

The Phoenix

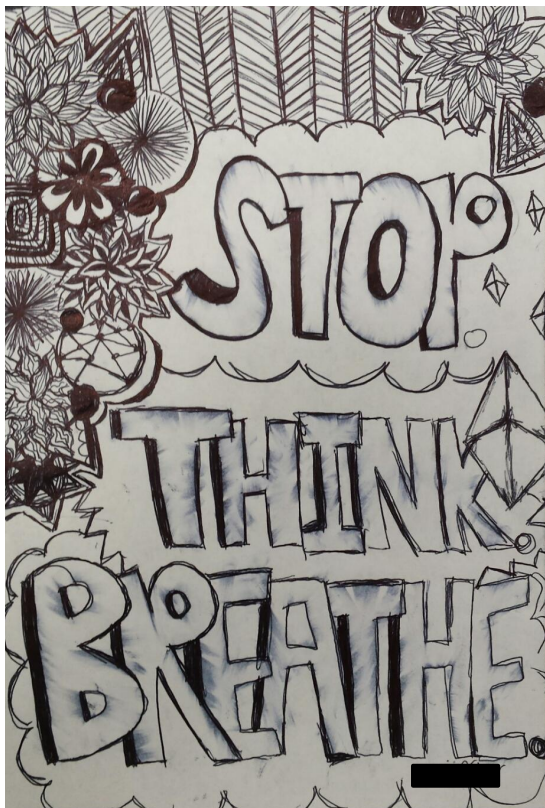
Spring 2015

Berry Middle School Literary Mag

The Phoenix is created in partnership with Berry Fine Arts. We welcome submissions for upcoming editions. [berrylitmag@gmail.com]

In this issue, we feature the written works of Madison O., Caleb Y., Makenna K., Misaki U., Maddy J., Kelsey O., Kayla W., Taylor S., James H., Jamie L., Kaylee H., Adrienne L., Cole T., Taylor H., Samantha D., Sam H., Anna Grace H., Anastasia Z., Jordan W., Hannah H., and Christian H.

In this issue, we feature the illustrated works of Zoe C., Sarah W., Olivia W., Sydney L., Naomi G., Sapir B., Victor R., Maggie M. and Hannah G., Hayleigh T., Hitham K., Kaddyja J., Alyssa C., Mary A., Dantayjah M., Palavi A., Reily R. and Ava G.



This piece was created by the artist when many people close to her were having a rough time with life. They were either in the hospital or just plain sad.

“Creating art is important to me because I have complete control of it, it can go any way I want it to. I made it to remind myself that it’s okay.”
~ Zoe C.

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Stop, think, breathe and keep reading ...

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Real Sisters

prose

By Kelsey O.

People talk about having annoying little siblings. Well, I agree, little siblings can be extremely annoying at times. Trust me. I of all people know. But, they will always have your back when you really need them. They might break your stuff. Get you in trouble with your parents, or even get you to do something you thought you never would do, good or bad. My little sister isn't like most little sisters though. We are real sisters by choice, not by force. I will never forget the day I met Raye...

I went through the routines of my life like any other Friday, going to my classes, writing down notes to study for upcoming assignments and tests, the dull gray walls made it easy to concentrate. I refused to make lower than an "A" on ANY assignment. I never did, and I never would. Then I went to cheer practice. We were learning a new routine for our upcoming competition. That day I went carpool with Jolaine, my best friend. When I got home, there was a note on the dining room table. It was from my mom. It looked rushed, like she was in such a hurry that she just slapped words on the paper.

My mom always left me a note if she wasn't going to be home. This time it read.

Chyanne,

I'm at the grocery store. I'll be back later.

When you get home:

- clean your room
(we're going to have company)*
- clean out a few drawers in your old dresser*
- do your homework*

I should be home by then.

Love you, Mom

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Wasn't I enough? Was I not good enough for her anymore? I had been with her my whole life.

Real Sisters

By Kelsey O.

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The first thing I did was get a snack. I was starving. I went into the kitchen and rummaged through the tan wood cabinets until I found a Poptart. I sat down at the kitchen table, practically ripping the package apart. I looked at the clock, and it was 5:25. I knew Mom would be home soon, so I cleaned my room and cleaned out the drawers. There wasn't that much to clean up so it was quick. I wondered why I needed to though and also who was coming over. I had already done my homework with Jolaine at school, so I turned on the TV.

I plopped in the chair, feet hanging over one side and head on the other. I watched *SVU* for a while. When the episode was over, I listened to music.

It was 6:30 when Mom finally came through the door. She peeked her head inside and said, "Chyanne, I need your help with the groceries." Her hair was pulled to the side in a low side ponytail. Then she popped right back out. I pulled myself out of the chair and went outside. There was a little girl standing in my yard. She looked like she was 8 or 9 years old. She had dirty blonde hair like me, somewhat tan, and she was missing her front teeth. She was wearing one of my old T-shirts and a pair of my old Justice jeans. The shirt is my favorite, well really it was when I could fit into it. It was a dark blue, three-quarter-length sleeves and had "ABERCROMBIE" on the front. It was odd. Why was she wearing my shirt? Who was the girl in my yard?

Mom turned toward the little girl and said, "Raye, this is Chyanne." Gesturing toward me. "She's your new sister." As soon as Mom said it, my attitude changed toward the little girl, "She's adopted too, like you. So that will give you something to talk about." I felt my stomach drop.

Mom had talked about adopting, but I didn't believe her. I didn't want a little sister. I liked being an only child. Jolaine got a little sister a few years ago, and she hated it. She took all the attention, and it was like Jolaine's parents forgot about her. Isabel is her sister's name, but, of course, her mom actually gave birth to her--and Jolaine had a 9 month warning. My mom didn't, she can't and I had almost no warning. She said she was thinking about it, not a definite thing though. That's why she adopted me.

Wasn't I enough? Was I not good enough for her anymore? I had been with her my whole life. Honestly, if I wasn't told I was adopted, I wouldn't know I was.

"So, you guys introduce yourselves, get to know each other." Mom walked off carrying the groceries in. My mom said like it was normal to just get a new sister after 13 years of being an only child, even if I was told about it.

"Hi, my name is Raye." She said it like I hadn't been there and just heard Mom say it 2 seconds ago.

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Real Sisters

"Let's get one thing straight, I am NOT your sister, and I am NOT sharing MY mom with you" I was so angry and I didn't even know why.

By Kelsey O.

continued

"Yah, I know. MY mom already said that." I didn't like the fact that she might think we would share MY mom, so I went ahead and cleared that up. I didn't like it at all. I didn't like that she was wearing MY old clothes, and I especially didn't like how she looked like me 5 years ago.

"I'm 8 years old, and I'm SO excited that I have a big sis-" I stopped her mid-word.

"Let's get one thing straight. I am NOT your sister, and I am NOT sharing MY mom with *you*." I was so angry and I didn't even know why. I felt my face start to burn with red. My stomach still turning at the moment. I just didn't like her, the way she was just standing there.

I felt like Mom abandoned me for her. I felt like I was replaced.

"I'm sorry. I'll stay out of your way." She said sheepishly and then scurried in the house to Mom carrying in a small duffle bag.

Later that night I was laying in my bed. My blue comforter was soft on my skin. Raye was in my Mom's room. Until we get another bed, she's sleeping in there. I had called Jolaine and filled her in on what had happened after practice.

"Oh, wow, ummmm..." She wasn't the best at cheering anyone up if they weren't on a field or in person. "That's bad, I guess, but you could come over tomorrow and get away from her, maybe for the rest of the weekend."

"Could I come over for the rest of my life?" I sighed, she giggled. "Anyway, I'll ask my mom when *she* isn't around." I wished I could have come over that night, and we could just laugh and watch movies. No worries. That's how I felt around her.

"Haha, yah, well I got to go in a minute, so are you gonna be okay?"

"Yah, I'll be fine for tonight, bye, see ya tomorrow."

"See ya."

I laid in the bed listening to music on my phone for another hour before I even changed out of my practice clothes. I laid there a while longer. My mind was racing, thinking about *her*. I finally turned out the light at about 12:30. I guess I fell asleep a little after that.

The next morning I woke up to Mom calling me from the kitchen, "Chyanne, breakfast is ready. Come and get it!" I got up and looked at my phone. It was 8:00 in the morning!!! My mom was never up at 8 a.m. Why was she now? I went down stairs, still in my pjs, about to ask why she was up this early, and then I saw Raye. She was sitting at the table in my old peace-sign pajamas eating pancakes. Mom only cooked pancakes on MY birthday. Why did she this time, and didn't Raye have clothes of her own? She carried in that duffle bag.

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Real Sisters

I was now right next to the couch, yelling right at her. She rolled her eyes and I went on yelling, until finally she yelled back.

By Kelsey O.

continued

"Looks like we have a picky eater on our hands." Mom giggled as she plopped another on the plate. She shoved the plate towards me and motioned for me to grab it. I did and sat down. I glared at *her* across the table. Our eyes met, but then she quickly looked down at her food.

"So, Mom, could I go over to Jolaine's this weekend? All my homework's done, and we were going to practice this routine."

"That will be fine, but first could you watch Raye while I run some errands. Then, when I get back, you can ride your bike down the street to Jolaine's, and Raye and I can go clothes shopping. Would you like that, sweetheart?" Mom turned to her and stroked her hair. Raye looked up and smiled at Mom. I wasn't smiling. "Well, I'm gonna go take a shower. Chyanne could you do the dishes, and you guys get to know each other." Mom said with a smile. She left the room, and went upstairs to the shower. Raye put her plate in the sink and then went and sat on the couch. Her glass was still half full and left on the table along with her fork.

"Ummm, are you not going to clean up your dishes?" I leaned out of the kitchen asking, or more implying that she needed to pick up her dishes.

She popped her head over the back of the couch and said, "I thought Mom said you were supposed to clean them?"

I walked over to the couch. I felt myself getting angrier and angrier. "She is NOT your mom! I told you that already!" I couldn't hold in any of my emotions anymore. Everything on my mind just came out. I exploded. "Why did you have to come here?!" I felt a tear pushing its way out. I tried to fight it, but it didn't really work. "Why did Mom adopt you?!" Now I was full out crying. I was slowly stepping toward the couch. "Am I not good enough for her!? Did she get you to replace me?! Now she's making me do your dishes and I'm getting more responsibility!" I was now right next to the couch, yelling right at her. She rolled her eyes, and I went on yelling, until finally she yelled back.

"I'm sorry! I'll do the stupid dishes! Gahh." She got up and walked past me. "Crazy, no wonder Mom adopted me" I heard her mumble under her breathe as she brushed past me.

I lost it. I turned around and hit her in the back of the head hard. She fell on her face, and I heard her start crying. She moved forward away from me. She rolled over and looked at me, tears streaming down her face in a way that made me feel like I had killed a puppy. Her nose was bleeding. She had hit it on the ground the wrong way.

Then, what happened next made my stomach turn so fast I about threw up my mom's famous pancakes.

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Real Sisters

Mom was standing at the entrance of the stairs. I didn't know how long she had been standing there, or what all she had seen. She looked like she was going to kill me.

By Kelsey O.

continued

Mom was standing at the entrance of the stairs. I didn't know how long she had been standing there, or what all she had seen. She looked like she was going to kill me.

"What happened! Oh my gosh! Raye, are you okay? Chyanne, what did you do!?"

"I, uhh, I ummmm..." I was so nervous I had never lost my temper before. I had never really gotten in trouble before.

"I fell and, uhh, hit my head on the desk right there. It was my fault. Chyanne was freaking out because of the blood. She didn't do anything," Raye said trying to save me from getting in trouble. She looked over at me and gave me a half sympathetic smile. Blood was still running down her face, pouring from her nose. It was like a volcano erupting, dripping lava, slowly but fast at the same time.

"Uhh, yah. She fell. Turns out blood freaks me out," I'm like Pinocchio when it comes to lying. Luckily, Raye is a good liar, and she pulled off our story. I never would have thought of saying I got freaked out by blood. Genius! I was mind boggled.

"Okay, well let's get you some paper towels, and some ice, sweetie" Mom helped up Raye, and they walked into the kitchen.

"Thanks," I whispered to her while she got up.

"No problem," she whispered back.

I felt horrible about hitting her, and the fact she lied for me. Then she completely forgave me.

Later that day I cancelled the spend the night at Jolaine's and decided to get to know Raye. She was in the backyard right before sunset, swinging on the old porch swing. I hadn't talked to her since the incident. The porch swing creaked as she kicked her legs back and forth slowly. I walked up and sat in the swing, next to her. I swung my legs at the same pace to keep the swing steady.

"Hey, I'm really sorry. I don't know why I did that. You didn't do anything and I, well, I lost my temper for no reason."

"It's fine, really. I should have put my dishes up. Your mom is a very nice lady." She stuttered. She was trying to get off that subject.

"No, Raye, she's your mom now too. We are sisters. Blood or not, it doesn't matter." I said really meaning it. "What you did for me was awesome. Thank you. You deserve to be treated better than how I treated you. I hope you can forgive me."

"Of course I forgive you. I've always wanted a big sister!" She was smiling ear to ear, and I was smiling too.

"So, you want to have a spend-the-night in my room? Only sisters allowed." I asked hoping she would say yes so I could get to know her better.

"Yay!" She jumped out of the swing making it rock side to side. She came toward me fast and hugged me hard. "I can't wait!" She said really loud.

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Real Sisters

I wanted to make sure she was happy here because it felt good having a little sister. I didn't want this to be the 10th house she's left.

By Kelsey O.

continued

I pushed a few strands of hair behind my ear that had fallen from my ponytail when Raye jumped up and hugged me.

We spent the rest of the evening together in our room, and I found out she had been to nine different homes in five years. That's why she doesn't have a lot of clothes. She gets there unloads what she has, and then when it's time to leave she'll end up forgetting something. I climbed into the attic later that night and got the old cardboard box with my clothes from when I was 8 and 9 years old. I gave them to her and she was so happy. I wanted to make sure she was happy here because it felt good having a little sister. I didn't want this to be the tenth house she's left. We talked and played games for hours until Mom finally came upstairs and told us to go to bed.

While we were talking, she said we could act like that day never happened. I can't act like that day didn't happen though. That day was the day Raye and me bonded. The day I decided that I was going to like having a little sister. Someone to hang out with and talk to when my friends weren't around. Someone to dress up and give advice to. Now, of course, we got in fights after that, but at that point, I knew from that Raye and me were going to be best friends -- real sisters.

The End



Olivia W.

The Phoenix

poetry

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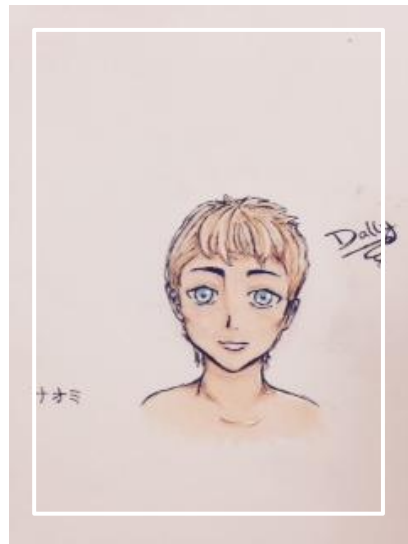
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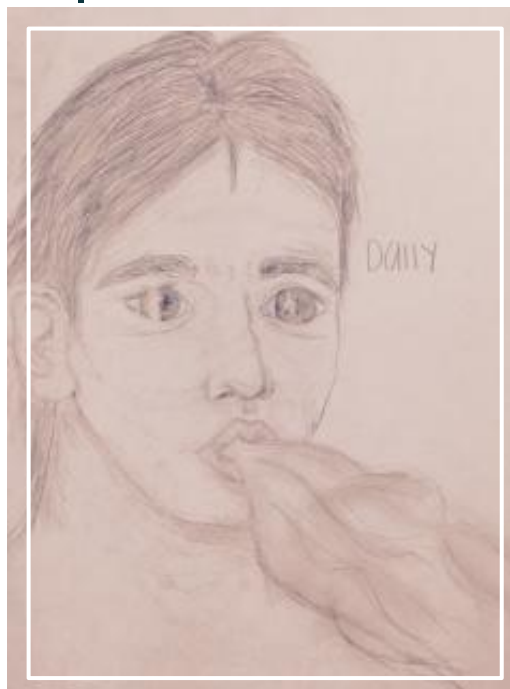
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Naomi G.



Zoe C.

Dally

By Naomi G.

They just see me as greaser,
 when I consider myself a believer
 Believer that I will go somewhere,
 away from this nightmare,
 Of people hating one another,
 while it seems impossible to help each other
 We are separated by who we are,
 yet we see the same star,
 as it sinks into the night,
 we hold its memory tight
 We are all the same,
 no matter what others claim
 They just see me as greaser,
 but I'm something much bigger.

Opinions

By Cole T.

What is good, what is bad,
 have you ever been truly sad,
 is it worth it to suffer pain,
 for all the strength you will gain,
 do you hope, or feel despair,
 is anything truly fair,
 are you weak or are you strong,
 will you live short or will you live long,
 these questions are all opinion,
 so say with these questions, you are
 done,
 for they are not worth suffering for,
 it is not good for yourself to be at war,
 all have good and all have bad,
 all have been happy, all have been sad,
 the pain of loss is a sad, sad thing,
 but the joy of friendship makes
 you want to sing,
 many people take for granted life,
 and have never felt true strife,
 but those are their lives, not mine,
 so I guess I really don't mind.

He takes a slow, deep breath. "Chrissy Ryan, will you be my date to homecoming?"

prose

Ten Seconds Left

By Makenna K.

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"Wait! Miss! Stop!" I look over my shoulder to see the fat security guard, Bob, bouncing his way over to me. "Just where do you think you're going?"

I heave a great sigh of exasperation. "We've been over this, Bob. I'm on the Yearbook Committee. I don't have to pay, remember? I've only told you a million times..." I mutter.

He looks thoughtful. "Oh, yes. You're the one, Chrysanthemum, right? Yes, I remember you now! Just remind me next time before you come strutting in, okay? I've gotta get the old brain moving again from time to time." He winks at me.

As he walks away I hear him quietly exclaim, "Oh dang nabit! I left my jelly doughnut just sittin' there!"

I laugh inwardly. As annoying as Bob can be, he always lifts my spirits. I check my phone for the time- 6:55. I'm doing good right now. I just have to save time to get a good shot of the team for the Yearbook. I walk down the paved sidewalk, weaving in and out of the crowd. My forehead slams into something hard. "Oomph! Watch it!" I exclaim. I immediately recognize the shoes. Relief flows through me. "Beau!" I exclaim, looking up. "Why aren't you on the field?"

"I could ask you the same thing! You're running out of time!" I check my watch, desperately hoping he is lying, and that I still have plenty of time-6:58. I look at him angrily. "And just how am I running out of time, Mr. Star Quarterback?"

He flips his hair dramatically. "I don't let people look at me up close for long. So, come on, chop chop. I'm starting to sparkle." Beau dabs at his sweaty face with his sleeve.

I laugh. "Well then, sir, let's get this photo shoot started!" I look at him with false pity and sarcasm in my voice. "We wouldn't want you to look bad in your yearbook picture, now would we?"

Beau and I get down to the field with five minutes left for the pictures. I make all of the team sit in the stands and smile, which was surprisingly hard to do. Boys, you never know what to do with them! After the shoot is done, I start making my way towards the stands. Beau grabs my arm, "Wait a second."

Panic and annoyance shoot through me like a bullet, "Beau! You're going to get both of us in trouble! Go back down to the field!"

"I know, I know. Just... Give me a minute, please." I can tell he is nervous about something. I can see it in the way he shifts his weight from foot to foot, and looks over his shoulders. "I have to ask you a question." He takes a slow, deep breath. "Chrissy Ryan, will you be my date to homecoming?"

"Watch where you're going," I started to snap. When I looked up, I saw sparkling emerald eyes, and a smile that could melt the sun.

"Ah, looks like we have ourselves a classic hypocrite," the boy says, still smiling.

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I yank my hand away, "Ooh, sorry!" I mumble, highly embarrassed. I am a screwup. A complete and total screwup.

Ten Seconds Left

By Makenna K.

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continued

"A hippo-what?" I exclaim, startled. Who does this guy think he is?

"A hypocrite," he repeats. "You were walking with your head down, and then told me to watch where I was going.

Therefore, being a hypocrite." He explains to me calmly.

"Okay, whatever. Sorry," I mumble.

"No need to be sorry!" He laughs. It is a learning experience for all of us." He looks at me for a few long moments before thrusting out his hand and quickly saying, "Where are my manners. The name's Beau."

I hesitate. Shaking hands isn't my usual type of greeting. Usually, I don't greet at all. People go out of their way to get out of mine. I shake his hand anyway. "Chrysanthemum Ryan. That is my full name. But it's not my name. Well, it is my name, but I prefer to be called Chrissy, or Chris, or, heck, even Cee Cee! But not Chrysanthemum, please not Chrysanthemum!" I wait nervously for his reply. Why was I so stupid? I didn't have to babble on about my name forever. Stupid, stupid, stupid... Wait, what was he looking at?

I follow Beau's eyes to a pair of hands, our hands. I yank my hand away, "Ooh, sorry!" I mumble, highly embarrassed. I am a screwup. A complete and total screwup.

Beau laughs, "Take it easy! I would want to hold my hand too!" He exclaims, posing comically for me. Now it is my turn to laugh.

"Hey, what school do you go to?" I ask him after I catch my breath. New kid is funny!

"Well, I just moved here from Washington, D.C, so I'm not too sure about the name. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think it's called Koya Creek High," he says, hesitating.

"Well, it appears you're in the right spot then Mr.," I can't remember if he had told me his last name or not.

"King, Beau Darrell King," he says, filling in the blank for me.

I smile. "Okay then, Mr. King! It appears that our limo has arrived just in time!"

He looks quizzical for a moment and then looks down the street to see a rickety, old, faded yellow school bus bumping along down the road. We both laugh.

As the bus pulls up, I step a little closer to the stop sign and my new friend. We look at each other and grin a great big grin. I have a feeling that this is going to be a great school year.

Now

"Go, Go! Run Beau run!"

continued next page

*If Beau scores, we will be in the
championship game.*

Ten Seconds Left

By Makenna K.

continued

Beau sprints down the field with ten Chester kids on his tail. He weaves in and out of them like I do in a crowd. I check the scoreboard. It's 14 all. If Beau scores, we will be in the championship game. I am up on my feet with everyone else now, screaming insults at the players that try to tackle Beau, and screaming at Beau to score. The clock counts down: Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, touchdown! The Koya fans go wild, and I join in. The final score is 14:21.

This is the best homecoming game, ever.

The End

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Sydney L.

The Phoenix

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I

By Kaylee H.

I don't hear the whistle of the wind,
not every summer breeze is a song.

I don't see the beauty in the sky,
the colors black, gray, and wrong.

I don't feel known
to the world.

An outsider, unfit.

but however,

I do hear the whispers
and the mean things said,

I do see the taunts and the teases
the looks and the faces of my "friends".

You think I don't have feelings?
You think I'm not human?

You think I don't try
to be at least
one of your kind.

I do try to wear
what you wear,

I do try to be
how you are,

I do strive to act
how you act,

and be,
for once,
not invisible.

poetry



Naomi G.

Perspective

By Caleb Y.

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I leapt onto the couch and lay down. When I was nearly asleep, I heard the garage door open. This could only mean one thing. She has returned ... and not alone.

I jumped down and sprinted to the small cat door that went to the garage. I leaped through it and behind me Cocoa came through as well. I ran to the woman and rubbed against her and then ran to her son and head-butted his leg.

"See? She loves me the most," he said as he picked me up and cradled me upside down.

"Ha, keep telling yourself that, Jordan," the smallest son said. As the little one said this, I indicated that I wanted down by acting like I was going to leap down myself. "I think that she wants down." I looked at him gratefully as if to say "thank you."

"No she doesn't, Caleb," the one holding me said, but it didn't matter because instead I just jumped down and walked to the kitchen where I heard the woman banging two cat food cans together and calling

"Milkyway! Cocoa!" It was time for dinner. As I entered the kitchen I noticed Cocoa staring at me as if he were longing to say something.

"What?" I asked nastily, he wasn't pleased.

"Don't steal my food this time," Cocoa growled at me menacingly.

"Well, to be honest, I thought I was doing you a favor. You really do need to cut back on the food, Cocoa, next time be more grateful," I said very pleased with myself that I came up with that. I jumped onto the counter where my plate was while Cocoa stayed on the ground for his. I figured the woman did this to be nice to Cocoa, because he was too fat to jump up there, but it was also probably because she wanted to keep us separated while we ate.

I wished she would always keep us separate, but, unluckily, that was not the case. After I ate, I left to the smallest son's bedroom, because he had a nice bed for me to sleep on. When I reached the door I saw it was closed, so I scratched on it. No answer. I scratched again. No answer. I scratched one last time and the door opened. I went across the room to his bed and jumped onto it. I lay down and thought to myself life is great, except for that brat Cocoa. Then I fell asleep.

I awoke and saw that it was now dark outside. Leaping off the bed, I went to go find Cocoa, but I was instead distracted by another event that had occurred. Another human had arrived. He was fairly short; he had brownish-red hair with little snowflakes in it and a beard, also slightly red. His nose was as red as a tomato; I assumed this was because of the cold.

Everyone had hugged him and the smallest said, "Good to see you, Sami." Sami looked at everyone and told them he was off to shave.

As everyone left, I went to the back door and scratched on it. The door opened and I ran into the snow. Leaving paw prints behind, I jumped over a fence and spotted Cocoa in the distance.

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"Yeah, save the lecture, but the fact is that you called her and it proves that your lecture was going to be full of lies."

Cat's Perspective

By Caleb Y.

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continued

Even though it was dark outside, Cocoa's black fur was very noticeable in the snow. He ran away and I didn't see him again until there was red in the sky. I waddled over to him, aware this was a very bad idea. I told him, "hello."

Before he could say anything I heard a snap very near us. Our ears perked up. A coyote emerged from the darkness of the woods and it shook off fur. Fear struck me immediately, but Cocoa became fierce and hissed.

"Stay back you old oaf," the Coyote said in an ugly tone, "I don't want you," it said. The coyote stared at me. It took a step closer, and Cocoa lunged at it scratching its eye, but the coyote knocked him off next to a tree. The coyote slowly moved towards me and pounced. Its teeth landed and punctured my leg. It hurt, but I didn't care, I was too worried about dying. I just stayed there in the snow silently wishing that the humans would magically know to come get me because I was hurt, but that, sadly, was not the case. Cocoa had left the scene, leaving behind a bloody corpse of a coyote.

The sun was almost completely visible when I heard more leaves and twigs cracking. I shut my eyes thinking this was the end, but instead felt a simple head butt and noticed that Cocoa was back, but not alone.

A human was following him; I heard the human arrive and gasp "Milkyway!" and he ran over to pick me up. I noticed the small human inspecting my bloody leg and he then left. About twenty minutes later he came back with his mother and two brothers who all looked at my wound. Only one noticed the corpse of a coyote and he covered his nose and said "Yeah, I am going back inside."

"Jerk," the little one said as he too gagged at the awful smell. He left with me in his arms and rushed me to the garage where his mother's car was parked. He got in the backseat and everyone else followed, the mother bringing a small bowl of water for me to occasionally drink out of. "Preferably drive slowly," the little one said, and the mother agreed. A few moments later I gave up trying to stay awake and fell back asleep. When I awoke I was laying in someone's lap in a room with many other people and animals.

"Wow, Sami, I thought you hated cats," the smallest human said.

"Well, I do, but I might as well be nice to it at least once and you know Caleb, I-,"

"Yeah, save the lecture, but the fact is that you called her and it proves that your lecture was going to be full of lies," the smallest one debated.

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Cat's Perspective

This time, however, I was happy, and this time, for the first time, I meant what I said to myself before I fell asleep ... all was well.

By Caleb Y.

continued

I passed out again, and I didn't wake back up until night. My leg was bandaged and it was feeling worse than ever. I saw Cocoa told him thank you in an extremely hoarse voice. "But, how did you get the humans to come in the first place?" I asked.

"Oh, I meowed until it annoyed him enough to follow me," he explained. He chuckled at the thought of it.

Today was Christmas Eve and the fire next to me burned hot, but dim, giving the room a faint glow. All of the humans sat in the same room they drank their hot chocolate as Cocoa sat down next to me. I stared at the fire one last time before I fell asleep again. This time, however, I was happy, and this time, for the first time, I meant what I said to myself before I fell asleep ... all was well.

The End

Chips Poem

By Jamie L.

I have eaten
The bag of chips
In the cabinet

Which were not mine to have
And which you were
Probably saving for
Tomorrow's lunch

Forgive me
They were so crisp
So salty,
And so savory



Alyssa C.

My SUMMER Day

By Kaylee H.

The Moon,
fading from existence,
Allows the Sun
To take its praise
And conceal the shadows.

The endless, green sea can finally
Quench its thirst
As the blood-stained gold
Crawls across the sky
Grasping its tendrils at the morning dew.

The husbands leave for summer work.
The mothers are left
With smiling, happy children
enjoying a carefree, no responsibility life
To do whatever they choose

As the Sun peaks,
The children come out
And make a ring-a-ling with new bicycle bells,
And the Ice-cream truck play that familiar tune,
And the mothers make soon-to-be devoured PB&J's

As the Sun dies,
The children sluggishly return to their homes.
The green sea withers as its struggle for food has ended,
And the wolves shall soon begin to howl at the Moon's dark power
Because all must come to an end

But with this good
The mystery of the Moon
Is not comparable
To the golden light's happiness
When it rises again.

TRIBUTE to My Grandfather

By Jamie L.

Died when I was six.
Tall, Old, Loving, Caring, Funny, Silly
Glasses, Oxygen Tanks, Dog, White Hair
Warm Heart, Kind Smile
Forever remembered.

FRIENDSHIP

By Jamie L.

Friendship is always
Warming your heart full of joy
Friendship is beauty

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Into The Sun

prose

By Misaki U.

Just like every day of the week, Evan headed outside to take a stroll with his robot-dog. With the sun peeking out from under the clouds and the breezy wind, it almost felt like a perfect day. Almost.

The world hadn't been the same since the beginning of the year 2060, thirty-two weeks ago. Everything had gone chaos, and all the populations had been wiped out except humans. To make it worse, the Earth was being pulled into the Sun more and more each day.

Despite the circumstances, Evan thought to himself, *It's such a splendid day. Surely, nothing bad could happen.* He kept walking. Right on cue, there was a deep rumbling noise that seemed to shake the Earth. Even though Evan was usually cautious, he looked around. As he and his pet rounded the last corner of his neighborhood, the smile on Evan's face grew big and long. Smiles from Evan were rare, especially these days, but it was such a nice day for him. That was until Aiden, Roxy, Thomas, and Houston showed up.

Aiden, Roxy, Thomas, and Houston were all teenagers like Evan, but they had lost their parents thirty-two weeks ago. They spread out like a pack of wolves hunting their prey, and started gaining distance on Evan.

"Hey Mr., I Have Everything! How's ya fake dog doin'?" asked Thomas.

Evan knew better than to talk, so he ignored Thomas and kept walking.

"Hey, what do ya think you're doin'?" said Roxy.

Evan asked why they were bullying him, even though the answer was obvious. Of course, it was because he was the only one who still had parents, shelter, food, and education. Instead of answering, the bullies pulled out a sharp object that glistened. Evan knew automatically that it was a knife, and he ran as fast as he could the other way.

The bullies ran after him and the chase was on. Because he was running so desperately, Evan didn't know that he had entered the "Danger. Do Not Enter" Zone, despite the many signs.

Soon, Evan realized that the footsteps behind him had come to an end, and he stopped to take a break.

"Where did the bullies go?" pondered Evan.

He looked around and saw no one around him. He also realized that he had come into the "Danger" Zone.

"Please don't tell me that they left me here! Oh, please! What am I supposed to do? Oh, please, someone help me!" cried Evan.

"Ha-ha, scaredy-cat Evannnn!" a Roxy's voice came out of nowhere.

"Roxy?! Where are you?" yelled Evan, panic starting to rise.

Right after Evan had yelled that, there was a thunderous sound that started to rumble, and cracks started forming on the ground. The cracks were huge, wide, and deep enough for an adult to fall into. There was another sound, the loudest of them all, and Evan and the bullies watched in horror as cracks formed, separating them from the rest of Earth. Evan could hear distant yelling and screaming from the other side, but he was too dazed.

continued next page

Into The Sun

By Misaki U.

The rope was on the edge of the cliff. Evan closed his eyes, and when he did, he heard his parents say, "Stay strong. With a heart and a mind, you can do anything..."

continued

"Crackkkkkkk. Creakkkkkk. Thuthuthu."

The sound of another crack forming brought Evan back to reality. When Evan got focused and saw how big the cracks were, he knew that he had to save himself, robot-dog, and even the bullies. However, Aiden, Roxy, Thomas, Houston, were already fighting to get back to the other side, not minding about Evan at all. As Evan watched in utter disbelief and sadness, Roxy pushed Aiden, Thomas, and Houston, and all three of them fell into the universe. The bullies had not cared for Evan at all, even when Evan cared about them. Plus, Evan could not believe that one friend would betray another and kill them in order for himself to survive. Then, as Roxy stood on the edge triumphing, cracks formed around where he was standing, and the piece of land fell out underneath him.

Now, Evan and robot-dog were the only two alive in the "Danger" Zone. Evan knew that he had little time, so he found a rope off the ground and threw it over the edge to the many spectators on the other side. Many of them caught the rope and they started pulling. After minutes of hard pulling, it seemed like Evan was only moving farther away. Plus, the rope had burned off some of Evan's skin and was now digging into his flesh. "Evan, sweetie, Mommy and Daddy love you." Evan started remembering his life thirty-two weeks ago. His parents read to him and kissed him goodnight.

Suddenly, Evan felt a shift in weight that brought him back to reality. His eyes adjusted to see the people on the other side, barely holding on to the rope. Time seemed to slow as the rope slid out of their hands.

Evan remembered the one time he had gone into the "Danger" Zone. He was little, maybe five or six. His father had yelled, "What did I tell you? Do not ever go in there again!" Now Evan understood why.

The rope was on the edge of the cliff. Evan closed his eyes, and when he did, he heard his parents say, "Stay strong. With a heart and a mind, you can do anything. We love you."

Then, he saw the rope go over the edge. Evan had expected more agony and more sadness, but he felt nothing. Instead, Evan got to work writing his Will.

"This is the Last Will and Testament of Evan Bray, survivor of the Big Earth Wipeout.

Because of Evan Bray's death, there are several possessions that shall belong to certain people.

His pearl necklace from his aunt shall go to his mother..." it started.

Evan finished writing and threw it over the edge just in time. He stayed just long enough to ensure that his Will reached the other side. Then, he walked away. He was done. Finished. After a few minutes, Evan started to feel the heat and radiation of the Sun. He looked up, and saw the huge ball of gas. Then, Evan, robot-dog, and the "Danger" Zone land were all enveloped into the Sun.

The End



Naomi G.

The Phoenix



Naomi G.

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FALL

By Samantha D.

The golden leaves of the fall
Give light to the darkness around them all
Take a look at the shy sun come awake
While the girls bake a cake

The bluejays sing a song
And the morning does not seem long
The rain is coming down the road
For the little boy has found a toad

Take your time and take a look
You see the chef starting to cook
For apple pie is a sweet food
The costumers are like a flood

Rose petals are falling down
And the little girl has lost her crown
Look outside the door
You will see there is more

The golden leaves of the fall
Give light to the darkness around them all
Take a look at the shy sun come awake
While the girls bake a cake

The bluejays sing a song
And the morning does not seem long
The rain is coming down the road
For the little boy has found a toad

BEST BUDS

By Taylor H.

He cheers me up when I'm sad.
He's been there for me since the first day of last year.
We have some of the same interests.
I can tell him anything.
We occasionally will get in a fight, but we always work it out.
We can be very loud, but it's worth it
because we make each other laugh out loud.
Even though I can be crazy and sad a lot of the time,
I know I have one person who will always be there for me.
His name is Max P.

poetry

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What Happens When Berry Middle School Gets a New Student

By Kayla W.

When new students come to Berry, they are new classmates, new friends, and new family members because here at Berry Middle School, we are one giant family.

Our teachers are our parents. The coaches are our buffed-up aunts and uncles. The custodians are our friends that clean up after us. The counselors are our wise grandparents. Dr. Robbins is what I like to call the "Man of the Family."

Dr. Robbins and the counselors make sure our new family members are comfortable and ready to learn. When we get new students, we don't know anything about them. We don't know how they act, how they respect others, or how they learn.

**Moving to a new school is hard.
New students just want to fit in and be part of the group.**

I remember my first day of sixth grade. I didn't talk at all the first day of school because I worried what others would think of me. I was insecure and I still am, but I know that new students are probably insecure on their first day too.

**You might not make new friends your first few days of school
but as the year goes along, you will have a lot of friends.**

When new students come to Berry, they see all the awesome electives. They get to read all the amazing books in our library. If they want to meet an awesome dude who is totally CRAZY about music, they should meet our band director Mr. Wilson! He is amazing, funny, nice, and I love that he has a huge heart for music. I've been in band three years. You'll never be bored in the band room. If you want to hear music, listen to the band at their concerts. You won't leave the concert with a frown on your face.

When new students come to Berry, they should be grateful because Berry Middle School is the best middle school in Alabama.

You'll never be bored at Berry. Trust me, these teachers know how to keep you on the edge of your seat, but they keep it fun too.

I love making new friends. I hope every student that's new to this school will read this and realize how great it is ...

being a Berry Jag



prose

The Phoenix

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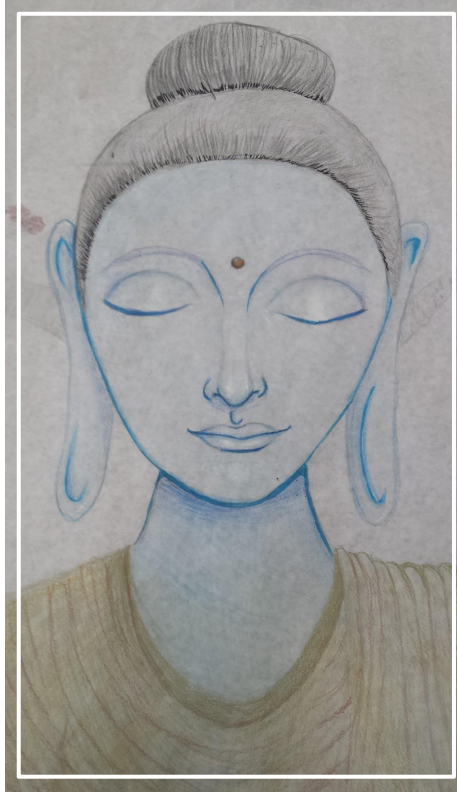
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Sapir B.

poetry

As the Snow Covers the Earthen Ground

By Cole T.

As the snow covers the earthen ground,
and fire warms us from all around,
we gather together on this wondrous night,
and we bring our lives into the truthful light,
we speak of tragedy, we speak of love,
we speak of death, we speak of doves,
then we, as a whole, sing words of joy,
when we pass along stories to the girls and boys,
this wondrous night is the first of the day,
and, to happiness, has opened a brand new way.

SNOWFLAKES

By Adrienne L.

My hand was outreached. My fingers cold and numb, but I had to get the whole feeling of how it was. Then, it started. One by one, they came. First, it was just one, but gradually, it doubled and tripled, and so on. But it wasn't hard-no, it was soft. As soft as a bird's feather. Each one fell so lightly, it was as if they each had little parachutes carrying them their own way. When one touched my fingertip, it was so dazzling and so unique, I couldn't even describe it. It felt like a million little crystal needles on my skin. Each one was like a person, believe it or not. Each one had its own path and each one was unlike any other.

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Brewed from the stuff of nightmares, a slimy, lumpy mass of green goo about the size of a basketball oozed from the rusty metal vat and out onto the cement floor.

The Creation

prose

By Sam H.

The house on the hill rumbled with the man's laughter.

"My creation! It lives!" he yelled, raising his arms victoriously.

Brewed from the stuff of nightmares, it oozed from the rusty metal vat and out onto the cement floor, a slimy, lumpy mass of green goo about the size of a basketball. The man stood over it in triumph.

"It finally lives!"

Shelves filled with colorful liquids lined the greasy walls of the dark basement. Rats and weasels and all sorts of other small animals howled in cages as machines buzzed and clanked away. He was what people would probably call a "mad scientist."

"They'll have to believe me now!" he exclaimed madly. "All those years people called me a lunatic. They told me that man could never re-create the acts of a god. Ha! But I have! Now I'll show them all! I'll be the richest person in the world!"

Then he stared down at the blob.

"Hmm, might as well make some use of you while I'm at it. Go make me my dinner, for I have very important business to tend to."

The blob did not understand. How could it understand?

"You heard me, now go!"

The blob just sat there, impassively staring up at the scientist's white lab cloak.

"GO! I said go, you insolent fool!"

What is he doing? Does he want to eat me? These were only some of the questions the blob asked itself as the furious man bellowed with rage, getting angrier and angrier by the minute. At this point, its primitive mind had recognized the scientist as a threat to its existence. It knew by instinct that it had to escape.

The blob moved as quickly as it could from the dark basement, up the stairs and into the heavily-furnished living room. But that, evidently was not fast enough.

"THAT'S IT! If I can't get you to obey a simple order, I might as well bring a rock to my presentation!"

The blob cowered under a beautiful crimson carpet as the enraged man attempted to smack it with a wooden chair.

"YOU SHALL BOW DOWN TO ME!" yelled the scientist hysterically.

But the blob did not bow down, for in a matter of seconds, the scientist was no longer in the heavily-furnished living room, but trapped inside the blob's dark stomach.

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The Creation

By Sam H.

continued

The blob then slid under the door and left the house with the howling rats and the whirring, clanking machines and all the incomplete experiments that would never be completed. It bubbled and sizzled down the long gravel path to the dark streets of Orangeville below. As it made its way down the street, it stopped at every house and made sure to devour all the oranges that had been left in their kitchens.

Among these houses lived a pale, thin man named Jack. Jack was just a regular young guy who, like everyone else in Orangeville, had an immense dedication to oranges. This came naturally to every citizen of Orangeville as a sense of patriotism to their home town. So when he woke to find his oranges stolen from his kitchen counter, he was hysterical.

"Where did they go? Who would do this?" Jack muttered madly to himself as he scavenged the room for any sign of where his oranges had vanished to. "Must have been those rats again." He was ready to jump to any sensible conclusion. He reached for the phone. "Yes, this is Jack Hunchkins calling about a pest problem. Yes, very big rats. Yes, I do know what I'm talking about. Ok, I'll see you at ten."

At ten o'clock, two men in black suits arrived at Jack's door. One of them, the shortest of the pair was holding some sort of metal tube with a nozzle on the end. Jack guessed it was some sort of device that they would use take care of his pest problem.

"Don't worry, sir," said the taller man flatly, "we'll have this taken care of by noon. But for now, I'm going to have to ask you to leave the house."

So Jack left the house to go buy some more oranges. By noon, the exterminators had sprayed everywhere in the house but the kitchen. Jack's kitchen was filled strange knick-knacks. Old bottles filled the window sill above the dirty ceramic sink. Cupboards lining the walls contained all sorts of random tools and spices, which did not seem to be organized in any way. One cupboard also contained the blob.

The blob was full of oranges from the night before and had turned a disgusting orangish-brownish-green color. It crawled out of the cupboard and targeted the light fixture on the ceiling which was round and flat- a perfect place to rest. It strenuously climbed its way up the wall, across the ceiling and into the overhead light.

"Fire up in there, I think I saw something."

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The Creation

By Sam H.

*The blob did not like to be threatened,
and it did not forgive.*

continued

A slimy, pale liquid shot through the musty air and splattered hard against the ceiling.

"No, hit the light, genius!"

Again, the liquid shot up. This time it exploded against the lamp and shocked the blob, which was still nested safely inside. Startled by the sudden vibration, the blob peered over the edge of the light to see what was going on. Two men in black suits stood on the floor. The shorter of the two was holding a some sort of tube with a nozzle on it. It was pointed at the blob.

"One more!" shouted the taller man as he pointed at the lamp, not yet noticing the slimy concoction peering over its rim. The liquid spiraled from the nozzle like lightning and slammed full on into the unsuspecting blob, knocking it from its perch on the ceiling and sending it flying across the room.

"Ugh, what is that thing?!" yelled the short man in disgust.

"I don't know, kill it!" replied the other.

The blob, which was now on the counter, dodged shot by shot of the liquid death, avoiding being hit directly. Another hit like the one in the lamp would be the end.

"I'm out of ammo!" shrieked the short man.

"You idiot! Now that thing is gonna eat our brains and it's all your fault!"

"I'm sorry," muttered the short man weakly.

The blob did not like to be threatened, and it did not forgive. The two exterminators were never seen again. Legend has it that they got eaten by a giant rat. But of course, that's just a legend.

When Jack got home, he was expecting to find an exterminator bill on his counter, but there was nothing there. There was some sort of device on the kitchen floor. A tube with a nozzle on the end, the same one he had seen the exterminator carrying that morning. He also noticed a strange trail of slime on the floor. He set down his fresh bag of oranges on the counter and bent down to examine the device. *Hmm, what happened here?* he wondered. To his surprise, when he reached for an orange to help him think, he ended up grabbing for thin air.

"Hey, what's going on?" he wondered aloud.

Then he spotted some goo dripping from the ceiling. It was the same slime that was on the floor. He called the pest control people.

"Yes, this is Jack Hunchkins again..."

"What? You mean they should be at my house right now?..."

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The Creation

"Ahhh! Get it off me!" yelled Jack as he thrashed about wildly, trying to shake off the creature on his arm.

By Sam H.

continued

"No, they're not here, but I found their sprayer doo-hicky on the floor..."

"What? No, I can't talk later!"

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! They hung up on him.

Jack heard something from the ceiling, a kind of slushy sound you might heard while walking through wet snow. He looked up. There seemed to be something in his overhead light- something slimy and gooey. He picked up the device and pointed it menacingly at the light.

"What's going on?" he muttered under his breath.

Minutes passed without an answer. In desperation, he yelled and threw the device at the light, knocking it to the tiled floor. Sure enough, there was some sort of gooey, slimy creature, filling the lamp like pudding in a bowl. The oranges were there too.

"I don't know who or what you are, but nobody, and I mean NOBODY steals my oranges!"

The blob had learned by now that whenever someone started shouting, they were usually trying to kill it. It climbed out of the glass light cover, across the floor and up onto the counter.

Jack pointed the device at the blob.

"Now how does this thing work?" he asked himself. He pressed a button that he thought looked like the trigger, and a muffled clicking sound came out. "Hmm, must be out. But there are still other ways to use this," he said, an evil grin coming over his pale face.

"AUGH!" he yelled, swinging the tube like a baseball bat and walloping the poor blob across the room. It hit the wall hard and slumped to the ground.

Jack walked slowly over to the blob on the floor smirking mischievously, never letting his menacing eyes move from the blob slouched against the wall. The blob had had it with this fool. As soon as it got close enough, it latched onto the tube and crawled its way up to the handle. Then it started its way up Jack's arm.

"Ahhh! Get it off me!" yelled Jack as he thrashed about wildly, trying to shake off the creature on his arm. In his panic, he knocked a bottle of soap out of the sink and onto the floor. It spilled all over. But then Jack noticed that the trail of goo on the floor had now vanished, washed away by the soap. *Hmm, maybe...*

The blob was still progressing up Jack's arm. It was trying to get closer to his head. Jack knew that if he was going to defeat the blob, it was now or never. *Maybe if the soap destroys the blob's trail, it will destroy the blob too!* It was worth a try. But the blob was already on his shoulder. He would have to act fast.

He threw himself to the floor and started rubbing the blob, which was firmly attached to him, against the spilled soap. It shrieked in agony, a horrible, unbearable scream. Jack rubbed harder.

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... all it ever was
was an insane lab
experiment. It was
never meant to be.

prose &
poetry

The Creation

By Sam H.

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continued

EEEEEEAAAAAYYYYYYYYYYHHHH!

The blob slowly melted into a gooey liquid, then dissolved into nothing. It was over. Its life had been so short, but all it ever was was an insane lab experiment. It was never meant to be.

~~~

RING!!! RING!! RING!!!

The next day, Jack got a call from pest control.

"Umm, yes, I do realize that it was not actually a rat," he said. "But really, you don't have any idea what that thing was? I'm very sure it was alive."

Jack never learned completely what the thing was, but he was told that its DNA had been tested, and it did not resemble anything known to mankind. To put the matter to rest, he resolved to believe that some things are just meant to be mysteries. He never really believed that.

The End

Olivia W.



As fear is our king, and darkness the rule,  
the shadows we swam through, like an abyssal pool,  
and day through day we passed the unjust,  
we went about our lives like we felt we must,  
but no more I must say,  
for the darkness consumes us like it felt it must,  
and through shadows of day and blackness of night,  
we must stand up for what's just and what's right,  
and shadows we must fight, through day and through night,  
and through hardships we meet, we must stand on our feet,  
because in the end, as few of us stand, we will win.

# The FIGHT Against FEAR

By  
Cole T.

## Growing Up

prose

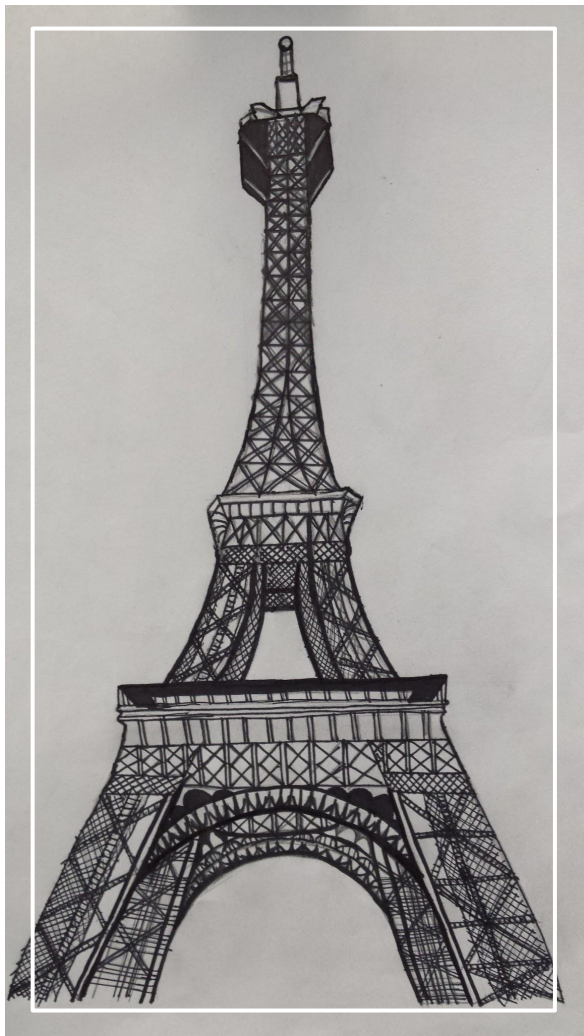
By Taylor S.

At age five I lived in McCalla, Alabama. The playground my grandpa built with his own hands was my own personal wonderland. Swinging on swings and sliding on slides was the life. My best friends would come over and we would battle mythical creatures in the backyard. I was “tuff stuff” fighting battling monstrous creatures. It was like my own personal movie.

Horsing around, playing t-ball, basketball, and fighting monsters everyday ... big and on top of the world at age five, I thought I had everything.

Nowadays I’m twelve and everything has changed. Life’s all about boys, Starbucks, school, and sports. Don’t get me wrong, I’m still fighting off creatures, but now the monsters are mean girls at school. Joking and horsing around is still one of my most cherished traits. Tough as nails, I don’t let the sport of softball get to me. Middle school is now in session, and I’m not drawing finger paintings anymore. Working hard and enjoying the journey through life got me to today.

I may not be five anymore, but I still feel on top of the world.



Sydney L.



Olivia W.

# The Phoenix

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# Boom!

By James H.

prose

BOOM! Thunder crackled as the pouring rain sizzled like burning bread. Thunder crackled again. There was an explosion. Someone yelled, "We're not going to make it!" Then, the face of a caring mother slowly burned away.

Tie shot up out of his bed with beads of sweat dripping of his forehead.

"Same nightmare again?" Lukas asked from across the room.

"Yah," Tie said.

The identical twins lived in Brooklyn, New York. When they heard Miss Web yell, "WAKE UP!" they jumped up and yelled back simultaneously, "Yes Miss Web!"

Tie and Lukas lived in an orphanage on Westerly Lane. All they knew about their family was that their parents had died in a plane crash.

The twins slowly walked downstairs. They were so tired they almost tripped down the steps. They entered the so-called "kitchen" and helped themselves to a smelly piece of toast. Miss Webb offered some moldy cream cheese, but they refused.

Tie and Lukas wondered what it was like to go outside. That was strictly prohibited. They weren't even allowed to have a small window.

There were other kids at the orphanage besides Lukas and Tie. None of the kids were allowed to communicate, except for with their roommates. Although there was that rule, it didn't mean the rule was followed.

Everyone in the orphanage made secret letters and passed them through the floor vents. Miss Webb called many air-conditioning companies to complain about sounds in her vents. Every time they came, they claimed there were no problems.

The orphanage was very tall, yet almost invisible from the outside. Virtually no one came to the orphanage.

Miss Webb was in charge. She was a mean fat lady with dark black hair. She wore bright red lipgloss on her huge plump lips. She wore too much eyeliner, making her eyes look jet black and menacing. She treated the kids like they were dirt.

If the kids were caught doing something wrong, they were whipped until they could not stand up straight. Most of the time the trouble makers were Lukas and Tie. They had deep scars on their backs. Miss Webb seemed to despise the twins more than everyone else.

Tie and Lukas wondered if Miss Webb was an orphan herself, but they never had the guts to ask. They would have had an extra beating for that.

One day, Tie and Lukas noticed something strange about Miss Webb. She wasn't around before about 9:00 am. It seemed like she was up to something. Whatever it was, Tie and Lukas knew it involved them. They had to find out what Miss Webb was up to, so they made a plan. They would search for answers.

Later that afternoon there was a knock on the front door of the orphanage. Lukas slowly walked down the stairs and saw, as usual, Miss Webb wasn't there. There was a strange boy. He was surrounded by four police cars with flashing lights. Lukas found this odd.

*continued next page*

*This was the first time in a long time that Lukas had seen the sun.*

# The Phoenix

# Boom!

 By James H.

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*continued*

The new boy was a small black kid with ratty clothes and no shoes. Lukas turned his head a little to the left of the boy and saw he was being escorted by a policeman. Lukas noticed the strange boy's sad and angry expression. There were tears falling from his cheeks. Lukas opened the door a little more to get a better look at the boy.

"Is Miss Webb here?" The officer asked Lukas in a stern voice. While glancing out of the corner of his eyes, the officer saw the deep scars on the back of Lukas' arms.

"No," Lukas said, unsure if that was a good enough answer. Lukas' eyes hurt from the bright glare in the sky. This was the first time in a long time that Lukas had seen the sun.

"Kid," the officer said with some concern in his voice.

"Yeah?"

"I'm going to ask you one more time," he said with a bit more anger. "Is Miss Webb here?"

Lukas snuck a look at the officer's watch. It was 1:18.

"I'll go get her," Lukas said. He ran down the hall and up the stairs, passing Miss Webb's office and heading to the little room.

"Tie, there is a man downstairs with a kid. I think he is a new addition to the orphanage. I don't know what it is, but I feel like he is important. Gotta go now." With that, Lukas was out of the door and racing down the hall to Miss Webb's room. He entered slowly and carefully through the door that was slightly ajar.

"WHAT!" yelled Miss Webb, quickly tucking something into her desk drawer. "There is someone here, ma'am," Lukas said.

Miss Webb lifted her chubby body out of her chair. Lukas couldn't help but giggle when she almost got stuck in her seat.

She then went downstairs to see who it was. She greeted the police officer, and also greeted the boy.

"Welcome to Miss Webb's orphanage," she said in her extremely fake voice. The strange boy entered. Miss Webb signed a sheet of paper, took him upstairs and gave him his own room.

Lukas and Tie ran up to the little room and greeted the boy as Miss Webb went back to her room.

"My name is Kevin," said the boy.

"I'm Lukas and this is Tie," said Lukas. "So have you ever been to an orphanage before?"

"Yes," said Kevin, "a lot."

"What happened to your parents?" Lukas tried not to say that, but it just came out.

Kevin hesitated for a moment and then said, "They were killed in a plane crash."

The room was completely silenced.

The End

# The Phoenix

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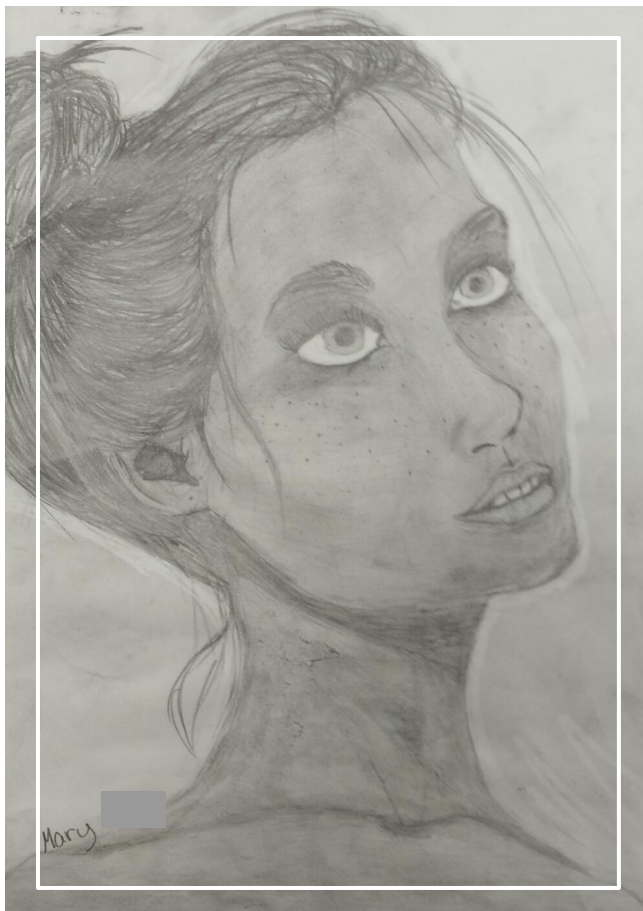
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## BEAUTY

By Cole T.

Your beauty is a shining light,  
that fights off the horrors of night,  
and your blazing smile fends off the cold,  
and your voice makes those around you bold,  
to you the beauty may be hard to see,  
but the beauty you have inside and out is more than visible to me.

poetry



Mary A.

# The Phoenix

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# The Hoosier Forest

By Maddy J.

My brothers and I hiked up the bumpy dirt path. The Hoosier Forest surrounded us. Trees of various colors surrounded us for miles. The only sounds were our heavy breathing, bird calls, and the occasional snap of a branch. The colors of the leaves looked like a rainbow. Streams of light danced on the forest floor as leaves rustled in the cool autumn breeze. My two brothers were carrying the most intricate and lightest backpacks while I was stuck with the heavy and dull packs. We had been hiking for at least an hour to the campsite. Fifteen minutes later, we arrived at a clearing near the lake. It was dusk and many colors danced in the sky as we set up our tent and campfire. The tent itself was a bright neon orange, while the cover, which protected the tent from rain, was a blinding yellow. My eldest brother started a fire as the sun set, leaving the area in complete and utter darkness. You could barely see your own hand in front of your own face because of the dark clouds covering the only source of light: the moon. The three of us sat down on the ground near the fire and cooked our hot dogs. I was mesmerized by the flames. The flames twisted and turned as the shadow of the fire loomed over us. After we finished eating, it was time to sleep. We crowded into the small tent. It was a tight fit, but it worked. Every time I was about to doze off, the sounds of the creatures of the night jolted me awake. Finally, fatigue overcame me, and I fell asleep listening to the lullaby of the nocturnal animals.

# The Single Star

By Cole T.

In the midst of darkness, the wicked's unrest,  
there was one light that shown unlike the rest,  
as darkness ruled over, and shadows the king,  
this light brought liberation, and made us all  
free.

*John hated gym more than anything in the world.*

# The Phoenix

# The Bully

prose

By Madison O.

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"Move out of the way, squirt!" said Jake, as he pushed John into a locker. John just ignored it because this has been going on since the 6th grade. John walked to his second period, math.

"John!" said his best friend Phillip, as he was fixing his glasses so they wouldn't fall off of his face. John and Phillip headed into math together. Mr. Greene had already started class.

"Boys, come sit down now," said Mr. Greene with an angered voice. John and Phillip sat next to each other in every class they had together. They were really good at every class, except PE, because they were nerds.

As they were leaving second period Tom came by and shoved John. John fell but got right back up because he was used to it. John walked slowly to PE in the gym. John hated gym more than anything in the world because he hated dodgeball and exercise.

John extremely hated dodgeball because he was horrible at it and because he always got smacked in the face with a ball.

After PE, the day was finally over and John got to go home and do homework. Walking home was bad because John had to walk by himself and hide from 8th graders to avoid getting beaten up.

John always went the same way home. He would walk in the middle of a group of girls to avoid Jake, The Bully.

Then when the girls went to their houses, John would hide behind something for a few minutes to make sure there were no 8th graders. When it was clear, he would sprint to his house.

~~~

John finally got home after his run for the day. He went upstairs to his bedroom to do his homework. When he finished, he came downstairs. His mom was cooking dinner.

"Hi, mom, what are you cooking?" said John.

"Oh, you scared me," said his mom, "Green Bean Casserole."

John loved green bean casserole, especially his mom's. John went back upstairs after dinner and started to play with his robot that he made on his own.

In the morning, John went to school early to go to the library for the book fair. When John left, Jake spotted him and yelled "John!" John didn't answer him; he didn't answer him. "John!" Jake yelled again. John still didn't respond, and Jake became furious. Jake ran to John and punched him in the chest. John almost vomited.

"Answer me when I speak to you!" yelled Jake.

"Why," said John holding his chest because of the pain. Just then Jake stepped on top of John. After that John started to cry at the top of his lungs with pain and, by that time, everyone had gathered around them.

"Get up, wimp" said Jake.

While John was on the floor, an angel appeared to him. The angel had the prettiest voice John had ever heard. The voice said, "Jake, stop it, you are hurting him."

continued next page

I bet Julia thinks I'm a wimp because I didn't defend myself against Jake,

The Bully

By Madison O.

continued

"So!" said Jake, and he walked away, leaving John with the pretty voice.

~~~~

"Are you OK?" the angel said softly.  
John came to his senses and saw that the voice was no angel. It was his crush, Julia.

"I'm fine," said John trying to get up, but he couldn't. Julia helped John walk to the nurse.

*I bet Julia thinks I'm a wimp because I didn't defend myself against Jake,* John thought as he walked to the nurse with Julia. When they finally got to the nurse, Julia told her what happened and she said. "No Jake would never do anything to hurt someone. You two are lying. He is a really nice kid once you get to know him, I'll see what is wrong with John. You, Julia, need to get back to class."

The nurse found out that John broke four fingers, three ribs, his wrist, and twisted his ankle. The nurse called 911 to come take John to the hospital.

When they got to the hospital John saw his mom, dad, and his sister Abby. "Are you okay?" asked his mom, crying.

"Yeah," said John.

After about five hours of being in the hospital, John finally had a cast for his wrist, ankle, fingers, and ribs.

~~~~

After three days, John went back to school. Everyone was asking happened, and every time, he said that he fell down a really rocky hill. He didn't tell anyone what really happened because Jake came over to his house when he was recovering and told him if he were to tell anyone what happened he would beat him up again.

By second period the next day, John got the courage to go tell Mr. Greene what had happened. When John found Mr. Greene he also found Jake close to him so he just turned around and went in the opposite direction.

After school, John had the smartest idea ever. *Why don't I go to Jake's house and tell his parents what he did so he can't beat me up because he will get in trouble with his parents.*

John took a bag and headed to Jake's house. He didn't want to tell his parents.

As John walked to Jake's house he got more and more anxious about what was going to happen. Each step he took he got more and more nervous.

John thought along the way. *Will he beat me up again? Are his parents also mean like him? Are his parents going to be willing to listen to me?*

When John finally got to Jake's house he hid behind a tree so Jake wouldn't see him. Jake was outside playing football with his friends. John waited to go to the door until Jake went inside and the other boys left.

John waited a few extra minutes to make sure Jake wouldn't come back outside. When the few minutes were up, John came out from behind the tree and saw why Jake had been bullying him since the 6th grade.

continued next page

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Are his parents also mean like him? Are his parents going to be willing to listen to me?

The Bully

 By Madison O.

continued

John saw Jake's mom punch an 8-by-12 inch hole in the wall right beside Jake.

"Why are you mad at me, Mom?" said Jake. "Mom just calm down we can work this out."

"No!" yelled Jake's mom. "We can't because you are the worst kid in the whole world!"

"Mom, do you really mean that?" said Jake, about to cry. His mother never responded.

~~~

The next day at school, Jake never said a word to anyone. He didn't even touch John because he was so depressed.

"Hey Jake" said John, yelling down the crowded hall.

"What do you want!" said Jake.

"Peace," said John.

"Why, all I have ever done to you is bully you," Jake said.

"I saw what happened at your house and I feel really bad," John said.

"Oh, wait ... why were you at my house yesterday?" Jake asked.

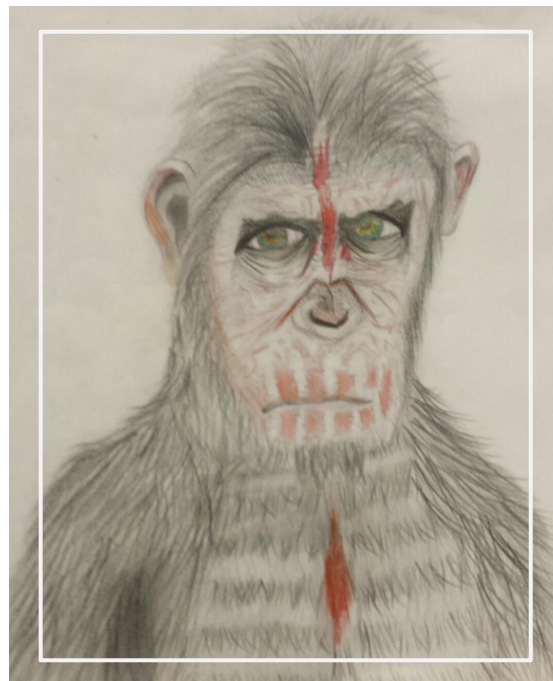
"Because I wanted to talk to your parents about what happened," John said.

After a while they started talking about how they both should go to the counselor to talk about what happened.

John and Jake went to the counselor together and after about two or three months they became best friends.

Jake went to live with his aunt because his mom went to get help for her anger.

The End



Sydney L.

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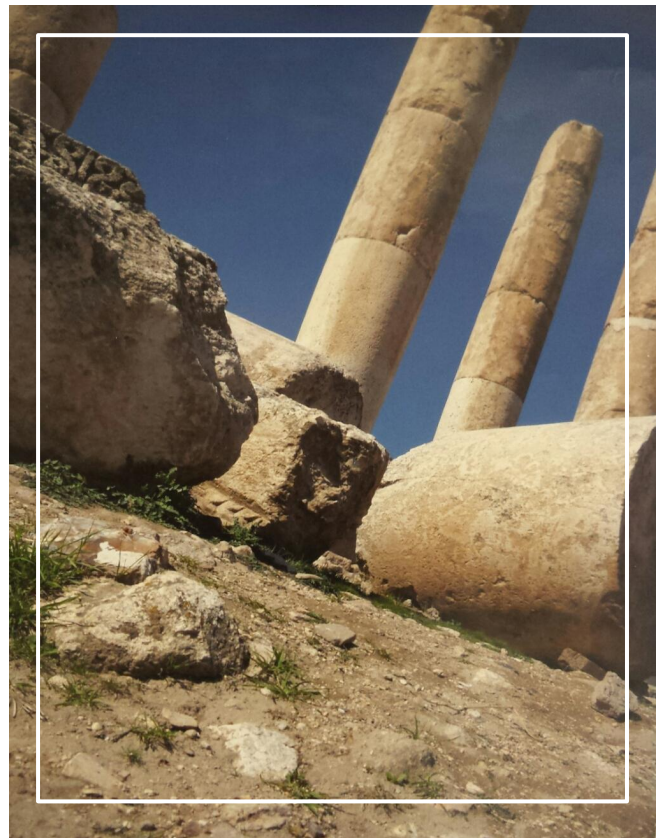
[End of the World](#)

## FOREVER GONE

By Anonymous

The thick gray sky  
The feeling of aftermath  
This silver sound  
is only obtained  
when you're safe  
straight from the pain.  
The flame is gone  
the rain has come.  
The flame is forever gone.  
Leave your pressure in  
the battlefield  
where it began  
and where it stays,  
Forever gone.  
You are the blameless,  
the innocent,  
the clean.  
You are the victim,  
the scarred,  
the hurt.  
You are free  
enjoy it.  
It is  
Forever Gone.

Hitham K.



## Decisions

By Adrienne L.

I put one tiny black shoe in front of the other. Each step makes a beautiful clicking noise when it meets the cold stone. I put my weight onto a rock; it sways back and forth, back and forth. Then, finally, it falls. I fall with it. I knew it was a bad idea to do this ... so why did I do it? Right as I think I'm going to hit the hard earth, I fly, but then I notice the strong hands around my waist, holding me up. "You know better. You will have to learn to make choices on your own because one day, my lovely, there won't be someone there to catch you when you fall."

Twenty-two year old Pierce Johnson heaved another stack of paperwork onto the cart. Before starting work as an intern at Ruby Beauty's business branch, he had had no idea how heavy paper was. Even a year later, after having earned a small position in the company, he still could not get used to the weight of the thin white sheets stacked on top of one another. After loading the cart with as much paper as he could, he sat down next to the wall, panting and rubbing a hand through his light brown hair.

"Taking a breather, are we, Perry?"

Pierce looked up to see the CEO, Peter Dactys, a husky, balding man with crooked teeth and a wispy moustache. Pierce was unsure of how such an atrociously ugly man had become so powerful in a beauty company. It was the most ironic of all ironies in the world.

"Well, Johansson, are you working or not? I'm not going to pay you for lounging around all the time." Pierce stood up, tightening his thin black tie.

"Yessir, I'm working. Sorry, Mr. D," he said. Dactys grinned cruelly. Pierce hid a groan as he began to push the heavy cart of papers down the hallway. Pierce made his rounds in the tall office building, often flirting with the women, which got disappointed looks from Dactys. Finally, after what seemed like years of delivering paper, the clock struck five, and Pierce was free to go.

He bolted out of the office to the small apartment which he rented out with his salary. He opened up all of the curtains, letting in the pink glow of the sunset.

"Evening in New York," he sighed woefully.

Suddenly, there was a knock at the door. It made Pierce jump, since the only visitor he ever got was the crazy old landlady demanding rent. Pierce made his way to the door, muttering about his strict salary. He opened the door and was greeted with the warm face of his mother, Diana. She was a thin woman, tall, but still had a definitive shape. She was wearing an aqua blazer with a fitted pencil skirt. Her hair was combed straight and her bangs hid her sculpted brows.

"Honey!" she exclaimed, embracing him.

"Mom, I didn't think you would be visiting today," Pierce said less enthusiastically. He awkwardly patted his mother's back. Behind her, he saw his mother's best friend, his tired, dark eyes hidden behind glasses. This man was the closest thing he had to a real dad. He never got to have the real experience with a father. His real father, Nathan Zellner, was with some woman in Cali. He had left Diana soon after she had become pregnant with him. Yep, his father was a real coward.

"Hey, Zeke," Pierce greeted him with a shake of the hand. His mother had met this man, Zeke Hargett, in Greece, of all places. She was still getting over Nathan, and he was studying to be a historian. That didn't go too well. Now a UPS delivery man with broad shoulders and dark hair, he had been friends with Pierce's mother for ten years. Zeke was pretty much Pierce's honorary stepdad. Pierce and he got along pretty okay. Of course, they never had the stereotypical father-son relationship with baseball and BBQ and things like that.

"Oh, sweetie, we have so much to tell you!" his mother's smile was brighter than the sun.

"That's great mom, it really is, but, uh, why'd you come in the first place?" Pierce had always been awkward around his family. Fault of his biological dad, he assumed.

Diana laughed. "Well, why wouldn't we visit you on your *birthday*, sweetie?" Pierce looked at her, an eyebrow raised. His birthday was today? How could he have forgotten?

"I, uh, erm... okay. Come on in, I guess," he clumsily stepped aside and his guests entered his tiny excuse for an apartment.

He brushed off the wooden stools in the miniscule kitchen, offering the seats to his mother and her friend. Diana placed a small Edgar's box on the dappled counter before sitting, and Zeke placed a small box, clumsily wrapped, right next to it.

*continued next page*

*"It's... a pen," Pierce said...*

*Diana had a quizzical look carved onto her face, but Minerva had a knowing smile.*

By Anna Grace H. and Anastasia Z.

*continued*

"So, honey, how's work?" Diana asked as Pierce joined them at the table.

"It's, uh, you know... work," Pierce didn't like talking about his job much. "How's Timothy?" That was Pierce's adopted brother. He was the most spoiled ten-year-old Pierce had ever known. As soon as he said it, he regretted it.

"Oh, Timothy's great! You know he got on the baseball team? *And* he got straight B's on his report card? *And...*" Diana rambled on about Tim's accomplishments. It was all Pierce could do not to roll his eyes. By the time his mother was done, he would need bifocals for the strain he had put on his eyes.

"Coffee?" he said as she was talking about Tim's great ability to hold his breath for *two whole minutes*.

"Oh, um, okay. That'll be great, sweetie." Pierce got the old coffee maker going, slowly but surely.

"So, how's the postal service going for ya?" Pierce asked Zeke.

"It's good," his gruff voice answered. Zeke was a man of few words.

"Ah, that's, well, that's good." Pierce gave him a thumbs up. Zeke didn't look very impressed. Pierce cleared his throat and ran his fingers through his fine, light brown hair. The coffee maker made a deep rumbling sound that meant the coffee was ready. Pierce got out three mugs and filled them up. Diana dumped cream and sugar into hers until it was beige. Zeke put one drop of cream and one packet of sugar into his. Pierce took his black.

Pierce sliced the intricately designed cake and laid the pieces on some paper plates.

"Thanks for the cake, guys," Pierce said through sips of coffee.

"No problem, Hun. Oh! We got you a present!"

Pierce smiled, picking up the small box his mother motioned to. He carefully tore off the wrapping paper, opening the box inside of it. After a few more layers of packaging, he held in his hands a chunky black watch, both casual and work-appropriate. He smiled at his mom.

"Thanks. You're the best."

"No problem, Sweetie. Zeke thought it would be the *perfect* gift for you." Pierce nodded at Zeke thoughtfully, and he nodded back. Suddenly, there was another knock at the door. "Ooh! That must be Minerva!" Minerva was Diana's *other* best friend. She was the only one there for her when Pierce's grandfather, Ace, had sent her away to an all-female boarding school to keep her away from troublemakers like Pierce's father. The school didn't work, Pierce was proof of that.

Pierce went over to open the door. Minerva smiled at him. "Hi, Minerva," he greeted her. Minerva was a dark skinned, petite woman with an athletic build and dark curly hair cascading down her back. She held a small box neatly wrapped in blue paper. Minerva walked in, her black high heels clicking loudly on the wooden floor.

"Diana!" she called, embracing Pierce's mother. "And Zeke!" she turned to the broad shouldered man. "It is so nice to see you again."

"You too," Zeke responded before turning back to his coffee. Minerva and Diana chattered for a few moments, and Pierce turned to the box. He lifted off the blue paper and opened the white prism that lay beyond it. Inside, there was a cylinder shimmering softly in the light.

"It's... a pen," Pierce said. Minerva and Diana stopped chirping and laid their attention on the small object. Diana had a quizzical look carved onto her face, but Minerva had a knowing smile.

"I thought it might come in handy... you know, with your new job and all."

"Right. Um, thanks, Minerva." Pierce slipped the pen into his shirt pocket. The two women continued with their jittering and Zeke took another sip of his coffee. Pierce sighed and laid back in his chair, the wood creaking, threatening to snap under his weight.

*continued next page*

*He spent another few moments staring at Diana. It made Pierce struggle to keep in his breakfast.*

# The Phoenix

## BOOK OF JOHNSON

By Anna Grace H. and Anastasia Z.

*continued*

"Happy birthday to me..." Pierce muttered to himself.

The next day, Pierce woke up to the blare of an alarm clock with a bad headache. His guests had spent the night on the small couch and recliner in his living room. Minerva had left. Now it was six thirty and he had half an hour to get ready for work. He kicked himself out of bed, and examined himself in the mirror. He had dark circles under his eyes and his light brown hair was messy and unkempt. He frowned before walking to his miniscule kitchen to put on a pot of strong coffee.

"G'morning, Sweetie!" his mother sang as she smothered butter on toast.

"Morning, mom," he did all he could to take the bitterness out of his voice. He nodded to Zeke, who was at the table reading the paper.

"I've made you breakfast," she said, sliding him a plate of burnt toast. Despite feeling bad, he gave his mother a crooked smile. She really did try. He silently munched on the toast spread thick with butter, trying not to nod off again as he waited for his coffee.

Finally, when Pierce was starting to snore, the rumbling of the coffee machine woke him up with a jolt. He got up and fumbled with the pot, muttering to himself. He took a long sip, letting the dark bitterness wash away his grogginess. He let out a contented sigh. With new found energy, Pierce finished his black toast and black coffee, and he made his way into the shower.

With his collared shirt and black tie on, Pierce made his way to work his mother and Zeke. They-meaning Diana- wanted to see about his job. Pierce had on the black watch from his parents and the pen from Minerva was secure in his pocket protector. He opened the door of the tall metal-and-glass building, and held it for the two to enter.

As he began a short tour of the building, he bumped into Peter Dactys.

"Perry Johansson," he said, frowning, "slacking again, are we?"

"N-no, sir! Of course not sir." Pierce said nervously, ignoring him getting his name wrong again, "I-I was just showing my guests my, uh, new job." Dactys looked at Pierce's company, and his eyes got wide as he saw Diana. Keeping his eyes on Diana, he said, "Well, I guess I can let this one slide. Especially for this pretty woman," he extended his hand, "Peter Dactys, CEO of Ruby Beauty."

"Diana Johnson. Full-time housewife."

"May I say, it is a great pleasure to meet such a beautiful character." Zeke gave Dactys the evil eye, but if Pierce's boss noticed, he didn't show it. He spent another few moments staring at Diana. It made Pierce struggle to keep in his breakfast.

Awkwardly, Pierce said, "Uh, well, we had better go," he ushered his parents ahead of him, "I'll see you later, Mr. D."

"Yeah... yeah, okay, bye, Perry. Bye Diana!" Zeke started muttering obscenities.

\*\*\*

"And that's the end of the tour," he said unenthusiastically, "what'd you think?"

"Your job looks very... interesting," Diana said, "but..."

"But...?"

Zeke stepped in. "But where will you go after your job?" Pierce had never really thought of that.

"Well, I, um, you guys know I'm just putting up with this until I get a better job--"

"But what if you never *get* another job?" Diana's eyes were pleading. "Pierce, I don't want you stuck in this business with idiotic CEO's. You have to get a real job, start your life. In fact, I think your grandfather has an opening in his business. You know, it's one of the biggest in the U.S."

*continued next page*

*She went to work with him everyday, observing him.  
Pierce felt like some sort of specimen in a lab.*

# The Phoenix

# BOOK OF JOHNSON

By Anna Grace H. and Anastasia Z.

*continued*

You know, it's one of the biggest in the U.S." Suddenly, Pierce realized why his parents had really come. It wasn't to celebrate his birthday. They just wanted him to join his grandfather. It wouldn't be any better in Chicago, Pierce knew that. He would be doing the same thing, only he would be working for his grandfather. That was just weird.

"Mom, Zeke, I don't need to go to Grandpa Ace for work. I am fully capable of getting a job on my own."

"You did a pretty bad job getting this one." Zeke crossed his arms.

"But-- but I--"

"No. Either you get a new job in a month, or we're sending you off to Chicago to work for Ace." Pierce was surprised at how angry his mother's friend was getting.

Diana said gentler, "Honey, we only want the best for you." *No you don't*, Pierce thought.

"I know you do."

It was final.

\*\*\*

Diana decided to stay with Pierce and help him get a better job. Zeke went back to Illinois. She went to work with him everyday, observing him. Pierce felt like some sort of specimen in a lab.

Diana helped him fill out his application.

"Okay, so you barely passed high school with all C's, and majored in Greek in the University of New York. You can speak fluent Greek and Latin, and you currently work in a business for selling beauty products. What else?" Pierce thought for a moment.

"I'm pretty strong. And I have stunning good looks." He flashed Diana a smile, but his mother did not look amused. She sighed. "You're going to work with your grandfather if you can't show us you can actually support yourself with this job," she said sternly.

"I know," Pierce said.

There was no way he could prove to them that he could support himself. He might as well start packing.

\*\*\*

One day, when Diana was alone, Dactys approached her.

"Diana! What a pleasure it is to see you!"

"And you, Mr. Dactys."

"Oh, please, call me Peter."

"Okay, um, Peter."

"So, Diana, please tell me what a *beautiful* woman like you is doing here?"

"I'm, uh, with my son, of course. He's trying to make a tough decision, and I'm here to help him."

"Good, that's good! Your son, Parker, he's a neat one, all right. And, just between you and me, he's my *favorite* employee." Diana raised an eyebrow.

"Uh-huh."

"So, uh, Diana," he knelt and held her hand. "*My beautiful cherry blossom*. I beg of you to join me on a date." His eyes were glistening with hopefulness. Diana's skin crawled.

"Oh... Peter... I cannot go on a date with you!"

"Why not, my dear?"

*continued next page*

*"I want you to go and-" he got close and started whispering- "kill their business."*

# The Phoenix

# BOOK OF JOHNSON

By Anna Grace H. and Anastasia Z.

*continued*

"I have to take care of Pierce. He is my main priority at the moment. I just do not have time to date you. Please do understand."

"I... I understand."

"Thanks." She tentatively patted his forehead like she would a sad old dog.

"But, um, if you *weren't* occupied with Pierce, would you go on a date with me?"

"Oh, um... sure." Mr. Dactys' eyes lit up.

"Thank you, Diana!" he gently kissed her on the cheek, his wiry moustache tickling her, then rushed away from her, running into startled, disgusted employees.

\*\*\*

Pierce was asleep on his desk. He had stayed up all night, and he slept whenever his mom was away. Papers were scattered among the desk in a big, disorganized lump. Suddenly, there was a loud tapping on his desk.

"Mmmm... five more minutes, Mom..." he muttered.

"Mr. Johansson." Pierce's eyes bolted open, and he stood up straight. Wiping the drool from the corner of his mouth, he said, "Mr. D. I was just..."

"Slacking. I expected more from you, Perry. But, I will let this one slide."

"Oh, um, okay... why?"

"Because, I know what a valued employee you are, so hard working and organized." Pierce looked at Dactys suspiciously. He couldn't even get his name right half the time.

"... You're talking about *me*, right?" Mr. Dactys burst into hearty laughter, earning some stares from the other employees.

"Yes, I'm talking about you, Parker!" he slapped him on the back, "Listen, kid, I have a task that needs to be done, and I think you're *just* the guy to do it!"

"Um, okay... what is it?"

"So, there's this business downtown run by the Gorgoni sisters."

"I've actually heard of them. It's supposedly a pretty big business."

"Pretty big business? They own one of the largest franchises in the world! You've heard of Mother Gorgoni's World of Wigs, right?"

"Of course I've heard of it."

"Well, it's run by those sisters. Stephanie, Riley, and Medea. Medea is the head of it. I want you to go and-" he got close and started whispering- "kill their business."

"Kill their business? Why? And how?"

"By killing their business, this one will bloom! You just have to take out the head, Medea, then you should be good to go! Easy-peasy!" Pierce looked at his boss, a quizzical look in his tired eyes.

"But... how is taking out the head of a wig company going to help ours?"

"One less company, one less competition, one more product for production."

"I understand, sir... but maybe you should get someone else..."

"Why? You are the most qualified employee I know. No, only *you* can do this for our business."

Pierce hesitated.

*continued next page*



*Pierce walked uncertainly out of the confines of the elevator. He looked up and down the carpeted hallways. Suddenly, his gut twisted into a knot.*

By Anna Grace H. and Anastasia Z.

*continued*

"And," Dactys said, smirking, "your family would be *very* proud of you." Pierce's heart started beating faster. He could finally prove to his parents that he was worth something, that he was as good as that brat Timothy.

"I'll do it," he said with finality.

\*\*\*

Pierce clutched his walkie-talkie close to his chest. He was starting to feel unsure of why he had agreed to do this, to take down somebody else's company. After all, they were just trying to make an honest living, the same as he was. *Why don't you get a better job?* the voice of his mother echoed in his head. *You don't want to be stuck in this loser job all your life, do you?*

Pierce clenched his teeth. He raised a shaking hand and pressed the small button.

"Gorgoni Sisters & Co., how may I help you?" answered a gentle female voice.

"I'm, uh, here to see the head of your company, Medea."

"Ah, you must be... Percy Fitzherbert?" That was the codename Dactys gave him. It wasn't that much different from what he usually called him.

Pierce nodded, then, realizing whoever he was talking to couldn't see him, said, "Yes."

"Come on in. We've been expecting you." The grandiose bronze doors shuttered, then opened slowly. Pierce walked awkwardly into the building. He greeted the chubby lady at the front desk, then went to the elevator. Inside, he spoke into his walkie-talkie.

"I'm in," he said.

"Excellent," answered Dactys, "Go get 'em, Mr. Fiddlebert!"

"It's Fitzherbert, Mr. D. You know, you're actually not that bad of a bo--"

"No time for that, Percy! Go do your business, and get out of there! But do take your time. No rush."

"Um, okay." Pierce hooked the walkie-talkie in his back pocket and checked his charcoal watch. 10:28.

With a ding, the elevator arrived at floor 42, the top floor. Pierce walked uncertainly out of the confines of the elevator. He looked up and down the carpeted hallways. Suddenly, his gut twisted into a knot. Where was the room? Dactys failed to provide him with that information.

Pierce roamed the halls. Finally, he found a door labelled with the number 4225. He ducked inside. The room was dark and smelled of rotten eggs.

"Maybe there's a map in here or something," he muttered to himself.

"Can we help you?" Pierce belted out a girlish scream.

"Oh, did we startle you, ma'am? Sorry for the lack of lighting." Suddenly, the lights blinked on. Pierce saw three old women sitting in love seats next to the usual conference table and chairs. They were all knitting intricate scarves, their hair seemingly blending in with the fabric.

Without looking up from her work, one said, "I do apologize for the darkness. My sisters and I do love the dark." She giggled softly to herself and the others slapped her affectionately.

"Right, um, I'm Percy Fitzherbert. I'm just looking for Medea's room, so if you could tell me where that is..." the ladies ignored him, knitting away. Sighing, Pierce looked at the front of the room, trying to find a map. A picture of three young triplets who vaguely resembled the hags sitting in the room hung on the wall. It said, *The Grey Sisters. Our most valued employees. 1963.*

Three pictures hung next to it, all black and white. The women in them looked about in their mid forties. *Dana*, said the one of a woman with a dark sweater and pale hair done in a beehive. Likewise, the woman who greeted him had on a pale peach sweater and had hair dry and brittle from too much product.

*continued next page*

*"Come with us, Pierce Johnson! To Hades!" They started crawling towards Pierce, who was frozen in place.*

# The Phoenix

# BOOK OF JOHNSON

*continued*

By Anna Grace H. and Anastasia Z.

The next picture said *Eden*. Unlike the first, this sister had darker hair and it was very long. She wore a thick coat and a furry hat. Pierce saw a matching coat that was worn hanging from a coat hanger near the door. The sister closest to Pierce had dark red hair that was clearly dyed and was in an intricate braid trailing down her back.

The third picture was inscribed with the name *Prinella*. This sister wore a mask of makeup, Pierce could tell that even in black and white, and her short, pale hair was in a ponytail. The one sitting closest to the window matched the face in the portrait. She had a modern suit on, and her face was twisted into a frown. Still, she looked to be the youngest, with hardly a wrinkle on her face clear of acne, unlike Pierce's.

Pierce looked back at the women, who were still engrossed in their knitting.

"Uh, well, if you can't tell me anything about Medea Gorgoni, then I guess I'll be on my way."

Suddenly, the three grannies looked up.

"Pierce Johnson, why would we tell you that?" said the one that resembled Prinella.

"Well, because I have a meeting with her and-- wait, my name isn't Pierce, it's Percy. Percy Fitzherbert." She raised an eyebrow and chuckled.

"No, silly, it's Pierce. That's what your name tag says."

Pierce's face reddened. He had forgotten to take off his tag. Trying to keep himself from face palming, he ripped off his tag and said, "Well, I, uh--" Eden raised a wrinkly hand.

"Cut the act, Pierce Johnson." She suddenly looked at him endearingly. "Now, tell us why you're *really* here." Pierce sighed. He guessed that he really had nothing to lose.

He told them everything. About his parents, his boss, even his annoying step brother Timothy. The old women nodded thoughtfully through the entire story.

"And that's why I'm here," Pierce finished, "I'm really sorry I interrupted you all. I'll just leave."

"Wait," said Eden, setting down her knitting needles, "Pierce Johnson, in our seventy-two years working here, we have never met anyone so humble, so honest. We thank you for that, Pierce Johnson. Medea's room is the third one on the right of us."

"Thank you," said Pierce, then he paused. "Wait a minute," he said, looking at the women. "You've been working here for seventy-two years?"

"Indeed, we have. Been working here since '42."

"B-but, why haven't you retired? Aren't you too old for this?" The old women chuckled.

"I guess you could say we were re-tired."

Pierce scratched his head in thought, then a chill ran up his spine.

"Wait, the youngest you can work here is 30, right?" The trio nodded.

"Then 30 plus 72... you guys should all be dead."

The woman glanced towards the wall. Turning slowly, Pierce followed her eyes. An article was plastered crudely to the wall.

"The Grey Sisters," it said. "Employees of the Gorgoni Sisters & Co. died today in a tragic car crash. Underneath, a note was inscribed. "Our most valued employees. Death: 1998. RIP"

"You see, *Pierce Johnson*," Dana spat his name like it tasted bad in her mouth, "we're already dead." Pierce backed up slowly as the women started cackling. Then, to his horror, their hands started to crumble away like dust.

"Come with us, Pierce Johnson! To Hades!" They started crawling towards Pierce, who was frozen in place. One of them, cackling uncontrollably, the one with the ponytail, grabbed his foot with her remaining hand.

*continued next page*

*Holding his breath, he placed his ear on the door, listening, and he heard the cackling of the women far off in the distance.*

*continued* By Anna Grace H. and Anastasia Z.

He sprinted to a room, and ran in, his heart beating a million times a minute. He shut the door and locked it. Holding his breath, he placed his ear on the door, listening, and he heard the cackling of the women far off in the distance. Letting out his breath, he sank to the floor, trying to calm down.

"Can I help you?" Pierce looked up suddenly, and his head hit the wooden door. Cursing, he looked at the body in which the voice belonged. It was Medea.

She was a moderately short woman, with wild, dark, curly hair, and brown skin. She would have been pretty if not for the permanent scowl and her piercing green eyes. She stood over Pierce, a dark hand on her green pencil skirt. Scrambling, Pierce said, "Um, yes, I'm... Percy Fitzherbert. I-I'm here for a meeting with you."

"Ah, yes," she said, checking her watch, "You're twenty minutes late." Pierce blushed, embarrassed.

"Well, at least you're here." A smile hinted at her lips. "Let's get started, Percy Fitzherbert."

\*\*\*

Diana Johnson roamed the halls of Pierce's work. Where was that kid? She rounded the corner, and ran into Dactys.

"Oh, hello, Diana," Dactys said, sticking his walkie-talkie into his back pocket.

"Hello ... Peter."

"What brings you here? Not that I don't enjoy your darling self being here."

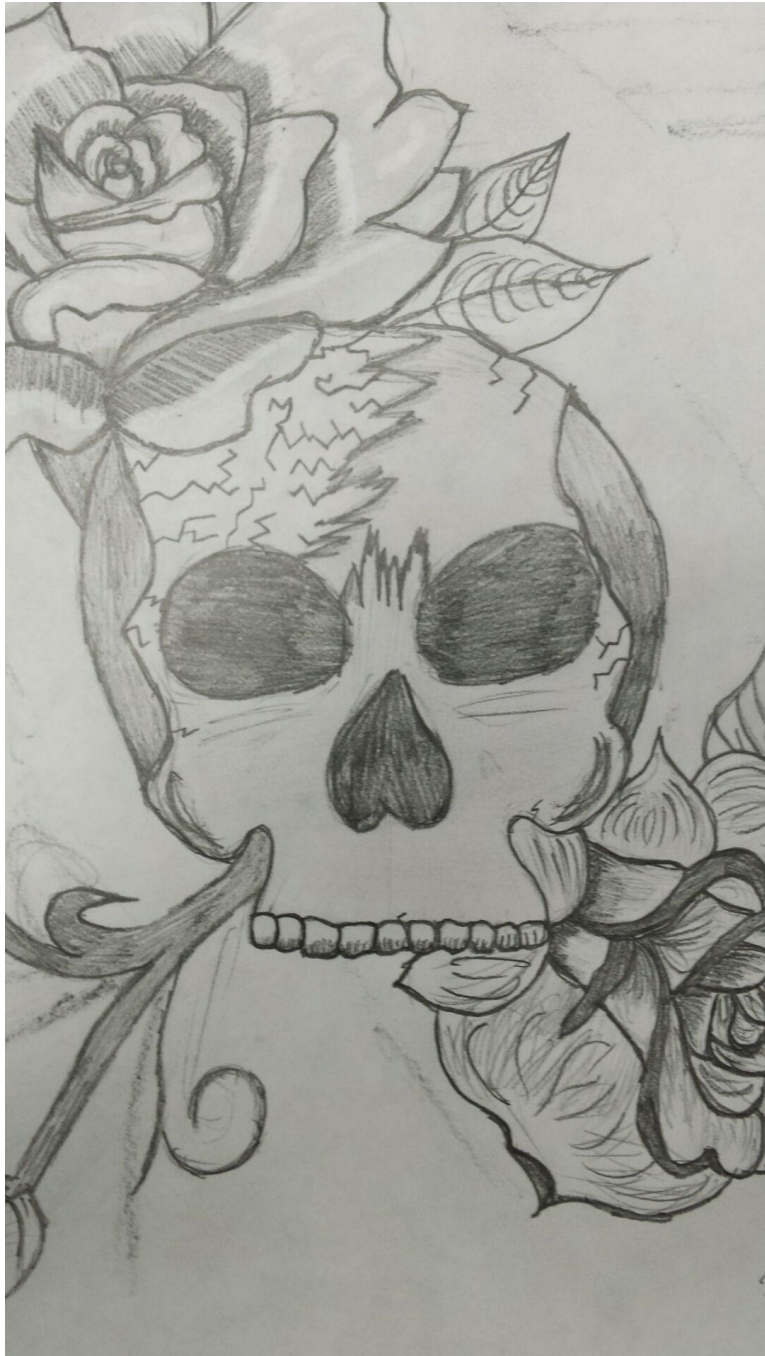
"I'm, uh, just looking for Pierce." She moved a strand of hair behind her ear, "You haven't seen him, have you?"

"My star employee? I haven't seen him around recently."

"Oh, alright. Well, if you'll excuse me--"

"Actually, Diana, I would like to open up my offer again. You're a busy woman, and you need some time to sit back and relax." He extended his pale hand. "What do ya say, Diana? Would you do me the honor of going on a date with me?" Diana fidgeted nervously. "I guess one date wouldn't hurt--"

"Great! I'll see you tonight at eight!" And with that, Peter Dactys scurried away, leaving Diana to wonder about Pierce.



Dantayjah M.

*continued next page*

*He could also see Medea: her venomous eyes, teeth as sharp as daggers. Her hair seemed to sway back and forth like snakes.*

*continued*

By Anna Grace H. and Anastasia Z.

Pierce nervously sat down in the leather chair at the end of the conference table. Medea took a seat at the other end. Pierce tried to calm himself, but to no avail. What had happened was beyond logic. So he sat there, his leg bouncing up and down.

"Now, Mr. Fitzherbert. Tell me, why are you here on this beautiful day?"

"Well, uh..." Medea looked at him with her piercing eyes. He averted his gaze, feeling sheepish in her presence.

"You really shouldn't stumble over a basic question like that, Mr. Fitzherbert." Pierce could feel his cheeks looking red, and he nervously straightened his black tie.

"Well, uh, I'm sorry, but I just had a slightly horrifying experience which, um, I can sue for, so..."

"Mr. Fitzherbert, are you threatening me?"

"I, uh-- what if I am, huh? What're you gonna do about it?"

"I have never met someone so *obtuse!*" Medea said, laughing ever so slightly. She drummed her fingertips on her desk before Pierce thought of something else to say.

"Yeah? Well, uh, my lawyers are the most *obtuse* people you'll ever meet! So, um, if you want to avoid my posse of *obtuse lawyers*, you'll do what I ask!"

Pierce saw Medea shake her head, a trace of a smile on her face.

"You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means."

"What?" Pierce asked, confused.

"You *dare* threaten *me* with your use of words that you don't even *know?*" She was starting to sound a lot like Diana.

"I-I.... yes?" Medea suddenly got up from her chair, and she made her way to Pierce.

"You know, Percy Fitzherbert, this business is among the top of all businesses. Do you want to know how?"

"Well, I, uh-" he was cut off by Medea's claws gripping around his neck.

"*It's because we get rid of all of our competition.*" Her voice was lower now. "I-I'm not looking to be your competition. My business actually wants to be your partner! Yeah, that's what's happening!" Medea faltered, and her grip loosened. Pierce sighed in relief, when suddenly Mr. D's voice came from his walkie-talkie.

"Percy!" it shouted, "Have you ruined their business yet?" Medea looked back at Pierce, her eyes blazing with anger. Pierce gulped, his heartbeat increasing. Medea pulled his leather chair against the wall, a mirror hanging loosely on the opposite side of him.

Pierce could see his reflection: his wide eyes, sticky-uppy brown hair. He could also see Medea: her venomous eyes, teeth as sharp as daggers. Her hair seemed to sway back and forth like snakes. Medea traced Pierce's chin with her nails filed to razor-like points.

"It is a pity," she hissed, "for such a handsome man to go to waste." Pierce swallowed nervously. Medea traced down to his neck. One quick swipe and he'd be done for. She pulled back, then-- "AHHHHHHH!!!!" She screamed as the pen doubling as a flashlight blinded her. She staggered back, rubbing her eyes fiercely. Pierce jumped out of his chair, coughing violently.

As he made his way for the door, he found his way blocked by two beautiful women dressed in black pantsuits who appeared to be related to Medea. One had light skin, but the same wild dark curly hair. The other had a darker complexion and blonde hair which surrounded her face in tiny ringlets. However, neither had the same eerie green eyes as Medea. "Why are all the ladies trying to kill me today?" Pierce muttered bitterly. "Stephanie! Riley! Get him!" Medea hissed, still rubbing her eyes. Pierce groaned, then turned back to the sisters.

*continued next page*

*Pierce stood on the high ledge of the building, inching forward as slowly as possible. His hair was being violently whipped around, and his heart was beating a million times a minute.*

By Anna Grace H. and Anastasia Z.

*continued*

"Uh... You two look like you need a drink. Why don't we just mosey on out of here? Drinks on me!" The sisters exchanged glances, then, not amused by his poor attempt to flirt, started slithering towards Pierce. He backed up until his back hit the wall on the other side of the room. Uh-oh. He was in trouble.

\*\*\*

Diana sat in the McDonald's poor excuse of a chair as Dactys ordered dinner. She crossed her arms, pouting. Dactys returned to their table with two Big Macs.

"My dear," he said, giving her a burger. He took a seat across from her and dug in. Diana sighed and looked out the window. He had already forgotten that she had said she was vegetarian. She scanned all of the tall buildings, and--

Wait.

Diana got out her phone and used the camera to zoom on the top of one.

"Oh my god!" Atop the building were four figures. Three of them were pushing one towards the edge. Pierce.

\*\*\*

Pierce stood on the high ledge of the building, inching forward as slowly as possible. His hair was being violently whipped around, and his heart was beating a million times a minute. He had to constantly blow his tie out of his face. The three Gorgoni sisters had tied his arms together, and he was covered in scratches and bruises from their encounter.

"What number should I dial?" Asked the sister whose name seemed to be Stephanie. They were allowing him one last phone call before they forced him off of the ledge of the building.

"Uh, 911 would be nice. It would be great to talk to the police before, you know, I go splat." The sisters laughed maliciously. He felt himself being pushed forwards and quickly reconsidered making jokes. "Okay, okay! Just call 757-4357. It's my mom." The sisters looked at each other, then Medea dialed the number. She held the phone to his ear. It rung once.

"Pierce!"

"Hey, Mom," Pierce tried to sound nonchalant, but his voice cracked.

"Oh my god, honey, I can see you from the McDonald's. Get down from there right now!"

"I'm afraid I can't do that, Mom." Tears were running down his face now, "I only have time for one call."

"Sweetie... please don't do this!" Pierce swallowed.

"This phone call... this is my note. That's what people do, don't they? Leave a note." He could hear his mother's sobs. He willed himself not to break down, to beg the sisters for mercy. "Just... come outside."

Diana ran outside, Dactys following behind her. She saw Pierce, his lean figure, being held at the edge of the building by three women, all with matching curly hair.

"Are you out?" said her son's voice over the phone. He sounded amazingly calm. Pierce was the least calm person Diana knew.

"Yes," her voice cracked, "I'm out, Honey."

"I'm sorry, mom. I'm sorry for being a deadbeat son who practically failed high school and can't get a good job."

"Oh, Pierce, my baby. I don't care. I just need you alive!"

"That's no longer in my control. Good bye, Mother."

She squeezed her eyes shut, knowing what would come next. She heard a loud crack as a body hit the pavement.

*continued next page*

"Pierce!" It called, "Pierce!" It was his mother. That little voice, his mother, gave him one last surge of courage. He summoned all of his strength, then lunged at Medea.

continued

By Anna Grace H. and Anastasia Z.

With a loud yelp, she ran across the street, not caring about the horns honking angrily at her. She ran, voices in her head blocking out the outside world. A man on a bicycle ran into her, and she tripped onto the pavement, hitting her head on the hard concrete. She was knocked unconscious. "Pierce!" But it was too late. The line went dead, and she could only watch as her son threw the phone off the building. He looked at his mother, looked her right in the eye.

\*\*\*

Pierce Johnson was standing at the top of the building, seconds from his death. He looked at his mother, who he knew was standing outside the local McDonald's, even though she was a vegetarian. A car horn sounded loudly. Time seemed to slow down. The sun hit his watch just right, as he had calculated. He angled his watch, and the beam of light hit the sister square in the face. He may have made straight C's in geometry and trigonometry, but it's amazing how trivial information comes back when you're facing death in the face. The sister screamed, grabbing at her eyes.

This was his chance. Grabbing the sister, he thought her name was Stephanie, he flipped her off the building, her screaming all the way down. One, two, three, *crash!* Pierce grinned. All those years of karate lessons finally paid off. He looked at the other sisters, a devilish grin on his face. The two remaining, who he thought were Medea and Riley, stepped back away from Pierce and the ledge.

"Now, you either let me go, or you face the wrath of Pierce Johnson!"

"... I thought your name was Percy Fitzherbert!"

"Oh, look who's the *obtuse* one now." He looked at the sisters, then lunged out at them. They screamed, backing up quickly. Pierce laughed.

"Now, if you'll just untie me, we can all move on with our lives and pretend as if this never happened." Riley started, rushing to his aid, but Medea grabbed her arm. They exchanged knowing glances. Riley walked to Pierce and started undoing his bindings. Suspicious, he looked at Medea, who was smiling.

"I guess you win, *Pierce Johnson*." She laughed, then put her arms up in mock surrender.

"What--" Medea's eyes glowed a bright green, and Pierce found his feet were frozen in place. He looked down, and with a random thought, pulled up his black pants. To his horror, he saw that his feet were a sickly shade of grey from the shin down.

"You see, Pierce Johnson," the Gorgoni he thought was Riley said, "There are things *much* worse than death. Such as, well, spending eternity with us as a statue. Oh, but you'll be our servant, too, when you're not stone." Her blonde curly hair flared, and Pierce felt a burning on his wrists. Crying out, he saw that she had replaced his ropes with something... alive. A green snake coiled around his wrists, squeezing tighter every second.

"Good boy, Apophis," possibly Riley praised the snake. Pierce frantically tried to remove it from his wrists, but it only squeezed tighter. Why did it have to be a snake? He hated snakes.

"Come with us, Pierce Johnson. To Hades!" He rolled his eyes. That particular saying seemed to be over-used in this building. He started to lose feeling in his thighs, then his hips. The numbness began to creep up his torso, about to infect his arms, about to render him useless. Pierce was about to give up hope, then he heard a little whimper.

"Pierce!" It called, "Pierce!" It was his mother. That little voice, his mother, gave him one last surge of courage. He summoned all of his strength, then lunged at Medea. He knocked her in the side, making her lose her balance. As she lost eye contact, he could feel the numbness slowly retreating. She stumbled, and then, with a last scream, toppled off of the building. Pierce watched her fall, then, milliseconds from the ground, she dissipated into green dust and smoke.

continued next page

# BOOK OF JOHNSON

*"You killed both of my sisters! You have no idea what I'm going to do to you." She walked towards him, and Pierce felt the sharp pang of pain in his palm.*

By Anna Grace H. and Anastasia Z.

"Woah. Creepy," Pierce said. Then, the numbness quickly retreated from his body completely. Letting out a sigh, Pierce turned to face the other sister.

"Please tell me you don't have the same creepy stone-ifying powers as your sister," he said, out of breath. Growling, the one he thought was Riley said, "You killed both of my sisters! You have *no* idea what I'm going to do to you." She walked towards him, and Pierce felt the sharp pang of pain in his palm. Suddenly, he started to feel light-headed.

"Good boy, Apophis." she repeated, staring at Pierce, a twisted smile on her face. "Don't worry. You'll die a *very* painful death in about, oh, five minutes." Pierce staggered to the floor. She held out her hand and the peridot green snake slithered up her arm. "Good boy. You get a treat for killing the god."

What had she called him?

"God?" he said, confused.

"Oh, uh, well, I guess since you're already almost dead, I might as well tell you." Pierce blinked away the black dots swimming in his vision. A cramping started emerging from his gut.

"You see, Pierce Johnson, my sisters and I have many powers. One of these powers, for instance, is seeing the value in a person. And my, my, Mr. Johnson. Your readings are off the charts!"

"I... what? You're... not making... any sense." Pierce was barely hanging on to consciousness, speaking slowly and slurring the few words that got out.

"Of course *you* wouldn't understand. Before today, you were treated just like a normal person. But, no, Pierce Johnson, you are so much more than normal. My sisters and I have been following you around since birth, trying to get you alone so we can kill you before you could reach your full potential. We didn't know it was you, actually, today, since you came under an alias. We did think you were just another loser trying to take out our company, I mean, we get those every week. But, when you revealed your name, Pierce Johnson, it was all so clear."

"I...why... would it... matter... if I reached my... full potential?" Breathing became harder and harder with every second. The pain in his stomach got worse. He barfed over the side.

"Oh, well, because it's a fact that once a god finds out his potential, he becomes immortal, derp!" Pierce looked up suddenly. Riley looked at him, then the smirk left her face. "Uh-oh...." Pierce suddenly started to feel considerably better. It was almost like the placebo effect, except for the fact that *this was real*.

"So you're saying that, heh, since I'm a god or whatever, I'm *immortal*?"

"I, well, I... I guess I am..." Pierce stood up to face the Gorgoni sister. He felt awesome. He felt like, well, like a god. Power surged through him, and when he looked down, he saw light emitting from his skin. He laughed, not believing what he was seeing.

\*\*\*

Diana opened her eyes. She was on the pavement, on the side of the street. Her wallet was gone. What had happened? Then she remembered. Pierce. She had to get to him. Feeling sick, she staggered to her feet. Looking up to the building he had leapt from, she saw the strangest sight she had ever seen. She rubbed her eyes. Nope, it was still there. She saw Pierce, or something that resembled Pierce, on top of the building. He -- *it* -- was glowing, shining like the sun. Bending over, she threw up onto the pavement.

\*\*\*

Pierce studied his hands. He was a god. *Him*, Pierce Johnson, full-time loser, was now a god! Testing out his newly found powers, he extended a hand at Riley. "Nice knowing ya!" he called as a beam of light shot *out of his hands*. Apophis, the demon snake, squealed once, and then was dust. Riley screamed in agony as she was incinerated. Her hands went first, turning into dust and sparkles. She fell to one knee, then looked to Pierce with pleading eyes.

*continued next page*

# The Phoenix

# BOOK OF JOHNSON

By Anna Grace H. and Anastasia Z.

*continued*

Then, her eyes turned to flame, and she started cackling. "Hehe, Pierce Johnson, you have much to learn about being a god! Your ignorance will be your own downfall." Now she was just a head. "Beware of the first!" she called before the last of her crumbled to dust. Pierce looked at the pile that stood in her place with disgust.

"See you in Hades," he spat, kicking the pile of dust and glitter.

\*\*\*

Pierce ran down to the ground floor of the building as quickly as possible.

"Mom!" he shouted at the top of his lungs. Suddenly he was engulfed in hugs and kisses.

"Pierce! Oh my god, Pierce!" Diana was crying freely, her usually perfect hair wild and unkept. "I thought you were dead! Please don't ever do something like that again!" Pierce patted his mother's back awkwardly and then, tears streaming down his face, hugged her back.

"I won't, Mom. I promise." His mom looked him up and down, and her eyes widened.

"Pierce," she said, "You're glowing." Pierce looked down at his still shimmering skin.

"Oh, um, wait. Let me try something." He clenched his fists, and his skin faded to normal, mortal skin.

"There!" Diana looked at him with wide eyes.

"I, uh, have a *lot* of explaining to do." Suddenly, a familiar shape ran up to them.

"Peter," said Diana somberly.

"Diana! Oh, thank god you're alright! You ran out of there so suddenly!" he looked Pierce up and down.

"Good god, what happened to you?" Even though he was feeling great on the inside, he was bruised and muddied on the outside. His hair was wild, and his hands were mangled from his encounter with the snake.

Even though he was some sort of god, his clothes were not. His white shirt, no longer white, was ripped to shreds and hung loosely to his body. His dark pants were smeared with blood and mud and now showed his brightly patterned socks. Also, one of his shoes was missing. Fortunately, his tie was mainly in one piece, though had a few snake bites in it.

"You!" Pierce pointed a finger at Dactys, "It's *your* fault! If you hadn't sent me on this *stupid* mission to support your *stupid* business, I wouldn't have almost *died*!" Pierce thought for a moment. "Of course, I wouldn't have become immortal either, so I could be thanking you, but... but... *that's beside the point!*" He slapped Dactys in the face. Surprised, Dactys looked him up and down and then started laughing maniacally.

"My boy, you have *much* to learn about being immortal!" Pierce looked at Mr. D quizzically. Dactys busied himself with picking lint off his shirt. "You know, I really did think you would have noticed earlier, Pierce. I mean, so many signs pointed to you being immortal. But, alas, not all of us are as sharp as I."

"Mr. D, you're not.... are you...?"

"A god? Hmmmm... and maybe I am. Maybe I'm your little guardian angel who has looked over you for twenty-three years, begging you to find out your true potential. Or maybe I'm nobody at all. Perhaps I'm one of Medea's cronies." At this, Dactys dissipated into a cloud of red-purple steam. Pierce and his mother looked at each other.

"Weirdest... day... ever," said Pierce. Diana smiled at him and said, "You know what? Let's go get some McDonald's."

*continued next page*



# The Phoenix

**Spring 2015**

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Reily R..

*“Beware of  
the first.”  
What could  
that mean?*

## BOOK OF JOHNSON

By Anna Grace H. and Anastasia Z.

*continued*

Pierce Johnson sat in the plastic chair in the McDonald's. He twisted around a plastic fork on the ketchup stained table. He thought back to what the Gorgoni sister Riley had said. *“Beware of the first.”* What could that mean? Diana sat across from him with a tray filled with a Big Mac and a salad.

“I just got off the phone with my lawyers,” Diana said, “They’re going to make sure that Mother Gorgoni’s World of Wigs closes. We should never have to worry about that creepy place again. Unless those idiot attorneys mess up again.”

Pierce smiled and turned to face his mother. “Do you mean to say your lawyers are *obtuse*?” He said, chuckling a bit.

“Uh... yes?”

At this, Pierce dissolved into a sudden fit of laughter.

“Wait, what did I say?”

“Your... your... obtuse lawyers!” Pierce practically yelled, gasping for breath between words.

“What? They’re really stupid. What is so funny about *obtuse*?” Pierce laughed for three more moments and an instant before calming himself. A warm feeling exploded inside of himself. Yes, he was a god. Yes, his problems were not through. But he could take this moment to relax and have fun with the one he loved most.

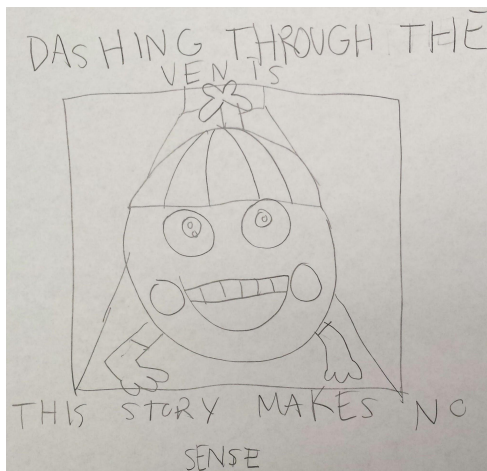
He opened his Big Mac and took a big juicy bite.

THE END.

FOR NOW....

# The Phoenix

Hannah G. and Maggie M.



Sarah W.

Victor R.



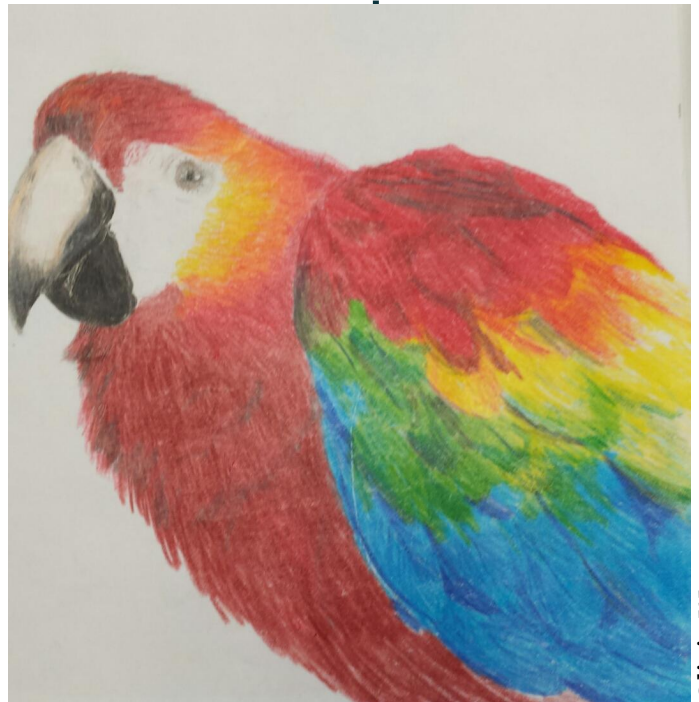
Ava G.

# The Phoenix

Kaddyja J.

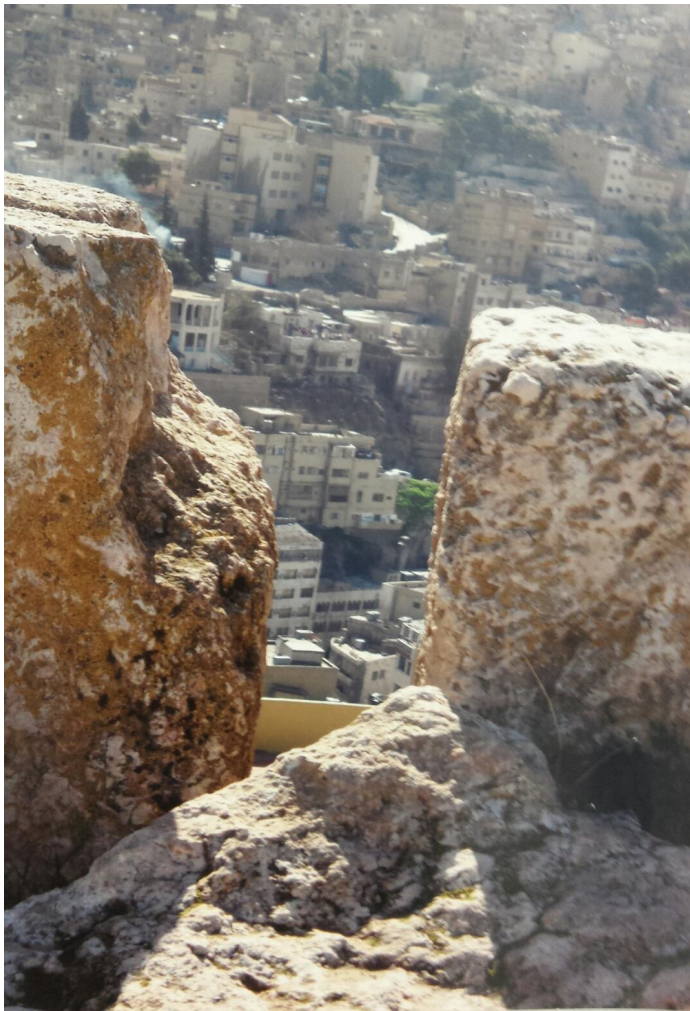


Hitham K.



Olivia W.

Hitham K.



# Princess

By Jordan W.

When I was little, I was the girl who skipped around in my golden flowy princess Belle dress. Being *that* little girl I loved to prance around and dance on my tippy-toes. My auburn frilly curls in my hair cascaded down my back. I was the cutest little thing. Which I knew! As a little girl I thought my "Prince Charming" was my little chocolate Build-A-Bear I named Cocoa. Really that little bear was all I was willing to play with. Making me go to sleep was like the hardest thing in the world. Also everyone thought I was the little weak princess who couldn't do anything by herself, but I knew the truth.

Overnight, that's when I thought I had changed so much, but it took so much longer than just overnight. It took 12 years! Now that I am 12 I don't really wear my princess Belle dress (considering it doesn't fit). When I was little I pranced and danced around and I still do, but now it is practice and not just for fun. Considering I'm 12 my chocolate curls are my least favorite feature on me. I know Cocoa isn't my "Prince Charming," but I still definitely love it! Of course, now that I am older I love to sleep, and it is no problem with getting me to go to sleep. Nobody anymore thinks of me as the little, weak princess who can't do anything!

Things changing are a blessing, but some things should and will never change!

# Always in a Princess State of Mind

By Hannah H

At age five, naps were public enemy number one. I would much rather have been watching *Sesame Street*, *Dora the Explorer* or *The Jungle Book*. Frilly, girly dresses filled my closet because I obviously didn't know how to pick out an outfit (according to my mother.) Petite bows clipped into my head everyday were worn like crowns because of course I thought (knew) I was my own kind of princess. Just ask my family. They'll tell you.

At thirteen changes start taking place. Sleeping-- Ha!--not a problem anymore, unless it's time for my recorded shows like *Pretty Little Liars*. My style is *way* different than it was at five. Lace, t-shirts, boots, and more: a 13-year-old wardrobe fills every inch of my closet. No bows allowed!...But that doesn't mean my princess ways have changed.

Don't get me wrong. Change is good, but I'm glad some things never change.

# End of the World

*prose*

By Christian H.

## Chapter One

March 26, 2089

Donnie sat in his room, the faint ticking of his baseball clock annoyed him to the point of him wanting to rip it off the wall. His mom called him from downstairs, "Sweetheart, dinner is ready!" He was happy, but the things that were to come would trouble him.

He sighed and replied blandly, "Okay," and went down the stairs. The smell of chicken filled the kitchen.

His father, on the couch, was watching TV. He stood and said, "Son, time to eat. You know you want to be big and strong if 'it' comes to Texas." Donnie did not mind his father somewhat childish joke. He knew if "it" came he would survive. Donnie sat down, ate his dinner, washed the dishes, and went to his room. He lay in his bed, and the second he closed his eyes his hollowgram went off.

It was Tyler. "Dude are you watching the news?"

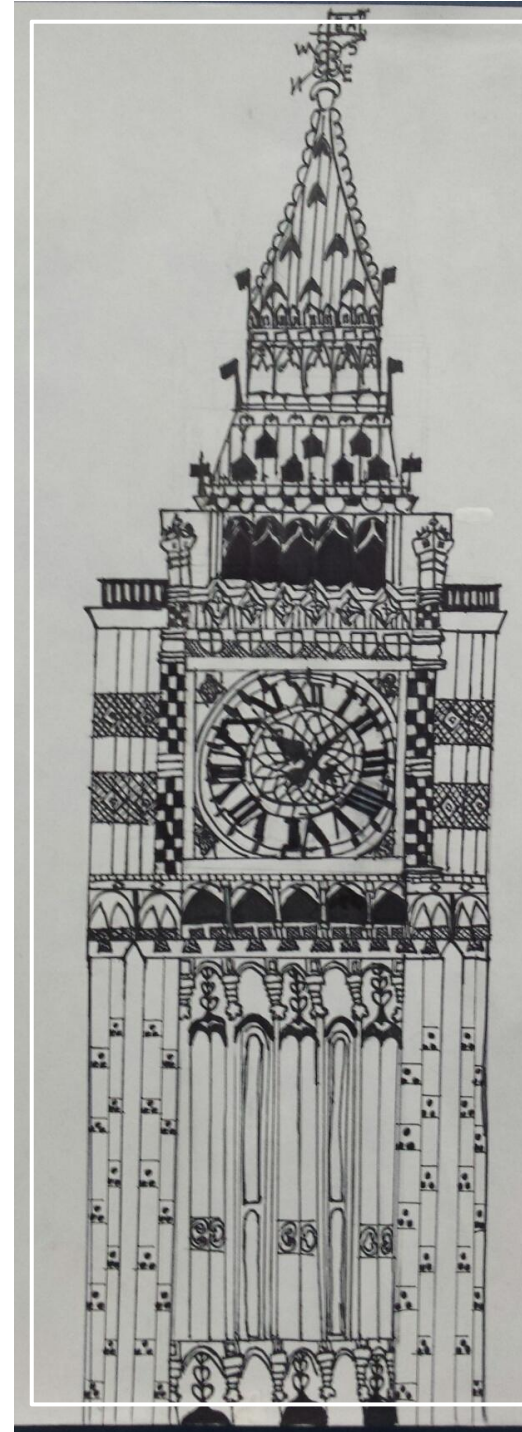
"No, I'm in bed. We have a test tomorrow."

"Not any more--Look! Turn on your TV!"

He turned on the TV. The light partially blinded him. An emergency broadcast was on. He heard a scream. His power went off, but the TV was still on because it ran on lithium batteries. The broadcast said, "This is not a drill. The virus has made it to Texas."

His father busted in his room. "Son, we have to go!" Donnie got out the bed and put on a pair of blue jeans and shoes and a green jacket. He ran downstairs. His mom was sitting in a chair by the door. "Come on!," my father said as he grabbed my mom's hand. We got in the car. My father threw on the engine. He opened the garage door. He pulled out, and we shot threw the cool black night air.

We were running out of time...



Sydney L.

About **Berry**  
**Middle School**

*A Hoover City School ~ Serving Grades 6-8  
4500 Jaguar Drive  
Hoover, Alabama 35242  
Principal Dr. Chris Robbins*

Our **mission** at Berry Middle School is to teach students concepts, skills, and thinking processes to meet challenges of a changing society while fostering positive social and emotional growth.

Our **vision** is to create a school climate that is caring and supportive, challenging and engaging, and innovative and relevant. This vision serves as a compass for our school, impacting daily decisions relating to our school's culture, curriculum and instruction, and the opportunities we provide for our students.

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