what was going on.”

“I did,” Blaze says back. “I told Chaos. He told me that I need to find time to become stronger, so that I could get back at them. So using all my free time, I trained myself for revenge. But now, I feel these humans do not deserve to live in this world. I’m gonna let Chaos do his thing. And I will not let you interfere!”

Blaze spits out a whip of fire at Wendy and it wraps around her. Wendy struggles but it gets tighter. Chaos starts to gather the smoke around the field. Kristen starts to tremble. Wendy knows she’s getting tired and can not keep fighting Chaos. Wendy stops struggling and starts to think of a way to help Kristen, but realizes that the fiery rope was getting looser.

“Maybe if I keep staying calm, the ropes will be gone,” Wendy thought.

So Wendy thought of all those peaceful moments before she had ever thought about going to a school. The ropes kept on loosening, but never disappeared. Wendy calmly puffed out white clouds and blew it towards Kristen, giving Kristen some energy.

“The ropes are only letting me do calm moves,” Wendy thought again, “I better be careful about what I do.”

Wendy continued to give Kristen energy, and Kristen was able keep on fighting Chaos. Blaze was starting to get furious. Atlantis and Rocky could not do anything, so they tried their best to remove the fire. Mother Nature watches as the prophecy sinks into the world. The human children tried to encourage Kristen to keep on fighting. Chaos was starting to get weaker.

“S-stop!” Chaos screamed. “I sense peace on this field and I demand the source of it to stop now!”

Kristen felt as if she could explode in energy, so she started to shine brighter.

“We need the light and dark to live on,” Kristen said, “I will not continue to fight, but I will neutralize all of us.”

Kristen started to shine brighter and soon, everyone in the field area blacked out. Wendy woke up on a cloud. She saw that everything was normal. Chaos was gone. Wendy goes to the field. She sees the police confronting the bullies and the nurses helping the other girls. Kristen was not there.

“Well Wendy,” Mother Nature started as she came up to Wendy, “Chaos and Kristen are now among the day and night now.”

“So now we can all live in peace now?” Wendy questioned. She was relieved that it was peaceful now.

“For now, we can live in peace,” Mother Nature replied. “There will always be chaos. However, there will also always be peace.”

“Well, I hope that battle will be our last battle for us,” Wendy prayed. “Well, for now that is.”

Wendy and Mother Nature faded away along with the rest of the family. And the Nature family went back to their regular duties, never to be seen by a human ever again.

THE END

## Fallen Flower

### By Veronica Fernandez Rojas

There was a tree. A simple old tree that bore its most beautiful flowers and wouldn't stop until fall arrived. This tree stood in front of my yard for the time I lived there. I was six when my mother brought a sister for me. I looked at her little baby face and then the flowers outside. I quickly ran outside to pluck a flower from the tree and placed in my sister's crib. I ran back outside to play around the tree. My mother called me over for dinner and while we were having dinner I faintly remember my mother saying

"Hugo, we should name her Magnolia!"

"No. She'll get made fun of because of that!"

I watched mother and father argue, going back and forth and until I spoke up.

"I think Magnolia is a pretty name. We can nickname her Maggie."

My mother clapped her hands in agreement and my father only sighed. It was a good thing my little six year old brain thought of that, but that wasn't the end of it.

"Marcelle, the thing is that we're naming it after the tree up front."

"And? That doesn't matter. It'll be like her own tree. She's going to be Magnolia but if you like, you can call her Maggie, right August?"

I only nodded and took a bite out of my honey glazed pork. They kept on fighting throughout dinner but of course, my mother won. After I ate all my food, they brought in a special little desert. It was eclairs which were my absolute favorite. It took only a minute for me to eat three eclairs. I excused myself since I stuffed up and snuck an eclair into my pocket. I then crept into the baby's room. Strangely, I saw magnolia flowers cuddling Maggie. I panicked for a second and tried to remove them before I noticed that branches and flowers were growing from the first flower I had placed in her crib earlier. I ran over to my mother and father and kept trying to pull them to see the phenomenon. Finally my mother got up to see and looked in her crib with such shock.

"Auggie did you do this?"

I shook my head no vigorously. She picked up my baby sister and out she came from the swaddle of flowers and branches. The magnolia's began to reach out for her but my mother began swatting them away.

"Hugo! Come over here!"

My father swiftly came over. He glanced over at my sister and the magnolia flowers.

"August Perrier Beaulieu! What did you do?" His voice boomed through the house. Tears welled up in my eyes but my mother took my hand.

"Hugo, it's odd I kn--"

"No! I can't have a witch child, a disobedient kid, and a petty wife!"

My mother looked taken back. She set Magnolia in my hands and whispered for me to go to my room before she laid a soft kiss on my forehead and on Magnolia's. Before I did as I was told, I took one of the white flowers from her crib. My little feet went up the stairs and into my room as I heard mom and dad argue and call each other names while pointing out each other's flaws and yelling over and over. I covered my sister's ears and closed my eyes. I heard footsteps run up the stairs and enter my parents room. The door slammed shut as I heard drawers being opened through the thin white walls. After a few minutes there was silence. I looked back and settled Magnolia down on my bed with the flower next to her. I peeked my head out my bedroom door and saw nothing. I was going to step out until my parents room door began to open. I closed my door but left it cracked open slightly to see what was going on. My mother had a suitcase. I went back to my sister and grabbed her little sleeping body. I opened the gingerly door completely and looked at my mom and dad argue from where I stood. My mother soon said something that sparked me to react.

"It's over. I'm done with you and your constant aping over all the flaws and imperfections in life. I'm done and it's over. I don't want you coming back to this house ever again and I hope I never have to see your stupid a--" I began crying, tears had welled up in my eyes and the little teardrops rolled down my rosy cheeks. They both looked up and saw me with Magnolia in my arms. My father muttered an obscenity before saying,

"If it's over I'll get the lawyer."

He then looked up at me and Magnolia. "I don't even care if I don't get to see them. They're the foulest thing to ever happen to me." He turned and left with suitcase in hand. He kept on walking off until he reached his car and turned the engine on.

My mother rushed up the stairs and laced her arms around Magnolia and I. "I'm so, so sorry. He was always just too much."



"Mom, why was Dad upset? I asked while eating lunch with my mother. It's been about fourteen years since the incident and yet it's so crystal clear in my mind. Magnolia is fourteen now since she was born around the same month of the fight.



“Your father was... Harsh and mean. I should’ve taken my brothers advice of not going with him but of course my rebellious teenage mind thought to go against my wise brothers decisions.” She then quickly changed the subject. “Have you gotten a job yet?”

I nodded as I stuffed some chicken into my mouth. “I got a job as newspaper editor. Is that good?”

“For us, yes.”

I nodded and got up, “When do I pick up Mag?”

“At three.”

I hummed an okay and picked up my bag. I looked at my reflection against my spoon and fixed my hair. I set the spoon down and laid a peck on my mom’s forehead. “I’ll be going out now ma, have a good day and make sure to take your vitamins.”

She looked up to me and let out a soft sigh, “I used to baby you and now you baby me.”

A crooked smile tugged at my lips. I didn’t like the fact that she was aging or the thought that eventually she would die and Magnolia and I would be on our own. I opened the door and went down the little rock path to my driveway where two cars rested. One was an old, blue two door Sedan and the other a Toyota Corolla. I got into the Corolla and sat there for a few seconds before my phone buzzed. It was a call from Magnolia’s school. I picked up and a mundane voice was on the other side. For a moment, panic had risen up my throat and infiltrated my system. Everything was blaring in my mind and my breathing became unsteady. I needed to be more calm and I knew I needed to be stable just to talk to the adult on the other side of the phone.

“Hello, this is Cedarview middle school. Is this August Beaulieu?”

“Yes it is.”

“Magnolia needs to go home. She feels sick and has a bit of a temperature”

I sighed with relief, my anxiety was simmering down. “I’ll go get her. I just have question, why didn’t you call our mother first?”

“She requested to call you instead.”



I arrived at the parking lot of the school. I looked at myself in the rearview mirror before setting off to pick up my younger sister. I was angered although slightly worried. I set off to the school doors and pushed the button to be let in. They then let me in. I saw Magnolia come out with her backpack and coat. She seemed fine to me, to be honest. I signed her out and we began our way out of the school. Once we arrived at the car, we sat inside for a moment before I gathered the courage to ask her,

“Why did you make them call me?”

She looked down for a moment, obviously ashamed at herself before signing a few words out. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to ruin your day. There were just a lot of people constantly bullying me because of the... flower power and because I’m mute. They think I’m a stupid, dumb freak.”

I nodded. “Please tell someone next time. And please call Mom first. She’s the one that needs to know first.”

Magnolia nodded and looked at her feet. I could tell she was genuinely apologetic. She had been keeping up this act of being sick for a while and I felt like it was getting out of hand. I drove her home, her face glued to the window and staring at the sky and scenery the whole time. Her eyes were glazed with the reflections and her thoughts wandered. It was easy to tell because she didn’t notice when we arrived home. All she did was look at the sky, and stare longingly.



I was at the door, fumbling with my keys. My sister had caught up with me and tugged on my shirt to get my attention. I looked at her as she signed quite quickly.

“Should I lie or should I-”

I grabbed her hands before she could go on. “If she’s awake, tell the truth and if not, you go on by.”

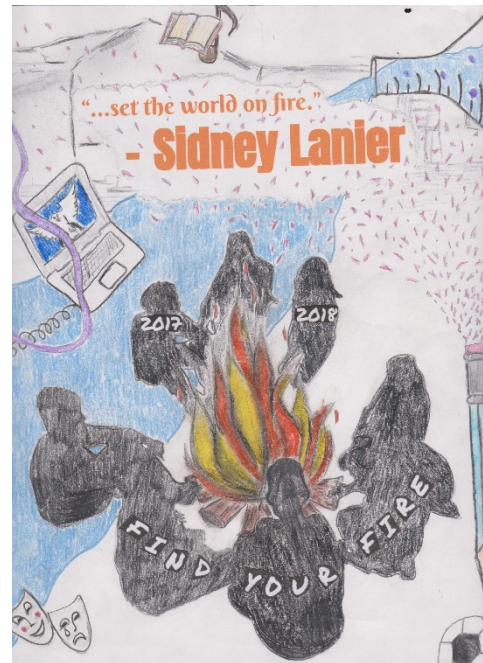
She nodded as I unlocked the door. It was silent throughout except with the light snoring that came from upstairs. She made her way to the kitchen and poked her head in the empty fridge. She picked out a sandwich that she saved from today’s breakfast. I left her there and walked upstairs to go check on mom. I headed to her room and cracked open her door. She was sleeping peacefully, stirring once in a while murmuring some nonsense. I closed the door slightly and went back downstairs. I heard some noises coming from the living room,

“Mags, do your homework for a head start instead of wasting your time in TV.”

She just waved her hands at me and I sighed.

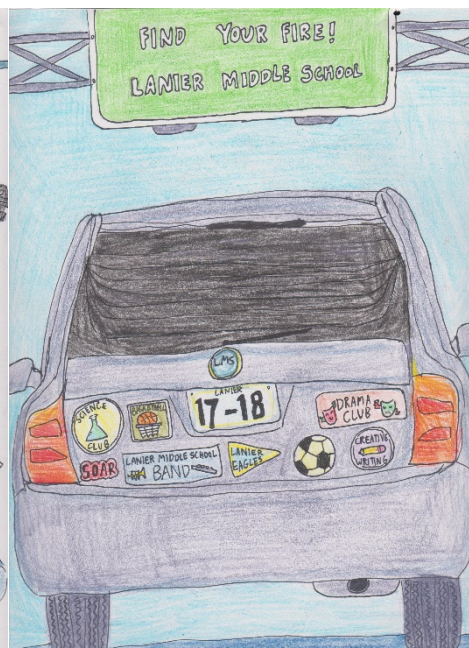
“Go do it or I wake up mom.”

She turned to me, freighted, and scurried off to do her homework. I walked farther away from her, now contemplating what to do with my job situation.



## Find Your Fire LMS Yearbook Cover Submissions

Sara Upreti, Shayla Brown,  
and Sophie Nave



## The Watcher

### By Fatima Hameed

Once upon a time there was a girl. Her name was Abbygirl. She was very shy and scared. She had no friends. She had no siblings. She lived by herself. She was going back to her apartment and she saw a creepy face looking at her from the window. She was very scared. She was alone. It was 9:00 at night Abbygirl heard a weird noises coming from the basement. She was very scared and she ran into her room. She locked the door and closed the windows. After 15 minutes she falls a sleep and forgets about everything. For the next day Abbygirl goes to school and an old lady stops her and she said "Are you Abbygirl I saw you yesterday that you fall asleep" Abbygirl gets little nervous and creeps herself out. Abbygirl asks the old lady about her age and she answers by saying, "Oh dear I am 90 years old." Abbygirl tells the old lady that she needs to go to her English class before she is marked late. While Abbygirl was doing her work sheet she heard the weird noises again. She heard, "I am 90 years old." Abbygirl tried to ignore it but she couldn't. After 2 weeks later she got a email saying that, "Hey Abby do you want to go to the forest?" Abby had no idea who the email came from. She was scared. She did not sleep for two weeks. She found out about the email that it was from the old lady. Abbygirl went to her room to get a rest. While she was looking into her phone she got email again. The email that Abbygirl got was saying "look down to your window" Abby was very scared to look Down to her windows. While she looked down she saw the watcher smiling at her. It was that moment she realized that she forgot to close the door. The watcher was already inside the house. She was very scared so she hide her self in the closet. The watcher kept calling, "Abbygirl where are you?" Abby was very strong girl she did not give it up. That time when Abby was hiding herself in the closet Abby tried to escape the house and ran away but she was too scared to do that. But she heard that the watcher getting a knife in the kitchen.

Abby tried her best to get out the house by going out the window. Abbygirl was near the door and the watcher was going upstairs with a knife. Abby was not enough fast to get out the house by the time Abby got to the window the watcher was looking at her and gave her a big smile by saying, "Goodbye Abbygirl it's too late." Abby had a cute glass cup from her mom when she was a little girl so she threw the cup at the watcher and had enough of power to run away.

Abbygirl had no were to go so she decided to go to the cafe. She stayed there over night. She was a little scared but not too much scared. For the next day Abby wanted to see the old lady but she had to go to the forest. She was a little bit nervous to go by herself. Abby called her dad. Her dad did not answer. She called her dad again. For the second time her dad answerd. "Hello Abbygirl is that you?" he said. Abby was surprised that her dad did not know that this was Abby. Abbygirl told his dad about everything that happened to her. Her dad told Abby to listen carefully that her mother is dead. Abby FREAKED OUT.

Abby told her dad how she died and he said, "She got into a car accident and her heart stopped beating." She got into a lot of injuries and she wouldn't survive. It was very hard for Abbygirl to life without her mom and her dad. She was too scared to go back to her apartment building. Her room is on the 10 floor. Abby had to tell someone to help but there was nobody that she could trust. She decided to go to the police station for help. But it was impossible for her to go to the police station. She became brave and went back to her apartment building by herself. The time she went back there was no weird noises no footsteps and no sounds. Everything was normal again.

One day she went to the park and she saw a puppy. The puppy had no owner so she took the puppy to her apartment. The puppy that she took back to her apartment was not normal. The puppy kept making weird noises without his mouth open. Abbygirl got worried about the puppy. Everytime she looked at her phone the puppy would look at Abby and make the weird noises.

One night she was playing with the puppy she saw blood coming out from his back. Abby wanted to help her puppy but the blood got worse and worse. So Abby took the puppy to the hospital she was trying to carry him and she saw a zipper that was full of a blood. Abby got so scared that called 911 for help. The next day Abby went to get some food at the grocery store. She got pizza and cookies for her lunch. Abby wanted to eat her food she saw that it expired one year ago. She was so hungry so she decided to eat an apple. She was driving back to home. She put on the music. The volume was very loud that she couldn't hear anything. While she was driving on the highway her speed limit was 60. There was no parking lot that she could park her car. She was driving while she looked at the mirror to see if there is any car so she could make u-turn. She saw the old lady in her car. The old lady was siting in the backseat. Abby was so scared that she jumped out her car and she got hit by a car. She couldn't survive. The doctors said that she will die in 24 hours. But it wasn't true. She got better in 10 hours because she was praying the whole time. Two weeks later she got out the hospital she wanted to meet the old lady so she could talk to her and tell her what she wants from Abby.

Abby packed her stuff and went to the forest. She was scared but she had to do it no matter what will happen to her in the forest. Abby kept looking for the old lady but there was no one in the forest. Abbygirl did not

give it up. Abby kept looking till she found an old house full of dolls. The dolls that Abby found was not normal dolls. The dolls were all full of blood and had no heads and arms. She was scared but she kept calling the old lady. She looked for the old lady for 24 minutes but she still did not find it. She decided to go into the haunted house the it was full of dolls. The moment she stepped into the house she saw the old lady waiting for Abbygirl. Abby got scared because the old lady was bleeding to death. Abby wanted to get out of the house but the doors were locked. She was very scared. She screamed for help but nothing was working. Each time Abbygirl moved or screamed the old lady got closer and closer. Abby was shaking but she did not want to move.

Abby started to ask the old lady a question. Abby asked the lady, "Why do you always follow me?" asked Abbygirl.

It was that moment Abbygirl's mother said, "Because I am your mother. Your father is lying to you over and over its been 20 years that your father lied to you."

Abby was very scared and she didn't move she kept asking questions. She was a strong girl but she couldn't stand anymore. She opened the door and ran away but the old lady kept following her and kept stalking her. Was she really Abbygirl's mother? You will find it out soon.

Days after days the old lady kept stalking her. Abbygirl found out that the old lady's name was "Eva".

It was 3:00am when Abby woke up because she had a really bad nightmare. She wanted to go out for walk. She got lost. The streets had no one driving or walking on them. She couldn't see any street names. It was silent. Abby was walking back to her house but suddenly Abby got fainted and lost all her memories. She ended up in Eva's house. The house looked very haunted and scary. There was no light or air conditioning in the house but the basement was freezing. It was very cold. The haunted house was very big house. There were 10 floors. She wanted to use the restroom but Eva only had one and the bathroom that was in the basement. Abby was too scared to go to the basement to use the bathroom. She saw Eva using knives, weapons, and guns to cook. Abby forgot about having to use the bathroom. Abby went up to Eva to see what she was doing or what she was cooking. Abby saw a finger and an arm in her pizza. Abby walked very slowly to open the front door but it was locked. She had no other place to stay so she had to go back to basement. The basement was too cold and had no lights. The lucky part of her night was that she had her phone with her. She turned on her flashlight and went to downstairs. She was too scared but she had to go to the bathroom. There was no other ways that she could go out. The basement was scary and there was no bathroom no doors. There were only snake and spiders. There were a lot of them. She ran so fast that she fell down into the snakes. She got bit by the poison snake. She got up and ran back to upstairs. Eva came to Abby and asked her that if she was okay and what happen to her.

Abby acted normal but she was shaking and Eva hid her feelings. Eva told Abby that she had a security camera if she wasn't telling the truth. Abby acted normal again. Abby told her that she needed to sleep.

Eva told her that, "It is in the basement."

Abby answered back by saying, "Is it really in the basement?"

Eva said, "Oh so you did see what was going on in the basement and you were lying to ME! Eva screamed.

Abby said, "Oh no no I went to use the bathroom but there were a lot of snake and spiders."

Eva answered back by saying, "Do you remember the food that I made?"

Abby said, "yeah".

Eva said, "I know you are going to eat it." Eva said I made that food just for you to eat and everything that happened to you I planned. I put the security cameras in your back in the whole house and I saw all the movement that you did. Good bye for now."

Eva fainted and Abby went down in the basement. For the next day Abby got all the memories back. She felt very scared she did not know what to do. But she was smart and quietly got up in the snakes and spiders and ran upstairs. She looked all around herself if she sees anyone out there. But thank God that there were no one out there. Abby saw a door was opened and wanted to see if anyone was outside again. She went to see. There was no one so she ran the fastest she could. After 20 minutes she kept running back to her apartment. Eva woke up and wanted to see how Abby is doing. She got downstairs but she saw the pizza and wanted to eat the pizza before she goes to see Abby.

After 15 minutes she finished eating and got to go downstairs. The moment she got downstairs she saw there was no one there. Eva was very ANGRY! She threw the food that she made for Abby.

She said that, "She will find her soon and will kill her."

Abby finally got home and opened her door and locked it them. She called her father. Her father hung up on her for the second time. Abby kept trying and finally got to talk to her father. The first word Abby said to him was, "Where is my mother?" Her father said that her mother is dead. Abby said, "No that's not true. Is my mother's name is Eva."

Her father was going to talk but she hung up because she heard a noises coming back to her again. She went to check it out and there was nothing in there. She tried to call her dad again but he couldn't talk so he wanted to text her. She asked him again and he said that her mother's name is Eva. He also said that her mother is not dead but she became a crazy woman. Abbygirl was very upset and wanted to see her mother and talk to her but Abbygirl



was very scared. She didn't care that point because she knew that Eva was her mother. She went to see her mother but the moment she realized that her mother was running to catch Abbygirl.

Abbygirl trying to stop Eva but Eva didn't stop so Abby slapped her "MOTHER!" And she said, "STOP! You are my mother please STOP!"

Her mother started to cry and wanted to talk. The first thing she said was that you're father is a killer and we need to get away from him. Abbygirl didn't believe her for first but then she explained.... That..... Abbygirl..... Had..... A..... Sibling. She had a brother. Abbygirl was shocked and excited. Her mother said that know it time to GO!!! The time that they wanted to go to the car to run away but it was too late Abbygirl's father was smiling at them through the window. They were so scared that Abbygirls mother drove over him. It was 3:00am. Abby was very scared but she couldn't stop thinking about her brother. She wanted to ask her mother but it was not the time.

(The next day....)

It was the time Abby wanted to know where her brother were.

So she said, "Hey mom so you said I had a sibling and what happened to him?"

Her mom answered by saying that..., "Her brother was blind and he was playing in his room with crayons and draw all over the walls so his dad beat him up and he was only 8 years old."

Abby was shocked and she wanted to know what his name was and she answered by saying his name was.... His dad showed up! So Eva drove fast that they fall into a water. The water was freezing but little that they know that her mother is blind but it was numb so she didn't feel anything.

(2 minutes passed)

Her mother starts screaming, "HELP HELP!!!! My back my BACK hurts so bad."

Abbygirl was shocked and she was staring at her mother but her mother kept screaming so Abbygirl quickly took the seat belt off of her and took off her scarf and tight it her back as strong as she possibly could. It hurt so much for her mother but Abby tried to find a way to get out of the car but it was too dark and there were no street signs or anything Abby was scared. Abby kept trying but little did Abby know that they were UNDERWATER!!

Abby wanted to break the window but her mother was falling asleep. Abby looked at her mother but the water filled up in the car. It was time for Abbygirl to break the window and to get out of the car. Her mother had no more power so she said, "Goodbye I love you." Abby didn't want to slap her but it was time to so she slapped her mother and said don't said, "You have to be strong and swim." Her mother couldn't swim she had no power. Abby was very sad... She asked her mother what was her brother name and she said his name was.... Le... Leo. It was that moment that her mother passed away underwater. Abby was VERY MAD AND SAD but at least she got her brothers name.

It was time that Abby let her mother go back to underwater. It was the hardest thing she have ever done. After she spend 20 minutes crying and expressing her feelings. It was time to walk and get herself a hotel. She didn't realize that she has no money or anything with her besides her phone but her battery was very low and she had nowhere to go. Her phone battery was at 10% percent. She was very worried about her battery.

(Two days later)

Every day she slept in the street like a homeless person. People were giving money to her. One day she became friends with one girl and her name is Rose. Rose helped Abby a lot. She got her a house and a car. They were very good friends but it was time for Abbygirl tell the truth. It was dinner time.

Abbygirl started to say to Rose, "I want to tell you something."

Rose replied, "OK".

Abby said, "I have a dead blind brother."

Rose was shocked and said, "Why didn't you tell me already?"

Abbygirl said that her father is a killer and killed her blind brother. She also said that she killed his own wife. Rose was sorry for all of her loss. Rose wanted to do something. It was way too far to go back to the ocean and find her mother's purse. Abby was happy and wanted to go back to the ocean tomorrow. They both agreed to go back tomorrow.

(The next day...)

They both woke up and went to the ocean to find her mother's purse. They got into the car and droved to the ocean. Abby was little nervous. They were 5 minutes away from the ocean it started to rain. Rose was wet and wanted to go back to her house but Abby was not OK with this and wanted to stay.

The first thing Abby said was, "I miss you mom". It was time for Abby to go back to the place where her mother died and where her car was left. She was swimming in the ocean and finally found her mother's purse. Abby opened her mother's purse and found her brother's picture.

It was very sad for Abbygirl that she didn't know that she had a brother and she wondered if he is alive or not. She knew that her mother said he was dead but she didn't believe this. She dug through her mother's purse a little more and she found a note that said,

"Hey Abby I know you will not see this but I want to tell you something. I want to tell you that you have a brother and his name is Leo. You also have a stepmother but nobody has not told you. I also want to tell you that you're Dad is a killer he killed his first wife. I lied to you that I said that your brother is dead but he is not dead. He is in your haunted apartment, in the basement, in your box. Go get your brother before your dad goes. I love you no matter what happens."

Abby was very shocked and proud of her mother that told her the truth. Abbygirl got out of the water and told Rose everything that happened. Rose said let's go back to your haunted apartment. Abby agreed but she was a little scared. They both got into the car and drove back to her apartment building. But little they know that Abby's dad was waiting for Abbygirl to get into her apartment building. Her dad had a knife with him. He tried to kill his own daughter. Rose was inside of the car while Abby was walking towards her apartment. Abby was inside the apartment and her dad was hiding behind the door so he could kill her with the knife.

Abby opened the door and her dad said, "Welcome back Abby how are you doing?"

Abby was like WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN HERE!

Her dad said, "Well you know the truth and you know that your brother is still alive but he is blind. You also know that you have a stepmother but I killed her because she did not follow my direction so I killed her but nobody knew that I killed her."

Abby asked, "What direction?"

Her dad answered and said that he wanted to kill someone who didn't want to work with him so he wanted her to kill him. She didn't want to do it so I decided to kill both. It was fun.

Abby said, "Why do you have to force him to work with you?"

Her dad said, "That's enough; it's time for me to end your LIFE!!" he laughed. Her dad wanted to push her and get the knife into her stomach but it was the opposite. Abby turned and her dad fell and the knife got in his stomach.

Abby ran and went to the basement. Little did she know that her brother was in her washing machine cabinet. But her mother told her that her brother was in the box at the basement. She could not find her brother for 15 minutes. She kept looking and looking and she's heard a crying sound in her washing machine cabinet. She quickly ran and opened the washing machine cabinet to see what was the crying from. She finally found her brother after 14 years. She was so happy that she found her brother her brother kept crying where's mommy where's mommy where's mommy. Abby told her brother that her mother will be back soon so her brother was calm and smiled at me and Abbygirl and they finally found each other.

Abby girl and her brother Leo got out of her haunted apartment building and got in the car. Rose was so happy to meet Leo and they talk they went to the restaurant and after all they got back to her house. Finally they were happy after each other. Rose Abby girl and Leo they all wanted to go out the house and wanted to talk to a police officer about everything that happened from the beginning to the end. For the next day Abby went to the police station and found a girl who was a police officer and the whole situation that happened to Abby girl also happened to the police officer. The police officer were so happy to help Abby girl. After the police officer how are you girl and tell her father out of the hundred building. Last but not least Abby girl wanted to tell the police officer about her mother.

The first thing she said was, "Hey I also want to tell you something that my mother and I got into a underwater and my mom got from there." The police officer was very sorry that heard everything about Abbygirl and the tough life that she was in and the time that Leo and I have a girl did not know each other for 14 years was very tough. After 40 days later Abby girl wanted to surprise Leo with eyes.

Abbygirl wanted to take Leo to a hospital so that she could surprise Leo with eyes. Abby girl took Leo to the hospital and got Leo some beautiful blue eyes. They got back to their house and surprised Rose with Leo's eyes. It was the best moment that they ever had together. 16 days later they got a flight ticket to get away to go to United States of America. It was the time that they were all in the airplane to fly to United States of the America. Abby girl and Rose and Leo have so much planned to do in United States. For the first plan was to get a Leo a beautiful bed and so much colorful in his room. Second plan was to get a house and a playground. Their plan was to get a car and a fake car for Leo. Next their plan was to get Leo to be educated again. Last but not least they wanted to have a beautiful life after all of these tough moments in their life. After 20 minutes later. They got off the plane. Rose wanted to surprise Abby. They had to pay for a house and a car and a fake car for Leo.

Rose wanted to get the exact same thing that they had before. They called an Uber to get in into the apartment but little did Abby girl know that Rose already bought the house and the car for them. That Uber already

knew the address to the house. A girl did not know where they were going. Rose told Abby to close her eyes. Abby was excited and a little bit nervous about where she was going. They all got out of the Uber and they got to the front of the new house. Rose told Abby to open her eyes. Abby opened her eyes and she was shocked that she bought her a best and top 10 beautiful house she had ever seen in her life. Abby was so thankful that Rose put the effort and with a big heart that she got her a best house again. Abby said thank you so much. I can't thank you enough. You are the best. Rose said no problem this is what friends do for each other. Abby said thank you and I love you. Rose said you are welcome and I love you too. After all they had the best life that they ever dreamed for. Abby did not know how much she could be thankful for her best friend Rose.

Abby missed her mother so much and she still does. Abby was thankful that she found her blind brother and she found the best friend she could ever ask for. She was thankful for everything but she was a little upset that the fact that she found out her father is a killer and he tried to kill her own daughter. Abby wanted to tell the police but she was scared because her father had extra security guards in the police station. But now she is over with all of these. Abby, Rose, and Leo did everything together. They went to the grocery store. They went to the playground together. They went to the restaurant together. They ate together. They studied together. They celebrated Leo's 9th birthday. They pretty much get everything together. They never got mad at each other. They love each other for who they were and their personality. Abby, Rose, and Leah were so thankful to have each other.

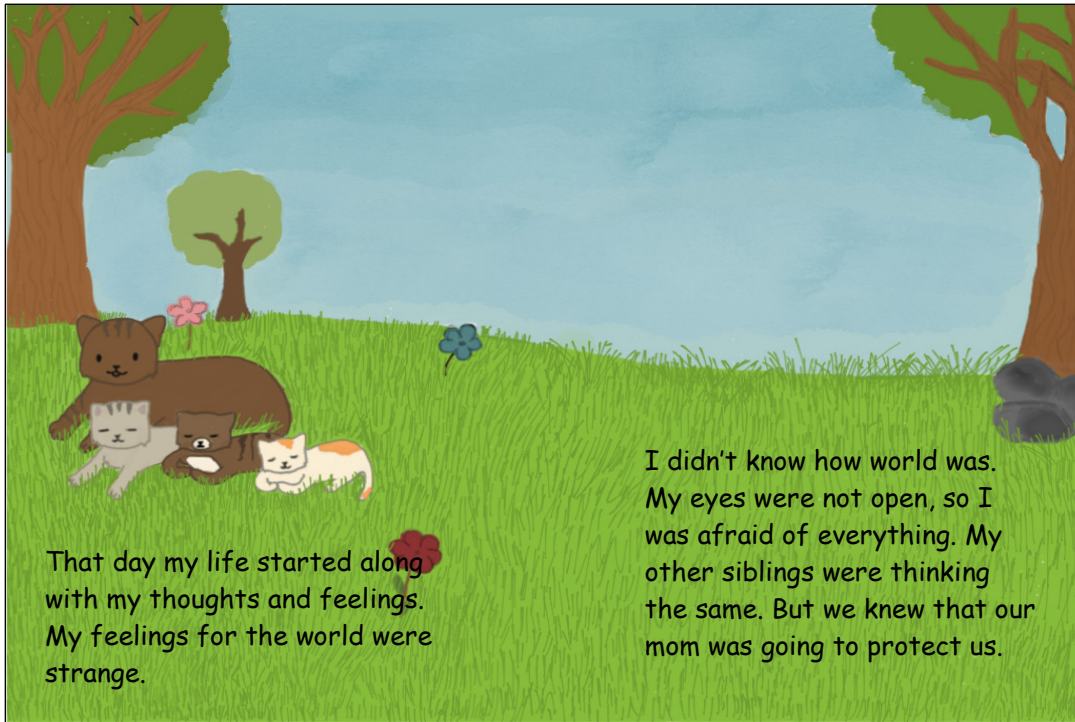


**Find Your Fire**  
**LMS Yearbook Cover Submissions**  
**Judy Ho and**  
**Sebastian Rodriguez Espinoza**





**A Children's Book**  
**By Gulnihal Cetinkaya**



That day my life started along  
with my thoughts and feelings.  
My feelings for the world were  
strange.

I didn't know how world was.  
My eyes were not open, so I  
was afraid of everything. My  
other siblings were thinking  
the same. But we knew that our  
mom was going to protect us.



One week later our eyes have  
started to open and we started  
to walk and run. I understand  
how beautiful the world is when I  
opened my eyes. There were lots  
of colorful flowers and grass  
everywhere.



One day we saw something moving between the grasses when I was playing with my siblings. It was a sick little bird. She tried to escape when she saw us, but she couldn't. We told her to keep calm and we were not going to do anything bad to her.

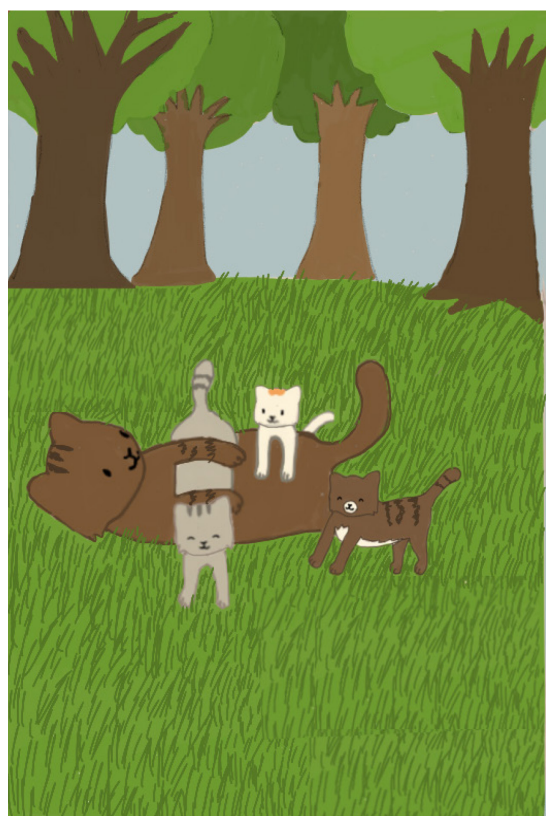


We were coming and checking her every day, she was getting better each day. After one week she turned normal. She wasn't sick anymore. We were playing games every day.



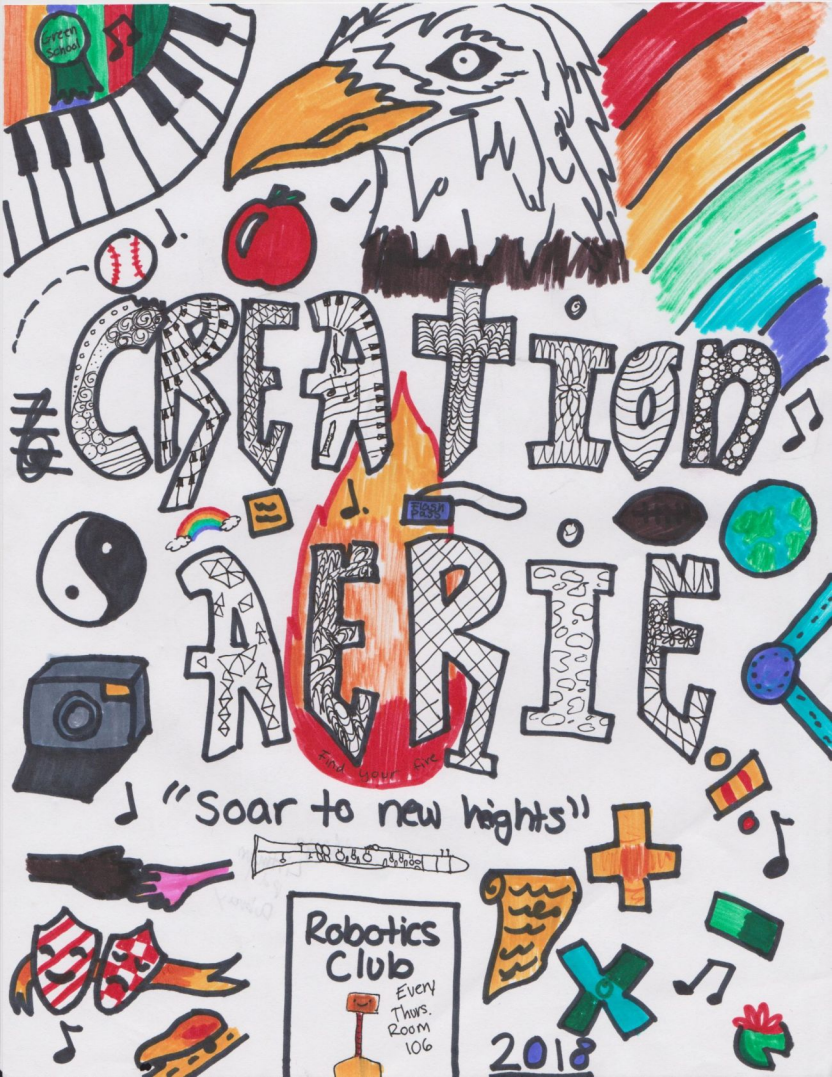


One day she said that she has a family in a different place and she needs to go there. We all get upset to this answer. But when she said she is going to visit us again we were happy.



After she had gone, we started to play with my siblings again, sometimes our mom was playing with us too and we were still having fun.





Green School

Robotics Club

Every  
Thurs.  
Room  
106

2018

"Soar to new heights"