



Issue Five

Poetry

Inferno

By Rita Yadav

/ɪn'fɜːnəʊ/

Noun

1 a very intense and uncontrolled fire 2 A place or condition suggestive of hell, especially with respect to human suffering or death

It is the desire to be set free, from the raging fire
of emotions that confine her as she struggles to conform.
She is limited by the tether of the social expectations.

It is the guilt that is carried in her purse, for letting
the family friend who tried to touch her walk free.
How many charred and tainted childhoods is she responsible for?

It is the fear that restricts her breath, in the smoky haze
face pressed against the musty seat of the old caravan.
The road to her school, her freedom, is broken.

It is the sorrow that hits, when her hand lays flat
on an emptied womb carrying the embers of a female life.
Her stretch marks are the battle scars from the war she lost.

It is the anger that emerges when realization dawns, she is
trapped in a society that feeds on her flaws and insecurities.
They ignite the illusion that women are not worthy, the weaker sex.

It is the paranoia that knocks on lonely nights, searing her mind
as every blaring horn becomes a sinister laugh.
Her knuckles turn white as they grip the keys a little tighter.

It is the strength of the raging inferno, a reflection of
the flames that try to silence her spirit seen in her eyes.
She will burn your bones to the ashes she rises from.

Riya Yadav has just entered her junior year of high school, and has written for a few anthologies and student magazines before. Apart from writing and reading, she enjoys watching romcoms with her six-year-old German Shepherd.

Girls

By Sidney Wollmuth

Her hair has this grace to it

Sweet tea and big white porches

I want to tuck it behind her ear

Just to see if I'd hear rain.

Sidney Wollmuth is seventeen years old. Her writing has been recognized by the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, and she edits for Polyphony H.S.

Guilt

By Molly Rose Strugatz

your father's wrinkled old

hands

wake you from crinkled cold hospital gown guilt dream

hospital, hands

hazardous, head

cold

but big blue bed

warm.

you try

to be good, and you read your parents

poetry, but

they think your poems are dirty and

they are

most of the time.

but sometimes,

when you write one down, you feel

so

clean.

Molly Rose Strugatz is an author and artist from Brooklyn, New York. A recent graduate from the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics, her work has been published in Le Petite Press' Eat/Ate, The Review Review, Troubadour, Antinomies, Pilot Press, and others. She's appeared on Creative Converse Radio 1190 and exhibited poems at Teen Art Gallery. Visit her at mollyrosestrugatz.com.

Someday I will Love Oblivion

By Morgan LaRocca

Until then let the sun in his smug brilliance kiss our honey drenched lips

Our arms dangling, our legs splayed out or wound together tightly

Our rampages and our silence. Our prayers scattered

To the wind or repeated over and over in the mirror

Until they lose all magic. Let us wear crucifixes 'round our necks

And use them to break our backs and pin our guilt

And nail our morality into. Let us have superstition

And thawed ground under slate grey sky. Frost bitten fingers and toes

To count our blessings and rub our relics, our rosaries between. Our strength
no

Mightier than a drunken bumblebee's. Let us have meaning

And a crusade. A prophet dead with more volumes to write.

Nothing to dance for us other than a plastic bag in the wind.

If none of this will be immortalized, then let us keep creating

With hands more worn than

A beggar's winter coat. For this is existence. To take

Up threads and intertwine them for meaning

And when they are worn down to nothing

To keep weaving regardless. For this is our sanity.

Let us forget our sanity. For this is existence.

Let us forget our existence. Our ribcage

Where empty promises stick and snare us. Our lungs

That exhale phrases that leave another breathless.

And what if this is oblivion?

Our saints and confessions? Our sunk Lusitania?

Then let it. Let it coil around us and pull us under

And make us forget we are made of ashes and dust,

That there is meaning in the touch of a shoulder or caress of the waist.

Morgan LaRocca is a sophomore at Towson University and is pursuing a major in English with a concentration in writing. She is an active member in her campus community, serving as the honors college student director as well as writing center tutor. In her free time she enjoys hiking and travelling. She has been published once before in Sequel Literary Magazine.

One Girl

By Riley Grace Borden

One girl, a tiara atop her head, sits crisscross in chicken poop all summer, a single dozing rooster nestled in her arms. One girl who stole the other's tea-set, stashes its shattered pieces in her palm. One girl, a bucket as her hat, awakens in a tree to watch a skyline drip with watercolor. One girl, her lungs scabby with expletives, bites another and goes home to shriek into a pillow as her parents fight upstairs. One girl whispers, "We hate you" into another girl's unsuspecting ears. One girl sinks her teeth into another's arm and curls up in her closet to hide from words all weekend. One girl jostles the branch outside her window, her mind set to judge the velocity of a plummeting bird. One girl locks herself in the bathroom to escape birthday cake. One girl watches her pigtails skip like rocks on water's surface tension, not noticing that her brother's raft has tipped over. One girl has a burial service for an earthworm she just met. One girl cannot comprehend the vestiges of another outgrown friendship, and crawls under her bed to piece them together, one page at a time. One girl throws petals as her best friend gets married at recess then slams a boy's head into the snow. One girl sneaks out at eleven with her bow and arrow pointed at the stars. One girl, who never owned her own toys, awakens in another world playing with thousands, while her limp body lies still on a sewer cap. One girl (she told you all of this) spots your curious shadow in her eyes, and leaves you wondering why she has begun to cry.

Riley Grace Borden is a high school junior from Whidbey Island, Washington who is passionate about all things literary. Her writing has been published by Sprout Magazine, Teen Ink Magazine, Five-2-One Magazine, Moledro Magazine, Eunoia Review, and the Mercer Island Reporter. In her free time, she edits her writing peers' work, blogs, reads, and goes for long runs.

Falling from Nest to Nest

By Mari Toplyn

“This is our new home,” Mother says.

This home: scratched floors and chipping paint. I sleep with Sister on a bed with no frame. Two rooms, one bathroom.

New boyfriend, new home.

This home: smaller but cleaner. I make new friends. They tease me. “My dollhouse is bigger,” they jeer. Sister gets angry. I cry. Mother demands to never be ashamed of our home.

Goodbye boyfriend, new home.

This home: one bedroom, and I sleep on the couch; Sister with Mother. I weep often. Only Sister sees. When Mother does, she hurts me. Sister yells.

No job, new home.

This home: not mine.

Marina (Mari) Toplyn is a sixteen-year-old junior in high school from southern New Jersey. She is a reader and creator of all things imaginative. She writes every available second and when the notebook is tucked away, she’s creating her thoughts into pictures inside her sketchbook—which usually ends up getting stained with coffee or tea.

Synecdoche

By Sophie Panzer

They say the painter Van Gogh
cut off his ear in a fit of tortured

madness and presented it to a prostitute
he might have loved, as if to say,

take this, make of me what you will,
derive my essence from this fragment

of flesh. Again and again we see
the blurred divide between madness

and genius. Think: what if, rather than
relying on endless testing and paperwork

colleges asked applicants for a single sliver
of belly or buttock or breast

mailed overnight in a cooler
and then, along with thousands

of others, fed through
a machine that could distill from it

every drip of ambition
every particle of desire

every tremor of weakness
as if the number of times you decided

to watch Netflix and eat ice cream
rather than study for AP Calculus

was configured deep in your tissues, mapped
in the intricate alignment of your cells.

Sophie Panzer is a history major at McGill University. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *carte blanche*, *GERM Magazine*, *Inklette*, *The Veg*, *Yiara*, *Teen Ink*, and *YARN* (Young Adult Review Network). She enjoys musicals, long hikes, and friendly arguments.

The Blue Scarf

By Renessa Visser

“Mom, can you buy me that shawl?” the thirteen-year-old girl pleads.

Her mother looks toward where the girl is pointing. An indigo shawl is hanging in a shop window. Red thread, gold thread, and black thread are all woven into perfection, creating elaborate designs across the rippling azure cloth.

“I don’t know,” she hesitates.

“It’s my birthday, Mom, please,” the girl begs.

Her mother enters the shop to examine it, and by the time they leave, the girl has her shawl.

She wears it everywhere. She drapes it across her shoulders and runs in skipping steps so that the tassels dangle flirtatiously. She wears it on her head, and when no one is looking, she unties it so her hair and the scarf are one with the breeze.

The girl is innocent, playful. She is mischievous, and mirthful. Everyone knows her laugh. Her parents call her silly—her brothers say she should be more dutiful.

She is in trouble more than she is not, but her pretty face and quick tongue often save her.

The girl puts on lipstick as she watches TV with her family, and as they murmur sounds of alarm, she is tying her scarf around her waist—See Mama, doesn’t it look pretty? The red thread matches my lipstick, Daddy.

But they don’t notice.

She leaves for school early in the mornings, before anyone has woken up. Her scarf is swathed around her head, her bag of books slung over her shoulder. She skips like a bird, a little blue bird, with feathers dotted in red and gold. Her eyes are dancing as always, her feet in step with her thoughts. Her dancing feet echo on the silent street. It is so quiet today, she thinks. Why is it so quiet?

A blast from behind her is so loud, and so sudden that the girl nearly falls from surprise. She spins around to see a bomb exploding down the road. It is far away, but it sounds closer—feels closer. There is fire and brick and dust—it is shooting towards her, and the girl is running, a little blue bird down the black street. There are more explosions, further away. The girl sees smoke spiraling all around, and she knows she is caught.

She cannot go home, she can only go forward.

So she runs. The girl runs, her blue shawl flapping behind her. She runs through street after street. Sometimes she is aware of people around her—sometimes it is only a place where people used to be. As she runs, her shawl changes color. It gathers the black dust, and sings at the corners. It soaks up the girl's tears, her innocence, and her playfulness. Still she runs, a child forever forsaken. She goes from town to town, sometimes with others like her, sometimes not. She only knows she must not stay still, or the terror might catch up with her.

Her scarf is still on her head. She vows she will never take it off.

When she stops to gather her bearings, she doesn't really know who she is. She is a woman with a blue shawl, running from the fire. Sometimes they give her a number, but when she moves on, it changes. She is a bird, a child, a woman. As long as life powers those long legs, and air fills those patient lungs, the woman with the blue scarf will run.

Renessa Visser is a sixteen-year-old student who enjoys photography, playing the piano, and learning how to evoke emotion through her writing. Her writing

has been recognized in the Noisy Island as well as regional writing contests such as Take Flight & Write Teen Writing Contest.

Let Your Imagination Fly By Jessica Frank

A good writer feels her stories. A good writer relates to her stories. But most of all, a good writer uses her imagination. I guess you could say I'm a good writer. I feel my stories, I mean, the paper seems pretty smooth. I can relate to my stories, I mean, I have written stories with my Aunt's name in them. As for my imagination, I try as hard as I can to avoid it.

Some say imagination is a wonderful gift, but it seems to be more like a curse. My imagination runs wild. The only way to keep it from being released is a prompt. If I would lose the safety of a prompt, my imagination would free itself. You see, once you have a prompt, your imagination is tied down to a concept. If I didn't have a prompt, my imagination would come loose. Although now, I must face my imagination as the dreaded free write.

My imagination knows my innermost thoughts, my biggest fears, and my darkest secrets. For my imagination to be free, possibilities are endless. How do I possibly make it so that my imagination doesn't take control? I could hide all the pencils in the house! What am I saying? My imagination can see everything I can. My imagination would know where I hid them. So how do I stop the force in my head? I could pretend to be sick! Then I wouldn't have to turn in my paper tomorrow. That would at least buy me some time to come up with a new plan. So it's settled, I'll be "sick" tomorrow.

Morning, that time when.....wait.....IT'S MORNING! It's show time! Role of a sick person, and action. Even after I tried every trick in the book, I still am forced to go to school. This might be harder than I thought. One thing's for sure; I can't let my imagination free. I've gotta find a way to avoid it.

I need to convince my teacher to give us a prompt. No, Mrs. Smith is too stubborn for that. I can't escape my imagination. There's no way. The time had come for my third hour class, language arts. Mrs. Smith took attendance. Now it was time to share our stories aloud. Beverley went first, as always. She read a story about a girl named Ramona. Then, Mary shared her story about two kids and a time traveling tree house. After Mary went, a boy name Andrew read about a pen like I'd never heard before. Then it occurred to me, all of these stories were magnificent. They were a masterpiece made by their imagination.

Imagination was nothing to be afraid of! An imagination is part of who you are. Imagination is everything beyond belief, and I wasn't going to hide mine anymore.

When Mrs. Smith called my name, I was confident and ready. I got up and read my story with pride. I knew I was a true writer. I knew the world was my paper, and I couldn't wait to grab a pencil and start my first draft. I stood up in front of the class and shared my imagination with the world. I haven't held my imagination down since that day it lead me. I know now to let my imagination fly, and I haven't let it touch the ground for a second since I read *The Cat in the Hat* for the very first time.

Jessica Frank has always liked to write. It helps her to express her thoughts in a way not much else can. It allows her to use creativity, as well as knowledge, to make something worth sharing.

A Crash Course in Paranormal Psychology By Laura Ingram

My sister comes home from her first sleepover smeared in makeup, refracted and reflective. She asks me if I think she's pretty. I take her hand and drag her across, wish I could pack her skull like a suitcase, letting only clean things stack up, whatever she needs to keep her warm. I see that she has started sitting on her hands, ashamed of the bulbous blue tips of her fingers. I want to tell her the universe has been promised to her palms, that those are the fingers that draw bunnies and clouds and corpses, that fed a baby bird sugar water out of an eyedropper, that tied my shoe laces in triple knots for six weeks when I broke both of my arms falling out of the space simulator on a field trip.

"You are lovely." I clear my throat, squeeze her shoulder. "Absolutely lovely." She squints as planks of sun creak across the sky, the construction site of summer.

"Lillian Baker says I'm too skinny and I look like an alien."

Emma. I press her name under my tongue, as if I could keep it safe inside my mouth. She covers her face and cries. I kneel; push her bangs out of her eyes. I do not hold her. I am so afraid she will go stiff or slack in my arms that I tell myself over and over that I am lighter without anything in them.

I lead her to the cramped blue bathroom. Scrunchies, bobby pins, and six different kinds of lip-gloss litter the counter. “What do you see?”

“ A skinny kid with socks up her shirt and bruises down her back.” She bites off a hangnail.

I flip the wrong light switch.

She feels Pangaea surging through loose fists; the whole of human history explained by the way she hides her hands. She rests her head on my shoulder. My eyes start to sting, an advertisement against allergy to self.

” Look at your sparrow shoulders. Your flyaway hair and skin the color of April. Your straight teeth and crooked smile.” I say.

“But all I see are bones and questions.” She brushes an eyelash off her cheek.

“I think that happens to a lot of us. I feel that way when I look in the mirror most of the time. We have to find someone we trust to be our eyes until our own work right. But one thing not working right doesn’t change the things that are!”

She bites her bottom lip. “There are a lot of things about me that aren’t working right.”

“But you are working right.”

I know how to graph exponential functions, have been able to teach myself Latin and Elfish, have learned to accept a single mistake on a spelling test, some blotted ink on an essay, but for all I know how to do, I cannot figure out how to protect her from what only she can see.

She sticks her tongue out at me and hops off the counter, prances to the kitchen and takes a swig of chocolate milk straight out of the carton. I groan.

“Great. Lip Smackers on the lid again.” She jumps on my back, giggling. I whirl around, making sloppy circles until I see double in every direction. My blood type is kaleidoscopic, incompatible with my next of kin. I bend over to

let her slide off, smooth her hair. Strands get stuck in my fingers, fall out at my feet.

My sister wins the school wide spelling bee, the most Girl Scout badges, the hardest song for the next piano recital. When I get called to the nurse's for the second time that week, I brush her bangs back to feel her forehead.

"She got in a fight with three boys. She bit the teacher that pulled her off the biggest one."

I rub the back of her thumb up and down. Somewhere a while ago I read that a consistent simple motion applied to the same place helps small children fall asleep if it is repeated every night. She flinches. The thin paper over the cot crinkles. I rest my head in my hands, realize that I have not allowed myself to watch her grow up, one more reason why I wasn't expecting this.

I turn away.

"They started it," she says pulling the pale blue blanket up to her eyes.

"Do you know why?"

"Because I'm little and they're not?"

"And why did you finish it?" I push my glasses further up my nose.

"Because I wanted to win."

"You don't have to fight to win. The winner is the one who walks away on their own. The lead up doesn't matter so much." I rummage in my pocket for a pen, twist the cap on and off.

"What do you know about fighting?" She clears her throat.

"Not as much as most, but more than some. I think I'm gonna be ok."

"I could so take you." She punches my arm.

“Yeah right, just this morning you had to get me to help you squeeze the last bit of toothpaste out,” I say.

“Yeah, and you couldn’t do it either.” She sticks her tongue out at me, an exaggerated red, like a sweatshop summer, manufactured overseas and shipped without protective packaging.

“Whatevs, I’ve got brainpower to back me up.” I crack my neck. She cringes.

The nurse rattles a bottle of aspirin, wraps a brown scrunchie around her black hair. Two girls skipping hand in hand and dripping in mud beg the nurse not to call their mother. They must be twins, but one of them is three inches taller. They are wearing matching yellow sundresses and jelly sandals. Crumpled blue Kleenex and brochures on every topic from Sibling Rivalry to Bipolar Disorder cover the cot next to Emma’s. Different colored crayon drawings, mostly of houses, strings of smoke swiveling out of crooked chimneys, hang on the corkboard.

“Emma, has your brother talked any good sense into you yet?” the nurse says.

“Yes Ma’am.”

The nurse blows a bubble with her gum, reaches up and stuffs it back into her mouth.

“You gonna stay out of trouble from now on?”

“I can’t make any promises.” Emma struggles with her jacket, sloppy braids getting stuck in the zipper.

“What about you, boy? You gonna keep her out of trouble?” The nurse pulls out a pink slip to send Emma back to class. I hand her my pen.

“I can’t make any promises.”

I catch my sister smoking the stub of someone else’s cigarette on the playground six blocks from Oakland Elementary. I snatch it from between her fingers; smother it under the sole of my shoe. I do not ask. She does not

answer. Her friends edge away, hair let down, sleeves rolled up. They look older than her. I can see the bands of their brand new training bras, thin pink straps that boys will snap through the backs of their blouses. They hold their hands over their faces like church fans, waving away lies of omission, a dismissal, not a greeting.

“We’ll be around, Emma.” They shuffle their shiny black boots. “Holler if you want to hang out some more.”

“You can stay. My brother just wants to know when I’ll be home.”

“Very soon.” I say. “Could you guys give us a minute alone?” They scuffle across the plywood plank that serves as a shortcut from the little kids and big kids playgrounds, stepping over clods of red clay. At a certain age, girls become careful. Still, they do not look at who is leading them before they follow. Being lost is better than being alone.

My voice is shaking but my hands are still. She coughs into her cupped hands, even though I taught her to cover with her elbows years ago.

I wonder what else she has forgotten. I don’t know what to say. I am tired of being the big brother, of keeping our misery immaculate. I want to throw things.

I want to make a mess.

I sit down on a creaking swing, purple paint peeling off the chains, rubbed away in some spots from tons of tiny fingers, smeared with applesauce, Chapstick, and snot. Emma stands over me, silent, denim skirt whipping around her scabby knees, socks sagging around skinny ankles. Mom insists she wear socks at all times to keep from catching colds, but she usually takes them off in the bathroom when she gets to class and puts them back on before getting off the bus.

A few fourth graders are playing freeze tag. The school lets kids whose parents are at work stay in the playground until six o’clock. A girl and a boy fall on top of each other, laughing, and everyone else unfreezes to sing “Jesse and Kaitlyn, sitting in a tree, K-I-S-S-I-N-G.” The other kids in her class freeze my sister first on purpose when she plays so she won’t get too tired. The younger kids just stare at her, ask her if she’s ever been to the doctor for that cold, if her

mom remembers to give her Robitussin before school. A group of girls, the curls coming out of their hair, smacking Double Bubble and clapping their hands to the beat of a Carrie Underwood song no one will remember two months from now, sit criss-cross-applesauce near the grave of the three guinea pigs the kindergartners could not keep alive when they were asked to take them home.

When I look at the skin over her wrist, weak veins from years of IV drips, I am not reminded of what is going to kill her.

When I look at Emma, all smashed china and spider webs, I am reminded of the things that keep a body alive, the tendons and tremors and ticking.

It takes a lot of doing to die.

“I just wanted to see what it will feel like when it happens.” She sits down beside me, rests her head on my knee. I try to stop bouncing it.

“When what happens?” I scratch a mosquito bite on the back of my neck.

“You know what I’m talking about. You know everything.” She picks at a scab on her elbow. “Surgeon General says cigarettes kill people.”

“Not all at once.”

She tucks her heels beneath her body.

“We’ve never talked about this before.”

“Sure we have. Remember when you finished Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows?” I say.

“That was different. This is real.” She twists the two friendship bracelets around her wrists, lines the fraying knots on the ends up with each other.

“Just because something comes out of someone’s mind, or even stays in it, doesn’t mean it’s not real.” I say.

She puts her hand precariously close to a bulbous pulse, to ribs below the heart, the same place that is closing off in her own chest. I focus on the infinity ring

on her thumb. The butterfly sleeves on her blue blouse flit back and forth in the breeze. I inch away. My father taught me a long time ago that if you touch a butterfly, not matter how lightly, tiny invisible feathers will fall off of their wings and they won't be able to fly as far or as long. Sometimes not at all.

It's hard to say.

"I'm dying faster than you." She moves her head off my lap.

"You will be if you start smoking." I braid a wisp the hairdresser forgot to trim from her bangs. She can never sit still for more than five minutes.

"I will be even if I don't."

"I don't want to talk about it." I say.

She is turning eleven in a week. Her best friends Jonah, Ellie, and I are planning a surprise party, with pizza with every topping but pineapple, which she hates because they are too stringy and get stuck in her teeth. I wonder if I will see her wearing white at the sixth grade dance, black at the eighth grade formal, gawky and static as someone else's graduation, if we will bury her in her first communion dress, which still fits four years later, or her favorite ballet costume, a glittery green leotard with sequined sheaths for sleeves and a short skirt.

I feel like the first day out of bed from the flu, empty and aching, but afraid to chew and swallow. Unable to digest.

She tugs at the sleeve of my Star Wars shirt, nose raw and running, ruining her passion fruit lip-gloss.

"What are you most afraid of?" she says.

"That the wizarding world will grow tired of our immense stupidity and wage full out magical war on us. What are you most afraid of?"

She furrows her brow.

“That my teeth will all fall out at once and I’ll choke on them. Or that God will really get mad at me for saying “oh Jesus” under my breath when I get mad at Ms. Mahoney. “

“It’s getting cold. Let’s go on home.”

I trail after her, bearing the burden of a social studies textbook and two Swiss rolls.

She is translucent and transcendent, trudging through small swamps.

“Hurry up slow poke” She starts walking backwards.

I shiver.

The worst part if she chooses to become a ghost is that she’s going to be grown up while I’m going to stay the same.

Laura Ingram is a tiny girl with big glasses and bigger ideas. Her poetry and prose have been featured in thirty-seven literary magazines, among them Gravel Magazine, Tallow Eider Quarterly, The Cactus Heart Review, and Forest for the Trees. Laura loves Harry Potter and Harry Styles, and hopes to be a bird when she grows up.

Rooftops and Nostalgia

By Ella Lerner

When we were 1, 2, 3, our mom would hold our hands all the way up the stairs to the roof because it was closer than the playground. She would sit us down in the middle of the cement so we wouldn't fall into the busy city streets.

When we were 4, 5, 6, we tugged Dad's hands as soon as he got home from work, begging an escort up the stairs, and a hand to hold as we peered over the edge. We would smell the roasting chestnuts and hear the shouts of seven languages. We would watch the rushing taxis, and the running umbrellas, and long for the busy city streets.

When we were 7, 8, 9, we danced and whined until we got permission to stand alone, looking down onto the busy city streets, feeling like royalty. We ran in infinite circles until a nervous adult shooed us away from the edges. We sat in the center like we were 1, 2, 3, until our feet itched and our legs tingled and then we ran.

When we were 10, 11, 12, we read books about dragons and kids with treehouses and we wanted our own fort. We scavenged old sofas and built a coffee table out of cardboard boxes. We draped satellite dishes with pretty clothes found under beds. We doodled a secret diary and wrote stories about technicians that stole our decorations and babysitters we were too old for that made us cookies. We had conquered the roof; we had no need for the busy city streets below.

When we were 13, 14, 15, we watched the sky change and traded homework and talked about boys and girls and sports. We laughed about the stupid things we did 1, 2, 3 years ago. The busy city streets roared on, idling cars stuck in traffic sending fumes into space, but we sat in our own atmosphere, untouched.

When we were 16, 17, 18, we didn't have time for our rooftop world. We had social lives, and relationships, and tests, and college applications. We had to figure out how to get skinny, popular, successful. We learned how to parallel park and merge. We became the busy city streets.

When we were 19, 20, 21, we realized our streets didn't go quite as far as we'd thought. Like birds learning to fly we left the nest for the West, South, Europe. We packed our bags for other busy city streets.

When we were 22, 23, 24, we lived in lofts or one-room apartments off of ramen and fast food. We surfed the Internet for expensive condos with good views we couldn't afford. We were interested in progress, in the days where we could do what we wanted and live where we wanted, not in returning to old roofs and flimsy second hand furniture.

Now we are 25, 26, 27, we have started thinking about marriage and kids and our own childhood. We walk back up the stairs occasionally; notice the hairline cracks on the right hand wall. Look out at the busy city streets; envy the expensive cars rushing by. We run fingers over velour brocades and the pages of the secret journal not well hidden. We miss 10, 11, 12, for a few minutes and then we go back to our lives.

Soon we will be 28, 29, 30. The marriages will fade from brilliance into normalcy, maybe all the way to torture. The kids will grow up like we did, 1, 2, 3, then 4, 5, 6. We will juggle briefcases and small hands. The kids will have interests— dinosaurs or pirates maybe. They will turn 7, 8, 9 and they will let go of our hands. We will start to see our parents in our own worry lines. We will learn to miss our rooftop homes and vivid imaginations.

Before we know it we will miss our children's childhoods and our own 20s, 30s, 40s. We will age into grandparenthood, 50s, 60s, 70s, and we will miss good backs and full nests. We will pull into the busy city streets and wish we could leave them for our rooftops once again.

Ella Lerner is a high school freshman who rarely gets enough sleep because of Netflix, or her teachers, or her need to make up stories about people she's never met. She's been previously published by Teen Ink and Stone Soup and recognized by Scholastic Art and Writing. She can be found on Tumblr at abandonedshopofhorrors.tumblr.com or Twitter @ella_raine

Warfare

By Jenna Bao

Growing up, Eliza learns never to choose sides. It isn't intentional, but with enough practice she masters the art of neutrality. She discovers the right times to nod, perfects an expression with just the right blend of ambiguity and understanding.

Her mother laments that America is falling apart. Her father scoffs that it was never as great as she wanted to believe it was. Eliza never could understand why a wide-eyed dreamer married a realist. But still, she plays devil's advocate for both and absorbs their righteous indignation so it won't ricochet off the walls.

Her mother claims that the movie is ethereal, gorgeous. Her father remarks that it's predictable, unrealistic. Eliza never could understand how a hopeless romantic loved a self-satisfied pragmatist. But when he gives her mother a box of chocolates for the fifth Valentine's Day in a row (never noticing that the treats got passed along), she nods that yes, Dad should make a greater effort, consoles that yes, Mom shouldn't let her emotions get all riled up over meaningless occasions.

She's not sure who she blames.

Inevitably, the language of her family twists so desperately that it sprains, limping, carrying only half its emotional burden. Statements crumple at the slightest provocation-and so they all learn not to provoke. Agree not to sink teeth into the gaping holes in arguments and to look the other way at broken claims. It's ugly, after all, to kick a crippled thing.

Their words become flimsy, like tissue paper. Stuffed into a gift bag to hide its emptiness, rifled through to find substance. It gets old, and so the words became sparse and utilitarian. Pick me up at 7. Buy eggs. Come. Fine.

And in the instances when there are tears involved, when voices are raised and past mistakes are resurrected, she hides. They are at least considerate enough not to search for her, and so enough bridges are allowed intact to keep the ecosystem up and running. (Sure, there are some nights when she wants to let them burn. But then, she's adapted to this environment. She can survive here.)

It's only until years after she leaves home that Eliza realizes she never learned how to make choices. Perhaps she was foolish for ever thinking that she could turn her "ability" on and off after it became instinct. Funny how she learned to stay in the middle, but never to find balance. She speaks in hypotheticals, an "on the other hand" always waiting in the wings as she reads the room and envies the conviction with which her friends embrace their bandwagons and blanket statements almost as much as she fears it.

Eliza's date swirls his wine glass absentmindedly, staring at her like he's trying to find something. Whatever it is he's after, he won't find it, but she resents him for searching anyway.

"Tell me about a cause you're passionate about," he says, as if it's simple, obvious, and her mouth opens and closes as she searches first for something safe and then for something real. Slammed doors and shattered plates warned her away from passion, but too often she hears people speak of it with revelry.

"I guess there's not much," she chuckles. She almost wants him to realize that it's contrived. Her date responds in kind.

"Well without a cause, what do you fight for?" he asks, keeping his tone light to belie a challenge. She recognizes the tactic. A glimpse of irritation brushes across her chest, wisps of smoke already abandoning a spark. She finds that people like the idea of fighting; it's romantic, they say. She looks into his eyes and she can tell that he thinks of warfare as martyrdom and freedom, but Eliza has heard too many low blows, too often marveled at the ability of shots to penetrate closed doors.

"Pacifism, I suppose."

That's the most useful skill she decides, that she learned from her family: the ability to make flimsy words seem powerful, for no side but her own.

Jenna Bao is currently bustling through high school in Cincinnati, OH. She is far too passionate about far too many things but manages to find time to create short stories by cutting out bodily maintenance. Her journalistic writing can be

found at shsleaf.org, and her fiction has been recognized by the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards and published in Flash Frontier.

An Imagined Conversation, or Why Couples Should Just Listen to Happy Music

By Bailey Share Aizic

Perched on the edge

of your bed, I listen to the

lyrics of a song I've

heard a million times.

"I'll never be the comfort

you lost when you were

nine," the singer belts,

and I look at you. "Don't

give me that face," you say,

"this song is about quitting

smoking." I want to say

something clever in return,

like, "same difference,"

but you're smarter than

me, so I just keep staring.

Wistful. I know you want

me to go home, or anywhere

other than your room. I will,

in a moment. For now,
let me count your freckles
and imagine a future in
which you love me.

Bailey Share Aizic is a poet, student, and Oxford comma enthusiast based in Los Angeles. She works on the editorial team of Wizards in Space Magazine, a litmag by and for nerdy writers, and performs improv comedy in her (scant) spare time. Read her recent work in Noctua, Rogue Agent, Right Hand Pointing, and Calamus, and read her mind @sortabailey.

National Day

By Kathleen Madigan

My classmates compete
to see who can bring the most camels.

Some of the older kids bring
falcons, and let them fly through the
crowd of people on the field.

During lunch,
old women sit on the ground
with a small electric stove
in front of them, making fried balls of dough
covered in honey and sesame seeds. We
watch a performance in the gym, of girls
doing the hair dance, whipping knee-length
locks from side to side. Of boys
twirling guns in time to the
music. The songs performed in a foreign tongue.

They give us flags of
a country I don't yet know
but will become my home.

Kathleen Madigan spent four years living in the Middle East, where she learned many new traditions. Her favorite was National Day, a time at school to appreciate the culture of the United Arab Emirates by seeing native animals and eating traditional food.

Lady Nature, Catching Stars

By Betsy Jenner



Lady Nature



Catching Stars

Betsy Jenifer is seventeen years old and from South India. Her art and writing have been published or are forthcoming in Door is a Jar, The Tishman review, The Claremont review, Polyphony H.S and Canvas, among others. She is also the first place winner of The Daphne review's Inaugural Web art competition.

Peru

By Sofia Schlozman



These photos were taken during a trip to Peru the summer of 2016. One was taken in the hills near Machu Picchu and the other off the coast of Lake Titicaca in a village called Perka Norte. It was an amazing trip during which I was able to experience Peruvian culture as I never had before. The people were some of the kindest I had ever met and never failed to welcome me into their homes and share their love of their country with me. Though these images cannot possibly capture the magic of Peruvian culture, my hope is that they convey the beauty and uniqueness of the county, not only in terms of the landscape, but the people one meets there as well.



Sofia Schlozman is a junior at Belmont High School in Belmont, MA. She has always loved photos, but did not seriously pursue photography until taking a film photography class as a freshman. Now, she carries a camera with her nearly everywhere she goes. Photos are her way of capturing memories, and she loves that each photo conveys deeper feelings hidden below the surface of the image. She hopes that sharing her photography with others allows viewers not only to peek into her life, but also to develop their own feelings about moments they never would have experienced before.

Coffee Shop Rejection

By Kayley Reininger

When she admitted that she was a lesbian, his whole dream of them being together- like in all the romance novels he read- popped like a balloon. He sat in silence for a moment, staring off at a random bookshelf.

Error, error. Cannot compute.

Comprehension finally swept through his mind, and his eyes flicked back at her, taking in her anxious expression.

“Oh...”

She bit her lip and tucked a strand of auburn hair behind her ear, nervously awaiting his reaction. He had honestly never even thought...It was okay though. He would be okay. Rose was nervous, and he needed to show her that he wasn't some...homophobic jerk. He nodded decisively.

Input command. Enter.

“That's okay,” he finally said, looking at her and then down into his coffee cup. It was cold. He took a breath.

“I'm not gonna lie. I'm disappointed. I... think I might need a few days to process this. After all, if we're going to stay friends, then I need to get over this crush.”

He glanced up just in time to see a wobbly smile form on her lips. It reached her hazel eyes, he noted with relief. He had succeeded in alleviating whatever fears had been running through her mind.

“Oh thank god, I was so worried about your reaction. I didn't- I didn't want to hurt you or anything, you know that right?” She spoke slowly in an attempt to keep her voice even.

He nodded. “It's okay, Rosie.”

She laughed and swatted at him. “Don’t call me that, Charles.”

He grinned before reverting back into a more serious expression. “Honestly,” he started, “we’ll probably be better friends now that that’s been resolved.”

“I hope so. It would suck to not have a book-buddy anymore,” Rose replied, pouting at the thought.

“And over a silly crush, too. My ego isn’t that fragile...to throw away our friendship over something that’s not your fault,” he said.

“Ugh! You’re getting all sappy! I think we’re getting too emotional today,” she complained, “Care to get fresh coffee instead, signore?”

He shook his head and laughed. “Only you- even though you’re an avid reader of romance novels- would complain about feelings.”

“Someone needs to with the way you were emoting,” she threw back, scooting away from the table.

“Get me another?” he asked.

“What’s the magic word?”

He rolled his eyes. “Please?”

She walked off without another word. After she was out of sight, he leaned back in his chair with a sigh. This was not going how he had envisioned it, and honestly, while he was disappointed...he was also sort of glad. The whole day leading up to his confession, thoughts of ruining their friendship ran through his head. It was probably why he had been so accepting of her rejection: he valued their friendship more than anything.

He didn’t regret asking her out though.

‘What’s that they say about weights and shoulders?’ Charlie thought.

Kayley Reininger is a young writer living in southern Illinois with her family. She is an active member of her school newspaper staff and is the Public Relations Officer in her local robotics team. In the future, she aims to complete a full-length novel and travel the world.

What Practice Makes By Meghan Rennie

“Are you ready?”

I nod. Readjust my grip and nod again. Bend my knees a little. Nod once more.

This time I’ll do it. There’s nothing holding me back.

“You don’t have to do this, you know,” Liesel shouts from the pitcher’s mound in a rare show of concern. “You’re bad at baseball. So what?” She repeats, “You don’t have to do this.”

But I do, I do. And I’ve already done everything I can to help my chances: I switched bats, I switched balls, I tried it left and right handed, I used different swinging techniques. Now I have the combination of variables that work best. This has to be the one.

Lord so help me, I will hit that ball.

“April! Are you listening?”

“Yes, yes. I can do this!”

“If you don’t though, remember that it’s okay—”

“Just throw the damn ball!”

I’m angry now. I mean, I’ve been angry ever since Gym class, where I found out how truly bad I am at using a bat.

(“How could you not know how to hit a ball?” Liesel asked then, taking her baseball cap and turning it backwards on her head. “You know how to do everything.” “Shut up,” I answered her, brilliantly.)

I've been angry the whole afternoon. But now, out on the school ball diamond quite some time after classes have ended, "borrowing" the gym equipment and using my best friend as a pitcher-slash-coach, my anger has been simmered to the perfect point. I pack my rage into a tiny combustion chamber in my chest. It will fuel me, and fuel my bat, and fuel the baseball as I hit it out of Earth's atmosphere. I can do this. I can do this.

I nod for the fourth time. I strengthen my grip. And Liesel, after an overindulgent eye-roll, relents. She throws the ball.

It flies forward. I give it everything I've got.

It's a clear miss. My bat keeps searching, straight and blind, and the force of it pivots me against the dirt. I spin in nearly a full circle then yell out at the diamond, "God dammit!"

"Told ya!" Liesel calls back, her usual smug self. I point the bat at her, trying to think of a comeback, then give up, tossing it away. It clanks hollowly against the packed dirt.

Turning around, I stare at the baseball, which has hit the jangly chain-link behind me and come rolling back. I don't know what to do, so I kick at the dirt with my sneaker until a bit of dust comes up. Then I walk over to the bat and pick it up again.

"One more time," I say. Liesel groans, but I ignore her, grabbing the baseball and throwing it back to the pitcher's mound—throwing is something I'm good at, at least. I return to home plate and get into my stance, nodding, gripping the bat's handle.

"I'm ready!"

Liesel squints and pulls her body back before throwing. I focus on accuracy. I don't need a home run, I just need a hit. Anything.

The ball bears down on me. I swing.

And I miss.

I don't spin around this time. I don't throw anything, I don't curse. I just inhale; close my eyes, and groan, sighing out until my lungs are empty. When I open my eyes again, Liesel is walking back from the mound.

"Sometimes you have to face the facts," she says, reaching home plate.

"I don't want to give up yet."

"I know." She wraps an arm around my neck and leans on me. She grins.
"You're too stubborn."

"Do you need to head home now?"

"Nah," she lies. "I do need a snack break, though. And we can even work on homework. Do something you're actually decent at."

". . . Fine."

She smiles. Still draped around me, she leads me off the diamond, towards the bench with our backpacks resting on it. Her skin is warm against mine. It makes me buzz.

We take our backpacks farther out onto the field and sit cross-legged side-by-side, grass prickling our bare skin. It's hot out; we're both wearing clothes that let us feel as cool as possible while still abiding the dress code. I'm wearing a pink tank top and shorts, and Liesel has overalls, a white shirt, and a sky-blue baseball cap. Adding that to her straight, dirty-blond hair and the freckles on her nose, she's the poster child for "summer tomboy".

I'm not a poster child for anything—looks-wise, at least. I'm too busy to bother with fashion.

Liesel has pulled our textbooks out, although we both know they won't be used—Liesel hasn't opened hers since the second day of school, and I've already reviewed mine and made notes with better wording and summarization. I pull

those notes out and read over them aloud, hoping some of it will happen to stick in Liesel's mind. I know she doesn't care about the upcoming exams at all, but I can't help caring for her. I don't have enough worry for myself, apparently.

Liesel understands what I'm doing and seems to try to pay attention, but after a while she lies down and I get the sense she's lost interest. I keep talking anyway, to help me remember but also to give my mouth something to do. I go through subject after subject until my notes have all been read, then I try to recite facts by memory. When I've done enough of that, I start talking about my extracurriculars: piano lessons, dance class, student council. Things like that.

I run my mouth until my throat feels sore. It's something Liesel and I do sometimes, when we're bored and have nothing better to waste time on. I talk until I lose my point, until I'm only speaking for the sake of speaking, as we both stare up at the wide swipe of sky above us.

"April?" Liesel murmurs.

"Yes?"

"You have a nice voice."

I look at her, and immediately glance back up. Liesel gets this way sometimes, when she's leaning against me and we can feel each other breathing and something inside her just melts, for a moment. I've seen it in other places, too—backstage before the school play where our hands almost touch, right before we get our cues; days in the gym changing room where we're both aware of how blatantly we're not staring. Times like that.

She gets this way, and so do I. I think we both know what it means. What it could mean, what it would mean, if we acted on it.

What it will mean is that we will continue to be best friends for years to come, always close but never colliding, running parallel and living our good lives and not interfering with anything when I have worked so hard to make my life perfect—

Liesel's great. But it isn't worth it.

Thinking about it too much makes me stomach-sick. I need to distract myself.

Liesel is dreamy-eyed and staring at the clouds. “Are you sure your dad doesn’t want you home?” I ask, knowing full well that he does.

“No way.” Her voice is still mushy. “Aren’t you the one with all of the extracurriculars you need to be doing, anyway? You can’t be late to your lesson where you recite the digits of pi while composing piano music while riding a horse. Or whatever.”

“I’ve got a day off. My instructor’s on vacation.”

“Must be nice.”

“Liesel,” I say.

“Yes?”

“I want to try again.”

She groans. Thank God I’ve snapped her back to normal. “Are you sure?”

“Yes.” I stand up and lean over her, disrupting her vision. She flops an arm over her eyes to block me out. Then she starts getting up.

We pack our things into our backpacks and head back to the diamond. “This is the last time,” I promise her. “Just one pitch. I’ll see if I can hit it. Then we’re done.”

“Yeah, yeah.”

“I’m serious.”

She stops and looks at me for a moment. Something in my expression tells her I really mean it. No more do-overs this time. It’s now or never.

“Okay,” she says. “I’ll pitch.”

I head to home plate, grabbing the bat and positioning myself: Readjusting my grip, bending my knees, backing up the slightest bit. Readjusting my grip again. I can feel my pulse in the base of my palms. It taps against the bat.

Liesel takes her time picking out what she deems to be the best ball at the pitcher's mound. She's taking this as seriously as I am, for once—I can't remember a time before where I actually promised her a do-or-die moment. She grabs a ball and looks back at me.

Mentally evaluating my body, I feel the urge to readjust once more. I ignore it and squint out at the horizon line. The day is starting to slow down, to cool off, to tint orange in the nearly-but-not-quite-setting sun. Normally, I'd have left school grounds a lot earlier. By now I'd be finishing up whatever lesson I was in. I would head home for dinner with my family, spend some time texting or reading or procrastinating. Practicing a hobby, maybe. Doing things with Liesel or without Liesel, always accomplishing something new, checking achievements off of lists. Then I would go to bed and start over again the next day.

I stare Liesel down. And I nod, just once.

She nods back. Moves her body, perfectly, and throws. I hold my breath. The ball comes, I see my chance. And in my do-or-die moment, everything feels clearer. And in my do-or-die moment, I know exactly what matters.

The ball is rushing forward, and it's coming and it's coming and it's coming—

Meghan Rennie is a fifteen-year-old writer, musician, and art enthusiast, who has an affinity for cats and chocolate oranges. Her work has previously appeared in *The Claremont Review*, *Skipping Stones Magazine*, and *The Courier*.

The Universal Donut

By Stuti Kute

I am walking through a supermarket aisle and I sit down — for no reason, of course. It is utterly nauseating how science has let me down, over and over again, and trampled over this kiddo's dreams. They say that this universe is a big— like a really big gap that's black with some humongous light-emulating stars at every nook and crook, here and there. And what? Even the Greeks had it better — don't mind the chaos, nonetheless.

Here's the thing, I hold every science notion of how stuff works by its ankles, upside down over a cliff and loosen my grip until it slips from my palms and oops! — might as well relish the girly scream. Good riddance.

The universe is a donut. A big, fat, succulent donut straight from the fantasies of every American cop. While humanity is the icing.

So beautiful is this truth and such intoxicating and sensual concoction is this icing — all luscious and colourful with seven billion flavours. I assume that you, who are reading this, are among the icings— Vanilla. The person across the table at the café you are in, maybe she is raspberry. While I, who stands presently in spirit just beside your right elbow with my dog and peek into my own work — I am chocolate.

Now that I have made you a teensy bit aware of my speculations, the insignificance of the problems of everyday— the barista at Starbucks who didn't quite hear that you wanted it NOT to be decaf (Who wants to be stuck with a venti decaf?), or that mall cop high on Red Bull and giving you a migraine with his SEAL behaviour, or being stuck in a horrid traffic without an audiobook— I am sorry to say but these are just a part of that intoxicating icing. All these commonplace wound-ups and things that get you furious, are they really worth it? Look at it as a speck of icing dust on a relatively larger speck of icing dust on the largest speck of icing dust of all — you. You are a flavour in yourself. So very important to the flavour of the universe-donut.

Hence it is of utmost important— of universal importance, that you retain that flavour.

As, for some reason, I am in a supermarket. After recovering from the trauma of getting bullied by science and his cronies, I am up and going again. I pass the aisle of emotions where I stop for window-shopping, because I really don't buy into that stuff. The shelves of hate, avarice, envy and lust are so very crowded that I want to stop, drop the jar of peanut butter in my left hand and yell for all I am worth, that it's not worth it. You guys are spoiling the net flavour of the universe. Just a hint of cinnamon is good, needed even. But stuff goes wrong when it begins to overpower. Go to the shelf of love. That beautiful thing, lined with antiques of age so old that no one even remembers.

And with one glorious sweep of your muscular arm, hoard the entirety of the shelf's content in your cart. SWOOSH and SWOOSH.

Arm yourself with love, wear love's armour and helmet, shod your feet with sneakers of love and put on a smile and take over the world, my love.

When I say love, I do not necessarily mean romantic love — no Jack and Rose, or Romeo and Juliet. That's another shelf altogether, all gooey and cheesy and puffed with pink powder and loads of Chanel no. 5. I mean love for everything that is alive. As well as the air of the mountains and the water in the lakes and that beautiful oak in the backyard. That kind of love. My kinda love.

From behind your right elbow, me and my dog have floated from around your back, to the left and now I give you a gentle nudge— go, my friend, be the flavour you want to be. I never said that these came inbuilt in your default factory settings. If you want, be chocolate or raspberry or vanilla. You can also be one of those originals— chicken waffles and what not. I wouldn't care, as long the original remains authentic.

But don't forget love. Never forget love— my kinda or your kinda.

Stuti is a tenth grader from Mumbai who currently likes nothing better than an idle morning hour with a cup of coffee, a little notebook and a quiet little

alcove in her favourite cafe. Give her an iced latte and she will sprinkle it with sarcasm with a hint of secret sly remarks which are too inappropriate for public exhibition (Tongue in the cheek; twirling her glasses). She believes that a woman who wears no perfume has no future (Coco Chanel, of course) and is a feminist to every definition of it. Oh, and she is lactose sensitive but likes most ardently, the sound of a latte.

One Last Time By Shenu Kathymoon

My bag is cluttered with uncapped black pens, a conventional banana, and an old journal. I eat breakfast, slowly peeling away the skin of the freckled, dark yellow fruit. It is slightly smushed on the top, but the more bruised it is, the more sugar I will taste. It sits in my mouth sweet and smooth and I swallow nervously when my right leg begins to twitch uncontrollably. My craving for sweet becomes sour when I chew my cheeks. If I hold in everything, I'll be okay. The antenna of the banana falls on my thigh and I stand to throw my plate of oatmeal away, but before I rise, my anxiety does. I stay seated.

We are dismissed later than usual and as I walk alone towards the glass doors, I catch a reflection before everyone swings it open. I should straighten my frizzed hair and scrub the yogurt stains from my jeans.

Perhaps my obsessive behavior gets the better of me, but it helps me to be calm. I like bananas and apples and oranges because it takes time to get to the core. It takes time to get through all the fiber. It takes time to be fulfilled.

During the day, I spend my time with my friends. From past experience, I find that everyone loves good company, but not when it's not benefiting them. I guess there's something selfish about being possessive over someone and wanting their attention 100%. It takes effort, but when I go all-in, I expect my friends too. But I guess that's not how every relationship works. If I come across someone in my life that devotes some time to me, I appreciate it like hell.

One of my friends likes sitting under trees and talking about them, absorbing every branch as if they were the veins in her arms and observing every pattern on the leaves as if they were creases on her Led Zeppelin t-shirt.

“I gotta go back, I need to write about that tree we just passed,” she says, and she walks backwards and into the maze of cabins.

My heart rate has slowed down a bit since breakfast. I am grateful that the river is sparkling like shiny vanilla mousse beside a flickering candle. That candle being the sun; orange and alike, I wonder how beautiful it must be on the inside if I were to peel back its layers. It would be dark red like my shorts and not the color of blood but the color of royal enigma, waiting to be understood.

I rest my head on the riverbanks and I wait until my friend meets me by the canoes. The substantial end to my thoughts are like damaged neurotransmitters; I am in need and I am disappointing. I've accepted some things about myself that I cannot change. My plate of food in the early morning, my clothes when it's warm outside or chilly inside, the people I choose to spend my time with are all things I can tweak and adjust to my liking. But I wonder if anyone had to tweak me like a rough draft of a story, would they like me with my hair short or my hair long? Am I just a plain package, camouflaged like a crumb on a large plate? If there's one thing I am never short of, it's promises and I promise that they would find that beneath the honey mocha skin, I am blue and I am burning.

Shenu Kathymoon is a writer and poet, attending Miami Arts Charter. She has been published in numerous magazines and literary journals such as Rattle Young Poets Anthology, Creative Communications, Critical Pass Review, and more as well as Silver & Gold Keys in Scholastics. She was born in Sri Lanka, but is raised in Miami.