

# Fourth Wheel of a Tricycle

A Collection from the 2016 ADVANCE Creative Writing Course

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\*Front and back art work drawn by Endria Tai

My name is **Olufunke Adeleye**, but I go by Funke. This is my second year attending ADVANCE camp and I decided to participate in the Creative Writing class this summer. I am fourteen years old, was born in the United Kingdom and live in Natchitoches, LA. This coming school year I will be a ninth grader at Natchitoches Central High School. An interesting fact about me is that I play the cello and piano. I also participate in sports such as cheerleading, tennis, and softball. I was Secretary of my school's Student Council, Vice President of my schools National Junior Honors Society, and am part of a youth service club called Modern Woodmen of America, which are just a few of my achievements. I enjoy reading and writing, but I wanted to take Creative Writing to better understand and explore different writing styles. Creative Writing and ADVANCE as a whole have both been memorable experiences for me that I will cherish for a very long time. I hope you enjoy my writing!

## Escape

Her head would fill with these thoughts  
Thoughts that would overcome her  
Thoughts that would grasp her full attention  
Thoughts that would engulf her  
To where she *needed* a distraction  
Her distraction made her feel good, happy  
It took her to another place, somewhere you can't go on your own  
She didn't care what the distraction was doing to her  
Because the feeling was worth it  
Or so she thought...  
Until the day she felt a little too much  
And her head, her body, became over whelmed  
Over whelmed to where she got to the point that  
It was too late to turn back  
Too late

## Time

Time, the thing that people seem to never have enough of.  
The thing that is always in constant movement, with no way to stop it  
The thing that people seem to get lost in, without realizing.  
The thing that can be taken from you, but you can never get it back.  
The thing that can tell a story on a face.  
The thing that can get in your head and scare you, if you let it.  
The thing you are supposed to cherish because you never know how much of it you have left.  
Time, the thing that can be measured in seconds, days, months, years, decades, and the list goes on.

## What Would I Do Without You?

My friend who is always there for me when I need somebody  
My friend who brings joy and happiness into my day  
My friend who makes me laugh until I can't breathe  
My friend who radiates positivity to me  
My friend who is as beautiful as a sunset on a warm summer day  
My friend who laughs at my jokes, even if they are pitiful attempts  
My friend who saves me from making bad decisions  
My friend who stands up for me when I need someone there  
My friend whose determination is a rock  
My friend who likes me for who I am, not what I have  
My friend who helps me see my cup as half full, not half empty  
My friend who encourages me to be confident in myself  
My friend whose big brown eyes show the path to her soul  
My friend who tolerates my nonstop talking  
My friend who has patience with me when I rant and complain  
My friend who inspires me to be just as good of a friend as she is

## Fighter

You tried to beat her once before  
But she fought you off till you couldn't fight anymore  
She knew that you were still there  
But as long as you were quiet, she didn't care  
So you stayed quiet for a nice time  
Until you decided to cross the line  
You got stronger and decided you want to win  
But she knew letting you win would be a sin  
How could you be so evil and return  
We hoped we were done and you had learned  
But no, you hadn't, you didn't care  
I guess you forgot you didn't bring her fear  
I guess you forgot she'll keep fighting  
Keep fighting till she's no longer here

## Where It Went Wrong

It all went wrong when I didn't practice my cello. I didn't practice my cello so I didn't do good at my performance. I didn't do good at my performance so I didn't get a college scholarship. I didn't get a college scholarship so I didn't go to college. I didn't go to college so I didn't get a good paying job. I didn't get a good paying job so my water bill wasn't paid, then the electricity bill, then the rent. I didn't pay rent so I didn't have a house. I didn't have a house so I was homeless. I didn't have a home so I lived on the streets. I lived on the streets so I didn't have any food. I didn't have any food so I became malnourished. I was so malnourished that I got sick. I didn't have any money so I couldn't go to the doctor. I couldn't go to the doctor so I died. I had no family so I didn't have a funeral. I didn't have a funeral so I wasn't buried. I wasn't buried so I am somewhere, dead, with nothing and no one.

## What, Again?

What, again? I have to vacuum the house again!  
Well you don't want to live in a dirty house.  
What, again? I have to walk the dog again!  
You're the one that wanted a dog right?  
What, again? I have to cook dinner again!  
It doesn't hurt to help out sometimes.  
What, again? I have to study for the spelling test again!  
We don't want you failing.  
What, again? I have to read the entire book again!  
You might catch things you missed the first time.  
What, again? I have to miss the softball game again!  
Work comes before fun.  
What, again? I have to move to a new town again?  
You'll have a nicer room.  
What, again? I have to go to a new school again!  
You'll meet new friends.  
What, again? I have to practice my instrument again!  
Well practice makes perfect.  
You aren't helping!

## Helping Hands

Ten long fingers  
Not too skinny, not too fat  
Having a purpose  
Each and every one  
Connected to a palm  
Round like the sun  
They say it tells a story  
The marks long and short  
My hands grow and learn with me  
Wouldn't need one more  
Don't want one less  
My hands were made for me

## Saturday

Today is Saturday  
Hooray, Hooray  
Stay up later kind of day  
Want to do nothing?  
Then have it your way  
Sleep longer  
Get stronger  
On Saturday

## Chilled

Cold causing shivers  
Every breath making fog  
Can't stay out too long

## Scorching

Sweat dripping down  
His shirt sticking to his back  
Mouth parched, need water

## Uproar

Boom! Goes the thunder  
The lightning striking brightly  
Beware! It's coming

## Hold On!

The wind starts spinning  
Around and around it goes  
It's coming, grab tight!

## Why I Did It...

Why I did it, I didn't know. She just gave me this vibe. She irked me and I couldn't even tell if she knew it or not. I mean, she was the new girl so I thought I just didn't know her. Well that's how it started. Then she tried taking over my life. First, she took my place as captain of the cheer team, then, my secretary spot on National Junior Honors Society, then, my spot as teacher's pet. She even took my boyfriend! That is where she crossed the line. She was ruining my life and she needed to be taken care of. Initially, I tried to warn her, we had a talk. I did the talking of course and explained to her that she was taking over my life and told her I didn't care if she knew or not. All she needed to do was put everything back to how it was and be like everyone else. I gave her a week, and no change. Of course she was stubborn so I had to go to Plan B. I used my connections and got her taken care of. I don't even know what happened to her but I do know she is gone and out of my life forever. Her "disappearance" was a thing at one point but it passed just like everything else does. Her family, her friends, I didn't care, all I needed was everything back to how it was and that's what I got.

...

So it's been a month since I've gotten rid of that new girl that I didn't bother learning the name of. Everything finally came together... just to fall apart again. First, the coach in charge of the cheer team ends up transferring schools so there goes cheerleading. Then, they decide to combine my schools National Junior Honors Society with another schools, causing me to lose my secretary spot. My favorite teacher who loves me has to start teaching a lower level class because their teacher moved. So I'm stuck with this old lady who can barely hear and talks about her cats more than she teaches. Nobody cares about the lower level students, how can they just take my teacher away from me and give her to them like charity. No not like charity, they don't even deserve charity. My boyfriend even broke up with me! He said we needed to go our separate ways. Separate ways, what is that supposed to mean? I have no idea how to fix this mess and I just want to... Oh no no no no no, this can't be happening. You are not serious. She's back! Someone posted a snapchat picture of her, that thing. The one thing I fought so hard to get rid of is back! The entire reason everything is going wrong is back here, now! Right when I thought my life couldn't get any worse. I want to, I want to just scream. No! I want to scream in her face! Not just scream, that isn't enough. I want to get a jug of milk and pour it on her head while screaming in her ugly face. I really need some sleep. Some beauty rest will help calm me down. Stress causes wrinkles.

...

I've got it, I've got an idea. I'm walking in the hallway at school and it just comes to me. To get rid of that obnoxious thing that got me in this mess in the first place I have to do it myself! Goodness the only way to get something done right these days is to do it yourself. Why not befriend her and then pounce and kill her? Not literally, maybe. Why don't I start right now "Oh look who it is" I say loudly when I see what's her face walking in this direction. Before she can turn around I quickly say, "It's been a while, everyone's been wondering where you went. Where did you, oh never mind. It doesn't matter, all that matters is that your back." I give her a smile and then she returns it with a hesitant one. "So," I say, "about how I acted before you left, well I would like to apologize. I would also like to mention that I am a different person now, as are you." Her short brown bob was now long and flowy and her olive skin even tanner, but still glowing. "Yes" she says "I..." then I interrupt, "Yea, so I was wondering, we should totally hang out and catch up. We can meet at this abandoned house and we could just walk to my house from there. It's on my street and I'm sure it's safe, I used to go there a lot as a kid and play around." She replies with, "Um well I kind..." "You will, great!" I interrupt, "6 p.m. Saturday night. I'll see ya and yea

what's your name again?" "Rachel," she says. "Rachel, what a... name. Great, I'll see you then Rachel, bye." "By..." she says, me leaving before she can finish her word. I couldn't stand one more second listening to her voice or talking to her in public. It's Friday so I have today to make a plan, and it better be good. We might both be going to the abandoned house but only one of us will be leaving.

...

So, it's 5 p.m. Saturday night and I've finally gotten my plan in order. All I have to do is get, ugh what's her name again, o yes Rachel, nauseating, but anyway, I have to get Rachel to follow me downstairs into the cellar and get her in there without me and lock her in. Easy as that. The hardest part would be convincing her to go into the cellar first on her own but I'm sure I'll get that figured out. Lucky me I found the key down there a few months ago figured I should keep it, just in case. Yes, I know you probably think I'm crazy and are most likely wondering how I won't end up going to jail but I have all of that figured out too. I'm not the person killing her, she's actually killing herself. I mean if she has no water or food for some weeks her body is the one that's going to shut down so she's doing it to herself. She's already disappeared once so it shouldn't be much of a surprise if she does it again. If anybody asks if I had anything to do with it all I have to say is we were supposed to hang out today and she never showed. I'm sure nobody's going to go into that house anytime soon besides us because people are too freaked out by it and even if they go inside the house they'll definitely be too afraid to go inside the cellar.

...

"Oh look whose here" I say when I see her walking over. "Hello," she says hesitantly, "what exactly are we doing here?" So I respond, "Well, I have always found this house interesting so I figured why not show it to someone else who might agree." She replies with "Well I think it's creepy." Then I say, "You might want to get comfortable," then I begin to mumble, "you don't know how long you'll be here." "What?" she asks, "Oh, nothing," I say, "let me show you around some." I take her to some of the rooms, I figured if she started to get bored, when I take her to the cellar she would be more interested than scared. After a tour of empty rooms with bugs and dust everywhere, one even had a family of raccoons, Rachel asks, "So are we almost done here?" I decide its time. "Oh yes, just one more place. There's this cellar downstairs, I just find it so interesting, why don't I show it to you?" "Sure," she says wanting to get out of this house as soon as possible. Once we get to the cellar I tell her, "Why don't you go in and look around. It's really captivating, I've been inside a lot of times so I'll just wait outside." She gives me a look of uncertainty and slowly begins walking inside. "It's safe Rachel, I promise." I reassure her. "Poor gullible thing," I tell myself. I start to walk to the door and while I begin closing the door she spins around really fast and looks then I tell her, "This is what happens to people who ruin my life, and then come back for more." "Bang!" The door slams shut and I wipe the dust off of my hands. Life is so good right now. Now I can concentrate on fixing everything with no complications like that thing. Since my work here is done I guess I'll leave. I start walking upstairs and I hear this ringing noise. I slow down so I can hear better. Oh wait, not ringing it's... sirens. Oh crap please tell me the police aren't coming near here. The sirens begin to get louder, there's a lot of surrounding houses near they are probably going to one of those and there's no way they would know to come here at this specific time anyway. The sirens get even louder. I look out one of the doors and see the police cars stopping in front of *this* house! There was no way to... unless, she has her phone! That little nauseating, hideous, pitiful thing had her phone. She called the police! Plan B couldn't have failed! I worked so hard on this one. Next thing I know the police bust in with a gun pointed straight at me. I freeze thinking of an escape. What do I do? They'll find me guilty for sure, there's too much proof. Then I run, and run, and run, with all my strength. But it wasn't enough. I'm shot, first in the thigh, then in the back, and I'm down, cold.

**Renee Angerer**, thirteen years old, lives in River Ridge which is about a fifth teen minute drive to New Orleans. She took Creative Writing to better herself in writing and help for eighth grade English class. She has started many stories, but has yet to finish even one of them. She is in her first year at Advance and is excited to continue writing.

## The Wildest Dreams

I dreamed that the sky lit up with the sunset, causing flames to appear in the sky;  
fire dancing, circling around people,  
depicting the passion that one person can hold.

I dreamed of water cooling everything and everyone,  
not only in the literal sense, but of the moods and temperament  
forming an environment of calm friendliness.

I dreamed of where I want to go, who I want to aid  
developed and undeveloped; 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> world  
what I want to see, who I want to meet.

I dreamed of work I want and things I have to do  
expectations of myself and others  
ways to solve problems that aren't even mine to deal with  
yet still eat at my brain like Cookie Monster eats cookies  
while elders look down, condescendingly, as if I can't do anything of importance.

I dreamed of a future that will never be, will never come  
for we are not open-minded or brave enough to even try, much less reach it.

## Always Repeating

You never know what will happen in a day, much less twenty years. For me it was all too much. My mother died in a car accident and father went crazy when I was fourteen. I can still picture the look of pure pain on his face when we were told, and I remember watching in his eyes, something slowly breaking. My brother and I were shipped to some military camp-like school where they beat away fun, happiness and ended all things, emotions close those. I am now a teacher at a public school, and everyone is afraid of my no-nonsense attitude towards students and teachers. I am told that it is 'scary' to be one of my student, but I am known for having very well behaved students because of the punishments that I use. A class this year has this one girl named Clare that is like I was after what happened to my parents and I tried to cover it up so I wouldn't have to leave my father, my daddy. I still can't face him for it is still too much to see the insanity in the corner of his eyes. I talked to her and ask about her parents. She has this panicked look and all I can think is that twenty years ago, I was there and that history always does have a way of repeating itself. I only hope that twenty years from now, she doesn't become me.

## Old Ears

The sounds surround me  
Noises, conversations, words  
Echo everywhere around me  
Slowly eating away at my hearing until none is left  
No sound to hear, or at least, not that I can hear  
Where did it go?  
The music of the birds in the park  
The sound of a dog barking  
I can still feel, though not hear  
For I lost it many years ago  
And will never find it again.

## Personality

My friend who's as persistent as a dog's barking  
The sun rising, inviting a new day to come  
The rain falling, beating against whatever is in the way  
My friend who's as nice and the smell of grandmother's cookies  
Or seeing an old friend after years  
My friend who's as talented as the pencil in Frank Lloyd Wright's hand  
Mozart's fingers dancing on the keys of a piano  
George Washington's strategizing on the battlefield  
My friend who's as intelligent as all the colors in the rainbow  
Any story she has read  
Any person she has read about  
My friend who's as hardworking as a bird building her nest  
A squirrel gathering nuts for the winter  
A plant flourishing through the first hard frost  
My friend who's as loyal as the stars to the moon  
The human to the dog, always caring for it, sometimes more than other humans  
My friend who's as wise as a woman twice her age yet has the common sense of a young child  
My friend whose fashion sense is horrible  
Yet she can wear it like the most beautiful outfit and it looks good

## Tragic Times

I watched her lowered into the hole  
The ringing still heard by me, only by me  
The white dress of the year before still etched in my mind  
The man, weirdly dressed, still talking without me hearing  
The young girl, almost a baby, next to me, staring  
The disappointment in myself for not being there five minutes earlier

## Fire's Betrayal

Suffocated, that is what I am, by flames  
Parched, for the heat dries my throat, my body, my life  
Chafed, the flames rub against my skin painfully  
Shenanigans pulled on me, burning my skin and heart  
Books, my only comfort in the time of betrayal  
Fire doused in water, the passion I now hold  
Nonsense, my own father said when I told him  
The worst is when a brother causes all pain  
When he is the one to push you in

## Savior of Fire

Why I did it, why did I do it?

I can't answer even though I want to

Why I did it, thoughts are darting in and out of my mind on how to cover it up, to make a lie believable

Why I did it, why didn't you do it? Would you do it?

No, I am not trying to change the subject.

Why I did it, that is the question that everyone wants to know

That I should know.

Why I did it, probably because I thought it to be OK, alright even,

But I was just ridiculed and criticized

Why I did it, to save them, their lives, but I was just injured

Why I did it, because that is what dad taught me to do

Because mom wanted us to help.

Why I did it, I saved them from the flames, though they hate me

'Cause of what happened many years ago.

Why I saved them

Only I will truly ever know

## Horrible You

You always have to never listen,  
The thought of helping never crosses your mind  
You're idiotic, stupid and hated  
Yet always seem to be in my class  
I wonder, how does it work?  
For you can't even speak English well, much less Spanish  
and you always forget your homework.  
You called people that are smarter than you degrading names  
And when asked about it, there is always an excuse that most believe  
But not me... never me  
You're as helpful as doodles over my notes  
As nice as a guard dog  
You're a bully that is never caught yet holds the evidence  
You're like the leader of a pack of wolves, just waiting for the lamb to be without a group  
You are hate and passion for the normally travel as one  
But while you are hated and hate  
the passion is used only for selfishness and uselessness wants  
that you can afford for you have more money than most and find yourself superior

## The Hope of Life

Where did it go wrong? Where did life take a bad turn? What event tipped the scale? These questions are questions I want, need to know the answer to, but where can one find these answers? I feel lost, lost in the world for I can't figure out even the most simple of questions.

Where did it go wrong? Which bad turn shot me into the black hole of hope and love? Was there truly just one event that tipped the scale? Falling. I am just falling into a bottomless pit full of pain, fear, sadness, too far in to ever think about being pulled out.

Where did it go wrong? What is even counted as a 'bad turn'? Could the scale have always been tipped and one event just opened my eyes? What is life? Truly, these are questions never to be answered as I found out long ago. They are the ones that no human ever knows the answer, no human will ever know the answer. So just stop asking. Give up. Have no hope because the answer will never be. This was painful to learn, for no one taught me.

Where did it go wrong? What is classified as 'wrong'? When will all the bad go away? Why is it so painful to learn? Listen to what I said. Give up for if this is life, death can't be much worse.

## Friends

Butterflies roaming  
Landing, talking, listening  
Siting on flowers

## Kidnapping

A dark street corner  
Leaves rustling in the wind  
Eyes watching, waiting

## Gossip

Soft petals drifting  
Getting caught in everything  
Spreading all that's heard

## Farewell True Friend

Goodbye warm sunlight  
Until again I see you  
Bye my only friend

## Mother Nature

Friend or foe of all  
Natural forces swirl around  
Trapping life's essence

My name is **Graysen Bates**. I was born February 2, 2003 in Shreveport, Louisiana. I moved to New Orleans when I was seven years old, and lived there for three years. I now live in Natchitoches, a small town between Shreveport and Alexandria. I have four siblings. A sister, Haley, being thirteen years old. Another, Revill, a one-and-a-half-year-old. I also have two brothers. Carter, a four-year-old and Sam, a three-year-old. Amongst my siblings, I have my Mom and Dad, and my stepmom and stepdad. I have many interests. Some of the many are science and human anatomy, music, piano, cross country and track, books, Greys Anatomy and One Tree Hill, Disney, school, dance, traveling, and most importantly my friends and family.

## Everything She Does

My mother who gives like a bathroom faucet running with no stop.

Who shares like the leaves falling off a pecan tree. Each act one in its own just like the uniqueness of each leaf that falls.

Who loves as much as her heart beats, with each beat it gets stronger and stronger.

Who cares as much as her eyes blink.

My mother who helps as much as the flowers grow. Some actions being soft like rose petals, and others hard like its thorns.

Whose eyes shine bright as the morning sun glows.

Whose smile is bright and beautiful like stars in the night sky.

Whose hugs are secure and calming like sitting by a fire all warm and cozy.

Whose presence is rough but soft and everywhere in between like cold wind in the winter, scattered spring showers, and warm summer breezes.

## Everything Breaks

I hear it, its every beat.

I hear it, its every sound.

I hear it, its steady pattern.

I hear it, its beat speeding up.

I hear it, it's beat slowing down.

I hear it, the blood pumping through.

I hear it. I hear no more. I hear no more because this piece of life is broken and loved no more.

## Dream Land

I dreamed of a cloud that could take me up high. That could fly me like a bird through morning suns sight.

I dreamed of a genie that could cast me my wish. A wish so needed like oxygen ever so rich.

I dreamed of an ocean where mermaids swam.

I dreamed of a field where fairies ran, sang, and danced.

I dreamed of a book that could give me its story. A story that would show me what happened before me.

I dreamed of a place where this was all true.

I dreamed of a place where I lived in it too.

## You Were There, but Never There

I hate you. You swooped me up in your arms, promising to not let me fall. Why did you let me fall? Did you want me to fall?

I hate you. You showed me affection, you showed me yourself. You took back your affection; you took back yourself.

I hate you. You gave me gold, a treasure I wished for, then you stole it all away. Your so malicious and mean.

I hate you. You told me everything I wanted to hear, everything I needed to hear. I was too stupid to see that you were lying to me.

I hate you. You were there for me when I needed you. But you weren't there for me, me. Was it for your ego, or was it to make you feel triumphant and good?

I hate you. You made my heart beat. It was beating for me. It was beating for you. It was beating for us. And when you turned your back, my heart broke and my heart stopped beating. Not just for us, and not just for you, but it stopped beating for me too. But what about yours? Did yours stop beating too? No it didn't because there never was a heart in you.

You said you loved me, but those were false words. Was it because your family doesn't love you, your friends don't love you, because you don't love you, or was it because I said I loved you?

You have no heart.

You have no love.

You have nothing but a sad, sorry, worthless life with no one and nothing in it. But I'm sure you'll find another person. Someone so vulnerable and naïve like me. Then you'll play your game, tell her and show her all the things she wants. You'll say I love you like you mean it and she will believe you. Then you will turn your back, and break her heart. But you'll have nothing, ever, and karma will get back to you.

I hate you, and they soon will too.

## Time dispersed

The water was froze.  
The leaves fell in the harsh wind.  
Time stopped in plain sight.

## Smothering

The heat was humid.  
The page flipped in the silence.  
It was breathtaking.

## Sitting, Just Sitting

Birds chirp by windows.  
Sounds of chalk on chalkboards.  
Time Reverses.

## Bound

We danced in the sun.  
Our bodies pressed in the time.  
Our hearts met in one.

## Stuck, Ready to fly Away

I saw the doctors move around me. Running and yelling, their goal to keep their patients alive. It was chaotic, a whole other world full of happiness, sadness, good, and bad.

Watched him lay there, the life drained from him. His skin was a white, grey color. His eyes were closed, but I expected they would be sad if they were open. His body was still. As still as cement. He was peaceful to look at. So quiet, almost non-living. His head was wrapped with gauze. It must have been some accident. I just watched and watched and watched.

My silence and view was broken by the sound of the doctor pulling the curtain back. A nurse and another doctor accompanied him. He was older, maybe in his forties. He had dark red hair, brown eyes, and pale skin. He looked very serious and concerned. The nurse and the other doctor were both women. Young. Fairly pretty.

“What do we have?” he asked.

“Dean Johnson, twenty-six-year-old male, found next to a four story building. We suspect he fell.” Said the young doctor.

“He is unresponsive, so let’s get a CT scan A.S.A.P.”

“Right away Dr. Genis.”

“Thank you Dr. Lane.”

I still hovered, watching this man. He was so young to have such a tragic accident. Dr. Genis seemed very concerned or he wouldn’t have said A.S.A.P. Falling from a building is one serious accident. How was this man still alive?

My silence and view was broke again by the voice of Dr. Genis.

“Let’s get him up to surgery now. We have an emergent head injury. We are going to have to do a craniectomy.”

I watched as the doctors rolled this man down the endless halls. I watched as they rolled him through the doors of the RESTRICTED-ONLY AUTHORIZED door. I watched the whole surgery. A long and difficult surgery it looked to be. It was definitely a serious one. Dr. Genis and Dr. Lane had serious faces. The OR nurses had serious faces. But, he still laid on the table, peaceful, still, quiet as ever.

I still watched him. Laying in the bed, his head wrapped in gauze.

I began to wonder. Where am I? Obviously I am in a hospital, but why? Why didn’t Dr. Genis, Dr. Lane, the OR nurses, everyone in the halls notice me? It was as if I were invisible. This is so strange. I figured maybe I was part of somebody’s dream, or imagination. I really did not know.

A voice broke my thinking.

“Hello? Where am I? My head hurts.”

I looked at the man, the poor young man. His eyes still closed.

“Hello.” I heard again. I still looked at the man. Eyes closed. Still as he could be.

“You, you standing in front of me, say something.

Could this man see me? I thought I was invisible. Nobody else could see me.

“Hello,” he said for the third time.

This time I said something back.

“Hi.”

“You finally decide to say something back. I thought you were ignoring me for the sake of it.”

“No I wasn’t. I’m sorry.” This time his eyes opened. He still looked sad. His eyes were tired as I had expected them to be. His skin still white, grey, body still, heads still wrapped. The only movement was his eyes and lips.

“Where am I?” he asked.

“In the hospital. You had a major head injury. The doctors said something about you falling off of a roof.”

It was quiet for a long moment. He didn’t answer and I didn’t say anything more. He broke the silence.

“How long have I been in the hospital?”

“Since this afternoon. It’s three in the morning. You had brain surgery.”

At that moment Dr. Genis and Dr. Lane walked in. They talked quietly, I don’t know why. They could see he was awake. They weren’t seriously trying to wake him? I heard Dr. Genis say to Dr. Lane...

“He’s stable but hasn’t woken up yet.”

Did I hear that right? Hasn’t woken yet. Obviously he is awake. I just talked to him.

Dr. Genis wrote something on the chart and exited the room. Dr. Lane followed.

I talked to him again.

“Can you see me?”

“Yes.”

Why couldn’t anyone else see me? He could. And why couldn’t anyone see he was awake. I could. It was all so strange. I don’t know where I am. Doctors can’t see that their patients are awake. What is going on here, in the four walls of this hospital?

Suddenly, I heard a voice. I didn’t know where it was coming from. I thought maybe it was my imagination. It wasn’t the patient; his eyes were closed again. Nobody else was in the room except for me and him. The voice spoke to me. All the it said was...

“Help him. It will help you.” I sure didn’t know what to think of that. My mind must be playing tricks on me. I was so frustrated by the fact that I didn’t know what was happening. Why was everything so complicated?

I watched as he recovered. The nurses and Dr. Lane coming to monitor him every few hours. Still no one noticed me, and still no one could see that he was awake. We hadn’t talked since before Dr. Genis came in. That was nine hours ago. The next hour passed. And the next. And the next.

It had been seven days, and I was still hovering around watching this man. I suppose I can start to call him by his name, Dean. The funny thing is that I was stuck. I couldn’t leave his room, 2178. I went wherever he went. If the doctors moved his room, I moved too. If the doctors took him to a different hall, I went too. It was inevitable trying to avoid him. For God’s sake, what was happening.

I was hovering, as usual when I heard the voice again.

“Dear child, help him.” I didn’t know what to do, so I answered it.

“Who are you? What do you mean?”

“Don’t be alarmed. I am of something greater. You were put in this place for a reason. Now I am going to show you why.” It, the voice, vanished. It was so quiet. Then it seemed like I was dreaming. Was I dreaming? Or maybe it was a vision. I didn’t know. In this vision I was standing on top of a building. A tall building, maybe three or four stories high. I felt the wind in my hair as the sounds of the cars in the city passed by me. The sun was high, with the rays pounding on every inch of my body. It was a beautiful sight. When I looked to my right I was standing behind a man. He looked to be enjoying the view just as me. “Hello.” I said. He didn’t answer. “Hello.” I said again. He still didn’t answer. So I watched him, like I seem to do with everything. It was peaceful watching him. Then he turned around and looked at me, still not breaking the silence. I was astonished by the face upon the person. It was Dean. My Dean. The Dean laying in the hospital bed right now, beside me. The one who *fell* from a building and had brain surgery. As the word Dean was about to leave my mouth, he jumped. Jumped from the building. I ran to the edge,

and looked down screaming his name. There he was. Laying on the ground. Helpless. Broken. Needing medical attention right away. It all happened so fast, I barely believed it.

That was the end of it. The end of the vision. I am not sure where it came from, and I am not sure what it means. So I just keep going back to the voice that was in my head before the vision. It said help him, and I will show you why you were put here. But what is this “here”? I don’t know what to make of any of it.

I hovered and watched. It was my daily routine. But it gave me something to do, it was all I could do. While I watched Dean, I thought about the vision, and the voice, and everything that had happened. The vision and the voice kept replaying in my head. I couldn’t get the image of him falling. Excuse me, jumping. He jumped. It doesn’t make any sense. Dr. Lane said that they suspected that he fell. But she said “suspected”, they didn’t know for sure. I just... Why would I have a vision, that shows my Dean jumping. And why is that vision followed by a strange voice? Two options were running through my head. Option 1, Dean is suicidal. Option 2, Dean fell.

As I thought of option one again, the voice came to me.

“Yes, dear child. Yes.” I responded back.

“Do you mean that Dean jumped? That Dean is suicidal?” The voice didn’t respond, but I got a feeling. A cold, endless feeling, and I knew that it was telling me something. I knew why I was here, in this hospital. I knew why I was communicating with a guy that nobody else could. I knew why nobody could see me. Everything dawned on me, and I remembered things that I never knew. One of those memories, is the answer to everything. I knew the answer in that moment.

I was nineteen. A sophomore in college. I was making my way through the second quarter. I cannot remember the reason, but I was so sad. Miserably sad. I was angry at everything. At the world, my class, my teachers, and my not so much friends anymore. The sadness and the anger boiled and boiled up inside of me, and I just could not take it anymore. So, I ended it. I ended my sadness, and I ended my anger. I killed myself on that day. All that is left of me is even more intense anger and sadness. I see this man. This young, twenty-six-year-old man. He is laying here, in the hospital bed. Hasn’t woken for weeks and he might die. It was because he tried to kill himself. He tried to end his life and whatever sadness and anger he was feeling. Little did he know, it wouldn’t work.

The voice came to me again.

“Child, I knew you were made of more. Do not let this man make the same mistake as you. He is still alive, so help him.”

“I don’t know how to. And how can I? He’s not even awake.”

“Walk over to him, child. Talk to him. Tell him. He will hear you. Believe me, trust in me.”

So I did exactly what the voice told me to do. I walked over to Dean. He looked the same. I couldn’t believe that he had tried to kill himself. It made me sad to think about what he had put himself through. I began to talk.

“I am not sure if you can hear me, but this voice tells me that you can. Why did you do it? I mean, I did it and can’t remember why. I regret it now. You are not dead yet. And unlike me, you have a second chance. A chance to make it right. So take it please. If you can hear me, wake up and tell Dr. Genis everything. Get help. Please. Please take your second chance because if I had one I wouldn’t let it get away.”

The voice talked to me again.

“Child, you have risen above greater things. You gave done what you were needed for. You have made things right, not just for you, but for him too. You can now leave this place. This place where you are confused, and stuck. Come join me. Take the step and it will all be over.”

So I took the step, without even consciously making it. And like that, I was there. I was there with him. The voice was a man. A wise man and loving man. I had no more sadness, and no more anger. I didn't feel anything but relieved. As I met him in the center of this place, he looked down. He looked down from Heaven and I did too. The sight I saw was Dean. My Dean. Awake, happy, telling Dr. Genis everything that had happened. His skin was rosy, his eyes were bright, and he looked good. I knew that he was going to be okay, and I knew that he was going to live a good, long life. I look down at him every day. I am with him every day. I am his guardian Angel.

Born and raised in New Orleans, **Brynn Beatty** is a 13 year-old rising eighth grader. She has taken a Creative Writing class before this and hopes to take more in the future. Her two dogs often share the house with one to five foster puppies. She has two older brothers in collage and two younger step sisters in her grade. You can usually find her hanging out with her best friend, Nina, or curled up in her room reading a good book. She also loves to spend time with her aunt, whether it be watching TV, cooking, or just talking. She is on her school's debate team and hopes to be on Newspaper and Yearbook when she is in high school.

## Thank You

Why do you think that everyone is paying attention?  
When you boast about your life  
And make your snide remarks,  
They do not listen.  
They do not leave their friends to sit with you.  
Contrary to what you believe,  
Their conversations do not stop to hear you.  
I know this may come as a shock,  
But for every mean glare you throw my way,  
I strive to smile to cheer others up.  
And that time you bumped my shoulder?  
You knocked me into someone else;  
We're great friends now.  
So thank you.  
Because when you rolled my pencil to the ground,  
I found a lucky penny.  
I gave it to you,  
So maybe it would help you to smile.

## Thinking Forward

“Where do you think we’ll be in a year?” Maya asked. She had her legs draped over one end of the loveseat and her head resting on the other. Her never still hands were rhythmically throwing a tennis ball in the air and catching it, and her eyes watched it travel. *Up and down and up and down.* Her best friend, Leana, sat at the computer, working on her English paper.

“Oh, I know where we’ll be in a year. Here. Doing practically the same thing we are now. The only difference will be that we’ll be seniors. This school won’t let us do anything but.” Leana didn’t even stop typing as she responded to Maya’s question. It was a skill she mastered long ago. Maya caught the tennis ball and looked over to Leana sitting in her swivel chair with her back to Maya.

“Okay, Miss Smarty Pants, I guess one year in the future isn’t too far away, but what about five, huh?”

Leana scoffed, then said, “That’s easy. We’ll both be at Collage, roommates, of course. You’ll always be swamped with homework from your Pre Med classes and I’ll be working on my Engineering projects.”

Maya stated throwing the tennis ball from one hand to the other, now tracing its movement from right to left. *Back and forth and back and forth.* “Well what about once we finish school? What will we be doing in ten years? Twenty? Will we still be roommates? Friends even? Will we have achieved our ‘life’s work’ by then?”

At this, Leana was quiet for a moment. “Of course we’ll be friends. But as for the rest...” She didn’t know what they would be doing, and it scared her a little to think about it.

Maya smiled before lightly throwing the tennis ball at the back of Leana’s chair. “Gotcha,” She said.

## Getting Lost and Left Behind

“Any questions?” Shay shyly raised her hand, nervous to talk in class. The teacher glanced around the room before her eyes settled on Shay’s hand.

“Yes, Shay? What is it?” the teacher asked, trying to keep the annoyance from her voice. It didn’t work, and Shay felt even worse for raising her hand.

“It’s just that I’m a little confused about the diagram. Could you maybe explain it again?” Sounds of displeasure reverberated around the room, and each one seemed to affect Shay, making her sink lower and lower in her seat. The teacher went over the diagram once more, this time not asking for any questions.

A little later, as they reviewed work from yesterday, Shay felt herself being lost in a sea of graphs, statistics and studies. A little after that, she was drowning in it. She raised her hand yet again, and when the teacher noticed her, she prepared to ask her to explain some more. That’s what always happens. Everybody in this class works so fast that it feels like she is only falling further and further behind each day. Before the teacher calls on her, some of the other kids in class see that she has her hand up. One of the particularly fast people in class say, “What, again?” annoyed by her always asking for the class to wait.

This time, she lowers her hand before the teacher can call on her. The teacher keeps on teaching.

## Night on the Boulevard

As a soft blanket of quiet settled over the city, I eased open my window and slipped out. My feet stumbled down the fire escape, taking the same path as always. When the city gets as dark as this and the night gets as quiet, I walk down the boulevard, thinking about how the half assembled buildings resembled my life. Those hopeful engineers dreaming about how the buildings would tower over the city were like me when I still had plans to do things. I had planned to let my dreams take me out of the sad, lonely life that I was stuck with, but in the end, it’s just me. But those broken dreams can wait here on the street for now; I have to get home. I should get home. Home can wait. I walk some more trying to clear my head from all the negativity surrounding me. I could walk forever.

## Little Distractions

In this galaxy, in all of the world,  
I find distraction in the smallest things:  
Melting chocolate and the crunch of crackers,  
The sharp sound of a cello in the air,  
The sweet lullaby of a piano,  
The absurd concept of Antarctica,  
As I sit, dying in the summer heat,  
The quiet snap of a crawfish's claws,  
The little things on Earth that find a way  
To capture my mind for just a moment.

## Where did my family go?

I dreamed of watching movies with my family and throwing popcorn.  
I dreamed of late nights with my sisters where no one wanted to sleep.  
I dreamed of cooking with my brothers and sneaking bites behind backs.  
I dreamed of aunts coming to visit, yielding ice cream and sweets.  
I dreamed of uncles who told the craziest stories of Mom and Dad  
I dreamed of grandparents pinching cheeks and sneaking money into palms.  
I dreamed of Mom, who always knew how to get back at my siblings.  
I dreamed of Dad, who was always ready to play another board game.  
I dreamed of a family, together and whole and supportive.  
I dreamed because reality was such a nightmare without them.

## Late

Yvette was walking to school when she heard someone shout behind her. A few seconds later, a bicycle flew past her with more of the same shouts echoing from the girl on the bike. She wove around lampposts and trash cans in a fun filled frenzy. She went up and down driveways and on and off the curb.

All the while, Yvette just stood staring, wondering who the crazy rider was. Curious, she called after them, shouting, “What are you doing?”

Her question was met only by more shouts of joy as she continued her crazy antics. She stood up while riding the bike and even let go of the handlebars. She made circles and sharp turns, and she— Yvette stared in shock when she toppled over before she rushed to help.

When she knelt down, she saw that the rider had chin length, dark brown hair topped by a dark blue helmet, necklaces of all sizes tangled around her neck, an assortment of rubber bands and bracelets on her wrists, a dark purple shirt advertising some sports team, dark colored jeans, and a cut on her knee where she fell and ripped through her jeans.

“Are you ok?” Yvette said to them.

“Oh, I’m fine. Just disappointed that I ripped my new jeans,” she responded while standing up and brushing off her legs. “This cut is nothing.”

Yvette sighed, relieved, then asked hesitantly, “If you’re sure. I could always go and grab a band aid or something from my house. It wouldn’t take long. I live right around the corner. I’m Yvette, by the way.” She waved awkwardly, not sure what to do.

“Hello, Yvette, I’m Emily. If you actually live around here like you said, then I’m your new neighbor.” She said playfully while she picked up her bike and straightened it out.

As she started to walk away, Yvette stopped her by saying, “What do you mean *if* I live around here?”

Emily turned around with a smirk on her face. “Hey, I’m new around here, so I don’t know anything about anyone. For all I know, you’re that weird, lonely girl, and you traveled all the way from your house across town to try to make friends with the clueless new girl. But hey, I won’t judge. If you did all of that then its none of my business.” Emily shrugged then continued to walk away, slower this time.

Yvette sputtered for a second trying to come up with a response. “What do you— Why did you— Hey!” She ran up next to Emily and tried to come up with a response. In the end, she settled on saying, “No lonely person, or any person even, would do something like that! And I do *not* live across town. I live like three blocks from here.” She was about to say more and ask what Emily was even *doing* out here riding her bike like that, but before she could, she was cut off by Emily.

“Ah, so you don’t deny being a weird, lonely person.”

Yvette sighed in exasperated confusion before protesting. “I have lots of friends! And who are you to call me weird? I’m not the one out here before school starts riding their bike like a crazy person. What was all of that about anyway?”

Emily ignored her question and asked, “If you have so many friends then why aren’t you at school with them right now? Oh, I get it! You’re weird, lonely, *and* homeschooled. Aww you poor thing.” Emily looked at Yvette with mock sympathy.

“The *only* reason I am not at school right now is because *someone* was riding their bike around all crazily and fell over! I had to make sure they were okay!” Yvette was huffing from shouting at Emily, but

she was surprised to realize that she was having fun arguing with her. This conversation was more interesting than any of the ones she had with her friends.

Emily started to walk away again, tossing an “Ok, if you say so” over her shoulder.

Yvette saw her leaving and said, “No. You can’t just leave. You have already made me late for school, so I’m gonna prove it to you and take you to meet all of my friends. While you are there, you can kindly explain to the office why I am late.” She paused for a second, glancing at Emily’s bike. “Your bike is just gonna make it harder for both of us to get there, so you can bike home, quickly, to put your bike away. If, that is, you really live around here like you said. You better hurry back too because if you are not here in 10 minutes, I am going to be quite annoyed. “

Emily looked at her in disbelief and, when Yvette’s face remained stern, shock. Not sure what to do, she said, “I’ll be back soon then,” and hopped on her bike obediently.

Once Emily turned the corner, Yvette took off her backpack and sat down on the curb. She looked at her watch and sighed. 8:01. Her school started eleven minutes ago, and she was late, again. She really did need Emily to explain why she was late. If not, she was going to get a detention.

At 8:09, Emily rounded the corner and walked up to Yvette. She held out her hand to help Yvette up and, once they were both standing, said, “Lead the way.”

Yvette grabbed her backpack and marched forward purposefully. After about half a block, her legs got tired, so she slowed her pace to a casual stroll. *An angry casual stroll*, she thought, *don’t forget that you’re angry*.

“Glad to see you’re walking at a normal speed now. If you kept walking to school that fast, I would’ve fallen quite far behind,” Emily said. Instead of responding, Yvette just turned her head away and kept walking. “Come on! Talk with me. You can’t stay silent forever, and if you do, however will we start our awesome and spectacular friendship?”

Yvette was debating within herself whether or not to respond. *You might as well. If you don’t, she’ll just keep annoying you for the rest of the walk*. Yvette thought for a moment more, then waited for Emily to speak again.

“Which school are we going to anyway? There are two in this area, right?” Emily fell into step beside Yvette and walked with her hands in her pockets.

Yvette glanced at Emily before saying, “If you just moved here, how do you know about the schools?” She said this hoping to catch her off guard.

Emily shook her head and said, “Well I gotta go to school somewhere, even if I’m not starting today. And besides, my mom takes a special interest in education so it’s not like I’m clueless. The two schools around here are Kingly and Stuart High, right?”

Yvette said “Oh,” feeling bad about asking Emily such a stupid question. She continued by saying, “Yeah, those are the schools around here. I go to Kingly so we’re gonna take a left up here and then we’ve got four more blocks after that.” When she looked over to Emily she saw that she had a wide grin across her face. Suspicious, she asked, “What?”

“I’m going to Kingly! Maybe we’ll be in the same class. Wouldn’t that be great?” Emily smiled deviously at her.

“Ugh,” Yvette said, not sure if she was happy or annoyed. “We probably will be, considering how small the school is. I mean, we got a new principal *last week* and she already knows most everyone’s name.” She looked at Emily again and said, “Why *aren’t* you in school right now, anyway?”

“Oh, my mom wanted to get settled into her job first before having to worry about me and school. Also, she believes that if I’m home alone all day, I’ll start unpacking and stuff. So far, not much of that has been happening.”

“So when are you starting school then, if not today?” Yvette asked.

“Well, I was actually planning on starting tomorrow.” When Emily said this Yvette’s eyes widened.

“Well this’ll sure be one first impression. You walking in there and telling them what happened. I’ll probably get in trouble anyway, but seeing that might just be worth it,” She said. She giggled and then stopped herself when she remembered that she was supposed to be annoyed with Emily.

“Yeah, just imagine it,” Emily started, trying to make Yvette laugh again. “I walk in there, and, of course, they are awed by how awesome I look with my accidentally ripped jeans and helmet hair.” Yvette laughed a little more and decided to just to have fun.

“Obviously,” Yvette said, playing along. “You can’t just settle on talking to the main office staff, so you demand to talk to someone higher up.”

“The principal! I will not settle for less. Because of the fact that I am as awesome as I am, they take me straight to her.”

“So you march right in, and—” Yvette paused, waiting for Emily to continue.

Emily picked up the story by saying, “—and I don’t even care that she is in a meeting. Seeing me, she dismisses whoever she is talking with.”

“She asks if there is anything at all she could possibly do for you.”

“I then pull you out from behind me and say, ‘My friend here saw me crash my bike this morning. She rushed over to help me and we both fell into this crazy vortex where time doesn’t exist. When we finally got out, she realized that she was late for school.’”

Yvette shook her head while saying, “That’s hardly believable. We should say that we found a time machine that took us forward fifteen minutes.”

“Oh yeah, and if they ask where it is, we’ll say the government confiscated it before we could hide it.”

They both laughed a little as they crossed the street to get to Kingly High. Emily looked up at the school building next to them and said, “Pretty nice.”

Yvette nodded and walked in the front gate. Yvette lead the way to the main office and they both remained quiet as they walked. When they got there, she walked up to the desk worker and said, “Hello, Ms. Watson. I’m here to get a—”

Before she could say ‘late pass,’ Emily interrupted her and said, “We’d like to speak to the principal, please.”

Yvette’s eyes widened and she whispered to Emily, “What are you doing? You can’t just do that!” Emily ignored her and just stared at the office worker, waiting for a reply.

“Well, honey, I’m afraid you can’t just randomly walk in and expect to be able to speak with Ms. Anders. She is a very busy lady. Now, Yvette, what were you saying?” Yvette just wanted to ask for a late pass and leave, accepting the consequences, but before she could get herself and Emily out of there, Emily spoke again.

“My friend here would like a late pass, but she has a good reason as to why that is.”

Ms. Watson looked annoyed at Emily's response and said, "Oh, and what might that be? Remember, Yvette, if you have one more unexcused absence this semester, you get a detention." She put aside the paperwork that was in front of her and took out the form for being late.

"Oh, I'm afraid I can't tell you the reason. It's for the principal's ears only. This involves a special task she sent us on." Yvette cringed with every word that Emily said, wondering how she was supposed to get out of this.

Ms. Watson looked at Emily skeptically before slowly saying, "Ok, you can go see her, but if I find out that you are lying, you both are going to be in so much trouble. Her office is down the back hall, the third door."

Emily smiled boldly and walked out of the office with a nervous Yvette trailing behind her. As they walked there, Yvette whisper shouted to Emily, "How do you plan on getting us out of this?"

Emily just smiled and said, "I have a plan, so you don't worry."

Yvette hesitated outside of the office. "Are you sure?"

Emily just smiled at her. "Just trust me."

Yvette pushed open the office door and looked at the principal sitting at her desk. When Ms. Anders saw Yvette, she said, "Hello, Yvette, what can I--" She stopped talking when she saw Emily and just looked confused. "What are you doing here? You don't start till tomorrow, and what on earth happened to your jeans? I just got those for you."

Yvette was confused to say the least, and it didn't quite click until she heard Emily say, "Don't worry, Mom. I'm fine. I'll just patch up the jeans when I get home, so they'll look even cooler."

Ms. Anders sighed in annoyance and said, "As long as you are ok. Now what are you doing here?"

"Oh, that's my fault, ma'am," Yvette said, ducking her head.

"And how's that?" Ms. Anders asked curiously.

Emily rolled her eyes. "I was biking around the neighborhood when Yvette was walking to school. She saw me fall off my bike, so she came over to see if I was okay. That's why she's late. We just got here."

"Thank you, Yvette, for helping my daughter. She gets into scrapes like this all the time. You should've seen her when she was younger," Ms. Anders said, thinking back.

Emily then said, "Well we can all talk about that another time, but for now, we have business to attend to. Yvette was late because of me, so I was wondering if you could just write her a pass. She won't get in trouble that she doesn't deserve that way. She *was* just making sure I was okay."

Ms. Anders thought about it for a moment, glancing between the two of them, then said, "I will this time, but don't count on it happening again. And for you, Emily, I want you to go to class today."

Emily started to protest, but Ms. Anders cut off her daughter by saying, "You're already here, so you might as well. Anyway," she paused to write a note for Yvette to give her teacher, "It will be easier this way. Yvette can show you to the classroom. You're in the same homeroom, by the way." She handed Yvette the note and said, "Now get out of here. You are late enough already."

Both girls turned around. Emily said, "Fine, Mom," and Yvette said, "Thank you, ma'am."

Once they were in the hallway, Emily leaned over to Yvette and said, "I had hoped we'd be in the same class."

Hello, Reader. My name is **Benjamin Bordes**, but I prefer to go by Ben. I am 14 years old, and I live in Lafayette, Louisiana. I go to the Episcopal School of Acadiana, which is the number one private school in Louisiana (Go Falcons!). I am going to be a Freshman next year. I love to eat, sleep, and play sports. Some of my favorite sports are basketball, soccer, baseball, football, and tennis. Pretty much I like all sports. I don't like English. It's probably my least favorite subject. I took Creative Writing at ADVANCE this year in order to improve my writing skills and to hopefully find an appreciation for the language. This class did that and much more for me. On the ensuing pages are handful of the pieces that I wrote in these three weeks here at the program. I hope you enjoy reading them!

## How to Sense Fear

Fear sounds like a desperate cry for help  
Fear smells like something foreign in a familiar place  
Fear tastes like your own blood  
Fear feels like you have nowhere else to run  
Fear looks like nothing but fear itself

## War Heart

I didn't know I loved my wife until I had to leave her  
I didn't know I loved my job until I had to quit it  
I didn't know I loved peace until I was drafted  
I didn't know I loved to sleep until I was on night shifts  
I didn't know I loved the quiet until we were ambushed  
I didn't know I loved supplies until we had to leave them  
I didn't know I loved Commander until he wasn't breathing  
I didn't know I loved my squad until they all were hit  
I didn't know I loved my leg until it was in bits  
I didn't know I loved to eat until I was starving  
I didn't know I loved to drink until I saw mirages  
I didn't know I loved my life until...

## That's Alarming

My alarm clock on my phone makes me angry. I slept through it, but luckily my RA woke me up at 7:45. Everything was great until my alarm didn't go off. I had already gotten seven and a half hours of sleep, and I woke up at 6:45, meaning I got to sleep an extra 45 minutes before my alarm went off. One hour passed really quickly, and I woke up to my RA instead of the "Sencha" sound. I jumped out of bed with anger and went straight to my phone, which still showed that my alarm was going off. So at first I thought that I had slept through 20 minutes of my alarm's annoying sound, but then I realized that my ringer volume was all the way down.

## Family Time

It was a cloudy day in Manhattan  
She was out on a grocery run  
Picking out dinner for her and her son  
She rummaged through one aisle, scanned the next  
Picked out a meat, some veggies, and bread  
She checked off her list and she checked out of the store  
She remembered everything, except to look left and right

## Listen Up

Don't eat sweets before dinner; don't spoil your appetite; put some greens on your plate; slow down while you eat; ask to be excused from the table; turn off the TV until you're done with homework; don't let me see you on your phone until you've finished your homework; don't rush through your homework; I want you in bed by 9:30; It's 11:30, go to bed; don't be late for the bus; make yourself breakfast if you don't see anything made for you; play tennis; try your best at school; use good manners while you're over there; get your elbows off the table; watch your tone of voice; ask me first; no; no; no; no; take that jacket off; watch me cook; put on sunscreen; wear a hat; tell me where and when it is; this is getting ridiculous, go to bed and finish your work in the morning

## Advanced Problems

What, again? I have to get up early again? No sleeping until I want to get up? Well, I guess it's not that bad. I'll just get up, get ready, and I'll have some nice, hot coffee to wake me up. What? We can't have coffee? Alas, I like tea too. I'll just have some steamy, flavorful tea. Ah, what do you know, no tea either. I'm running out of alternatives. I guess I'll just suck it up and go on with my day, and the next one (if I can wake up), and then it's Sunday and I can finally sleep in. Then, week two. What's that you ask? Oh, yes, three without coffee. But I'm not complaining.

## Taking One Down

He woke, and dressed in an oxford shirt  
Putting button through buttonhole, like a machine  
He drove, blaring music, causing vibration  
Going to work: a rocket scientist  
They were launching it in the afternoon.  
At lunch, he devoured a lobster nervously  
They counted down, severe tectonic movement  
Blasting off, moving in a zigzag, exploding  
He ate mushrooms for dinner, poisoned by the chef  
Killing him, sending him to his padded casket

## Tree Haiku

With chirping branches  
Drinking from the cup of life  
Murdered by the cold

## Crime Haiku

“No! It wasn’t me!”  
Handcuffed, slammed against the car  
The snow coming down

## Corrupt Protection

“I don’t know why I did it!” screamed the officer. “He said he had a firearm on him!”

“And did you take that as a threat?” the lawyer asked calmly.

“Well, he reached into his pocket after he said that, so I thought he was reaching for his gun.”

“He said nothing else in between telling you he had a firearm and reaching for his pocket?”

“Well, not exactly. He said he was reaching for his ID, but how was I supposed to know if he was telling the truth or not?”

“Did you ask him to get out his ID?”

“I asked him to put his hands up.”

“Did you ask him to get out his ID or not officer.” the lawyer repeated slowly.

There was silence in the courthouse. The judge repeated his question again. There was a riot going on outside the building. Hundreds, maybe thousands were protesting and holding up signs reading “Black Lives Matter”.

The officer spoke up. “Yes sir, I asked him to take his ID out, but I also told him to put his hands up.”

“And all of this was over a broken taillight?”

No response. The jury began murmuring.

“Did you think he would have shot you with his family in the car?”

No response. The murmuring grew louder with each question.

“After you shot him multiple times, why didn’t you check to see if he was okay?”

The officer was still silent. The prosecutor started to ask another question, but the judge stopped him with three bangs of his gavel. The room went quiet.

## Don't Sell these Cells

Oh, white blood cells  
You do your job so well  
You tackle any challenge  
You do it without pay

I envy your judge of character  
Identifying friend from foe  
You are selfless  
Working day and night  
Cleaning up my mistakes  
My guard dogs, my cells

## The Good Life

A man who cares for his community  
A man who shared his knowledge,  
A man who now shares his strength  
A man who everyone has come to know and love,  
Yet is lonely all the same

He spends all of his week alone, even Saturdays  
He sets up shop at the market, isolated from the rest  
He works all week for Saturdays  
He has been drained by those below him,  
Yet is happy all the same

**Emma Gruesbeck** is a 15-year-old, a rising 10<sup>th</sup> grader, and a 3<sup>rd</sup> year at ADVANCE. She lives in Natchitoches, Louisiana, and attends Natchitoches Central High School. Her favorite of her works included in this anthology is “Candles”; “For my Fingers” is a close second. When not writing, you can find Emma playing her guitar or piano, drawing, reading, or having fun with her friends.

## For my Fingers

I like to draw faces on you,  
See you lined up like soldiers.  
Fold you into my hands,  
Then flip them up to see the congregation.  
I let you swim in soapy depths,  
And you become raisins.

If not for you,  
You pale little caterpillars,  
I could not move through life with ease.  
Your stretching and scrunching  
Helps me hold the key to opportunity.  
Without you,  
This would not exist.

## Elegy for Lawrence Burnside

You were six days old  
When Death took you  
Out of your crib,  
And into a coffin.

Time made a mark  
On you  
Before  
You could make a mark  
On it.

But you didn't become  
Hardened by life.  
You remain  
A babe,  
Innocent and untouched.

Your tombstone,  
Which lies next to your mother's,  
Has done the aging for you.  
It has a cow on it.  
I'd like to think you liked cows.

It also has a sun.  
A sun you do not have to  
Look up at,  
But down upon,  
As I look down at where  
You rest.

I look,  
And I write,  
And in my head,  
I am singing this to you.

Even if it does not rhyme,  
I am singing to you  
A lullaby,  
125 years too late.

## Food for Thought

She wished she could teach her lips to agree with her mind. If whenever she thought *Speak!* Her mouth would follow the command. Instead, her tongue turned to lead, and her lips were stitched shut as tight as the seams of the clothes her mother used to sew for her as a child. This chronic loss of words dated back to when she was that young, and, at the ripe age of 19, she hadn't found a cure. Teaching would be too hard; her mouth would just not learn.

*Suppose, she thought, as she opened the soup she would be having for lunch, there was a can opener for your mind. A cranium opener.*

She laughed a bit over this as she began to pour the soup into the pot, and imagined the vegetables were thoughts.

*Once you dumped out all your thoughts, she reckoned, they just needed to be made a bit more appealing, more appetizing.*

Thunk! Went the knob of as the burner lit up. *With a bit of time, they'd be piping hot ideas, ready for the listener to consume.*

She sighed as she poured the soup into a bowl. *Soup and speaking are nothing alike, she internally scolded herself.*

She would have to wait for the soup to cool. She didn't mind. She was used to waiting.

## Sophia

My sister,  
Whose hair is golden wire,  
Whose nose is a rosebud,  
Whose eyes contain the ocean,  
Whose lips are branches of coral.

My sister,  
Whose neck is the trunk of a birch tree,  
Whose arms are made of birds' bones,  
Whose fingers are sharpened twigs,  
Whose waist is a Grecian pillar.

My sister,  
Whose legs are those of a deer,  
Whose ankles are arrowheads,  
Whose feet are carved of soap,  
Whose toes are hardened sap.

My sister,  
Whose thoughts are firecrackers,  
Whose ocean-holding eyes  
Are trying to find beauty in it all.

## The Burning of the Witch

Her gemstone eyes are dazzling in the night,  
Illuminated by the firelight.  
Fair face, dotted with freckles, charms us all,  
As lovely as a princess at a ball.  
But scraps, not silk, make up this lady's dress,  
Eaten by flames, the gown's a sooty mess.  
Oh, fickle witch, with rosy fingertips,  
And tongue from forth dark magics oft are quipped,  
It is so baffling how you seem to make  
Yourself a thing of beauty at the stake.

## Candles

In the beginning,  
You thought it would never end,  
Never slowly sputter out.

You laughed so hard you cried,  
The golden tears of joy  
Filling the empty mugs.  
You used them to make tea.

This was not selfish,  
You did not laugh in vain.  
For the longest time,  
Everything was funny.

You fawned over people passing by,  
Danced and sang like a wild person,  
Joined hands with others to make Celtic knots.  
The crumbs from the chips you shared lined up to form a grin.

In a way,  
You became a child.  
Hair done up in pigtails,  
A youthful beam plastered across your face.  
You gave piggyback rides,  
And finger painted.

But you also became wiser.  
You made friends,  
You learned,  
You found happiness,  
Happiness with no catches,  
No surprise drawbacks.

And you thought you were queen,  
Queen of everyone and everything.  
Nothing could end this,  
This whirlwind romance with joy.

But then,  
The lights go out,  
The movie ends,  
The man on the ravioli can hide himself,

And you're stuck staring at the darkened ceiling.

"What?" You say to yourself.

"Where did it all go?"

You wish you could find it,

Hidden beneath some giant bed,

And shriek from joy and cheer.

But you cannot.

You remember,

Writing down the moments on sticky notes.

And every once in a while,

A smile creeps onto your face,

As slowly as the worm you saw crawling on the floor.

**Elizabeth Johns** is a fourteen year-old who lives in Orange, a small town in Southeast Texas on the Texas-Louisiana border with her parents, brother, and her dog, Scout. She will be going into the ninth grade at Little Cypress-Mauriceville (LC-M) High School. In her free time, Elizabeth likes to knit, cross-stitch, read, write, act, dance, sing, and play the piano. She discovered her passion for writing in the first grade and has been writing ever since. She has finished one or two short stories in the past and also enjoys writing stories with her friends. Elizabeth looks forward to finishing her first novel and hopes to continue writing for many years to come.

## Elizabeth

Elizabeth  
Four syllables  
Nine letter  
Four vowels  
Five consonants  
Common  
Too common  
Everyone has this name  
Everyone  
Boring  
Makes me sound like a stuck-up British granny  
Everyone can pronounce it  
Except for me  
“You can be President”  
Mom says  
“You can do anything with a name like that”  
Anything  
Except pronounce it correctly  
Too easy to make nicknames  
Too easy for them to be stupid  
Too hard I have to fight them off  
Too hard to stay ‘Elizabeth’  
“You don’t look like your name”  
They say  
“You don’t look like an ‘Elizabeth’”  
I can’t help what my name is  
Sorry about that  
I can’t do another thing  
I can’t pronounce it properly

## My Future

Twenty years from now, I will be writing what I will be like when I'm 54. I will be a 34 year-old who has had many novels published and has managed to get one or two on the bestsellers list. I will have been on *Dancing with the Stars* and won, much to my delight. I might be married, and if that slight chance comes to pass, there will be an even slighter chance that I will have kids.

I would have a college diploma from Rice or Baylor (both are Texas schools) with a double major in something English related and a master's degree in speech pathology.

I would have a trophy case in my office at home. Along with the mirror ball trophy, I would have the Director's Choice award from choir in high school, all of my gold cups from piano, and awards for making it to state level choirs. At the very end of the case would be awards from my eighth grade year: Most Likely to Succeed Girl, Highest Ranking Overall, Highest Science, and Highest History. Getting those awards would be nothing more than a distant memory that I would recall by opening one of the many journals that fill an entire shelf on the wall. And then when I had memories that I wanted to recollect in twenty years, I'd write in my current journal.

If my kids actually existed, they'd be about four or five, and go to pick them up from school, they'd run to me yelling, "Mommy! Mommy!" so they could tell me about their days. Little did they know that I would write down their adventures and later slide some of the same scenarios into books that characters who were alarmingly like my children existed. I'd have two children, and I'd hope that they'd be twins (a boy and a girl) so I could name them "Myra" and "Peter" (even though in the short story that they come from, their parents die).

And that's what my life will be like in twenty years. \*

\*Or that could all just be hopes and dreams and by that time I'll be a failed person and a hobo living in Beaumont. Who knows?

## My Piano

My Piano

Whose notes sing out like the morning's first bird

Whose notes are the melodies of all times of day and night, every season, every rain and snow

Whose notes are like nature, with the intertwining noises melding to become one

My Piano

Whose voice can put one to sleep

Whose voice can make one cry in sadness or in passion

Whose voice is soft like a bird's feathers or hard like the rock the bird sits upon

My Piano

Whose wood is brown as dirt that has baked and hardened into clay

Whose wood is shiny as freshly polished glass or a newly cleaned ice skating rink

Whose wood is like the tree it came from, with chips in the bark here and there

My Piano

Whose keys are cold as a winter's night then become hot as a summer's day

Whose keys are the whitest of snow and the blackest of tar

Whose keys move easily, but sometimes jam, like the well-oiled door whose hinges sometimes refuse to budge

My Piano

## Words with Friends

Don't be a coward; You worry too much; You need to stop worrying; How many times have I told you not to worry?; You need to break out of your shell; You can't be so shy all of the time; Stop being so quiet and speak up for yourself; You need to stop thinking about it; But I can't; Yes, you can; Why do you always overthink everything?; Stop that! Just go!; Listen to what I have to say; Don't you cry; Could you cry in front of her to make her feel bad?; That would make me feel so good; You need to go talk to him; But I can't; Yes, you can; You just have to believe in yourself; But I don't; Why are you always so difficult?; Stop it, you're starting to make a scene!; Just go! People are starting to stare!; You need to talk to him, not just think about it; But I can't; Yes, you can; He's too nice to be rude to you; But what if he isn't?; He will be; Stop staring; Don't be rude; Do not look up; Why?; Because he's looking at you; Don't; You; Dare; Look; Up; I; Said; Don't; Look; Up; Stop thinking about it; Stop looking so sad; Oh, please don't cry; Just try not to think about it; But I can't; Yes, you can; You know it is going to happen; If you don't, we will; But you can't; Yes, we can; Stop talking about all of this; The more you talk, the worse it will become; The more you talk, the harder it gets; But I can't; Yes, you can; Just don't think about it; Since thinking makes it hurts more don't; Stop!; You're thinking!; I can see it on your face; Don't; But I can't; Yes, you can; Just try; Try to move; Move away; Away from this; This thing; Thing that kills you; You don't deserve; Deserve hurt; Hurt from him; Him who hurts; Stop; But what if I can't?; You can

## I Dreamed

I dreamed for too many things once  
I dreamed everything I wished to dream  
I dreamed with no limits  
I dreamed every second, both waking and sleeping  
I dreamed I could get away with it all  
I dreamed I could have it all  
I dreamed for what most everyone wants  
I dreamed I could have a “happily ever after”  
I dreamed and wished upon every star  
I dreamed everything would work out  
I dreamed that things wouldn't end up like this  
But they did  
If they hadn't  
Do you think I would be writing about it?

## The Wedding

Gliding up the path, trailing behind them  
The entrance loomed above, the doors lay ahead  
Footsteps echoed and the music began  
One chair scraped and all the others followed  
A battalion had fought, but one rose above  
Colored light from pictures in windows  
All of the faces in the church gazed on in hope  
Ready to start a new chapter, to turn the page  
There were lessons to learn, memories to make  
In this tying of knots, this gathering of love

## Why I Did It

Why did I do it? Why did I fall in love with him? I don't know. I guess it sort-of just happened.

For one thing, he's perfect. He's smart, athletic, and has the best personality. He's never been rude to me, not even when my friends did what they did to him. He's funny, in that sort of "you're not really *that* funny" way. He's so talented at everything he does, and I don't think anyone can help *not* liking him in some sort of way. He's not popular, yet isn't an unknown wallflower or anything like that. The only thing is he could be a little taller, but he's still perfect.

Another thing is that he's one of my closest friends. We all know the stereotype: the two best friends fall in love. I didn't really want to fill a stereotype, but it happened. He's always been my friend, as long as I've known him.

But explaining what might have caused this and what really did are two very different things. And one I can explain and the other I can't. I don't know if I'll ever be able to. It is a hard question to be asked. Just imagine what *you* might say. Would you dive right in, pulling out whatever first comes to your mind or would you stall and try to completely evade the question? I've been stalling for over a year now, searching for an answer that will satisfy the voice in my head. An I'm still stalling. Every moment that passes, every second, minute, and hour is another that passes with me stalling and sidestepping and frantically searching.

Falling in love isn't easy. I'm not going to sit here and tell you that it is. It is a never ending battle behind the head and the heart. And with the power struggle between the two, comes the confusion. Confusion about what to do, how to feel about what you've done, how to feel, and what to think every single second. And with love comes all of the disappointments and victories, both having big and little things. I once said that my heart breaks more every time something sad would happen, but the littlest, happy things mended it much faster. I know by now I must seem like a crazy person who loves to rant. But it's hard to think about love and even harder to translate these thoughts and feelings into words where everyone can see them.

So why did I do it? Why did I fall in love? Well, why did you?

## Hate

I hate you, I really do  
I hate everything about you  
And there's nothing that I don't  
Nothing will ever make me like you  
I've never liked you  
Even when we met, you, I didn't like  
The next day and after that  
I hated you more and more  
And now I'll say what's on my mind:  
You I'll hate until the day I die  
I can't even think of you, because my blood boils  
I cry in passion, cry in rage  
Cry, because you, I love to hate  
I hate I have to pretend  
That we are actually friends  
And that everything is fine  
And that I don't feel this way  
You don't even know how I think  
You don't see me glare and gag as you pass  
You don't know what I'd love to say  
And you never will  
You're too thick to get the hint anyway  
So why waste time talking to you?  
You have no good qualities  
Don't even try to pretend that you do  
Since everyone already knows the truth  
Everyone, but you  
You may think that I like you  
But it will never be  
Nothing about you is pleasing  
I've looked from top to bottom, searched from side to side  
And every moment that I looked  
I've hated even more  
The part that hurts the most  
Is keeping to myself  
And since this hate is secret  
I'll never settle the score

## Where It Went Wrong

It went wrong in seconds. The moment it was said out loud, their thoughts began to taint it. The thing that had been perfect was being ripped apart by their criticism. The thoughts of those people stained it. Everything was thrown onto it all at once and no amount of scrubbing would ever make it perfect again. The actions of those people injured it. They took the knives and stabbed it again and again. It would never be in perfect health again; it had lost far too much far too quickly. The words of those people disheartened it. Once the words were said, hope was lost, and with every word they said, more was taken and those things would never be given back without a fight. The glares of those people scared it. Everywhere it went, there was always some. There was always someone watching, someone hating. It grew scared. It found the darkest corner, that was the best place to hide in and held on tight whenever someone tried to pull it out. The hate of those people worried it. How could so many people hate one thing? When they took out the pitchforks, another night would be spent hiding from those people, who wanted nothing more than to rip it apart and toss it to the dogs. But hiding? That made the worrying worse and it became something that it had never imagined it would have become. The “help” of those people killed it. It could see through their sympathetic eyes and open arms. It could see the trap, waiting to clamp its jaws onto it. It could see they were trying to make it like it once was. But it was too late to go back. Nothing could ever help it. Yet they still tried to make it what it had once been so long ago: the perfect thing that was once love.

## I Didn't Know I Loved...

I didn't know I loved the early morning, until I remembered how much cooler it is than the afternoon.

I didn't know I loved the color blue, until it was the only color against beige.

I didn't know I loved the morning sun, until it became my alarm clock.

I didn't know I loved having a light in the shower, until I didn't have one.

I didn't know I loved freedom from my parents, until I wasn't with them all the time.

I didn't know I loved laundry baskets, until I found out I left mine at home.

I didn't know I loved being away from my friends and family, until their persistent nagging was gone and I could have some peace.

I didn't know I loved the warmth of carpet greeting my feet, until there was only the cold of tile.

I didn't know I loved the lights shining in from outside at night, until that is what lulled me to sleep at night.

I didn't know I loved a secret stash of snacks, until I could eat some sort of sugary or salty goodness at ten o'clock at night.

I didn't know I loved a high restroom vanity, until I didn't have to squat and bend at the waist to reach it.

I didn't know I loved to go away until I was gone.

## Homage to My Hands

These hands are the hands of a musician  
They bend over backwards in otherworldly positions  
They can sprint up the keys  
They can dance slow  
They can dance fast  
They beat out time on walls, on tables, on the piano  
They twirl, jump, and they leap  
They conduct the imaginary orchestras before me

These hands are the hands of a dancer  
They lead me across the floor  
They make me into a bird, a fountain, an actual prima ballerina  
They let me move them and flutter them  
They can help me up  
They can help me down  
They can save me when I fall  
They tie my shoes  
They grasp the barre  
They help perform for the packed audience that is my room

These hands are the hands of an author  
They paint with letters on paper  
They create worlds far away  
They make stories that could happen in my backyard  
They fly across parchment  
They race across keys  
They can make anything happen  
They tell stories to the critics that are my friends

These hands are the hands of a musician  
These hands are the hands of a dancer  
These hands are the hands of an author  
These hands can do anything  
These hands are the hands of whatever I want to be

My name is **Aanisah Johnson**. I'm twelve years old, a first year in the ADVANCE program, and I'm about to go into 8<sup>th</sup> grade. I live in Houston, Texas. I love murder mysteries, fantasy, and saying random things out of nowhere. I also love Mario and Sonic games. Mac n' cheese and Netflix is my life. Where do smurfs come from if all of them are male? Just something for you to think about. Have a nice day.

## Five Meanings

Colors tickled the white and black world bringing new ways  
to describe

Life, a doctor to death and a science that can never be  
explained

Food, a remedy passed down to help when growling  
stomachs called out

Crazy, unexplainable ways of the universe

Gabby creatures looking over ideas

Distinguishing nothing because everything is collective

## Clouds

I dreamed of lifeless dancers  
I dreamed of crackling red  
I dreamed of soft orange  
I dreamed of traveling wind wings  
I dreamed of woven fabric  
I dreamed of buttons and zipper  
I dreamed in white

## Ode to Madness

You  
Why are you  
so cynical

Don't you know  
happiness really  
exists

Just because your  
bitter doesn't  
mean everybody else  
is

You  
Why are you  
so angry

Don't you dare  
take your demons  
out on someone

Their just a  
stranger. They don't  
know what you've  
been through

Your insecurities  
are not someone  
else's problem

You  
Why are you  
so hateful

When the world  
is full of love  
How could you be  
filled with hate

You say you love  
power, but nothing will  
ever be enough

Villains of the world  
You enrage me  
I hate you and yet,  
I pity you

## My Temporary

My name  
A word  
A title just for me

Others have it  
,but no one makes it  
mean what I do

My name  
A word, just  
that to someone  
else

But, to me it's  
a ball gown made  
of galaxies and  
stitched with stars

A dozen personalities  
it could be sewn  
to, yet it sewed itself  
on to me

My name  
Some say it marks  
possession, but I disagree  
Just something to give to  
someone who doesn't  
understand me yet

But soon will  
recognize each other  
without

## Weird Conversation

Two friends sat under a tree in a park with an open picnic basket between them. They were talking about the soccer game they watched earlier while they were eating.

“Hey, have you seen the video with that cricket in it”, the girl said out of the blue.

“No, what is it about”, the boy responded.

“It’s not really about anything”, she said.” There was a guy with a cricket in his ear.”

“Dude, I don’t want to hear that while I’m eating!”, he shouted.

“ear”, the girl continued, ignoring him. “and someone had to pull it out with tweezers while it was still alive”.

The boy ran away, his fingers plugged into his ears, his face a little green.

## Young Ancestor

My mother whose  
appearance is a mirror  
a reflection of what she  
has given me

My mother whose  
eyes are quick circles  
of liquid brown which can  
see all I feel and do

My mother whose  
countenance is a plethora  
of color, like light that  
shines through a clear plate  
of glass

My mother whose  
hair is a black midnight  
sky with the occasional  
starry twinkle

## Flashlight

Bright and free  
a sunbeam changing  
place with every minute  
a day

A black tunnel  
contents that don't  
come out of hiding unless  
necessary

Puzzle pieces  
Independent, able on  
their own, but better  
together, working of each  
other

These things are all  
a group, all a collective  
They are all one thing

## Starry Sheen

My hair  
black silk when  
sizzling heat comes  
out to play

My hair  
cotton clouds  
when damp conditions  
come to call

My hair  
which is like  
two sides of a  
coin

Hello! My name is **Chris Kang**; I am 16 years old as I am writing this autobiography. I was born, raised, and live in Tyler, Texas. The furthest I have been outside of my home town is to South Korea. I attend Robert E. Lee High School where, as of right now, I will be graduating as 3<sup>rd</sup> out of my original 712 classmates. I plan on attending an ivy league college, and if don't, I will go to college somewhere in Texas, like Baylor. I will be studying medicine in order to become a neurosurgeon. I have decided on this profession so that I can help cure and treat neurological diseases such as Alzheimer's.

## What I Want

I want to make all A's,  
I want to score perfectly on the SAT,  
I want to go to Harvard University,  
I want to become a neurosurgeon,  
I want to join the World Health Organization,  
I want to help third-world countries, and  
I want to cure diseases  
Because I want to help people.

## Ignorance

Devil's son, you linger like your father.  
Within the empty heads of your prey  
And choose, mandate everything and all.

For eternities, they who follow you have had mindless ancestors as teachers,  
And for eternities their descendants will have another mindless generation as teachers.  
They obey you, eternally, for you have taken their knowledge and sight, for you oppress them.

There are those who resist you, for some time, until THAT instant occurs,  
Then raindrop tears, ultimate vulnerability.  
You, you, viral infection decorated with the serpent insignia, remedy a lie.

False promises, you take their sight, knowledge; you take their light.  
“Damn you for playing with our lives; every follower you gain,  
Heaven's patience dies.”

## The Terrible Night

The once magnificent buildings are now half their original size. Debris from the city's diminution scatter the ripped streets. The only forms of light now are the search lights and the moon. The former attempting to discover the devilish weapon that could cause such destruction to our isolated country from the sky. When one of the search lights found an anomaly in the clear night sky, we first mistook it for a cloud. As the rest of the lights tried to cover even just half of the entire foreign object, it became evident that this was an airship: the zeppelin.

Of course it was the Germans' creation; they have been inventing mechanized weaponry even before the start of the war, but to think that they built a soaring monster that could pass our powerful navy was impossible.

## The Clock in Goodwill

A clock in the shape of a crescent moon has stopped working at 11:50. The tired gold moon is the frame of the clock with a gently smiling face in the middle of its arc. There are also stars along the moon along with a small metal wire that props up the clock. Where the crescent does not entirely circle the clock, there are dancing flares of the sun. The clock inscribed in the moon is quite ordinary: a white background with black roman numerals. The second hand is red while the minute and hour hand are both black. Very "minutely" in small letters there is the word "QUARTZ" right above the six. The position of the numerals rotates along the center.

## Time and Space

Time is a very difficult concept to comprehend. Without the very concept of time, there would be no movement nor action, simply just existence. Time's counterpart, space, is just as abstruse. Without space, there would be no literal things, objects, no existence. With just a single one of those concepts, we either have an active, empty universe or a filled, still universe.

This is one of the main reasons why I truly appreciate time and space. Through space, on a more minute level, we can exist. Through time, we in our existence can experience. Through both factors, we are both "alive and living."

## I Realized

I stopped him because I realized he was doing something atrocious, but by then, it was too late. He had killed the entire family, children first, and had a broad, ugly smile on his scarred face. He was sadistic, and that was an understatement. I knew I couldn't let him continue to live, so I raised my gun upon his head and shot myself.

## How Confusing yet Understandable

The clouds are fun like a bubbly bath.  
The river flows softly like a panda.  
I don't have a clue why the sky is grey.  
I have never heard of a peregrine.  
If I was Irish, I would do a jig.  
Crème Brulé is my favorite sweet.  
Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious  
The concept of infinity is hard.  
We all have a secret that no one knows.  
What is mine? I have gynophobia.

## Reverence to my Hands

These hands of mine are absolute,  
They do everything for both others and me.  
For others, they perform surgeries, shake hands, salute  
For myself, they feed me, play my instrument, do my homework.  
These hands are not parts but family.  
I love these hands; they define my emotions, personality, me.  
When you see them in the air they bellow, "I'm happy!"

## Time

Patience, impatience.  
What allows us to perform.  
It is our balance.

## Glasses

To some, it helps see.  
To others it may hinder.  
To the blind: never.

## Chris

The crickets recite.  
The warm, wet breeze calls my name.  
I am quite content.

## Alzheimer's Disease

Forget forever.  
Never again remember.  
Forget all loved ones.

## Window

A translucent view,  
Restricting one from moving.  
Through force, it shatters.

## Pyramid

Entombing the dead,  
Withstanding heat of the sun,  
Standing against time.

## Simple Life

The wasp is flying  
Through the lush fields of bonnets  
Living so simply

## Volcano

Like a whale spouting,  
Pent up anger, frustration.  
Spill: fiery rain

## Pond

Gleaming drops of rain,  
The rushing river water.  
Again, it is full.

## Saturday

We all praise your name.  
You bring joy to all of us.  
Whatever season.

## Where It Went Wrong

Where did it go wrong?  
The coldness of the spring breeze.  
I chose to forget.

## What I Will Have Done

Twenty years from now, I would be performing operations as a neurosurgeon, having completed college (4 years), med school (6 years), and residency (7 years). I would also try to be a member of “Doctors without Borders” to help developing nations. In addition to that, I want to be able to research cures for neurological diseases such as Alzheimer’s and ALS because neurological diseases, I believe, are the cruelest, especially to the loved ones of those afflicted.

I want to be able to help people 20 years from now.

## Where I Come From

I live in the city of Tyler, named after President John Tyler himself, in Texas. Our city is quite minute compared to others, however, we are growing and urbanizing rapidly. Although our city is quite insignificant, we are most recognized for our roses and azalea trails. Another aspect of our city, is a somewhat decent public school system. We have over 10 elementary schools, around 6 middle schools, but only 2 high schools. Personally, although there is a plethora of high school students with simply 2 high schools, I find that allows students to interact with more of others who live in Tyler, making the city a friendly one.

## Dream

I dream of a place where the edge of Heaven meets the skies of Earth.  
I dream of a time when the ocean falls from the sky.  
I dream of the swords embedded in the core of every apple.  
I dream of a book that the trees pass down for generations.  
I dream of a damaged clock refusing to stop counting time.

## Fear

Fear looks like a tear as it shows apprehension.  
Fear sounds like a cry as someone is in pain.  
Fear tastes like spoiled milk, we try to avoid it, but sometimes it comes by surprise.  
Fear feels like death as it's not the quality of life.  
Fear smells like whiskey.

## How is That Possible?

What again? How could something so expensive, so massive as that disappear in flames?  
How could a project with so much effort, expense, and time spent end in just a moment?  
How could the world's most intelligent individuals who have dedicated their entire lives to this mission die only a few seconds after their launch?  
This is the most Challenging puzzle of all.

Hello. My name is **Olivia Kim**. I am 14 years old. I just moved to the U.S. last year from Korea. I took Creative Writing for this first year at ADVANCE. I live in Tyler, Texas with my parents and my 10 years old brother. We attend The Brook Hill School. My hobbies are reading books, singing, and playing piano. My favorite animal is a turtle. I enjoy to eat any kinds of foods. My favorite sports are swimming, archery, and track. My favorite colors are green, blue, and white. I consider myself as a pious and introverted person. Creative Writing course has developed my character to be more extroverted. I like this class because it has helped me talk and share my poems more. Also, I think my writing skills have improved by taking this class. Most importantly, Creative Writing has helped my creativity to grow. This will definitely help with achieving my dream of being an architect.

## My Mom

My mom whose hair is a dark chocolate.  
My mom whose eyes are deep wells underground.  
My mom whose smile is a butterfly.  
My mom whose arms are pillows.  
My mom whose hands are bees.  
My mom whose legs are engines.  
My mom whose hug is a teddy bear.  
My mom whose thoughts are fresh air.  
My mom whose words are an owl.  
My mom whose heart is the Sun, a detergent, a precious diamond.  
My mom whose presence is a birthday gift.

## I Love you, Daddy

You lived to be comforted.  
You were comforted by your family all the time.  
But you prefer to be comforting.  
You are always there for me when I need you.  
You lived to be served to everyone.  
Your fire in the fireplace was always lit and warm.  
But you prefer to serve others.  
You polish my church shoes.

You lived with faithful people.  
You had friends to assure you when you were sad.  
But you prefer to be faithful.  
You are always there even when I don't seek you for help.  
You lived in the changes, the revolutionaries.  
You saw him get assassinated.  
But you prefer to make changes to the world.  
You brought me to this promised land.

You are caring.  
You are cared.  
You are serving.  
You are served.  
You give.  
You receive.  
You challenge.  
You achieve.

You are my teacher and advisor  
Even though you are not a teacher.  
You are my refuge and strength  
Even though you are not a God.  
You are my shield and sword  
Even though you are not a knight.  
You are my pillow and blanket  
Even though you are not a bed.

Even though you are not a teacher to gain information;  
Even though you are not a God to believe in and rely on;  
Even though you are not a knight to be protected and be safe;  
Even though you are not a bed to cry on and sleep on;

I love you.  
I love you just because of who you are.  
I love you and I am always proud of you  
as you always say to me.

## Lips

These lips are sweet lips.  
From these my words come out.  
From these my complements, my songs,  
From these my voice, my laughter come out.

These lips are cruel lips,  
From these my emotions I packed inside.  
I thought I burned them all.  
I thought I saw them, ashes.  
These lips are fire.  
I use this to shine people  
I use this to comfort people  
I use this, people fall asleep.

These lips are fire.  
I use this to burn people.  
I use this; it destroys their homes.  
I use this to make them despair.  
I thought I was with them, not against.  
At the end, I have to say, I'm sorry.  
These are fire, these are cruel, I don't know  
how to use them.

## Time

Tick Tick Tick  
Racing though every second.  
Tick Tick Tick  
Walking by every minute.  
Tick Tick Tick  
Stiff movement every hour.  
You better use it wisely;  
It never comes back.  
You better not forget;  
It's a shame to be late.  
You better be thankful;  
Today is the day that  
He who died wanted to live so desperately.  
Time is a racing horse.  
Time is a blink of an eye.  
Time is a tiny snail on a walk.  
Time is the heartbeat, often forgotten.  
Time is the gold that never waits

## We don't know yet...

Twenty years from now  
We will automatically write 7. 22. 36  
Twenty years from now  
We will be independent  
Twenty years from now  
We will be washing dishes, picking up our children  
Twenty years from now  
We will be running to our offices  
Twenty years from now  
How would we think? How would we be together with?  
Twenty years from now  
What would we teach our children to be like?  
Twenty years from now  
What would we think as we see our children grow up?  
Twenty years from now  
Then we would understand our parent's hearts  
Twenty years from now  
Then we would understand our parent's ways  
Twenty years from now  
How would we live? How would we die?  
Twenty years from now...  
Nobody knows what lays in front  
of us, eagerly we wait, standing on the clock of life.

## Statue

A statue?  
Blonde hair blue eyes.  
Balancing on one foot.  
Staring at the ground.  
“How are you?”  
“I’m doing good.”  
“You are not a statue after all.”

## Grandpa

Hot. Shade.  
Blue shirt and jeans with white hair.  
New phone, grandpa.  
Are you texting your son?  
Licking your tongue. One Two. Three.

## You are...

You are always smiling.  
Winking.  
In the sun, in the strong, sweaty sun.  
You are always smiling,  
Winking.  
In the fur, long, yellowish dirt colored fur covering your body.  
You are always smiling.  
Winking.

## Falls the Fall, Falling...

Rustling leaves under  
Walking down the street alone.  
Brown leaves are falling.

## Sally

"Sally, darling, come here please."

"I am not a darling. I don't even know who you are, lady!"

"Yes, you do. I am your mother, and you are my daughter."

"I said, don't talk to me about that. I am sure that we talked about this yesterday. Didn't we?"

"Yes we did. But you need to know this. I am your mother and you are my..."

"I said, STOP! I hear that every single day and I AM SICK OF IT!!! Stop saying that! Even though you think of our relationship that way, I am not your daughter. I don't even know where I am right now!"

"That's exactly what I want to say, Sally."

"I said, Be quiet!"

I had nothing to say anymore. I have tried my best of best today to persuade my daughter who suddenly lost all of her memory except her name and her age. I just stared at my daughter, 7 years old with brown hair and green eyes of mine. She was my daughter and I was her mother no matter what.

"Don't you dare stare at me like that. Or I'll scream!"

I just kept staring and she screamed. I stood up and walked into my room to get dressed. I threw my body onto my bed. I covered my face.

"My Sally. My precious daughter..." I sobbed.

About 10 minutes later, I found myself driving. Sally was sleeping on the backside of the car. My parked my car at the nearest parking lot and opened the back seat.

"We are here, Sally."

"Hmm? Where are we?" Sally responded, still drowsy.

"The farmer's market, darling."

"We came here yesterday, too. Are we going to meet new people today? Oh, if you're going to make this stupid thing a routine, you might want to stop today because I am not going to follow along anymore."

"Then, I'll have to drag you here. You have to come and this is mandatory. No excuses. Now get down and let's go."

Sally came out of the car and followed me reluctantly. I held her hand and started to look around the place we visited yesterday. I am going to bring Sally here every day, so that she can remember that this was her favorite place to come. Before she lost her memories. Before she was in the roller coaster. Before she said, "Good bye, mama!" Before she fell off the coaster and banged her head on the tree. Before, before... when Sally was still my daughter and when I was still her mother. When we were still together as a family.

My name is **Alyssa Macaluso**. I am fifteen years old and a third year in the ADVANCE program. I am going into 10<sup>th</sup> grade at Episcopal High School in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. I am in many humanities-related clubs, including the school's literary magazine, slam poetry, and Model United Nations (MUN). I also play basketball and softball. I want to be either a diplomat, medical examiner, or a lawyer when I grow up. I prefer reading to writing, and I will take almost anything over math. I love strawberries and chocolate, especially when they are combined. I also have a twelve-year-old sister and a very fickle cat that usually only likes me.

## Beginnings

She sat in the park, listening to the sound of nature, while he walked in the park, juggling his thoughts. This was the day that it all began.

She had wanted a break from the office—a plain, boring cubicle where she answered customers’ calls that were full of questions about their taxes—and the park down the road was as good a place as any. She pondered her as it was two months ago: attending classes, writing papers, taking midterms. And, of course, the parties. But then she had graduated, found a job, and moved to the sunny Columbus, Ohio. Sighing, she glanced at her watch, she sighed, gathered up her purse, and started the trek back to her plain, plain office.

Walking in the park was not in his normal routine. It usually consisted of waking up, eating breakfast, getting to level twelve on Halo, and obsessively checking his phone for news on the applications he sent out. He had graduated from college with a degree in tech consulting and big dreams to work for a large company like Apple or Google, but he hadn’t heard anything back from them yet. He had also applied to several smaller companies, and one of them had sent back a request for an interview. His interview had gone so well that they offered him the job on the spot, but he had asked them to wait. He wanted to give the bigger companies more time to respond, but this was a good opportunity. So, he was taking a walk to sort out the pros and cons of taking the job.

Suddenly, he felt icy cold water spread up his legs and to his chest. Totally bewildered, he looked around, trying to figure out where he was. He laughed at himself when he realized that he had walked over the edge of one of the tiny bridges crisscrossing the various small ponds in the park.

A girl appeared on top of the bridge. “I heard a splash. Are you all right?” she asked, looking both amused and a little worried.

“Yeah,” the boy said. “Just a little wet.” *Nice going*, he reprimanded himself silently. *Of course I’m wet. I fell in the pond.*

“Well, you know, these bridges without railings are really quite a danger hazard. I’m sure people fall off of them all of the time.” The girl offered her hand to pull him up. “My name’s Sarah,” she continued, her voice tinged with a foreign accent of some sort.

The boy was wringing out his shirt and shorts the best he could. He didn’t realize that she was waiting for a response at first, and when he did, his face took on the coloring of a tomato. He desperately tried to recall what she said last. “Names! Right, sorry, I’m James.” She just laughed.

“Well, I had better go. I have to get back to work. Do you need anything? Do you need to call anyone?” Sarah looked torn, like she wanted to stay but knew she shouldn’t. At that, James realized that his phone had been in his pocket. His phone! He patted his pockets, trying to find the phone, while imagining all of the bad scenarios that could happen. What if Apple called while his phone was broken? He had no landline and his computer was broken, so there was basically no other way to reach him, unless they sent snail mail, but why would they do that? They’re a tech company. He finally located his phone and yanked it out of the pocket alongside a shower of coins. He fumbled with the buttons until the loading screen appeared. He sighed in relief. Sarah was still looking at him, and he realized for the second time that he hadn’t answered her. *Gosh, she must think I’m spacey or something*, he groaned inwardly.

“Oh, I’m good. Thanks though,” he answered awkwardly.

They turned in opposite directions to go back to their respective places: Sarah to her cubical, James to his couch. Though they were parting now, they knew they would meet again soon.

## My Name

So I don't really know where my parents got my first name. My dad wanted to name me "Aimee," spelled the weird way, A-i-m with two e's. he claimed that was the name of a singer he liked, whom I have heard before, but I'm going to take a shot in the dark and say that that was probably the name of an old girlfriend, too. My mom thankfully shot it down (and I'm glad she did—I didn't like how it was spelled or my almost-namesake's music).

The other potential candidate for my name was "Isabelle," which my parents both agreed on, but my dad's brother was going to have a kid soon, too, and they wanted to name their child "Isabelle." I think my parents should have named me that and had them find a new name, but my parents were nice and decided to find a new name. it turns out that the baby was a boy, but since I was already a couple months old and named when they realized that, my parents didn't bother changing my name.

I would have preferred "Isabelle" to "Alyssa," though. "Isabelle" has many nicknames while "Alyssa" has close to none. Like, you could have "Iz" or "Izzy" or "Belle" or "Bella" with "Isabelle;" with "Alyssa," you can have "Al," which is a little too tomboy-ish for me (I grew out of that phase when I was eight), "Lyssa," or "Lyss," which is just basically taking off the first and last letters of "Alyssa."

Still, my parents managed to find nicknames for me that had absolutely no connection to my name. For example, they called me "Ed" because I was bald or very close to bald (I had very fair and wispy hair) when I was little (like three or four) and I got hand-me-down clothes from my older male cousin (not the one who stole my name but he was of the same nuclear family), which my parents would dress me in before taking me out in public. When people would coo, "Oh, that's such a cute baby! What's his name?" They didn't bother to correct them and went with "Ed." My other nickname was a courtesy of my sister; when she was little, she apparently couldn't say "Alyssa" or any other version of that, so she called me "Lee." My parents thought it was adorable, which is why it is still practiced today, but I personally think that she was just being self-centered and wanted to say her name all of the time (her name's Natalie, so you can see where the "Lee" part comes from). Though my parents say that my theory's not true, I don't see how you can get "Lee" out of "Alyssa."

"Alyssa" is also really awkward in that it's not common enough to find in on a mug or keychain in a gift shop but it's not rare enough to be cool or unique.

For my middle name (Marie), my parents picked one of the three most common middle names of the time (Marie, Elizabeth, or Anne) and called it good. My last name (Macaluso) is from my dad's side of the family. Though it's said just like it's spelled, people mispronounce it all of the time. I've heard "Mac-Aluso" or "Ma-cal-so." It's really quite annoying.

## As a Child...

I dreamed dreams of many things.

I dreamed of love, that first blossom in the chest that signals something special, the swoop and soar of both heart and stomach, the love that grows deeper each day.

I dreamed of flying, gliding like a fish in water, speeding like an ad on the back of an airplane, the wind fresh on my face.

I dreamed of home, the nest a baby bird can always return to, the horizon where the sun finally into rest, a place I'd always be welcome.

I dreamed of all the pets I'd have, scattered and mixed like a handful of jellybeans you would dump into your bag, each as different as the cells in your body.

I dreamed of a time when there would be no homework, no notes, my caged hands free of the pen to sculpt, create, play.

I dreamed of wishes being answered, success beyond measures, like all of the stars in the sky were granting me my deepest desires.

I dreamed of complete understanding, like my brain was a book with all of the answers to life.

I dreamed of making a difference, leading a revolution, sparking a tidal wave of rebellions against the injustices in the world.

I dreamed, but little did I know the only I could do all of these things was in my dreams.

## Wanderer

I wandered through the woods,

Following a path only I could see.

With no rhyme or reason the trail meandered,

First to the left, then to the right.

As I traveled, I grew to love the mystery of not knowing what's next;

I grew to love the chirps of birds and crackle of leaves, mixing together to form a harmony;

And best of all, I grew to love myself.

I was safe, and happy, and confident.

And my only fear was the end.

I never settled down in one place,

Just kept exploring, wandering, discovering.

I discovered a waterfall in the moonlight

A doe giving birth, and the young deer wobbling on twig-like legs.

I experienced all of these things, and more, as I wandered through the woods.

I wandered through the woods,

Dancing to a tune only I could hear

But following the footsteps of many.

As I walked, it grew darker, and I grew weary.

As I tired, I began to no longer fear the end.

## I Didn't Know I Loved

I didn't know I loved writing.

The feel of stiff paper bending and crinkling in the hast of fresh ideas.

The smell of ink, pungent yet reassuring, a promise of immortality for your ideas.

The organized chaos of verbs and nouns linking together to form thoughts.

I didn't know I loved wind

The whistling in my ears as it swirls around me,

The symphony it conducts using only its strength and trees.

I didn't know I loved sand

The cool, silky particles sliding between my toes,

The hundreds of thousands of crystals that reflect the light of the blinding sun,

The malleability of the fine substance into whatever I desire.

I didn't know I loved mountains

The imposing heights and widths of carved and sculpted rock,

The snow on the peaks in the winter and the brilliantly blue lakes at the bases in the summer,

The evergreens that cover the slope year-round.

I didn't know I loved root beer milk

The creamy dairy mixing with bubbly soda,

The combination of two odd drinks into a single magnificent one,

The ability to fit into breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snack time.

I didn't know I loved the stars

Diamonds that even the poorest man could admire,

Fairy godmothers that grant you wishes,

Lanterns that light up the sky when the sun goes to sleep.

I didn't know I loved books

The smell of fresh, stiff paper,

The plot that twists and turns, full of surprises,

The sense of camaraderie as I grow and love and hurt with the characters.

## Love Story

(based on the song “Love Story” by Taylor Swift)

Dear Diary:

Saturday Night, April 23

I was at the senior dance, jiving with my friends like we do at every dance, when I saw him. He must have been new at school because I had not seen him before this day, but when I locked eyes with him—they were the deepest green—it was like I had known him all of my life. I tried to get closer to him at every chance I got but was blocked. Finally, towards the end of the dance, I made my way over to him. Just as I reached him, a slow song started to play. And can you guess what happened next? He asked me to dance. I have a really good feeling about him, even though the last boy I had a crush on turned out to have been an identity thief.

Dear Diary:

Saturday, April 30

Today I had my first date with Hunter—the boy from the dance. We just drove out to the city limits and talked but it was the best date I’ve ever been on. I have bad news, though: his father is the new dentist in town that Father is all troubled about. Father is worried that he will steal all of our clients. I will talk to him in the morning. I mean, we are well-off enough that we could lose a few clients and still stay where we’re at. Hunter and I will just have to keep our relationship a secret.

Dear Diary:

Early Afternoon on Tuesday, May 13

I think I’m in love! Hunter and I have been on so many dates I’ve lost track (just kidding—we’ve been on twelve). I have another one tonight and I think we are going to the beach. I really can’t wait!

Dear Diary:

Evening of Tuesday, May 13

I didn’t know everything could go so terribly wrong in one night. We had a perfect date—I was right! We did go to the beach—but my dad must have seen us as we were driving back because he confronted us when I got home. We normally planned dates on days when Father has a meeting or a dinner. So when we pulled up in the driveway, and I didn’t see his car in the driveway, I thought it was safe for Hunter to at least walk me to the door. It turns out that the car was actually parked in the garage. The door sprang open when we reached it and my dad told us to come inside. The fight that followed was too ugly for me to recount. I mean, I understand that he was didn’t want me to date the son of the competition but that didn’t matter when faced with true love.

I was sobbing on the staircase as my father explained his plan for what was to happen to us: Hunter would leave the town with an early admission to MIT—which was Hunter’s first choice of college. Father pulled some strings and got him in. I begged him to not go, but I knew that it was no use. If he stayed then I would have to go, and Father didn’t want that. He had already lost mother and he did not want to lose me, too. But it’s too late for that—he lost me when he sent Hunter away.

I fled to my room after Hunter left and I’m not leaving.

Dear Diary:

Graduation Day, May 20

The remainder of the year has been a blur. Everything’s gray without Hunter. Even graduation is dull. What’s worse still is that I can see where Hunter should have been standing from my viewpoint. Sadness washes over me as I try to smile pretty for the photos I suppose I’ll want later.

I didn't get into my first choice college—I suppose that was Father's doing again, as he was very adamant that I should go to the community college. So I start there in the fall. While Hunter is out there, seeing, experiencing, living, I'm still stuck in this town.

Dear Diary:

Six Months Later

I've been taking classes at the community college, but nothing really interests me anymore. Father has tried to set me up with the sons of other well-known figures in town, but none of them interest me. I've humored him and gone on a few dates, but nothing can conjure up the feeling of excitement that Hunter's dates always procured.

I still think about him constantly. It's been a year and thirteen days since I last saw him. Even though I know it's hopeless, I still wish he would come back and rescue me from this terrible, tiny town.

Dear Diary:

Six Months, 13 Days Later

You won't believe what happened today! I was walking home from the grocery store when this car slammed on its brakes right beside me. I kept walking, of course. But then the driver's door opened and I heard *his* voice—Hunter's voice. I didn't believe it at first, but as the rest of him emerged, I dropped the bags and ran to him. And you won't believe what else: he proposed to me! Right then and there. Just pulled out a beautifully simple silver ring and asked me. I said yes.

He promised me that we could elope and begged me to come with him. I wanted to more than anything, but my father popped into my head. I mean, what would he say? Would he be okay without me? Though I think he's done all of these horrible things to me, can I really leave him? My heart wants to leave, yearns to leave, but my mind worries. I can't say yes to this question, but I don't tell him no either.

Oh Diary, do I stay or do I go?

## What's on My Mind?

Honestly, the only thing that's on my mind is sleep. I just want to crawl back to my soft, warm bed and sink back into my dreams. But, since today's character day, I'll impersonate my character (a Ravenclaw student at Hogwarts) instead.

*Dear Diary,*

*The new term is going so badly I can't even put it into words. We've had to get new teachers for the transfiguration and defense against the dark arts classes after the ones that were teaching the classes died in the big battle between Harry Potter and He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. Neither of them know how to teach, I mean, I could probably teach those classes better than they are and I don't even know the material. Also, the defense against the dark arts teacher can't even control his class; it's anarchy in there! People are cursing each other and at least one person a day gets sent to the hospital wing.*

*Professor McGonagall is struggling to keep everything under control, but it's falling to pieces. I've offered my services time and time again—I'm really a great organizer—but she says that students need to focus on their studies and not on running the school. How are we supposed to "focus on our studies" when the running-the-school part is failing??*

*Worst of all, Ravenclaw is second to Slytherin for the Quidditch Cup because Malfoy cheated and knocked our seeker off his broom! Then their keeper deflected our penalty shot. And Gryffindor is taking the lead for the House Cup because Hermione Granger decided to show up again and redo her final year—who does that?*

*Even though midterms are four months away, I've already started studying. This year I take my OWLs, and I have to get as many as I can if I want to be the headmaster of Hogwarts someday. Anyway, I better get back to studying. I've got to teach myself how to turn a chair into a doe.*

## What is Saturday?

Friday is the day of parties,  
Celebrations of the release from school's hold,  
The day of ice cream and late night curfews,  
The day of freedom.

Sunday is the day of rest and Our Father's,  
The day of recovery and preparation,  
Both from last week and for the upcoming one.

But what is Saturday?  
It's not the day of ultimate parties, though some do occur,  
Or the day of R&R, though I do sleep in.  
But it can't be both and it can't be neither,  
So what is Saturday?

## I'm Not Narcissistic

I've always loved my blue, blue eyes.

They change slightly to reflect the colors around me,  
Sometimes as pale as the sky,  
Other times as dark as the depths of the ocean,  
But always with flecks of something lighter,  
Like amber or green, around the iris.

They change slightly to reflect the emotions I'm feeling inside,  
The blue of a chicken's egg for happiness, excitement, and contentment,  
But the blue of the deep ocean for sadness, anger, and fear.

Though my vision is far from perfect,  
I don't need contacts or glasses (yet).

These eyes have seen more than my brain processes.  
They have gobbled up words,  
Forming a story that plays out behind my lids,  
In my mind's eye,  
And are always eager for more.

My eyes allow me to see the beauty in the world,  
The light, veiny leaves illuminated by the bright, searing sun;  
The deep mountain lakes or the crystal white snow  
Capping the gray-green mountains.  
My favorite view, however, is the mirror in my bathroom,  
Where I can stare into my blue, blue eyes.

## Where It Went Wrong

I don't know where I went wrong. One minute, everything was fine; the next, cops were storming into the building, closing off our exits. Most of us made it out—all but me, I think—so the flash drive is supposedly safe, which means that the ransom was paid and Clara rescued. I would have liked to oversee all of that, but I trust my right-hand man, or rather woman, Jess, to finish the job. She knows how important my sister is to me.

The part I can't figure out, though, is where it all went wrong. We cut the alarms, and the backup alarms, and the backup, backup alarms, so that couldn't have been where it went wrong. I try to think some more; we had made sure the building was evacuated—after pulling the fire alarm, we basically x-rayed the building for signs of life, and there were none. We stayed away from the window, took the stairs, scrambled the feed on the cameras, and were done in half the time we allotted ourselves. I went over the plan again in my head, but everything was sound, and it had all worked beautifully. At least, up until the cops came. There was one option, but I avoided even going there. I needed to believe my team was good, that I could trust them, or else I don't know what I would do.

The door to my cell rattled open, and I was startled out of my thoughts. An important-looking man stood there, flanked by four heavily armed guards. I was amused that they thought I was some high-level mastermind who needed armed guards. I was only sixteen. “Ma’am, we need you to come with us,” the important-looking one said. I was not sorry to leave the dreary, cold cell, with the metal bars, harsh fluorescent lights, and cold that seeped into your bones and settled there.

They brought me to a small, windowless room. A mirror (which I'm guessing was two-way) lines the wall parallel to the table with three chairs, one on one side and two on the other. Cameras are perched in all four corners of the room, leaving now angle unsupervised. They leave me there, and my mind wanders back to where it all went wrong. The possibility of someone on my team betraying me hurts my heart. I don't want to consider it, but almost against my will, my mind begins to sort through the options. The twins, Jake and Luke, I immediately discard. I took them in when they were younger and basically raised them; we were family. Jess, my closest confidant, wouldn't betray me either. We've been best friends since birth, gone through horrors one could only imagine together. That left Will. He was the newest member of the team; he had joined about six months ago. He appeared out of nowhere and asked if he could join. I wasn't going to let him, but he fit in well and he had great computer skills. Plus, he had great looks, all chestnut hair and deep blue eyes. I started to discard him too and start over, but something was nagging me, a long-ago problem that I had forgotten. I had gained access to the FBI database years ago, and constantly checked for files on us. We were all marked deceased—faked deaths, of course—but I wanted to make sure that they didn't realize we were still alive. When I checked for files on Will, though, I didn't find any. Not even a mention. It was like he didn't even exist. I knew he had good computer skills, but I didn't know he was *that* good. Now, I entertained the possibility that he hadn't done that, that the FBI had themselves. Or some other party. A cold, heavy feeling settled in the pit of my stomach.

Just then, the door opened. Two men walked in, one of them the important-looking one from before and the other was—“Will?” I gasp. Even though I had been considering him, I hadn't actually come around to suspecting him. I felt my stomach drop even more.

“Hello, Viv,” he replied. “Miss me?”

## Loneliness

Loneliness feels like wind, pushing against you, but when you turn around, there's nothing there.  
Loneliness smells like empty air—there are no familiar scents to breathe in.  
Loneliness looks like fog, obscuring all familiar objects from sight.  
Loneliness sounds like a lone bird's call echoing in a silent night.  
Loneliness tastes like lime juice with nothing to soften the bitterness.

## Imagination

Imagination feels like the yawning cavern between where your stomach should be and where it actually is on a roller coaster, empty and ready to be filled with either flesh or words.  
Imagination sounds like silence, ready to be filled with a variety of noises.  
Imagination looks like clouds, ready to be molded into any shape, if only temporarily.  
Imagination tastes like water—rich and full of its own unique flavor and used in almost everything.  
Imagination smells like candy; salty, sweet, or sour, but always a treat.

## Loss of Self

I glance out of the window, thinking about loss.  
Like, what happens in the aftermath of death?  
Does heartbreak connect us or drive us apart?  
My bland smile hides the questions swirling in my brain,  
My face is blank so they don't see my inquiries.  
It has to be this way—they judge too easily.  
Insecurities line the pathways of my brain,  
Whispering of my imperfections, my faults.  
They see different as bad, but I see it as a gift.  
That's why I can't let them know the real me.

## The Old Man

A young girl of about seven or eight approaches the man in the booth at the end of the row of other booths at the farmer's market. He's selling vegetables, like many other booths, but he has less than the other sellers and is older, around seventy; he's probably younger than that, but his weathered face, spider webbed with veins, adds years.

"Can I have a cucumber, please?" the girl asks, handing over one of the worn, wooden tokens.

The man's thin lips, turned down at the corners, now lift up into a smile. He replies, "Yes, you may," and holds out a basket for her to choose from. His voice is slightly raspy now, but it holds the traces of smooth tones. He also has a southern accent, not too strong, but noticeable by the long "a" sounds and the short "ou" ones.

After the girl leaves, he sits back in his plastic folding chair to enjoy the slight relief the shade provides from the blinding sun.

A younger couple in their late twenties stops by the booth next, looking for some large tomatoes. "We're going to have a fancy dinner!" the woman exclaims. "My parents are comin' over, and Billy here"—she gestured to the man—"he hasn't met my parents yet, so it's a real important affair." Billy just nods in agreement; he doesn't look as enthusiastic as his partner.

The old man pauses, trying to recollect a story of his own. "I remember when I had to meet my wife's parents. It was terrible! I overcooked the roast and Louise—that's my wife—she spilled wine all over the brand new white tablecloth. We had bought it just for that occasion." He cracks a smile, reminiscing, and his eyes smile, too. They are a light blue, and though slightly misty, they shine with an old intelligence some might call wisdom. Billy laughs at this, but looks more nervous than before.

The woman fans herself. "My, it's mighty hot out here," she says, and then addresses the old man. "Dear me, how are you surviving out here? Especially in long sleeves? I'm in a tank top and I'm hot!"

The man is indeed wearing a long-sleeved, blue checkered shirt and blue jeans. He isn't wearing a hat, though, and sparse, white hairs dot his head. "Well, I'm a little hot, but it's manageable," the old man replies. "My mama always taught me to look nice in public, and I've stood by the advice ever since. It's done me well."

"Yes, that's very wise," says the woman, nodding her head in agreement. She hands over the basket of tomatoes she wants. Money exchanges hands, and the couple leaves.

The old man once again resumes his place in his folding chair in the back of the market to relax and people watch.

## Twenty Years from Now...

Twenty years from now, I'll be dead. I have a rare neurological disease and the doctors don't think I'll live long, maybe five or six years after this entry. My family will miss me and I'll feel bad that my parents will outlive their child, which should never happen. I probably won't have children, both because I'm a little young and because it would be cruel to leave them motherless. At the very least, I want to experience love, but if not that, then I want to see the world.

My name is **Madeline O'Connor**. I live in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. I am fourteen years old and am going into the ninth grade. This is my first year attending the Advance program and I decided to take creative writing because I have always enjoyed writing. These are a few of my writings from this class. I hope you enjoy.

## I Didn't Know I Loved...

I didn't know I loved shells,  
flashes of color all over the ocean.  
I didn't know I loved snow,  
a white blanket as far as the eye can see.  
I didn't know I loved stars,  
dancing across the night sky.  
I didn't know I loved clouds,  
differently shaped with every drive.  
I didn't know I loved sand,  
reflecting the moonlight on to my legs.  
I didn't know I loved storms,  
the darkness they bring is ever so calming.  
I didn't know I loved rainbows,  
making any day a better day.  
I didn't know I loved flowers,  
adding splashes of color wherever you go.  
I didn't know I loved trees,  
giving us life without ever failing.  
I didn't know I loved the outdoors,  
giving me a new adventure each and every day.

## Homage to My Mind

My mind is a fun place,  
there's always somewhere  
new to explore. My  
mind is filled with  
memories, like movies  
in my head. My mind  
has many scenarios that  
stayed stored away for  
when I'm bored.

My mind allows me  
To leave reality behind,  
Which often gets me in  
Trouble. My mind has  
Always been my  
Favorite place to go

## A Collection of Bad Haikus

The leaves are changing  
They crunch in my phalanges  
The sound hurts my ears

The water is warm  
Waves are always crashing down  
Salt water is weird

Snowflakes start to fall  
In the North it's really cold  
Louisiana

## Leaf

As its life begins,  
It is nothing but a speck  
On a blank canvas  
Time moves on and  
Some stay small  
But some grow large  
It will surely take a stumble  
But the stumble begins the journey  
Soon it shall travel  
Through the air  
Certainly it will see  
All the sights to see.  
Unfortunately, the story goes on  
And it will get stepped upon and  
Crushed like a bug  
Ending its seemingly perfect life.

## The Romantic and the Killer

*Katherine*

I gripped the rim of the porcelain sink. “One last time,” I whisper, “One last time.” I check to be sure the gun in my purse is completely concealed and return to the party. I scan the room looking for my final victim. After a few minutes of searching, I spot him. The boy who would help me end my career as a serial killer. This boy would be dead by the end of next week.

The boy looks up and we make eye contact. He smiles and I smile back as I begin to walk toward him. I can feel my anticipation growing as I approach my victim.

“Katherine!” I turn to see who shouted my name. My best friend, Allie, was walking toward me. I stop and give her an irritated look.

“Hey, where have you been?” I ask only half joking. She’s the one who dragged me out to this party in the first place.

“Just hanging out! What have you been doing? You look bored,” she says. She obviously can’t tell that she just interrupted me. I can smell alcohol on her breath.

“I’m not bored, I’m just people watching,” I say. Allie obviously doesn’t know that I’ve been searching for a victim, but she also doesn’t know that I’ve been a serial killer since I was fifteen.

“Whatever,” she says, “I’m going to join the party, and so should you.” She waves and walks away.

I begin walking toward the boy again. He isn’t looking at me anymore; he’s returned to his phone. He’s leaning against the counter top, so I stand in front of him. He looks up and smiles.

“Well, hello there,” he says, “I’m Elliot.” He extends his hand out for me to shake.

“I’m Katherine,” I say shaking his hand.

His voice is deeper than I had expected it to be. He looks to be about my age-nineteen. Elliot has jet-black hair and startling blue eyes. His skin is pale, but not too pale, and he has a few freckles around his nose.

“So, what are you doing here, Katherine?” he asks. “You don’t seem like the type of person who would hang out with this crowd.”

I smile and say, “How do you know what kind of person I am?”

“Well, considering you’ve only talked to one person all night not including me, I think it’s safe to say that you don’t usually come to these things.”

I laugh a little at his response and throw my hands up in mock surrender. “You got me. I don’t usually come to parties. My best friend made me come because she wants me to meet new people on campus.” I say. “What about you? You’ve been on your phone as far as I can tell.”

“I don’t know anybody here except for the host, but he’s a bit preoccupied with all the other guests, and I’m really introverted, so I just stay over here.”

“That’s cool,” I say, “I’m introverted, too.” I’m not exactly an introvert, but if that will allow me to bond with Elliot, then that’s what I’ll say. He smiles and we keep talking about random things. After about a half hour, he asks if I want to go somewhere quieter so he can hear me. I smile and say, “Sure.” I quickly text Allie and tell her I’m leaving and that I have a ride back to the dorms.

“So, where do you want to go?” Elliot asks as we sit in the car.

“Let’s go eat,” I say.

“Okay, where do you want to go?”

“McDonald’s.” He starts laughing as I say this. “What?” I ask in confusion.

“Nothing, I was just expecting you to say something more decent than McDonald’s, but I like McDonald’s. Let’s go to McDonald’s,” he says.

“What’s more decent than McDonald’s?” I say jokingly. He laughs and starts the car. I turn up the radio as “Hello” starts playing, but Elliot quickly changes the station. “You don’t like Adele?!” I ask accusingly.

“Oh my gosh, no. That’s not my style,” he says. Elliot grabs a CD case from the center console and takes the first one out. “*This* is my style,” Elliot says as he puts the disc in. I bust out laughing. Elliot listens to classical music.

“You’re joking! There’s no way that you listen to classical music!” I say

“Oh, but its true!” He says laughing. We stay quiet as the time continues to pass. I can already see this boy beginning to trust me as all the others prior to him have. I guess people just find me to be a trusting person, but there’s something different about this boy.

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I was fifteen when I committed my first murder. I was walking home from a friend’s house late one night. I had a pocket knife that my dad had given me in my front pocket just in case I needed it. Even if I did need to use it, my intention never would have been to kill someone.

I was about a block away from my house, but we lived in an old neighborhood with no camera’s or anything of the sort, so there were about abductions from my neighborhood all the time. My mom usually picked me up from friends’ houses at night, but I had gotten in an argument with a girl and I didn’t want to wait for my mom. I texted her and told her I was going home, but she didn’t answer.

As I was walking, someone grabbed me from around the waist. I stayed completely still, not wanting the person to hurt me. “If you scream, I’ll shoot you,” he said. I nodded my head to show I understood. “Good. Now we’re going to take a walk a few blocks back and you’re going to come with me, got it?” I nodded. My heart felt like it was beating out of my chest. I had never been so scared in my life.

He moved one of his hands to my wrist, but the other one was still around my waist. That’s when I realized that if this person had a gun, it was not in his hands, meaning he couldn’t

shoot me immediately if I tried to move. I put my hand in my pocket and grabbed the knife, keeping it concealed. “Okay, let’s go,” I said, my voice shaking.

He started to turn around, his hands still on me, and I whipped out the knife and stabbed the hand around my waist. He immediately let go and let out a scream. I should’ve ran; that had been my plan. I just wanted him to let go of me, but something held me back. I felt an urge to do more damage than I had already done. I turned to face him, but he was bending over, gripping his hand in pain. I walked up to him and drove my tiny little pocket knife into the side of his neck. He fell to the ground. I yanked the knife out of his neck and stabbed him once more. As I watched the life drain from that boy’s eyes, I felt an odd satisfaction that I wanted to feel again.

I burned the boy’s body in an alley and two days later I saw a missing person report on the local news. They looked for that boy for a long time. I was the only one who knew what had truly happened to him.

\*\*\*\*\*

“Favorite color?” Elliot asked. He had been asking me questions since we sat down each eating a double cheeseburger.

“Lilac. You?”

“Orange. Favorite food?”

“Double cheeseburgers, obviously,” I say.

He laughs and says, “Mine too.” We continue to question each other like this for quite some time. He’s just feeding me information, information that could be very useful when the time of his death comes along.

We eventually throw away our trash and return to his car, where he plays his classical music again. I don’t know why, but I can’t help but laugh at the very idea of someone like Elliot listening to classical music. He just strikes me as someone who would listen to rock or some other genre besides classical. He looks over at me and smirks before turning the volume up.

When we pull in to the parking lot of my dorm, he turns off the car and looks over at me. “I had fun tonight,” he says.

“Me too,” I say. As I say this, I realize that I’m not lying. Killing Elliot is going to be harder than I thought.

### *Elliot*

There’s something different about Katherine. I’ve never met anyone like her. She’s outgoing, but she’s also quiet. She’s the only thing that filled my head for the days that followed our McDonald’s date. We text a few times about random things, but not too much. I feel like I like her more than she likes me. I keep thinking I should ask her to hang out, but I don’t want to be rejected.

Three days after the party, she solves my problem by calling me. I answer a little too quickly, "Hello?"

"Hey, Elliot. Do you have plans tonight?" Katherine says.

"No, why?"

"Do you want to go see a movie tonight?"

I feel like a little kid trying to hold back my excitement as I respond, "Sure, what are we seeing?"

"*The Conjuring*. See you at seven!" With that, she hangs up.

I go to the computer and look up *The Conjuring*. I watch the trailer and instantly regret saying yes. I hate scary movies. I don't want to look like a wimp by calling her back and telling her that I no longer want to go. I guess I'll just suck it up. At least I'll get to be with Katherine.

### *Katherine*

I had to keep to myself for a few days. I didn't want to egg him on if I wasn't going to kill him. There's something different about Elliot. He's not like the others. There's some other emotion going through me, I just don't know what it is. I don't like it.

After a long argument with myself, I decide to call him. I don't have to kill him tonight, I can just hang out with him and see if this odd emotion disperses. He agrees to go see a movie with me.

I should just kill him. It'll make my life easier. I won't have to sit around and wonder if I'm going soft, he'll just be dead. I don't like how one person is able to change the way I view murder just by spending time with me. That's crazy. Who doesn't love a good murder? It's like all the power is in your hands as you watch that person die. It's exhilarating.

I eventually decide to get ready for our rendezvous at the movie theater. I brush my long red hair and decide to leave it down. I put on a jeans and an Edgar Allen Poe t-shirt. I look at myself one last time in the mirror before grabbing my keys and heading out the door.

As I begin my drive to the theater, I start to argue with myself once more about whether or not I should kill Elliot. It would be nice to get it over with, but it would also be nice to figure out what this new emotion is, too. I guess I'll decide when the time comes.

When I pull into the parking lot, I see Elliot getting out of his car, so I park in the space next to him.

"Hey, how are you?" he says as I get out of my car. "You should've let me pick you up."

"Don't worry about it, I prefer to drive anyway." I purposefully didn't let him pick me up so I would have more time to decide his fate.

"Yes, but that's not how dates are supposed to work," he says smiling. Is this a date? I thought we were just friends. I've never been on a date before. That's not really something that a nineteen-year-old goes around telling people, though. I guess making it a date would indeed allow me to gain his trust quicker.

We began to walk toward the ticket booth. He buys both of our tickets. He seems nervous, though I can't imagine why. We proceed to the concession stand and Elliot buys a large popcorn and two drinks.

Elliot says he likes to sit in the back of the theater, so we make our way up the steps to the back row. He keeps trying to make small talk by commenting on the previews, but he's not doing a very good job. I keep smiling and laughing a little so he doesn't feel bad. The movie starts and he finally shuts up.

I find it to be a rather intriguing movie. It's about this couple that moves into a new house that's haunted by spirits. I don't find it scary, but Elliot keeps jumping. I laugh every time he does, which is followed by a glare from him. It's an amusing cycle we're going through.

Half way through the movie, Elliot puts his arm around my shoulders. I don't understand the point. Why is he putting his arm around me? Is this supposed to be some strange sort of affection? I mean, he does have an arm rest if his arm is just that tired. He looks over and smiles at me, and I smile back, not wanting to make it obvious that I had no idea why his arm was around me. I expect him to move his arm eventually, but he never does.

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I've figured out what my odd emotion is. I have feelings for Elliot. The feelings that are supposed to mean something. I can't do it. I can't kill him. If I do, I'll never know what could've been.

What if he finds out that I've killed people? I'm pretty sure most people have a problem with that. I'll have to tell him! I can just tell him everything. I'll tell him that I originally wanted to kill him so that I could stop killing people. If I tell him the truth, he won't be mad. He'll understand, I know he will.

I call Elliot and ask if he can meet me at a café tonight so we can talk. He says okay, but he seems sort of upset as he says this.

*Elliot*

Katherine called about an hour ago and asked if we could talk. She's going to tell me that she doesn't like me the way I like her. That's the only reason people ever need to meet in a public place to talk.

We only hung out twice, but I can't help but feeling some sort of disappointment. As I'm about to walk out the door, my phone rings and for a moment, I hope it's Katherine telling me she can't make it to the café. It's not Katherine, it's an unknown number. I answer, "Hello?"

"Elliot?" It's a girl's voice.

"Yes, who's this?" I say.

"It's Allie, Katherine's best friend."

I remember the girl with the short brown hair from the party. This must be her, she's the only one Katherine talked to that night.

"Oh, hey. Is something wrong?" Why is Katherine's friend calling me? Is she okay?

“Yes, something’s very wrong.” She started talking faster.” I found Katherine’s journal. I shouldn’t have read it, but I did. She’s a serial killer, Elliot. She’s killed seven people, and you’re supposed to be her last victim.”

My head begins spinning. I don’t know what to say. This can’t be right. Katherine is in no way, shape, or form a serial killer. She’s too nice. “Are you serious?” I say. This must be a joke.

“I wish this was a joke, Elliot. You can’t cancel your plans for tonight or she might suspect that you know something. You’re going to a café, right? There should be lots of people there, it’s the middle of the day. Don’t worry, I’m going to call the cops, and they’ll be there by the time you get there. Don’t let her know that you know anything.”

All I can say is, “Okay,” and with that I hang up.

### *Katherine*

I’m in the car on my way to the café. I hope Elliot doesn’t freak out when I tell him the truth. I guess I can see how some people might find it unsettling that they were going to be killed.

My phone buzzes from the passenger seat indicating that I’ve received a text message. I pick up the phone and unlock it. It’s Allie. I start to read her rather long message.

“Hey, I think we should talk.” I glance back to the road and then continue to read. “I found something that I found-” I look back to the road and then back to my phone. “to be quite interesting. I read your journal, Katherine.” She read my journal. Oh my gosh. She knows everything. “Please tell me that this is all just a story. Please tell me-” I look up as my car begins to flip.

### *Elliot*

I’ve been waiting at the café for over an hour. I’ve tried calling Katherine and Allie several times, but neither of them answer. Just as I’m about to leave, Allie opens the door to the café with tears falling down her cheeks. I get up and begin to walk toward her, but she tells me to sit back down.

“What’s wrong? Where’s Katherine?”

“Elliot. Katherine’s dead.” Her voice breaks and she puts her head down.

“What do you mean she’s dead? Did you kill her?” I don’t know how to react. I’m just shocked.

“What the hell, Elliot? No, I didn’t kill her. She had a car accident on the way here. Her car flipped four times and she wasn’t wearing a seatbelt. She was my best friend. She’s gone.” She continues to cry harder.

I don’t know what to say. I don’t know what to think. I stand up and walk out the café, leaving Allie behind.

**Endria Tai** is thirteen years old and currently a rising eighth grader. She is the only student at ADVANCE this year who is not from the States. Even though she has gone to school at Renaissance College Hong Kong and lived in Hong Kong for her whole life, English is one of her main languages.

She is (proudly) addicted to volleyball, basketball and badminton, and represents her school in all three sports. She will be playing for the Junior Varsity team next year for volleyball, and will also continue to represent South China AA. She has represented in her school's Student Council for the past two years, and will continue doing so in the next school year. She has also been elected to be House Captain for her school as well.

This is her first year at ADVANCE, and she decided to take Creative Writing because English has never been one of her strong subjects. This course has given her a deeper insight into poems and writing in general, and she feels more confidence sharing her work now. She has also made many friends and connections that she will never forget, and it has been one of her best experiences of her life (except for the fact that she always ends up as the only girl signing up for basketball activities, but she's over that now).

She will never forget the fun she had in the amazing big white van with her awesome class. She will never forget the fantastic swiss rolls she's had. She will never forget the drawing pen that Mr. Ralph gave her. But most of all, she will always remember each and every one of her classmates and TA and instructor, because they've made the class perfect.

## Reach

The mystery of the thought, I can feel breathing,  
Posing a foe to my brightest dreams, I fear  
Manipulated dimensions in my story,  
Fighting against the investigator in me.  
I feel that they're there, in the back of my mind,  
But somehow, I seem too young, too thoughtless to reach.  
Equipped with the wrong instruments, useless to me,  
The blinding light shines in my eyes, oh so bright.  
I try to advocate for what my heart believes,  
But I end up silent, unable to speak.

## The Upper Hand

those innocent dark brown eyes,  
that wicked, crooked smile:  
hides nothing more than an evil heart;  
constantly put in denial.

you; and the other you,  
how different could they be?  
like two separate souls, two separate minds,  
why are you so mean to me?

that halo around your messy black hair  
always there for them to see.  
but when they left, you turned around  
and put on your cynical face just for me.

why, oh why are you always so bitter,  
those words that hurt, those words that kill.  
even though I smile and laugh,  
the actions and insults make me terribly ill.

I learned how to fight, how to ignore,  
and I know that you've been beaten.  
that content smile, those cold dark eyes;

I'm here to take back what you've been keepin'

you've always tried to take credit from me,  
and it was 'bout time I truly cared.  
so I raised my hand and gave the answer,  
while I saw your frown and stare.

I know of the times you've stood behind me,  
a silent presence, just like a shadow.  
you were waiting for the right moment to impress,  
but you should've known I'm not that shallow.

now things have changed, and here I am,  
definitely with the upper hand.  
sure, you can act all that you want,  
but you know that you won't, you can't.

they know, they know: everyone knows  
that you have been revealed.  
maybe you should try to be yourself,  
and stop using me as a shield.

## Time

she lifts her right foot  
trampling my hopes and dreams  
gone in an instant  
an invisible currency  
the value that can't be controlled  
she tenses her muscles  
a heart is broken  
and one is healed  
she raises her left hand  
giving me opportunities and chances  
an undeniable privilege  
but there's only one  
and if missed it'll disappear  
she lifts her thumb  
an old man dies  
and an infant is born  
her never ending sprint  
ensuring that return is impossible  
the beginnings and endings  
all obstacles and passageways  
gone through and gone past  
she has only just started  
her journey  
the construction and destruction of love and death

## Am I a bad kid?

Turn the TV off after you're done; tidy after eating; actually, don't eat so much, you'll get fat; put the clothes in the washing machine; don't put your shorts in the dryer, they'll shrink; wash your hands before dinner; don't slurp on your soup, it's loud; careful with the knife, you might cut someone; chew with your mouth shut please, it's revolting; put your dishes in the sink, it's your turn to wash them tonight; scrub harder with the rough side of the blue sponge, the stains go off easier that way; put your phone away; read! The books on the shelf are waiting for you; stop reading, where's your homework... wait, is that Facebook?!; answer the phone; maybe you should try wearing a skirt sometimes – you're not a boy, you know; *but I only get hand-me-downs from my brother!*; brush your teeth, it's almost bedtime; wash your face more so you won't get pimples all over, like your brother; don't kick the wall when you're angry – there's a mark on the wallpaper; stop playing volleyball in the house, you're going to break something; feed your hamster – poor him, to get such an irresponsible owner like you; this is what you should do when strangers get too close; this is what you should say when someone asks you to do something stupid; stop sleeping on the couch, it's bad for your spine; time for your training – remember to bring your volleyball pads or you'll get those horrible looking bruises again; wash your training kit on your own – it smells disgusting; call me immediately when you leave the sleepover; don't be so mean to your brother, he's really a nice person inside; flush the toilet; wipe your hands after washing them, don't just drip everywhere; this is how you do your math homework... actually, on second thought, maybe you should ask your brother or do it on your own; work harder, keep your grades up; remember to study for biology; *but I'm really confident this time!*; well, over-confidence isn't good... what if you end up not passing, hm?

## Face

I hear her footsteps  
echoing in the hallway,  
the sobs and the tears  
when she is alone.  
But when I turn the corner  
and look to see if she's there  
I see her standing and smiling,  
waving and greeting.  
The sound of the music she plays  
by herself in that small music room,  
touches my heart as I listen,  
with its beautiful melody and its emotions.  
She uses her voice  
with compliments and advice for me,  
while I return with an unconscious touch of coldness and distance.  
She understood.  
But one day,  
her music disappeared,  
she disappeared from the school,  
and she left without knowing  
that I wanted to say goodbye.

## In Between

I dreamed of a struggle, the battle for time, where every route led to a dead end.

I dreamed of a war, the clash of answers, where everyone I knew pulled out their knives against me.

I dreamed of an escape, the run for my life, and the road I see before me seemed endless and thin.

I dreamed of the clouds, fogging up the reality, giving me coldness and despair everywhere I looked.

I dreamed of endless nights, where the sunrise was just across the ocean, but there were no boats, and I could not swim.

I dreamed of the past, where everything was fine, until I realized that the more I knew, the more I feared.

But,

I dreamed of the future, where all doors were unlocked, and it was my guns against their knives.

I dreamed of all the beginnings, the endings – but what I truly loved is the things in between.

## Pride

“why’re you crying?” they ask  
because they don’t understand my pain  
hope and faith demolished in seconds  
it’s a matter of heart

“why’re you grinning?” they ask  
because it’s just a small reward  
after countless hours, a special moment  
it’s a matter of satisfaction

“they’re just games,” they say  
but that’s not all there is  
every second you’re out there  
it’s a matter of spirit

“don’t take it so seriously,” they say  
but this is my life  
for the people I’m with  
it’s a matter of family

“don’t you get tired?” they ask  
and I have to say yes, I do  
but I never give up, as long as there’s a chance  
it’s a matter of perseverance

“why do you play?” they ask  
it’s because I love the game  
the wins and losses, laughs and cries  
it’s a matter of pride

## Haiku Collection: Time

water from rainfall  
battles against my tears  
the clouds shadow me

-

the sound of the clock  
raindrops shatter my deep thoughts  
time has passed me by

-

night stars haunt the sky  
the melody of past time  
it washes away

-

the force of the wind  
armed with power of water  
smaller, smaller, gone

-

birds chirping at dusk  
melodies fading at dawn  
moonlight hidden in

The following is a surrealist poem composed by the entire class. The lines were picked by the students from a selection of writing exercises done in class.

## Salamander's Ulna

If she had never left home, hidden under the darkness of the sky, it would be harder to achieve happiness.

If death did not exist, all beauty would become extinct.

If I die, all the unhappiness will flee from the world in an instant.

When the instrument is drained of its music, I would have a heart attack.

When the sun finally comes back out, the Earth will be destroyed.

If the world came tumbling down around me, I would not have to face the fear of death.

If the stars could string themselves together, would you still kiss me in the moonlight?

When I wondered why life is so cruel, would you still love me tomorrow?

Why did you kill me? Personally yoga calms the mind, body, and soul.

When the sun sets for the last time, all the love I ever knew will never be there if you're not there.

When swiss rolls take over the world, I would eat a swiss roll.

## CREATIVE WRITING REUNION 2036

(written by Endria Tai)

We were all waiting outside the restaurant. Ben stepped forward and held the door open. “Welcome to Lasyone’s, ladies.” Chris narrowed his eyebrows, and Michael laughed. “Ben, I’m not a lady,” Chris said in his serious voice. “Didn’t we have this conversation 20 years ago?” “Majority wins,” Michael said. The girls giggled.

As we walked into the room at the back of the restaurant, Aanisah pulled out her eye-beard. To my surprise, it was covered in cobwebs. “Aanisah,” Emma said. “Why have you kept that for so long?” “We must always remember that eyes are more important than hashtags,” Aanisah says, hiding her laugh.

We sat down in the exact same seat we did 20 years ago, and Graysen immediately started talking to people sitting on the other table. Doesn’t she always seem to know everyone? I pulled out my seat and made myself comfortable, and Alyssa sat across from me. Suddenly, her shirt seemed to move. “Argh!” Mr. Ralph yelled in surprise. “Is that a cat?” Alyssa just smiled and said “Yep” in the most British accent you can imagine.

After everyone finished giving their orders, Chris and Ben pulled out their sunglasses and dramatically put them on their face. “Why’re you guys wearing them?” Funke asked in annoyance. “We’re indoors. Are you trying to impress your crush, Chris?” Chris just blushed and gave a look to Ben.

Olivia suddenly stood up. “I have an announcement to make!” she said. “I have officially published the novel of the green elephant!” Everyone cheered and clapped.

Elizabeth held up her wallet and flipped it open. “Do you see my kids here?” she said as she showed me the photograph. “I named them Peter and Myra!” I leaned over the table. “Isn’t those the characters whose parents died in a car crash?” Everyone knocked on the wooden table.

“Renee, how’s the military training for orphans going?” Brynn asked. Renee smiled. “Actually, I wrote a book about that, and now it’s a bestseller!” Everyone cheered again and I smiled. Everyone seems to have wonderful news.

“Mr. Ralph,” I said. “How’s life?” Mr. Ralph nodded.

“I wrote a hate poem yesterday. Do you guys want to hear it?” he said in the nicest voice ever. An awkward silence fell across the class. “Just kidding,” he said, breaking the silence with his laughter.

“How’s Kaitlyn?” Brynn suddenly asked. The whole class turned to Michael as he blushed. “You’re not supposed to know anything about my personal life, *students*.” We groaned, then bursted into laughter. We’re already in our thirties, and he’s still calling us “students”?

“Actually, guys,” Madeline said. “I got dessert for you all!” We all knew what was coming. Madeline reached into her bag and took out the almighty boxes of swiss rolls. “They’re amazing,” Madeline smirked. “They’re my life.”

I looked over and grinned at Madeline. “White folks crazy!” I exclaimed.

As our food started to arrive at the table, I held up my fork high, ready to dig into my meat pie when suddenly Ben screamed something across the room and made me stop in mid-action. “Wait for everyone’s food to come before eating!” Ben said, sounding aggravated. Funke ignored him and continued with her food. “Our food’s going to get cold,” she said. “Are you going to tell us to keep our elbows of the table too?”

Everyone finished their food, and we started to get our wallets out of our bags when I suddenly heard Aanisah talking behind me. “Endria!” Aanisah exclaimed. “Gimme fifty cents!” I sighed and pulled out two quarters for her. She always asks me for my money. Always.

After we finished paying for the bill, Mr. Ralph surprised us. “Field trip day!” he said excitedly. “Let’s have fun in the big white van!” Everyone cheered and Michael smirked. He looked like a kidnapper at that point, but since we’re not kids anymore, we can all just fight him off.

We piled into the van one by one. “Let Ben and Renee sit in the front,” Michael says. “They’re always sitting at the back.” Everyone sighed and agreed. We barely fitted into the van.

On our way to Morrison Hall, we started to talk about our beloved characters.

“John’s such a loner,” Emma said. “He’s *still* got no friends.”

“I know right,” Madeline said, raising a swiss roll to her mouth. “I’m starting to feel sorry for him.”

Ben and Chris both nodded furiously. “Does anyone want to hear the haiku I wrote about John?” Chris asked. Everyone pretended to have fallen asleep before he could start.

We arrived at Morrison Hall, and we slowly walked into our classroom, Room 145...

To our surprise, the cicada shell was still sitting on top of the piano. “Ew,” Graysen says as she picked it up with the tip of her fingers and dropped it into the trash can. “It’s all moldy.”

“Of course,” Renee said. “It’s been sitting here for twenty years, but then, it still remains our class mascot, so you shouldn’t have thrown it away!”

“Whatever,” Graysen answered. “We will probably be able to find another one to replace it anyways.”

We all sat down in our original chairs and stared outside the window. “Let’s write a love poem instead of a hate one this time,” Mr. Ralph said as he smiled at all of us. “It would be nice. Do you want me to turn the lights off?”

“Half-half please,” I said as I took up my notebook, my poetry book and my short-story book and put them onto the table. At that moment, I suddenly realized that I forgot my flash drive.

“Michael, I forgot my flash drive.”

“Me too,” said Graysen.

Michael sighed. “Let’s go, guys. You’re getting a punishment this time.”