



INCITE 2015

6TH EDITION

INCITE 2015



The CITE Executive thanks the student and teacher participants for their support of the 2015 InCITE Writing Competition.

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"Alchemy" by Diana Salman, grade 12,
Hillfield Strathallan College



Hillfield Strathallan College
Learn with Joy. Live with Purpose.

MESSAGE FROM CONFERENCE CHAIR

Hillfield Strathallan College

We don't take comedy seriously enough.

Comedy can teach us a great deal about the human experience. We learn to laugh at ourselves. We learn to laugh at our circumstances. Comedy brings healing; the maxim—"laughter is the best medicine"—is famous because it is resoundingly true. Comedy balances the literary canon, offsetting the pensive and dour role tragedy plays by telling our collective story with jocularly and humour.

Yet comedy does more than provide "comic relief." It is not only about "going for the gag." Comedy ultimately speaks to our interaction with fellow human beings. Tragedies dwell on the private individual, giving us a window into the mind of a single character—Lear's madness, Oedipus's unmitigated pride, Willy Loman's self-deception and disillusionment. Comedies, however, deal with human beings as social creatures. Comedy explores community, "otherness," our communion with each other. This is why—according to Aristotle—most literary comedies end in a marriage; arguably marriage is the most intimate union of socialized human beings. This is why the best way to identify a Shakespearean comedy is to see how it ends—if there is a marriage, then it is a comedy. Some of the most influential texts are in fact comedies because they are narratives that conclude with a marital union. For example, Homer's *The Odyssey*, Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, Milton's *Paradise Regained*, J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and *The New Testament* (cf. "Marriage of the Lamb" in *Revelation*). Without a doubt, comedy has left an indelible mark on our culture.

This is why the members of the CITE 2015 planning committee were delighted with the writing prompt "Make Us Laugh," forwarded by Terry Fallis, Canada's premier literary humourist and our esteemed InCITE judge. We wanted to create an opportunity for student-writers to explore their lives through the lens of comedy. We believe that comedy is as essential as tragedy in aiding our understanding the human condition. The stories, essays, and poems collected here are no less relevant because they are "funny." Life is serious but it is also silly. From the seriousness of tragedy, we learn to reconcile ourselves with death; from comedy we learn to reconcile ourselves with life itself. We hope you feel more alive when you finish reading this collection.

Jeremy Johnston
Conference Chair
CITE 2015 "Leading With Words"



PREFACE FROM OUR ESTEEMED JUDGE

Writing. Whose idea was it anyway? What were they thinking? Of all the myriad ways artists entertain the world, surely writing has got to be the most challenging, the most frustrating, the most enervating, the most demoralizing. No?

Musicians and singers have instruments and their voices. Painters have different brushes, bright colours and big canvases. Dancers have their graceful and well-toned bodies. Film-makers have just about everything you can imagine, including special effects. Sculptors have marble, or bronze, or steel, or clay, or anything they else they choose. Actors have their faces, and bodies, and voices, and costumes. Yes, most artists have a few more arrows in their quiver than do writers. Their stories can be conveyed in so many different arresting and compelling ways. Their audiences dine at a veritable smorgasbord of sensory delight.

Then we come to writers. What do we have to grab our audience's attention and keep them with us until our story is finished? We have a blank page with what appear to be random black marks on them. That's it. That's all. No colour. No sound. No movement. Nothing but words. But trust me. That's just where the joy, the elation, the satisfaction come from, along of course with the anxiety, doubt, pain, frustration, fatigue and disappointment.

As writers, we have to put these markings on a blank page. We have to use words alone to capture our prey and bend them to our bidding. We have words alone to make them angry, frightened, excited, happy, sad, interested, fulfilled. I know it's not easy. But when it works, there's no better feeling in the world.

Some may say that it's toughest to put down words on a page that make the reader laugh. Yes, I guess it's perhaps more difficult than scaring them, shocking them, or even grossing them out. But what a feeling when they laugh! It's wonderful.

The stories in this collection will make you laugh. So while you're reading these pieces and chortling away, spare a thought for these fine young writers who tickled your funny bone and split your side just with black markings on a blank page. I'm proud of them.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading 'Terry Fallis' in a cursive, flowing script.

Terry Fallis

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I CAN'T STOP THIS FEELING

By Joey Furfari

His legs are aching. He's been running for a while. His vision is impaired by the deep fog that follows him through the dark forest. His foot catches a tree root and he falls to the ground. He feels no motivation to get up. Has he gotten away? Or are they still watching? Waiting for the right time to take him alive. The right time to scalp him and pick at his brain. The right time to infect him. He hears it again. The all-too-familiar chanting. He can't tell if he's hearing it with his ears or his brain; either way, it echoes off the walls of his skull.

Ouga Chaka / Ouga Ouga / Ouga Chaka / Ouga Ouga / Ouga Chaka

He sits up and his eyes dart from tree to tree, looking for the man-eaters. The chanting doesn't stop. He scrambles onto his feet and runs in an unknown direction. He stops in a clearing. The chanting stops. His eyes spin back and forth as he studies the towers surrounding him: the trees that served as canvases, protecting the unknown horrors of the world from the human eye. For a minute he remembers how beautiful the world once was. Before "Funny Man" Chris Pratt took to the silver screen. Why? Why did he do this? The 90s were over. Why star in a movie that would reincarnate such a destructive song? But thinking about the past was deadly in this new world. The chanting starts again, only louder. Closer.

Ouga Chaka / Ouga Ouga / Ouga Chaka / Ouga Ouga / Ouga Chaka

He springs out of his daydream and looks around. Faces emerge from the bush. Some are smeared with blood, others with dirt. But they're all chanting the same death sentence.

Ouga Chaka / Ouga Ouga / Ouga Chaka / Ouga Ouga / Ouga Chaka

He recognizes these monsters. They were all people at one point. His neighbours. His friends. His acquaintances. But now they aren't even human. They're surrounding him, all chanting and stepping towards him synchronically. "Monsters," he thinks, "not human... not like me." He meets the eye of a woman standing directly in front of him, her eyes peering into his soul while her mouth sings the song of the mad men. He knew her. She was his wife. She is his wife. Looking into her gaze is not a far cry to him. Just as he is starting to see that she is just like him, he closes his eyes. He squeezes his eyelids together with all of the energy he has left. He tries to resist.

Ouga Chaka / Ouga Ouga / Ouga Chaka / Ouga Ouga / Ouga Chaka

Ouga Chaka / Ouga Ouga / Ouga Chaka / Ouga Ouga / Ouga Chaka

Ouga Chaka / Ouga Ouga / Ouga Chaka / Ouga Ouga / Ouga Chaka

Seconds go by. He gives up. He can't take it any longer. He opens his eyes, his mouth and his heart:

"I can't stop this feeling / Deep inside of me / Girl you just don't realize / what you do to me."

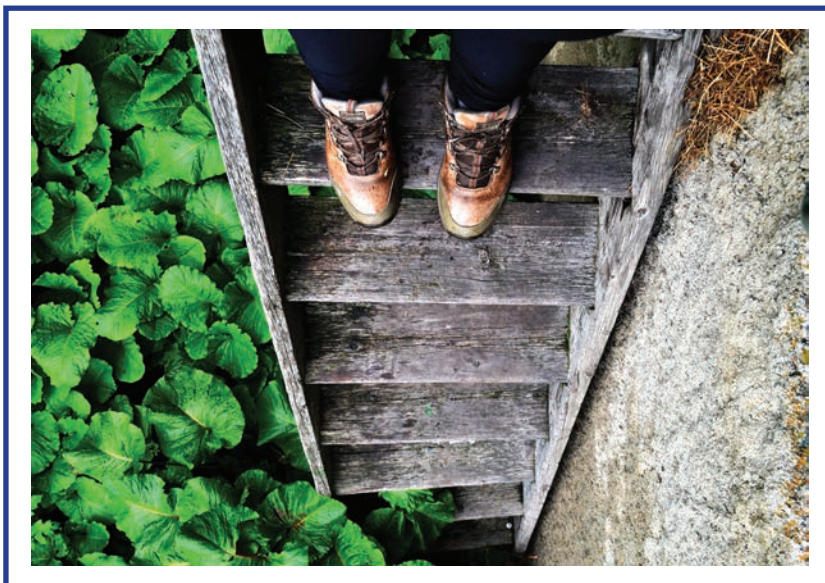
The chanting becomes part of his mind, body and soul as he sings.

"When you hold me / In your arms so tight / You let me know / Everything's alright"

He smiles with glee and grabs his wife's bloody hand.

"Iiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiim hooked on a feeling! / I'm high on believing / that you're in love with me!"

They all dance in a circle around the newest member of their tribe. He sings. He will sing until he dies. Because he's one of them now. One of us. Blue Swede will never die.



By Yara Al Sakka



By Anne Gover

EXAM TIME

By Tommy Shen & Kiyan Heybati

I wake up at 7:30, refreshed and confident.

I wake up at 3 a.m. and start studying for my exams.

I have a hearty breakfast.

I study for five hours straight, with no time to eat.

I walk into the exam room, full and hydrated with a binder filled with study notes.

I walk in with red eyes and beg for study notes.

When the bell rang, I started writing as if it were a tiny quiz.

The bell rang and I felt the noise exploding into my head; now I feel defeated — got nothing in my head!

I finished the exam in only thirty minutes.

Time flew by. The exam is finished. I only answered the first question.

I walk out with a bright smile.

I storm out of the exam room, full of tears and hopelessness.

The next day...Hoorah! I aced the exam!

The next day... Oh no! I got another F!



By Carol Li

PASS THEM ON

By Demi Pallas

Laura was never going to wear the ugly purple skates with the roses on them. Generations of family wearing the skates or not, wearing those skates to practice would result in total humiliation. But she couldn't leave them at home either. If she did, her mom might find them. So she decided that the best plan of action was to take the purple skates with her to practice, but to wear her old skates. So into the purple bag both pairs of skates went, and Laura smiled.

"Ok, so I'll see you at home then? You do want to spend time with your friends after, right?"

"Yeah, mom!" said Laura, exiting the SUV her large family needed.

"Just remember that your Grandma is coming over for dinner tonight. So bring the skates."

"Got it," said Laura, "Bye!"

Laura shut the door to the vehicle and stood on the curb for a while. There was really no need for precaution. The plan was foolproof.

She spun around and started walking to the familiar doors of the arena. She arrived at the locker room, took a seat on the bench, and unzipped her purple skating bag. Ah, her old skates. Yes, they were going to be a bit tight, but it didn't matter. Her thoughts were interrupted by the whistle. Practice was starting. She shoved her stuff into her favourite locker, laced up, and hurried onto the ice.

.....

"You were so good!"

"Yeah Laura, I couldn't have ever done that routine. And that was so nice the way you helped the new girl."

"Thanks, guys." Replied Laura

"Hey, you're coming with us after, right?" Asked Laura's friend Naomi.

"Yeah, I just gotta get my bag."

"Kay, but hurry, my sister is waiting for us." Said Cori, another one of Laura's friends.

Hurriedly Laura ran into the locker room, approached her locker, and took out her bag.

Weird....it felt.....empty.

Oh. No.

The skates were gone.

The skates were gone, the skates were gone, the skates were gone. In a panic, she looked all around the locker room for them. This wouldn't be such a big deal if Grandma wasn't coming over for dinner that day. Grandma who would freak out if any minuscule detail of any tradition got messed up. Oh, where were they? Those old skates would and could not attract attention from any thief. She emerged into the hallway.

"Guys," she said, "Have you seen my bag?"

"No, why?" Said Naomi.

"Because there used to be something in them." Said Laura, "These... purple skates. And I really need to find them." Said Laura.

"Did you check the locker room?" Asked Naomi.

“Yeah, they’re not there.”

“If you want,” said Cori, “I can get my sister Nicole to take us to the mall instead of to the movie. Then you could buy some new skates.”

Laura said, “Really! I mean, that would be great! But we’ve got to go, like now.”

The three girls ran out of the arena and into Nicole’s car.

“To the movie theatre, right, girls?” Said Nicole.

“Nope,” said Cori, “Change of plans. To the mall!”

.....

But, of course, there were no purple figure skates in Laura’s size. At any sports store. The clock ticking, Laura’s group of friends ran into the closest department store. Laura knew what she was looking for, and found it quickly. Purple fabric dye, and some fat laces. Laura was resorting to plan b: editing her old skates to make them like the original skates. She quickly paid for the stuff, then left the store. The group of friends got back in Nicole’s car and made sure to drop off Laura first.

“Thanks!” Shouted Laura over her shoulder.

Laura quickly snuck up behind the house and entered the garage, the best possible workspace, she decided. Action time. Out of her bag came her old skates, the dye, and the laces. Hectically, she inserted the new laces into the skates, being sure to fray the edges.

Next was the dye. Laura squirted some on a cloth, then wiped it all over both skates. Ha, thought Laura, that was easy. She then decided to pound on the skates to make them look worn. That took up some time.

And then she heard her father yell to the family, “Grandma’s almost here, so get ready!”

She stood up, looked at the skates, and remembered the roses. There were two roses on each skate. She frantically looked around for a Sharpie marker.

“Aha,” Laura said, and began drawing ‘detailed’ roses.

But then she saw something on her hand.

Oh, boy.

Her hand was purple. Not a very bright purple, and just on one hand, but still, purple. She knew exactly what her older brother Avery would chuckle, “Well, it looks like we caught you purple handed.” And she would say, “Ha, ha.” But this wasn’t important. She needed to get her hand un-purpled, and the roses drawn. For a moment she was torn with what to do. Hand.....roses.....hand.....roses!

But she was interrupted by the sight of a girl in the driveway. When she stepped out of the garage she saw that:

It was a girl she knew.

It was the new girl.

The new girl was holding the skates.

What???

“Laura, good! I’m so sorry! We have the same bag apparently, so I must have taken your bag in the locker room, and when I saw that the skates were yours I asked Coach for your address, but anyways, here you go and see you next week at practice.” Said the new girl.

Still stunned at the scenario, Laura accepted the skates, and gave the new girl back her bag. But then she shook herself out of the trance once she realized her situation.

She now had two pairs of skates.
And a purple hand.
What was she going to do?
And to top everything off, a car pulled up in the driveway.
Grandma.

Laura ran into the house, and into the first room she could get into, the laundry room. All she was thinking was, I need a place to hide them. So she threw the makeshift skates into the laundry basket. She then ran back up into the dining room, in time to greet her Grandma.

A lovely feast awaited her. As usual, her mom went overboard with the dinner. The whole Stontier family; Laura, her mom, her dad, Avery, Caleb, and of course their Grandma were seated at the table. But just as everyone was about to sit down, Laura's Grandma made an announcement.

"As we all know, I won the purple skates at a contest when I was Laura's age. I passed them on to your mom, who is now passing them off to Laura. I hope Laura will appreciate them like I did.

Laura stood up, voluntarily.

"I want to thank mom and Grandma for these. I now do realize how.....irreplaceable they really are."

With everyone smiling back at her, Laura frowned.

It had just occurred to her that tomorrow was laundry day.



By Jessica Li

"YES DEAR"

By Matthew Borinsky

It was a snowy Saturday in December. We arrived as usual at four and I rang the doorbell. As we stood there waiting for it to open we heard my grandmother scream, "Kaarrrrlll! Answer the door! I think the kids are here!" A few minutes later my grandfather opened the door and standing in the hallway were the two of them. Before I knew it my grandmother grabbed my arm and gave me a big, awkward, sloppy kiss that smelled like coffee. When she turned to do the same to my brother Paul I wiped the slobber off my face and took a breath of air scented with mothballs and lavender.

My grandmother is 78 years old. She has shoulder length hair and I guess she was once a brunette because she has two inches of brown roots showing below her washed-out dyed-blond hair. That day she was wearing a flower-patterned nightgown and pink velvet slippers. My grandfather is 80. He's a little taller, fairly slim, has messy, salt and pepper hair and a bushy beard. He sort of looks like Si from the TV show *Duck Dynasty*. My grandparents have been married for 58 years. They met at a car wash in 1957. She was the cashier and he had a car.

Later, as I was sitting in the living room my grandmother hollered from the kitchen, "Kaarrrrlll! You need to empty the dishwasher!" My grandfather slowly got up from his chair where he'd been sitting and said, "Yes Dear." Then my grandmother came into the living room and told me that I look too thin and she asked me if I wanted something to eat. I told her that I wasn't hungry. She looked at me for a moment and slowly hobbled back into the kitchen. All of a sudden I heard banging, crashing and complete chaos. Moments later she appeared again out of the kitchen but this time with a tray of cheese, baguettes, fruit, veggies, chocolate, and an assortment of appetizers.

"Eat, you look hungry."

Feeling obligated for all the effort she just went through I took a few appetizers. A few minutes later when I looked up again I noticed that my grandfather came into the living room and had fallen asleep in a chair. I quietly walked over to pick up a magazine to read but before I could sit down again my grandmother screamed.

"Kaarrrrlll! Why don't you play a game of cards with the boys!"

He slowly opened his eyes and said "Yes Dear".

While we are playing cards I head the dishwasher in the kitchen come on. It seemed a little odd to me that my grandfather had just emptied the dishwasher and now the dishwasher was on again. Nevertheless, I've learned never to question the odd things that happen at my grandparents' house. Anyway, the tray of food was next to me so I took a piece of chocolate. As I was putting it in my mouth my grandmother yelled from the kitchen.

"Matthew, don't eat that. You will ruin your dinner!"

My mom and my grandmother were now both in the kitchen preparing dinner. Tonight's menu was soup, salad, salmon surprise, scalloped potatoes, vegetables and a noodle casserole. Now, my grandmother, like so many grandmothers, loves to cook with her microwave. Thank goodness my mom was there to help. Sure enough, my grandmother yelled at my grandfather to get wine and soda, and with another quick "Yes dear," it was on the table.

When we arrived in the dining room, nice hot bowls of turkey noodle soup made from leftovers were waiting for us. After eating the soup Paul and I cleared the dishes and it was time for salad. Well, my grandmother's salad is unique. She cuts up massive pieces of iceberg lettuce, cabbage, tomatoes, radishes, cucumbers and onions. She also tosses in two cans of anchovies, oil and vinegar. Then she takes the enormous bottle of her homemade dressing and proceeds to pour it on the salad.

As always, I passed on the salad.

A little later, my brother and I cleared the salad plates. My grandmother got up, slowly hobbled to the kitchen, opened the dishwasher, and took out a very long plate completely covered in tinfoil. As she began to hobble back to the table she almost dropped the plate. I jumped up, took it from her, and placed it on the table in front of her. She sat down and removed the tin foil from the plate.

"SURPRISE it's salmon!"

I look at my grandmother like she is crazy.

"Grandma!? Did you cook the salmon in the dishwasher?"

"Of course I did! My mother showed me how to do this years ago."

I wasn't convinced. I quietly took the phone out of my pocket and googled "How to cook salmon in the dishwasher."

Apparently, it's a thing...

Who would have thought you could cook in a dishwasher? Surprisingly the salmon actually tasted pretty good, and the rest of the main course wasn't bad either. Then came dessert, my favourite part of the meal. The one thing all grandmothers know how to do is bake or take credit for baking something they didn't.

My mom poured the coffee for the adults and put a freshly baked apple pie on the table. My dad went and got the large fruit plate and chocolate ice cream. My grandmother looked at me and asked how large a piece of pie I would like. I kindly asked for a large slice. My Grandmother said "Okay" and, as always, cut me the smallest piece of pie I've ever seen.

After dessert, Paul and I disappeared upstairs to play with the laundry chute. This was classic entertainment. Paul and I searched around upstairs for items we could throw down the laundry chute. We started with toilet paper. What we would do was hold the end of the toilet paper and let go of the rest of the roll so it flew all the way down the chute. Then got to the towels, sheets, and some items of my grandfather's clothing.

That was the best part of all, the underwear.

Before we were completely done my mom called upstairs and told us it was time to leave. Now usually we would go downstairs and clean our mess up but as we were coming down my dad said that we had to leave quickly because there was a storm coming. My grandfather gave us all a hug goodbye. As we were just about to leave I heard my grandmother hollering from the basement.

"How many pairs of your underpants do you expect me to wash? I'm not your maid! And what's with the toilet paper?"

"Yes dear," my grandfather replied, and he smiled.



By Jillian Sward



By Noa Mayer

EXCERPTS FROM MY DIARY

By Anabel Yeung

September 8th, 2014

So I have a close friend named Troy (no, he does not live in Detroit*) who's incredibly good at basketball. He's about 6'4" and practices everyday, while I'm about 5'4" for about an hour after waking up and went to a basketball camp once when I was six (I quit after three days because I realized I preferred putting it up my shirt to imitate a pregnant woman instead of playing). Anyway, I challenged him to a basketball match, just me versus him. Needless to say I lost every time, insisting that I would win after each match.

I guess you could say I got destroyed.

**To those with a productive life devoid of any viral internet events (first of all, congratulations)—This is a reference to the song "Anaconda" by Nicki Minaj.*

October 20th, 2014

Today was prom day. My best friend, Chloe, and I are both single (by choice, obviously, 'cause besties before testes— sorry Troy*) so we had planned to go to prom together. With an hour left, we were getting ready to go from low threes to mediocre sixes¹ (with the right angle and a filter). As she was filling in her eyebrows, I commented sincerely, "Oooh gurl, your brow game strong!"²

Which was true, because her eyebrows then proceeded to punch me out cold. I woke up in the hospital with a concussion. We missed prom.

**Not really.*

¹For those unaware of youth lingo: appearance can be described from a scale of one to ten, where a one is looking like Quasimodo while a ten is looking like a fresh, hot bowl of macaroni and cheese (i.e. beautiful).

²Adult Translation: Oooh, girlfriend, your eyebrows are groovy and bold!

November 13th, 2014

I am so picky when it comes to names. Today I was trying to start a short story, but wasted my time looking for the right name. Consequently, I can be kind of critical of parents who give their children names that are outright unsuitable. Now I really mean no offense, but who names their child "Richard"? Don't get me wrong, it sounds very fitting for a tall adult male in a suit, but did parents not find it weird to look their baby in the eye and call them that? Imagine: a mother cradles her newborn in her arms with the father by her side. The baby is wrapped in a soft, light-coloured towel and is smiling while looking up at them. Its skin is as smooth as my interaction with cute boys (i.e. super smooth, obviously) and he looks like an angel. The father asks, "What should we name our little boy?" After a moment of thought, the mother replies, "Richard. Yes, this incredibly mature and harsh-sounding

name shall be given to our infant who has no sense of object permanence and requires pats on the back to burp. It's perfect."

December 2nd, 2014

I had the weirdest dream last night. It was excerpts of the movie *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*, but everything was made with citrus fruits; the characters, the weapons, the settings... Literally *everything*. It was the X-Men Oranges: Tangerine.

January 30th, 2014

Recently I've been binge-watching movies. Maybe it's just because I'm too optimistic to parody movies, but I've seen quite a few bad ones like *The Adequate Spider-Man*¹, *Lord of the Things*², and *The Mother-In-Law of Frankenstein*³, but man, does *E.T.* take the cake. Also known as *E.T. The Extreme-Terrestrial*, it's about this nutcase who lives underground like a mole despite being a grown man with responsibilities and taxes to pay. And it's not even a nice underground home— he literally sleeps in a dirt hole. *The Extreme-Terrestrial*? More like *Extremely-Terrible*. 0/10, would not recommend... just like that pun.

¹A film in which a man has the ability to call and control spiders. An equally terrifying and formidable super-power indeed, except the main character has arachnophobia and only uses his power to keep spiders out of his life.

²A three hour movie about boarders. So.. many... bobble heads...

³Uncomfortably awkward. Just like watching a friend get scolded and nagged at by their mother-in-law in real life. Was on my phone for two thirds of the movie.

February 16th, 2014

Today I went shopping with Chloe and Troy and finally got some new clothes. As I laid them out on my bed at home, I stopped at a pair of ripped jeans. For about 15 minutes, I had a deep and empathetic conversation with them. They seemed distressed.

March 31st, 2014

I just realized that I've never mentioned this in my diary before, but I'm actually *obsessed* with making lists. This is a compilation of a few of my wise and necessary musings:

- Why does the skin on our fingers just end and grow these weird, translucent nails?
- Who decided that "colonel" should be pronounced "kernel"?????
- Is Annie okay or not? Don't leave us hanging, Michael!!
- Why on earth did Iceland think that a men-only UN conference on gender inequality was a good idea?
- Why am I so cute???
- Centipedes... just.. why..?
- Why doesn't my cat love me? (is it because we named him Doug???)

April 8th, 2014

Today I watched *The Great Gatsby* with Troy ('cause Chloe was being a bum and preferred to study for her “super important AP calc exam”. Psh.) and man am I distraught. Are we all okay with the fact that there are towns in the story called “West Egg” and “East Egg”? Because I’m not. What’s next? A rich neighbourhood named Caviar? When something is fantastic, do you describe it as “eggcellent” or “eggseptional”? Did farmers use yolks on their oxen? I know I’m really eggsaggerating here but what did you eggspect?

...Okay I'm sorry please don't beat me up.

May 3rd, 2014

I think I just met the boy of my dreams. Well, kind of. I didn't just meet him today- I've known him for a while; but you know what I mean. I don't know how I didn't realize this earlier, but for some reason when I saw him today, my heart stopped and I almost had a stroke. And I haven't really described him much, have I? He has light brown eyes and a smile that made me stop and stare, like how you would stop and stare in a kind of disgusted, "how is that possible?", but intrigued way at a person eating a hundred tacos in 10 minutes. It's been done, seriously, and it's kind of gross but mostly made me very inquisitive and amazed. ANYWAY, he has dishevelled dark brown hair and great taste in fashion (HALLELUJAH). Also, he started wearing a cologne that smells heavenly and he's a feminist! I wouldn't have guessed this in a million years (because I'd be dead, duh) but this boy I'm describing... is *Troy*.

I'm quite literally screaming out of excitement/disbelief as I write this so this seems appropriate:

"AA
AAA."

I need to lie down.

THE WAREHOUSE

By Jordan Brown

A crackle of static broadcasts through the air to my big Motorola radio. I make out a voice asking for one of the 28 toasters we have in stock, the ones that went missing weeks ago. I punch the product number into my computer to confirm my suspicion. Sure enough, they are the toasters that a lazy employee abandoned. Those 28 toasters are ghosts, entities with no physical form, suffering the same fate as the seven yellow kayaks that nobody has ever seen but are in the warehouse stock.

I radio back to the floor. "Sorry, we don't have any of those located. They vanished weeks ago."

Things are running as smooth as ever back here in the warehouse. Outside, a massive transport truck rests at the Canadian Tire Store #069 loading dock. We are the final destination of 115-cubic meters of product destined for our store room shelves. It will take 16 hours of labor to get that truck unloaded, a full eight hour shift for two workers to complete. Thankfully I have been assigned another task for today.

As I punch in, I mentally calculate where my day will lead me. Even though I meticulously create a list of what I hope to accomplish, I know that it will be an uphill battle. No matter how hard you wash the grime off your hands from the previous day of work, your body will still be marked from events of yesterday. As I stock the warehouse shelves, I realize that I still have spattered black paint stuck on my hands from yesterday's shipment. Somebody's lack of care led a whole case of dark paint to bleed out on the floor like a crime scene victim — a casualty, another setback caused by somebody's lack of endeavor. My hard work has left my hands rough and callused, but I still notice a splinter still lodged into my palm from dealing with an orphaned skid that was carelessly forgotten in a far corner of the warehouse.

Although the time needed to deal with one skid is negligible, the true problem is when they start to multiply like weeds on an unmaintained lawn. No matter if I put away every single skid, they will always be back the next day. Just like weeds.

I find myself searching for items located up stairs. Working through the housewares, I end up in the soap and household chemical isle of the warehouse. The potent stench of Drano, ammonia, and way too many air fresheners burns the nostrils. The air is thick with lavender spring, vanilla spice, and commercial disinfectant; I can taste the air fresheners as the fumes make their way down my lungs. I don't know how the other employees have been able to tolerate this for so long. The other warehouse workers must have learned how to hold their breath in the many years they have been trapped here. Good thing I'm only here for the summer, and not the rest of my life.

To put it into simple terms, this job is hard. This job is a never-ending list of tasks that blanket you in work and fatigue. This place can trap you like the 1985 Ford pickup tail light replacement that has been lost by time and covered with a thick layer of dust. I don't want to be buried here for the rest of my life. I realize that if I don't have a greater purpose, I'll end up just like that tail lamp. If I don't have an escape plan from here, I'll just sit around looking for an opportunity that will never come, like a victim trapped in a burning building that desperately waits for a savior that will never appear. I have to find my own opportunities, and not wait for them to be given to me. I can't allow myself to get sucked down into a minimum wage career.

Luckily for me, school starts in another two weeks, and that will be my ticket out of here, my greater purpose.



By Lily Coles

FOUR PHILOSOPHERS (OR, THE PERKS OF SUSPENDING DISBELIEF)

By Adrian Marcuzzi

The delegate smiled as he led Socrates, Plato and Aristotle into the marble room adorned with pillars. “The council has summoned you three for a matter of great importance,” he began. “A stone slate, recently discovered last month, has been found to have... clairvoyant properties.”

“Is this some kind of joke?” questioned Aristotle, irritated by the absurdity of it all.

“Far from it,” assured the delegate calmly, only to suddenly lose his composure and bellow, “Rufus! Bring in the slate.”

A slender man entered the room with a massive slab of rock held up over his bent, straining back. His trek to the centre of the room progressed at a dreadfully slow pace, and to make matters worse he stiffened and wheezed with every step. His eyes were wide and his body shaking under the sheer weight of the stone. The three philosophers genuinely feared for the fellow’s life, and the longer this went on the more awkward everyone felt. Luckily, he reached the centre of the centre of the room, deposited his burden and strolled out with surprising nonchalance. Over time, perhaps one just learns to deal with this sort of thing.

The philosophers stared at the monolith in the centre of the room. Etched across the top in smooth strokes was the message *‘This slate shall reveal the thoughts of those in the far future. You need only ask.’*

“I assume you three are sufficiently literate and no doubt already deep in thought,” began the delegate with a hint of condescension. “Nonetheless,” he continued, “you might still be confused as to why you were called here.”

“Indeed,” grumbled Aristotle, now more impatient than ever. He was ignored.

“The council”, clarified the delegate, “wants you to gain insight on the popular questions being posed by future philosophers and start finding answers for them now. We believe that this will lead to exponential progress and ultimately benefit society in both the present and the future. As a trial run you are assigned to tackle one question. I should probably also mention that you’re forbidden to leave until you come up with something deep.”

The delegate left the room the same way he entered it, smiling.

--- --- ---

“Well, where to begin?” asked Plato.

“With something simple, of course,” replied Aristotle. “Let’s tackle a question posed by the youngest well-known thinker of the future. Surely it will be the easiest to solve yet provide an answer abstract enough to be approved by the council.” The other two philosophers agreed.

Socrates turned to face the slate: “show us the most popular question posed by the youngest popular thinker of the future.” Immediately words began to form on the surface in front of them:

"How Can Mirrors Be Real If Our Eyes Aren't Real #JadenSmith"

The three men were silent. Then they nodded and murmured amongst one another. "Hmm... well, yes indeed. Very profound," Plato began, although his tone seemed uncertain.

"And conveyed in so few words," added Socrates, with equally uncertain conviction.

"What the hell is that supposed to mean?" demanded Aristotle, the only one so far who seemed ready to admit he had no clue what to make of it.

"W--Well *clearly*," Plato began, albeit a bit unsteadily, "all objects which can be perceived empirically are inherently false by association."

"E--Exactly," added Socrates, "the limitations of our perceptions make it such that the fluid scope of reality, henceforth, is falsified both within and about ourselves to a certain degree of relevance."

That was, without a doubt, the biggest load of nonsense any of them had ever crammed into a sentence, and they were all aware of this. The men once again stared at the slate and fell silent for several minutes.

"We just don't seem to be at a high enough mental state to comprehend such a question," admitted a glum Socrates.

"Why not try our luck with another one?" suggested Plato.

"Are you nuts?" shouted Aristotle. "If a question posed by a child is causing us this much trouble we're screwed. If only somehow we could..." Aristotle trailed off. After a moment's pause his eyes suddenly lit up: "That's it!"

"What's it?" asked Socrates.

Aristotle explained. "We may not think like those in the future, but there's no reason we can't learn. Instead of going straight for the questions, why not first study a basic premise?" The other two thought this was a brilliant idea. Aristotle decided that the simplest teaching was the best starting point. He demanded the slate to show them the most basic and concise principle posed by the aforementioned thinker. The slate obliged:

"Most Trees Are Blue. #JadenSmith"

The three men pondered those words for the next two hours. Their sheer bafflement over this simple declaration left them speechless, and it was beginning to drive them mad. In a steady rhythm Socrates beat his forehead against the palm of his closed fist. Aristotle erratically broke the silence with sharp profanities, directed at nothing in particular. Plato, usually the most collected of the three, was the first to lash out. He smacked the floor, stood up and spoke his unstable mind.

"I understand not being able to comprehend a question, but being unable to comprehend a statement is ridiculous! I'm tired of beating around the bush here. I'm going to grab this cretin bull by the horns and there's nothing anyone can do to stop me." Plato confronted the slate and shouted "bring me into the core of our thinker's mind."

The slate hesitated, as though confused itself, but spat out another sentence all the same:

"Water In The Eyes And Alcohol In The Eyes Are Pretty Much The Same Thing I Know This From First Hand Experience. #JadenSmith"

This pushed everyone over the edge.

"I just don't understand it!"

"It's all too advanced! Too abstract!"

"I've got it! Mirrors are trees!"

"Oh, we're never getting out of here!"

This incoherent blithering would have gone on for much longer had Rufus not wandered by the room. Seeing another soul with which to spread their burden the three men wailed, "What is the answer to all of this?"

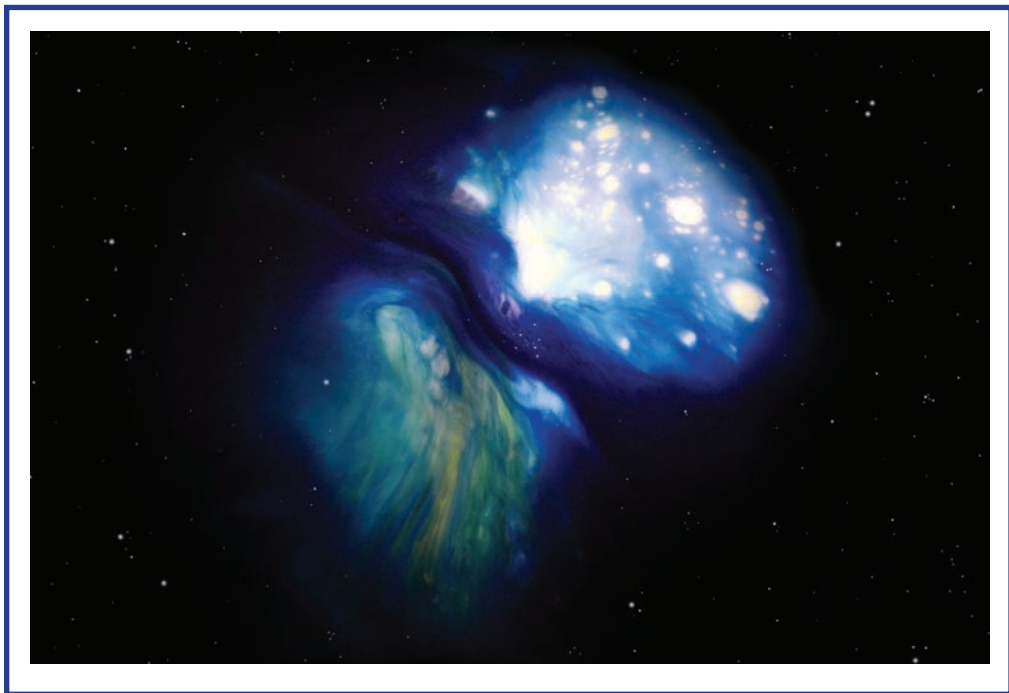
After some thought Rufus shrugged and said, "Well... maybe the person in the future is just as clueless as we are."

"Oh that's perfect," mocked Aristotle, "that's *just* what we should tell the idiots who put us here to figure out the *obviously brilliant minds of future generations!*"

"Hold on," said Socrates, "the man might be on to something. Perhaps we are clueless in the end and this is something we must come to terms with. Perhaps true wisdom comes to each of us when we realize how little we understand about life, ourselves and the world around us."

"Works for me," said Plato, "Let's get out of here."

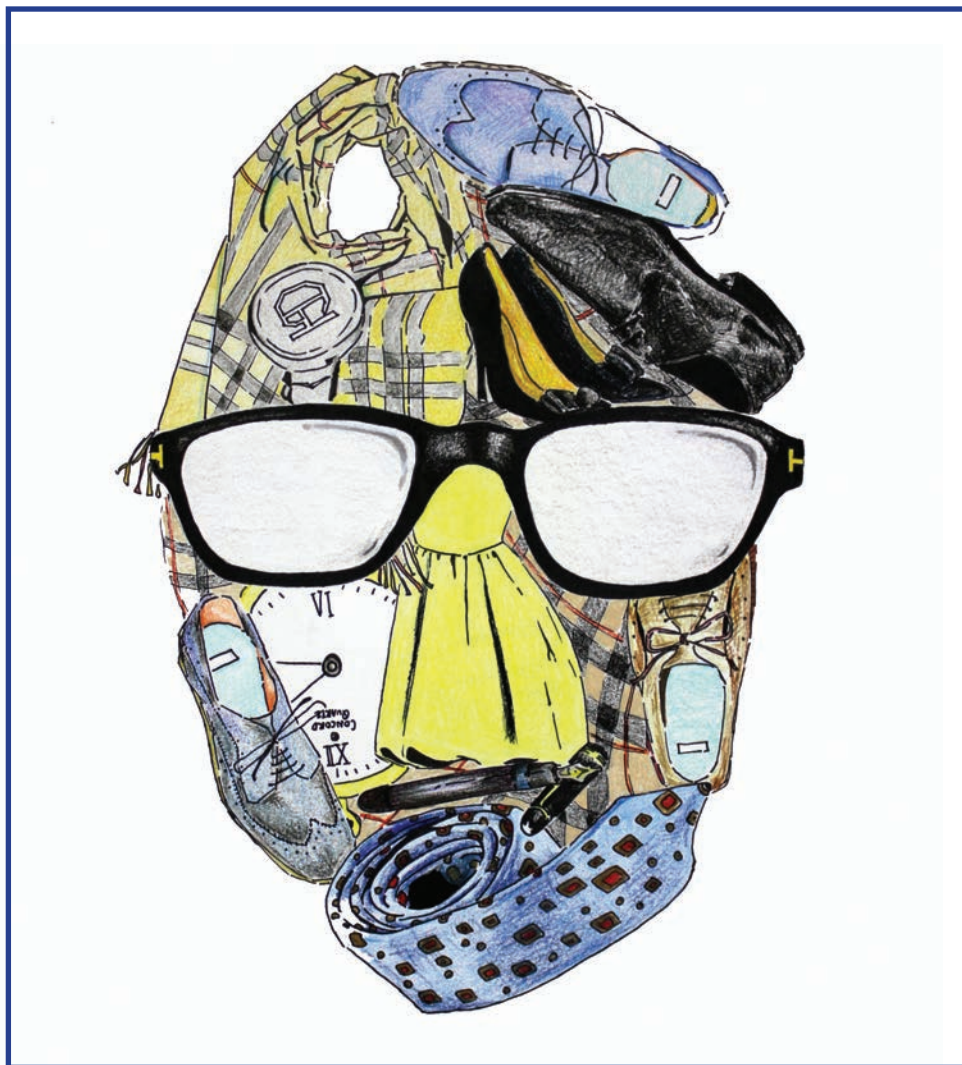
Socrates' new teaching brought him much acclaim in the philosophical world. The saying soon became famous amongst the people Athens, and would later be immortalized in textbooks around the globe. To be honest, Rufus' suggestion was closer to the truth but I don't think it really mattered to him either way. He never was one to get worked up over this sort of thing. Rufus was just that kind of guy.



By Kate Jones



By Echo Huang



By Amy Cho

TITLE OF PIECE???

By Kira Paul

Carol and Jim are an old married couple in their 70's. They live in a small house together, and go about their retirement in peace and relaxation, or so it should seem. . .

Carol is starting to lose her short-term memory, she is a sweet endearing woman, always trying to please and do well, but her memory often makes her a hassle as she often forgets things.

Jim is a very traditional old man, set in his routine-ways. He often depends on Carol to perform everyday tasks for him, being stuck in the traditions of the early 1900's. With that said, he loves his wife Carol dearly and puts up with her times of memory loss.

Jim is sitting in a rocking chair, newspaper in hand, reading each word with intense detail. The door opens and Carol comes into the house, her arms full of groceries.

Jim: Honey, could you put the kettle on? I would love a nice cup of earl grey.

Carol stumbles into the room.

Carol: Yes dear! One minute, let me just get into the kitchen.

She stumbles past Jim, who does not notice her need for help.

Pause

Jim: And Honey, did you remember the scones?

Carol places the groceries down with a thump on the counter, sighs with relief and responds brightly.

Carol: Yes dear, I went to the bakery first just so I would remember. They were toasty warm, fresh from the oven!

Jim rubs his hands together in delight.

Jim: Honey, you just made my day!

Carol smiles to herself.

Pause

Jim: And Honey, remember the kettle!

Carol: Oh! Of course Jimmy dear, I'll put it on right away.

Carol puts the kettle on, the sound rumbles throughout the house.

Pause

Carol: How was your day?

Jim: It is barely past morning! I'm still in my slippers.

Carol: Of course! How was your morning?

Jim: I was reading the paper, did you know the buses are on strike again, this is the forth time this year!

Carol: Oh that is not good-

Jim: Not good? It's awful! How am I going to get to Bingo on Friday nights?

Carol: Dear don't worry about that, I'm sure it will only be for a few days-

Jim: If only it were not so far away I could walk. . .

Slight pause, Carol looks disorientated.

Carol: Walk where dear?

Jim looks at Carol exasperated.

Jim: To Bingo on Friday nights. . .

Carol: But why would you walk when you can take the bus?

Jim continues to stare at Carol, then his gaze softens.

Jim: Never mind, we can talk about that later. Has the kettle boiled?

Carol: Oh yes! Your earl grey is sitting.

Carol starts to put away the groceries.

Pause

Carol: Jimmy?

Jim: Yes Hun?

Carol: Do you think, well. . .do you think. . .

Jim: Yes?

Carol: That, I, that I-

Jim: Yes?

Carol: That I'm losing. . .

Jim: Losing what Hun?

Pause

Carol looks dazed.

Carol: What?

Jim: What are you losing?

Carol: Oh! I don't know, I. . .Oh look! Your tea is ready!

Carol smiles as she brings over Jim's tea, he smiles up at her, but is concerned.

Jim: Thank you honey.

Carol notices the newspaper

Carol: Anything in the news lately?

Jim sighs as he flips over to the front page

Jim: Well, there is a lot about the bus strikes. . .the rising tax rates and the competitiveness of the work these days.

Carol: It must be so hard for them. Just think!

Jim: I can't imagine it.

Slight Pause

Carol: Jim?

Jim: Yes Hun?

Carol: Do you remember when we were young?

Jim croaks out a laugh as he picks up his tea.

Jim: Do I ever! You were quite something back then, let me tell you!

Carol: Back then?

Jim catches himself.

Jim: Of course, nothing close to the real catch you are now.

Carol smiles.

Carol: Forty-seven years and you have not changed a day...

Jim: Has it really been that long?

Carol glares at him.

Pause

The two sit there in silence, reminiscing.

Carol: Well, I best be getting back to that kitchen...

Jim: Could you grab me a scone while you are there? With some clotted cream and jam? I do love clotted cream!

Carol: Scones? What scones?

Jim: The scones you just brought from the bakery this morning. The ones still warm from the oven?

Carol: Oh, right.

Carol wanders off into the kitchen in a daze, Jim watches her, worried. He goes back to reading the newspaper; there is noise from the kitchen. Minutes pass and Jim looks up anxious.

Jim: Carol dear?

Carol: Yes Jimmy?

Jim: Did you find the scones?

Carol: Yes, yes coming dear!

Pause

Jim: Hun?

Carol: Yes dear?

Jim: I was thinking...what if we were to get a dog?

Carol: A dog? What for?

Jim: Well, we could go on walks together, see the world. And it would be a great companion, just think!

Carol: A dog...After Max went, I'm not sure I could take another loss.

Jim: Yes but dear-

Carol: I know you love animals, but I cannot take another life on my hands-

Jim: But a dog would be different! Dogs give back love as well as-

Carol: And Max did not give us love?

Jim: Hun, Max was a goldfish. He died after two weeks...

Carol: And I was a wreck then, how do you think I would cope with the death of a dog?

Jim: Alright, alright, it was just a thought...

Long pause. More noise from the kitchen. After a while Carol comes to sit down on the sofa across from Jim with her earl grey tea.

Carol: It is such a nice day today! We should go for a walk.

Jim: But it is quite cold, minus fifteen on the news. Did you not feel it when you went out?

Pause as Carol tries to recollect the memory.

Carol: What was I doing?

Jim sighs sadly.

Jim: You were out buying groceries, and the scones...

Carol: The scones! I keep forgetting. Oh dear Jim I am sorry!

She makes her way back into the kitchen.

Jim: Thanks dear.

Carol's muffled voice comes from inside.

Carol: Scones, scones, scones...

Jim: With Cream and Jam!

Carol: Yes, yes... Scones, scones, scones...where did I put the...

Muffled sounds of cupboards opening and pots clanging.

Pause

Carol: Jimmy dear?

Jim: Yes Hun?

Carol: I, uh...

Jim: Yes?

Carol: I looked for them and...

Jim: And?

Carol: Well...

Jim: Yes?

Carol: There are no scones.

Silence, long pause as Jim processes this information. Finally

Jim: But you went to the bakers...

Carol: I know, I must have...I must have forgotten them.

Jim: At the bakers?

Carol: I must have...

Jim: But-

Carol: I remember paying for them and then...

Jim: And?

Pause, Carol looks lost. Then, after a minute

Carol: What was it you wanted dear?

Jim slumps into his chair, picks up his tea and newspaper and sighs.

Jim: Nothing Honey, everything is fine. Just fine as it is.

Carol smiles.

Carol: I'm glad dear, very glad.

She watches him as he slouches in his chair, head buried deep into the paper. After a moment, she turns back into the kitchen.



By Jasmine Patterson

THE UNFORTUNATELY NON-FICTION STORY OF WHIPPED BUTTER

By Christine Wong

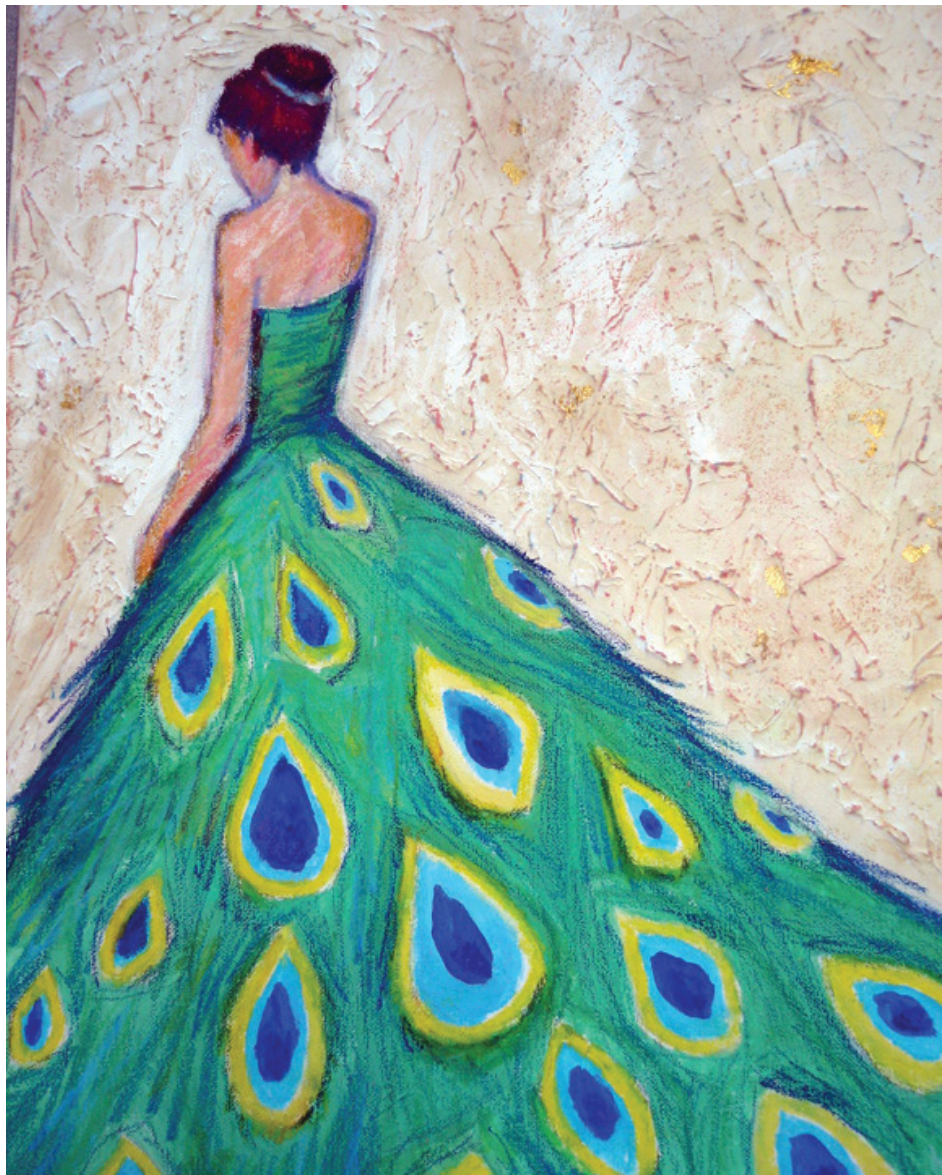
When I was younger, I was fascinated by stairs. From their gloss finish to the round supporting poles, stairs were my go-to mode of pleasure. As obscure as this obsession may seem, well, I guess it really was peculiar. I grew up in a small subdivision house with what seems like the Rue Royatier stairway connecting the basement to the main level. Even though I had a platoon of toys to choose from during my scheduled hour-long play times at 2:30 p.m. and 6 p.m., I always chose to play on the stairs. Instead of playing with proportioned plastic dolls and puzzle pieces, I tested how many stairs I could jump at a time.

I theoreticized that I could weave my body in and out of the railing. So, one day, I tried it. Opposing my safety, I chose to put my head through first. I placed my hands on two wooden poles that supported the railing and tried over and over to pry them apart to be able to fit my head in. One, two, three times and my weak toddler muscles were not able to pull the two-hundred-year-old oak poles apart. Then, a brilliant idea came to my mind. I should just try to push my head through! I pushed and pulled, squishing my cheeks and distorting my face to positions that they should never have been, until I was successful. My dream was becoming a reality! Just as I was about to advance my body through, my mother and father called me down to the kitchen for snacks. They told me it was the traditional tasteless saltine crackers and dry carrot sticks. Though, my journey through the centre of the stairs made me famished. As I dislodged my body from the railing, I tried to eject my head. Boom, boom. I heard and felt a force that trapped my head where it was. As every scared three-year-old, I began to cry. My mother quickly ran up the stairs and found my head between two poles, lying on my stomach, bawling from fear. My mother yelled, "Call 9-1-1! Call 9-1-1! How are we going to get her out? She is only three years old! Call 9-1-1!"

My father responded with, "Wait, we should try to get her out first. Grace, grab the butter. Grace, grab the butter!"

The next thing I know, I have the fatty lubricant spread all over my neck and hair, pushing and pulling my neck, trying to pull my head out just as I had put it in. After a few minutes, a kilogram of whipped butter, and a thousand tears from a combination of myself and my mother, I had finally dislodged my head!

The next week, the alarm system of my house signaled that my father had arrived home. As he entered the door, I greeted him with a loving welcome home with my head through the staircase. Again. "Grace, grab the butter!"



By Yasmin Kirby



By Gabriel Croitoru

TITLE

By Megan Hill

Imagine it's your birthday,
and you have made yourself a cake.
(The cake represents a poem or a piece of writing
for those of you that need the connecting thought)
This cake is beautiful.
It's one of those three tier cakes that you only see in dreams,
with that weird play-dough icing that makes it look super smooth,
and some of those flowers that look so perfect that they could be real flowers
so you don't eat them just in case.
(In other words,
you're really proud of this thing you wrote)

Now, there's a kid.
(The kid represents having to put a title on this poem/piece of writing
for those of you that need the connecting thought)
This is that one child that always appears at parties
You could be 40,
and you never remember inviting him,
but he's there.
He could be a cousin, or a friend's kid, or a changeling...
Who knows?
Anyways you try to ignore the kid for most of the party,
but at cake time he is unavoidable.
This is the kid that stands on a stool
right beside you.
And just stares at the cake
You can see the bloodlust in his eyes.

As you go to blow out the neatly arranged candles on your cake
You see this gremlin
beat you to it.
This entitled brat just steals your moment,
not to mention your wish.
He just takes it
And in his moment of satanic possession,
because he can only be described as the devil's spawn,
when he blows, you can see beads of spit fly through the air, into the side of your face and

on top
of
your
cake

like a Windex bottle on mist mode.

Not only can you feel the wet patch of kid juice on the side of your face,
but your cake...

(your beautiful writing)

Your cake has been tainted
(ruined)

Infected with the disease of childhood

(associated with the pain of trying to find this title)

Then everything carries on as normal.

He gets the first slice of course,

and as your peel the weird, now dewy, play-dough icing off your wedge of cake,
he sits there

taunting you

mouth covered in icing (and the blood of your inspiration)

eating cake flowers that could still, very possibly, be real.

So when my teacher says

"I know this is your favourite part!"

Understanding fully well how difficult it is to sum up my teenage genius into a handful of words

I become disinterested with my masterpiece

because when I stare into the blank abyss

with the center-aligned

blinking text cursor

at the top of my page

before the first line



By Katie Wilkinson

THE BABY IN THE JUNGLE

By Anna Karnay

My family and I had picked a burning hot and sunny day to visit the Manuel Antonio National Park during our Christmas vacation in Costa Rica this year. My Mom is one of those people who brings a guidebook with her on vacation, and carries it around like she's Sherlock Holmes and it's her pipe or something. She had read that it's best to arrive at the park by 7:00 a.m. before the gates open, as they only let eight hundred people into the park and once it's full you have to wait.

Of course, we are not early-birds at the best of times, and definitely not when we're on vacation. So we arrived at the crack of 9:30 a.m. to see a lineup of about two hundred people in front of the locked gates of the park.

We got into line while my Dad and older brother Sebastian went over to the OTHER line that you had to get into to buy the tickets which cost \$20 each. It was so hot that my little brother Christopher and I went over to a coconut vendor's stand to be in the shade. After about twenty minutes, my Dad came back and said, "I can't pay with my credit card because it has a chip and their system won't accept it!"

"How much cash do you have?" asked my Mom.

My Dad replied, "Only \$40."

Now here's what you don't know about my Mom and Dad. My Mom likes to tell my Dad how he should have done things if he doesn't do them the way she would have done them. So none of us were surprised when she asked, "So did you at least buy two tickets?" Of course, my Dad had not, because that's what she would have done.

The plan was quickly determined and put in motion. My Dad would walk up the hill to the ATM machine (as the ticket office had described it as being "just up the road"), Sebastian would get back in the ticket line to buy two tickets for him and my Mom (as my little brother and I were free), and we would continue to stand in our line.

About ten minutes later, we saw a park ranger approach the gate from the inside and start to unlock the padlock. Everyone in the line started picking up their bags and preparing to go in. My Mom called us over from our shady spot and asked, "Where's Sebastian?"

We couldn't see the ticket line from where we were. The gate opened and the line started to move forward. We could only hope that we wouldn't make it through the gate before the others got back!

The line kept moving forward. As we got closer to the gate, we could see that it led into a central courtyard holding area before the actual park entrance. When we got to the gate, my Mom declared, "We're going in."

As it turns out, we were the last ones through and they closed the gate behind us and padlocked the chain that held it shut.

"We'll wait here until Sebastian and your Dad get back," explained my Mom. We kept looking out through the gate at the line until we finally saw Sebastian coming with the tickets. He was about to take his place at the back of the line when we called to him to come up to the gate. My Mom approached the park ranger and said, "This is my son, he was in the line getting the tickets when our line went in; can you please open the gate and let him in?" The park ranger was a rather surly-looking man who said, "If he was

not in the line, then he has to wait in the line.”

Sebastian shrugged his shoulders, reached through the gate to hand my mother her purchased ticket and went to stand at the back of the line. Now another thing you don't know about my Mom is that she will complain if she feels she has been treated unfairly.

So my Mom went to the park entrance where several park employees were checking bags and taking the tickets. She approached one of the ticket takers and said, “My son was buying our tickets when the line went in, and now he is outside at the back of the line by himself and the park ranger won't let him in.” The woman's English was not very strong, so she started to ask some questions to ensure that she understood our dilemma. My Mom knows a bit of Spanish but not enough to explain.

“Perhaps I can speak to the manager,” tried my Mom.

Christopher and I were starting to feel embarrassed as some other people started staring. A woman who had overheard my Mom stepped up to translate. This woman starting speaking rapidly in Spanish in a dramatic fashion, waving her arms. We had no idea what our translator was saying on our behalf other than the word “niño” (which means little boy), but the ticket taker's face began to express concern.

The ticket taker called over her boss, a grey-haired man who was about 5 feet tall with a huge ring of keys attached to his belt. She explained the situation to him in Spanish and he motioned to us with his hand, proceeding to the gate with us following.

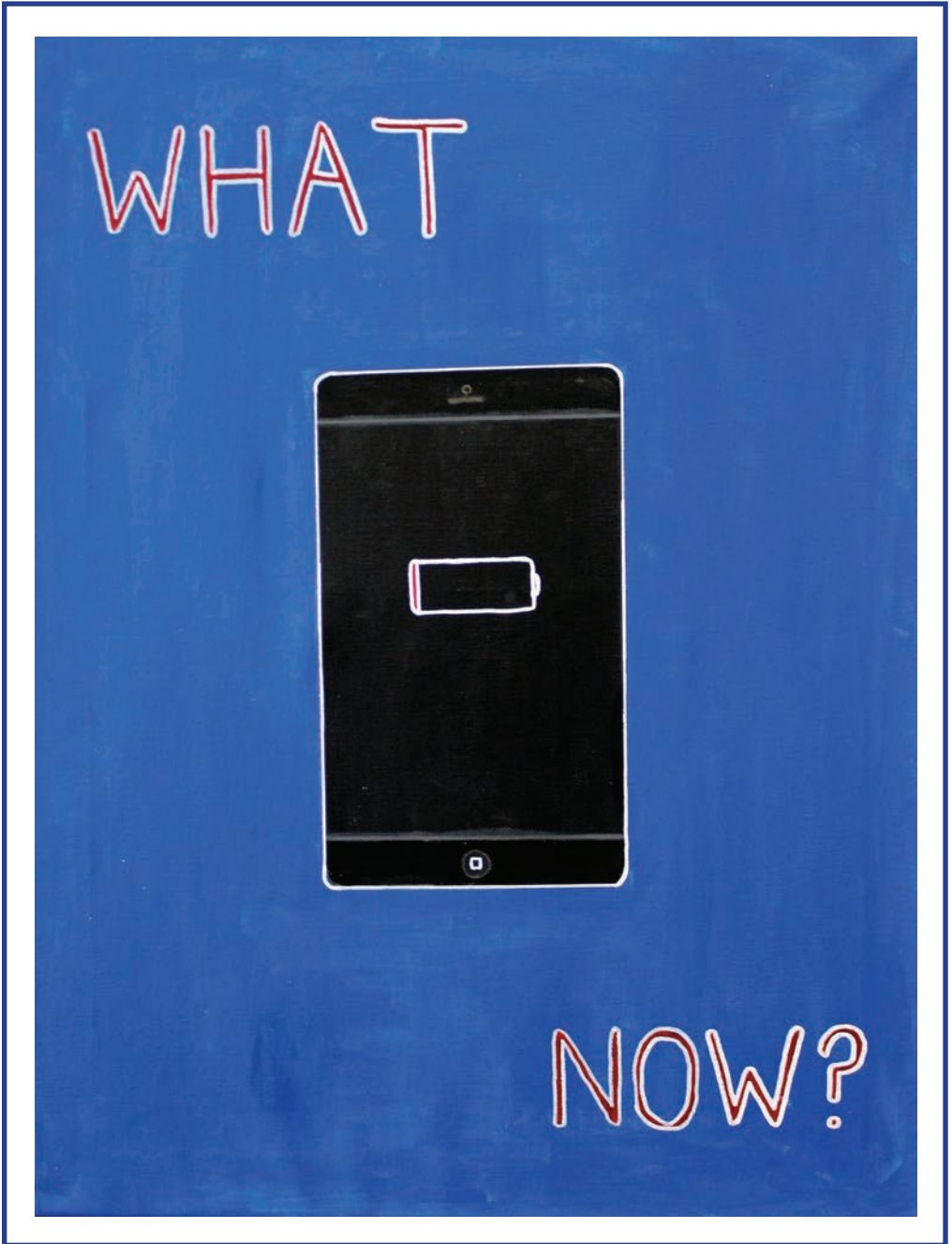
The boss took one of the keys from his ring and the crowd in the lineup pressed forward, thinking that he was going to be letting them in. The boss shook his head no to the people at the front of the line. “Sebastian!” my Mom yelled through the gate. “Come up here; he's letting you in!” I haven't told you that Sebastian is 16 years old and 6'2”. Sebastian quickly came to the front of the line where the boss had now opened the gate, and came through.

As Sebastian passed through the gate, the boss looked up, way up, at him and we could see the look of surprise on his face. He muttered something in Spanish.

Well, to make a long story short, my Dad did eventually make it to the ATM which was two miles uphill, and joined us in the park not long afterwards. We told him the entire story of how we had managed to get into the park together. My Dad asked what we thought the woman who was translating had said. My little brother said that she was looking at him so it was probably something like: “My little boy is outside of the gate all alone.” However, we all thought it was something much more dramatic that had increased the level of urgency. Sebastian laughed and said it was probably more like: “MY BABY'S LOST IN THE JUNGLE!!” However, we still didn't know what the boss had muttered under his breath when he saw Sebastian. My Dad guessed it was: “How long was that baby out there?!”



By Charlotte Houston



By Cameron Teboekhorst

TERMINAL C

By Philip Brenninkmeyer

Like many of my journeys do, it all started at a Starbucks Café with a venti, soy, decaf, no fat, non-foam latte with caramel drizzle. This was not unusual. Before flying I often found myself standing in line, my shoes pressing against the black, slightly greasy stone floor and my eyes focused on the complex list in front of me. However, today was not an average day. Today I had chosen to sit down at one of the veiny wood tables that reminded me of an East Asian dojo. The change in my usual travel routine had been prompted by a change in my travel plans. It had also been said that Starbucks would be serving all their drinks in a comforting red festive holiday cup complete with a little white snowflake pattern.

While waiting to check in, I attempted not to fall into a deep coma from the perfume of the slightly balding middle-aged meerkat in front of me, whom had probably been convinced by a suspicious online advertisement that his perfume would make him the star of his local bowling alley. All the while, I endured the exuberant affections of a fawning couple, thinking of their impending trip to Hawaii, behind me. After enduring 45 minutes of excited giggling and eau-de-bowling alley, I finally made my way to the air transit clerk at the check-in counter only to find out that my flight had been “delayed” until 7:45 by what the US Airlines employee described as: “A spontaneous storm formation that was obstructing air traffic”. As this began to sink in, I found myself wondering if my carry-on would suffice to bludgeon the fawning couple into everlasting silence, when I realized that I had embarked on an involuntary, short term “vacation” inside Terminal C. So I decided to check my bag and seek out the sanctuary of the closest Starbucks.

As I reached into my pocket to retrieve my phone, my sense of smell curtailed as I found myself in front of the bald-headed bottle of perfume that I had the pleasure meeting during check-in. I quickly began to consider other options for overpriced caffeine and Zen like wooden tables when my coffee shop migration was suddenly averted by the man’s choice to rest his bowling-strained legs elsewhere. Pleased that I had just been spared exposure to Abercrombie levels of air pollution, I returned to my phone and began to flick across the CNN homepage. I had barely begun ignoring the first article about Obamacare when the glow of my phone was extinguished by a tsunami of warm liquid. This sudden release of fluids appeared to have been caused by a nearby child colliding with his mother’s coffee cup, causing the woman to expel all the liquids in her cup in my direction. As I struggled for words, the shocked mother began to smoothen me with apologies “Oh dear. Oh my goodness. I am so sorry honey...” she said as if I were a 6 year-old and she had accidentally stepped on my toy car. She proceeded to throw several reams of tissue paper, as well as other unidentifiable paper objects in my direction, as if she were attempting to extinguish a fire, but it did nothing to stave off my phone’s inevitable death. As the mother’s verbal diarrhea continued to pound against my skull I began to re-examine my surroundings.

The Starbucks was not like so many others that dotted the maps of cities large and small across the globe. It was nestled in the corner of the departure area. About 100 meters from the nearest gate and about 10 meters from the escalator that lead back up to the security check. The bar was staffed by two baristas whom both looked like they would be more suited working for a modern fashion magazine. Both wore haircuts that extended to their shoulders on one side and did not stretch beyond 5 milliliters on the

other. They buzzed back and forth between a host of oversized colored chrome machinery and eclectic customers. There was a woman whom I was sure had slept through most of the 1970s and as such, had not realized when the 80s began. She was, as it so happened, asleep. To my right sat a man who had spread out what appeared to be every financial report he had ever penned. While these documents would most likely lead one to believe him to be an accountant they were not in any way necessary for this conclusion to be reached. His rounder than life spectacles, tweed jacket, hunched posture and the no less than seven different colored pens in his breast pocket made this immediately apparent.

My mind shifted... the importance of numbers...time...my plane. My eyes launched themselves against the black and white clock poised against the stark green wall. It was 7:40. As I sprung from my seat, my one hand grabbed my still drenched phone and my other launched toward my venti, soy, decaf, no fat, non-foam latte with caramel drizzle. I said my goodbyes to the still stammering mother and dashed out of the coffee shop. I ran quickly. Past Gate 4, past Gate 6, past Gate 8, past Tim Hortons, past McDonalds, past the sketchy souvenir store. I kept running. Past the man with the turban, who had been "randomly selected," past the sleeping people, past the waking people. Then I reached it- Gate 54.

The line had already dissipated and the only trace it had left was a thin, spindly, man with a baseball cap who was frantically searching for his ticket. I rushed forward, ticket and passport in hand until I was rudely interrupted, "Sir, you can't take that on board". "What do you mean?" I objected tentatively. "It's against regulations Sir. It's too big, Sir." Her continued use of the word sir was beginning to frustrate me, but nevertheless I kept calm, "I just purchased the drink in the terminal." I protested. "We are only allowed to admit drinks 500ml or under onto the aircraft, Sir" she explained with the confidence of a bouncer. "Sir I am going to have to ask you to leave your drink out here". The attendant grew more impatient as I continued to cling to my venti, soy, decaf, non-fat, non-foam latte with caramel drizzle "Sir, this is your last chance" the attendant warned. In frustrated submission, I plunked the cup down on the ticket counter. As soon as I did, I immediately realized my mistake. Shaken by the impact, the plastic lid detached itself from its cardboard partner, closely followed by an explosion of very hot, very venti, soy, decaf, no fat, non-foam latte. I watched as if in slow-motion the mud like beverage spread its arms across the surface of the counter, across the telephone, across the computer screen, and across the electrical socket setting off an array of alarms. I quickly found myself tackled to the floor by a large, muscular man whom I would come to know as Air Marshall Robert Wilson. As my face made contact with the heavily traveled carpet, I was informed that I would be banned from all future US Airlines flights.



By Pascale Mettrick



By Jiaro Cao

THE PERKS OF BEING THE ELDEST

By Laura Symons

Raise your hand if you are the eldest sibling. Well congratulations, you have won the birth order lottery. You are among the likes of myself, Hillary Clinton, J.K. Rowling and Winston Churchill. There are many advantages to being the first born.

First, close your eyes. Beeeep Beep. That's you alarm, waking you up for the third time this morning. You check your watch and see that it is 7:50 in the morning, and you are going to be late. You run down your stairs with your tie half on and shout, "coming" to your dad who is already waiting outside. You've had a hectic morning because you slept in and all you want is to have a moment to relax while in the car, and to stretch out your legs. Being the eldest, there is no "my seat or your seat" when it comes to shotgun. It is rightfully your place, where you can sit and stretch out, while your younger siblings are constrained to the space in the back.

Another benefit to being the eldest is that you are always the first to get toys, and clothes. Think about it. There is a reason that mothers only have baby showers for their first borns. It is because theoretically they won't need any new stuff for babies in the future, because they already have all the supplies they need. This is true even into adolescents. Youngest, I'm sure you can recall a time when instead of that new shiny dress in the storefront, you were met with a tired hand-me-down from your elder sibling.

On another hand, many studies, including the famous birth order study by Alfred Adler, suggest that eldest children are high achievers, and more likely to be a type A personality. So what does this mean? Well, PBS news reports that eldest children "do better in school, are less likely to have substance abuse problems and accumulate more wealth over their lifetimes". In fact, this high achieving trend can be seen in the professional world: half of the American presidents, as well as half of CEO's are first borns (Pathe).

Younger siblings are like dogs, who never stop trying to catch their tail, even when they know they have lost. So, although I have pointed out many arguments as to why eldest siblings are the best, I'm sure that there is at least one younger sibling in this room who is not ready to put their armor down and admit defeat. One argument that I'm sure is swirling around their head is that younger siblings parents are more lenient with them, due the comfort that, "they have done this parenting thing before", and that their oldest child didn't die on grad trip, so you can go. While this is a very valid point, might I point out that eldest siblings' reputations and trust are not stained by other siblings, unlike the reputations of younger siblings. Say you have a horribly delinquent elder sibling, who got arrested on grad trip, chances are you are not going on grad trip. So, I say that in this, the scale tips in favor of the eldest siblings, whose reputations are entirely made by themselves, unlike their younger siblings, who reputations can be swayed positively or negatively by their eldest siblings.

In a world that is forever changing, there are only a few things that are constants, and being a first born is a title that can never be taken away from you. The youngest may not always be the youngest, as you could always get a new sibling, however, you are forever the oldest. So oldest, I encourage you to enjoy this title to the fullest potential, and snag the shotgun seat in your car.

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By Ariana Hernandez

HELIUM

By Melody Li

“Welcome to Melody’s 9 p.m. show time, your favorite Study Buddy. Coming to you from your school’s nightly self-study period...(I raised my already-too-high eyebrow)... but only audible when the teacher is in the bathroom!” One person began to chortle out loud, a sound that grew into unrestrained guffaws of laughter. Then others joined in and began hitting each other on the back. Hilarious. I was hilarious.

That was then, back in China, when I had the magic in me. I never imagined that these punch lines would one day torment me.

Now, let’s fast-forward a bit. Country: Canada. Weather: Cold enough to freeze a polar bear. Place: Grade 7 classroom. Every single person was laughing in the room – everyone, except me. I looked at them as they laughed with abandon. I just didn’t get it. A classmate had said something, but it wasn’t funny. Was it? No, or at least not to me. That day I realized that the biggest challenge of coming to Canada was not the academics, the leadership skills, or the culture, but the challenge of HUMOUR.

You have probably guessed that Melody “DeGeneres” Li was forced into retirement. The glory, my glory, was gone. But I vowed to make a comeback. Not only would I understand these jokes, but I would also tell the funniest ones—jokes that would make people laugh until they lost consciousness. I shared this marvelous plan with my friends. One friend cautioned, “Don’t even try. I’ve been here since grade five, but I still can’t understand English jokes. Take my advice: Just pretend it’s funny and laugh along with others.”

To sum the situation up – no one supported my mission. Ok then, I would go undercover, alone. Top-Priority Mission ‘English Humour’ was underway. Plan: read funny novels, watch stand-up comedy, and stay positive.

I opened my laptop, clicked on Google Chrome, and searched ‘Funniest joke on the planet.’ Scrolling down, down, down. Not funny, not funny, not funny. After days of researching on the Internet, I found the perfect joke. My mission was on. I tossed and turned all night, too excited to sleep.

At the beginning of the next day’s English class, I asked my teacher if I could tell the class a joke. “Sure. Why not?” he said.

I hurried to the front of the class. Sixty eyes stared at me. I took the plunge: “So, I started a new job as a selfie photographer. It’s something I can really photograph myself doing,” I declared, beaming.

There followed a long and awkward silence. My face flushed crimson, and my knees started to buckle. With a sudden realization, I knew where I had gone wrong: “No!” I shouted. “I meant *picture* myself doing!”

Months later, in Science, we were separated in groups in order to talk about the periodic table. The memory of my complete humiliation receding, on an impulse I decided to try again. “So, Helium walks into a bar. The bartender says: ‘Sorry, we don’t serve noble gasses here. He doesn’t

react.” Everything was in slow motion. I could only hear the swallowing sound in my throat and the mechanical sound of the clock -- tick, tick. All the blood in my body left my extremities and raced towards my heart. Anxiety churned in my stomach, and invisible hands clawed at my throat, choking me.

“That’s funny!” declared my science teacher, breaking the interminable silence with a smile. “I totally get it! Good one, Melody.” Then, my classmates started to move their facial muscles in a strange way that I had not seen since I had come to Canada. No. It couldn’t be. Were they laughing? I heard people muttering, “I get it. Helium. He doesn’t react.” My blood began to circulate again, warmth slowly returning to my body.

Mission Accomplished.



By Anjali Sachdev

A NARRATIVE

By Eloisa Cervantes

A narrator's responsibility is the most important, yet the most underrated, if I do say so myself.

See, my job is to tell you everything I see, and I'm supposed to make it interesting, too. All narrators are supposed to be good, but we're not equally good. Naturally, I'm quite brilliant, but the job itself is a pain. When I do what I want, the characters *always* get annoyed at me, and they don't like me very much. The feelings are mutual.

If I were to stop altogether, let's say, on a day like today when I'm feeling especially lazy, how big of a predicament would you and everyone else be faced with?

"....and that's when she kept going, on and on, so I tried to cut a piece of duct tape, but I didn't have any scissors--"

"Hold on."

"What is it?"

"Where's the narrator gone off to? It's quiet, for once..."

"How should I know? Anyway, that's when I said 'Give it a rest!' but she yelled 'I'm not a composer--'"

"It's funny because one day we'll all be decomposing."

"Robert, will you *stop*..."

"Stop interrupting or stop making jokes?"

"Both!"

See? At this point I'm supposed to tell you how Robert laughed, what the first person looked like, and all those common things narrators do. I can't say that Robert had a wishy-washy laugh because that's an absurd way to describe a laugh and it's not very specific. If I do a bad job, I get fired, and no line of work, even the most tedious, pays *this* well.

It wasn't even my decision to be a narrator in the first place. I just wanted to be a rocket scientist, but then I discovered some terrible news:

I'm awful at science, and even worse in mathematics-- talk about calculated decisions, I couldn't even choose a job for myself.

"Hey! Stop talking about yourself! You're supposed to be telling our story!"

Did you hear something? Something loud and annoying? That must have been Robert.

"He's making some awful jokes, make him stop!"

"If you can't appreciate my jokes, Jamie, then leave."

"No, I think you should leave--"

Quite honestly, I'm not sure how these two are friends.

If you hear them interrupting again, would you be so kind as to swat at them a few times? They usually stop after this, and then I get new characters to work with. It's like the refresh button in a web browser.

Another thing about being a narrator is that I can lie to you.

For example, I could say that Jamie admits *she* was the one who finished Robert's slice of pizza when he wasn't looking during that party they went to a few weeks ago, and send him home in tears.

If you think that's an overreaction, then take this into account: Robert had missed lunch and breakfast, and a very stressful day at work, and these things caused him to arrive late to the party and miss the arrival of the pizza. He had triumphantly claimed the last slice, though it was a tad cold, and taken a bite out of it. The dinner gathering was in fact more of a dismal pizza party since it only served the one pizza. When a colleague distracted him, it was only for a second-- but it was enough.

When Robert turned back to his plate, the pizza was gone, and the culprit unknown.

That was the night he vowed revenge.

Remember Jamie's hypothetical confession one hundred and fifty-two words ago?

Well, it's not an example anymore, because for all you know, that's exactly what just happened.

Look, there he goes! Robert is speed-walking so desperately that his shoelaces have become untied. Let me tell you that he's tripped on his face after stepping on the left shoelace. Today's a particularly muddy, wet day, so it's not very good for falling on the grass.

They're in a park, by the way. Did I not mention that? Don't tell my boss I forgot that (small) detail, okay?

Anyway, now I say that it's all a lie, and you just spent an entire minute of your life reading about a dinner party that never happened.

"I would *not* get that emotional over pizza."

Why is Robert speaking? You were supposed to swat the characters. *Swat!*

You're not very good at this. Maybe you should take up rocket science.

"Actually, *I'm* a rocket scientist."

What?

"Uh, and so is Robert."

...

"That kind of job is out of this world, am I right, Jamie?"

"One more of those and that pizza story will come true, understand?"

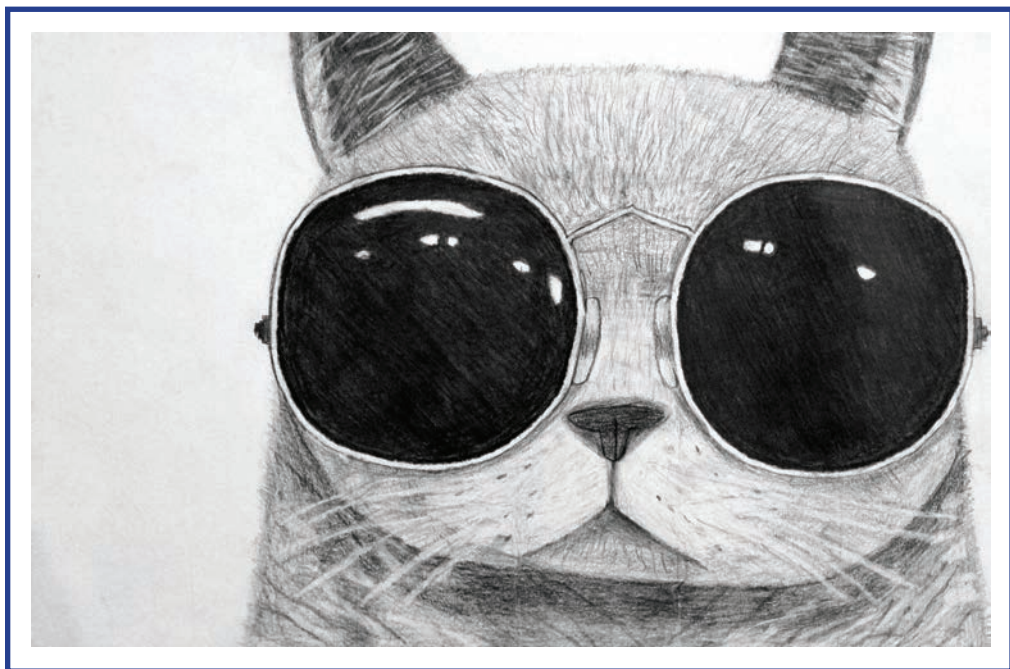
Oh, dang it, I've been slacking off for too long. If I don't start narrating the actual story soon I'll be let go for sure, and rocket science won't be able to help me at all in the rough world that is reality.

Here is the real story:

It was a damp, dewy Saturday in mid-October. Jamie and Robert were walking in the park when they passed a group of peculiar-looking dogs...



By Leah Richardson



By Malcolm Leask

SCHADENFREUDE

By Christian Mele

For the past two months my peers and I have been frantically working on university applications, writing them out, comparing them, cross-checking them, and analyzing them. Some of the more spiritual students have started suspending them all from strings in a room and meditating hoping that they fill out themselves from some outer aether, while they sip their fancy coffee from Starbucks. For these applications we are practically required to document our entire lives to get into university and in order to do that we must search the dark banks of our minds, search for those obscure extracurriculars that might put you ahead of others. We all study as hard as we can to get the highest marks we can possibly get, grinding our teeth going through tests and biting our nails in anticipation for those highly anticipated report cards. Then when we present the universities with our nice and pretty A+ grades and maybe they accept us into their prestigious programs based on how hard we tried to make our minds collapse under all that knowledge we were forced to consume. They all end up looking the same at the end, a nice mark here and a cool extracurricular there. They always do, but we worry anyways.

Some people are starting to go crazy, and I'm not excluded from that group. We're all going crazy in our own ways, each one of us in our own special little way. Some of us are staying "calm". Most of us stay "calm" by breathing into paper bags, or squishing little stress balls until all the tiny little plastic beads come out. Others stay "calm" by talking to the university guidance counselor, and complaining about the arduous application process. "Calm" means you don't have a nervous breakdown and start singing songs in the middle of class, because you can't figure out why the website won't accept your application. After your first nervous breakdown, you notice you made a mistake on it; like replacing your reference's last name with "teacher". Then you end up having another nervous breakdown, this time involving Styrofoam cups and three tubs of blue Playdoh, building the world's "most wicked" Playdoh sand castle. That might have been me, it might not have been.

One of my friends is applying to become a doctor: "entry level genius" is what we've taken to calling her. You need 100% in the course to even be considered. Albert Einstein couldn't even achieve that, and this girl is somehow managing to pull it off. Scattered about those amazing marks are extracurriculars that would stretch on for days if you tried to list them all. Sports like Ultimate Frisbee, Field Hockey, and for some reason, Underwater Basket Weaving are all written down in her applications. She then writes beautifully long essays, flourishing with grace, perfect anecdotes, life experience, and manages to still make it relevant to the program she is applying to. Never in a thousand years could I attribute baking cookies, to becoming a neurosurgeon. After spending years of working diligently on her studies, her extracurriculars, "Maybe I'll get in" is what she tells us. Probably. Maybe.

Another one of my friends is the more relaxed kind, the "Sleepy Scott". When I say relaxed I mean lay on a couch and fall asleep while the rest of us panic and fill out forms as fast and efficiently as possible. We scream in agony as we get another request for another supplementary application application and he sleeps through it all. We still have no idea what he is applying for or where he is going, what we do know is what he'll probably be doing when he gets to university. He might become an Astrophysicist, snoozing on rockets all the way to Mars. At least he isn't losing hair like the rest of us.

I'm not without my own little insanities as well. I'm applying to Biomedical Engineering, my friends call me the "discount doctor", a guy who's going to be building all the machinery that doctors use, without using it myself. What's great is that I don't need to be in the operating room where all the goop is but I still get to help people. No goop, no problem! I had to choose out of tens of different fields of engineering to decide where I would be going and studying for the rest of my life, a sad realization I had to accept; student forever. I decided that helping others might be the only way I can redeem myself for being such a pain to all the teachers that I annoy in extra help with all my super obvious questions. Maybe in the future I'll be able to help all those teachers I annoyed to help me get those A's.

On all of my applications, of which there are five, I am required to speak usually about something that interests me about the program; "Why choose our university?" It baffles me that they ask this every time, and expect a different answer from every person. It must really suck for the admission officials being able to read their own university description directly from the website with its own little unique flourish. It's practically asking to be copy pasted straight into the tiny 300 word field box, perfectly sitting there, your plagiarism in all its glory. You'd probably still get in, they don't really pay attention to those applications do they? I've been writing about how I want to attend their program, how I want to help people, and how I want to achieve more than I ever have before. Which is true I guess, but the way we have to put it down in words, it makes me feel like I'm groveling. I get down on my keyboard, head bowed and start typing compliments like "beautiful campus", "great residence", "amazing program" and "I plan to make a change" to even get considered by the bot that filters you into the work pile of a poor university grad student forced to go through these. Then comes the extracurriculars; it looks like I'm trying to complete every single activity under the sun to try and get into a university. I might as well have been the valedictorian for every single school in Toronto from what my application says. Head of Music, head of games club, head of running, pyrotechnics, archery, martial arts, and flying with your eyelashes. I covered nearly everything I had ever done in my short existence on that application, and even then it looked sparse compared to other applications.

As I come to finish my applications I find that I am starting to mellow out, in a kid coming off a sugar high kind of way. Crashing and burning seems to be my most recent New Year's resolution that I'm actually keeping. As I finish more applications, more activities flood in and take my time, but they are ever looming, hanging over me as I wait for my acceptance. Maybe I'll be able to take a break someday. Sleep counts as a break, right?

THE CHOCOLATE CONUNDRUM

By Inaara Ahmed-Fazal

Mr. Seamus Twatterfly simply could not get enough of chocolate. So, when he happened upon a rather large package of it at the corner of 627th and 983rd (and mind you, chocolate was currency in this fine city), it seemed only natural that he would devour it all within seconds.

Mr. Twatterfly thought of himself as the best detective in all of Antiquated York. (He also thought one would fall off the Earth upon reaching Florida.)

He arrived at work with the usual remark about “the nerve of some people, driving straight through green lights!” On cue, his boss, Mr. Fargo Pomclip, who seemed to possess more matter between the ears, came striding briskly up to him.

“\$1,295,348.51,” said Mr. Pomclip (who appeared oddly angry for someone who usually resembled a bossy elderly fox), “worth of chocolate has allegedly been stolen from the bank. Tracers were found at the corner of 627th Street and 983rd Avenue; however, it appears that the culprit...ate... the evidence.”

Then, when Mr. Pomclip assigned this case to Mr. Twatterfly (who ate chocolate so frequently it appeared to be eating his brain), Mr. Twatterfly puffed himself up, simulating a peacock. He subsequently made a vow to “rid the land of this foul thief”, attempted to pivot on his heel, and skipped away.

Upon surveying the scene, Mr. Twatterfly found a large package full of chocolate wrappers lying near a mailbox, and a “Eureka!” moment.

He promptly called Mr. Pomclip, demanding that he “get his derrière over here immediately!”

As Mr. Pomclip was the sort of person that travelled to Solitary Singles’ events with an entourage, it was quite odd that he arrived with only one sleep-deprived police officer.

When the small party arrived, Mr. Twatterfly pompously marched to them and announced his ground-breaking discovery. Mr. Pomclip found himself looking very smug as he pointed out that they already knew this, and there was no point sticking around *whatsoever*.

However, the recently deflated Mr. Twatterfly found *himself* deep in concentration (or perhaps constipation). Finally, he arose from whatever imaginary toilet he was sitting on, and declared that he remembered finding and eating a large package of chocolate the previous night at this very location.

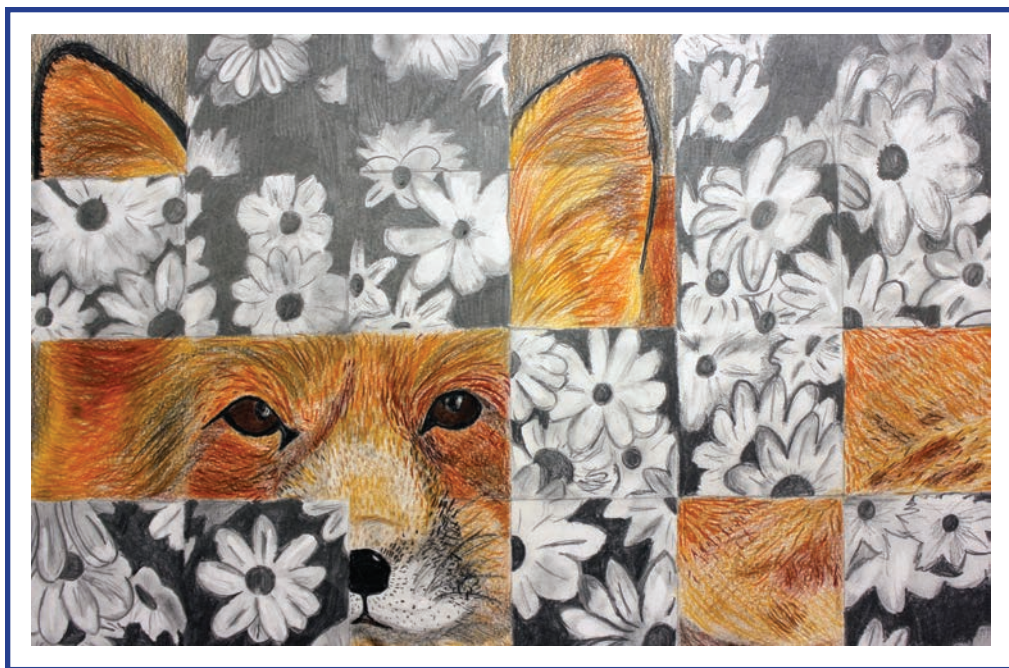
If it was possible for a man to look like a seagull that had succeeded at pooping on a brand new car, Mr. Pomclip fit the description as he told the officer to arrest Mr. Twatterfly “immediately; he’s *clearly* the culprit.”

Mr. Twatterfly proceeded to dramatize his “inevitable death”, clutching a mailbox in front of him. “Wait!” he exclaimed. “This mailbox has the name Fargo Pomclip on it! We must be in his front yard!”

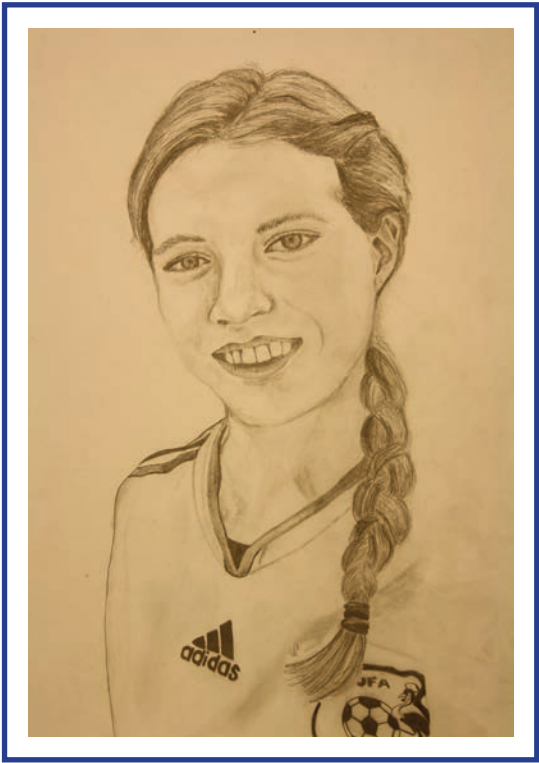
In a sequel to the earlier Pooping Seagull, Mr. Pomclip now turned swamp green in a stunning Threatened Chameleon.

The lethargic police officer finally managed to put two and three together: “Pomclip, you’re under arrest for Chocolate Thieving and Obvious Evidence-Disguising Using a Mailbox! Twatterfly, I am grateful for your help on this case.”

“I solved a case?”



By Erika Thomazi



By Nathalie Colbourne

HIGH TIDE

By Jack Vanden Broek

*"Supply and demand is like the ocean.
Just like the tide, supply and demand for resources goes up and down...
and if you are not careful, you can get sucked into the surf."
Bodhi, Point Break (deleted scene)*

Carver rubbed the sleep from his eyes and stifled a yawn. It was 3:30 in the morning, and his shift wouldn't be over until 7. Carver had been hired to stock shelves at the local Odd Cabbage grocery store over the summer. It wasn't the worst job. He made \$11 an hour, but most of his friends were camp counselors or worked in fancy restaurants away from the city.

He walked along the aisles, changing the inventory and the prices as he went about his business. Carver turned the corner into aisle 24, the cleaning products aisle. The tune he was whistling faltered when his jaw dropped and the price gun slipped from his fingers and clattered onto the linoleum.

The once-full shelves now lay bare. Every Tide product had disappeared from the store. Carver wondered if this meant he would just have to microwave his underwear to clean them. Was he just very forgetful, or was there something more sinister afoot?

Carver walked into the staff room and sniffed around. It was too dim to make out solid shapes, but he still had his nose. He could smell detergent in the air--it smelled like cleanliness and mystery. Carver heard a door slam, and he ran towards the noise.

He pushed open the door, just in time to see a van squeal out of the parking lot. It was headed towards Stan's 24 Hour Coin Laundry. Carver hopped into his car and started to give chase.

For the next 20 minutes, the two vehicles were locked in a high-speed game of cat and mouse. Horns were blared, rubber was burnt, and Kenny Loggin's "Highway to the Danger Zone" was played in the background on loop. It was awesome.

The van screeched to a halt outside of Stan's 24 Hour Coin Laundry. Two men dressed in black suits stepped out and opened up the trunk, unveiling the mountain of orange Tide containers stacked within. Carver pulled up behind them and leapt from his car.

"Hey, look man, that was a pretty sweet chase back there, but I kind of need those back" he called out. One of the men in black approached him: "If I were you, I would walk away now, kid. Things are about to get ugly," the man warned.

Carver stood his ground. The man sighed. "You see, kid, this is something bigger than you or me. This is something ancient and universal. The battle between Tide and Dawn Extra Strength has been raging on for centuries under everyone's nose. But tonight we are going to change everything. We are going to blow up this laundromat and plant all of this second rate detergent around as evidence. Tomorrow the Dawn shall rise!" he exclaimed, raising a triumphant fist into the air.

A gunshot rang out. The man in black looked confused and looked down at the blood blooming from his chest. He collapsed face first, dead, onto the pavement. The other man in black held a smoking gun and said in a super cool, one-liner tone, "No dawn is coming for you, Bud; I am."

Carver stood slacked jaw again. If he had any presence of mind he would have taken off in his car when the first man warned him. He did not move a muscle.

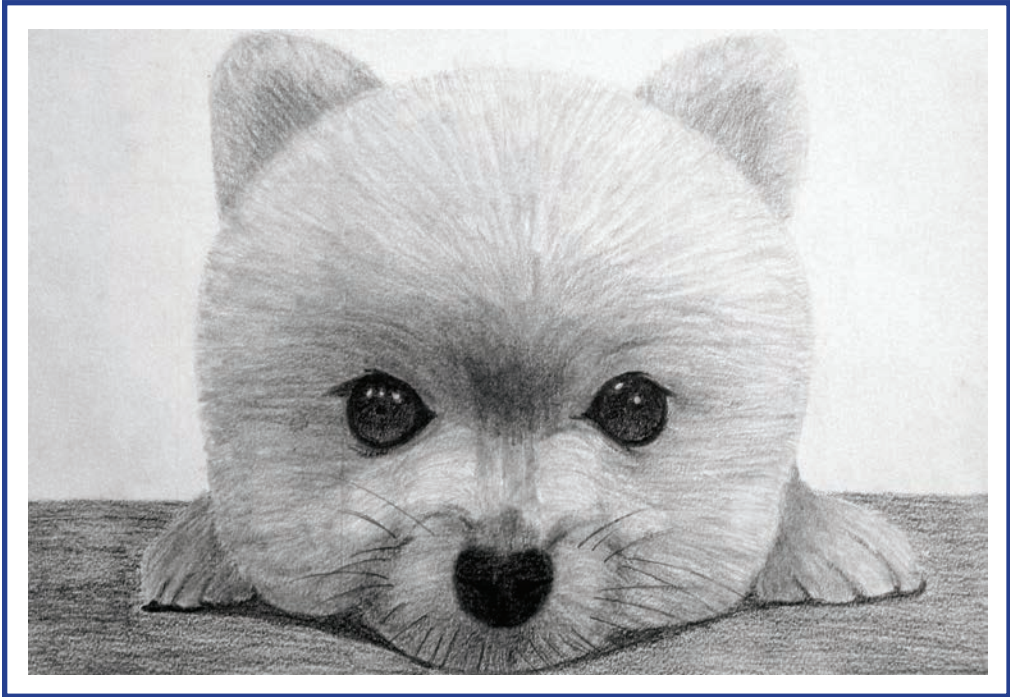
The remaining man holstered his weapon and walked up to Carver. "Look, Son, you have two options right now. You know too much, so I either have to kill you right now or you can join the Tide Corporation," he explained.

Carver swallowed hard. "What does it pay?" he asked. "\$13 an hour," the man replied. The two of them exchanged a serious look and shook hands...

The End



By Anna Turner



By Tao Tao

MY MARVELOUS MATURITY

By Sarah Williams-Habibi

People have been mentioning my maturity level's low;
That I'm too childish – progressing too slow!

I'm not polite, I don't ask folk: "How do you do?"
But, of course I always tell them when I'm going to the loo.

I don't have a filter, I don't think before I talk;
In the halls I'm found running, as I never walk.

You'll often find me laughing at a joke that's not funny
Or buying a little something for an insane amount of money!

You'll often find me mesmerized by dancing little lights,
Or getting overly excited when visiting tourist sites.

You'll often find me eating, but unfortunately I can't cook;
Though, I have mastered the smoothie without a recipe book.

You'll often find me yelling for you to turn around;
Then realize everyone's listening, and carefully inspect the ground.

You'll often find me staring, at something out of sight
And walk into a pole that was formerly on my right.

You'll often find me rushing, as I'm often running late
Or wishing you a 'Happy Birthday' on a completely different date.

You'll often find me cleaning up the mess that I've just made
Or running back to class, realizing I probably should have stayed.

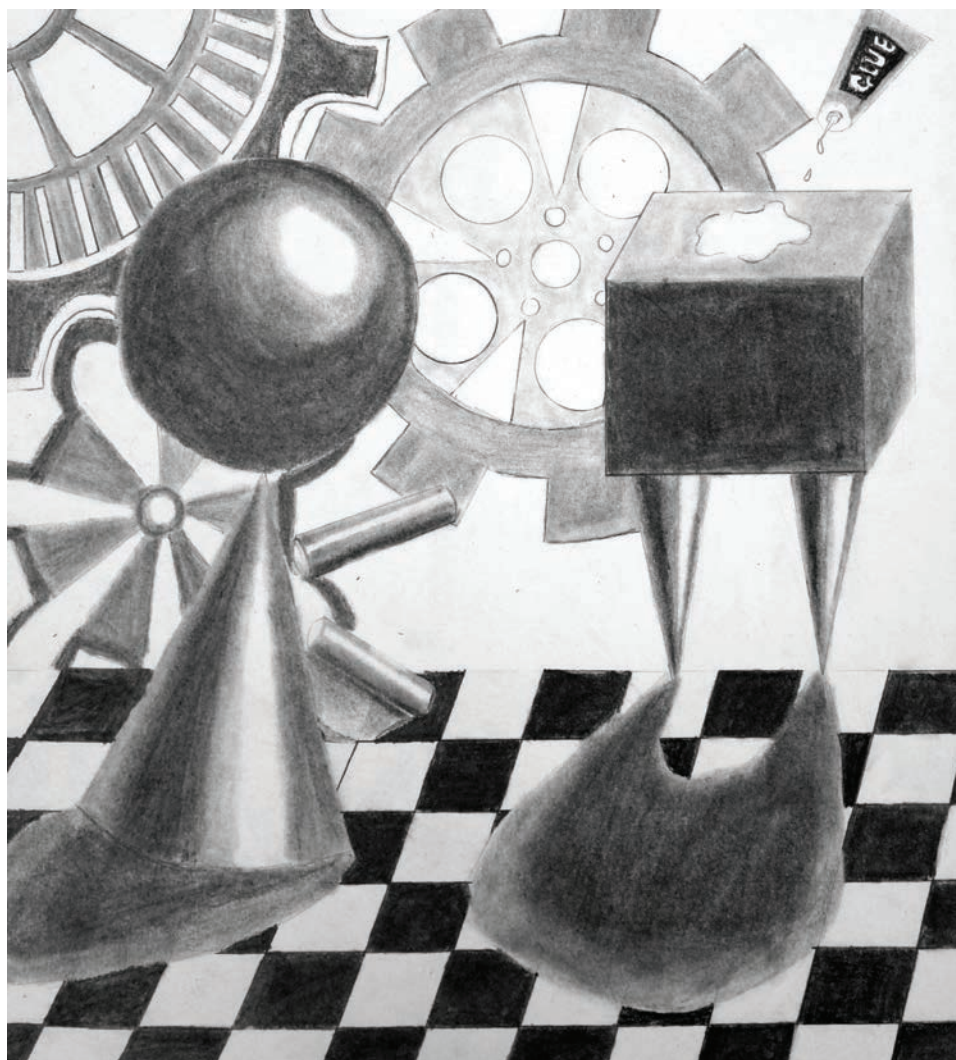
You'll often find me sprinting to that course I often miss
Or writing cheesy, rhyming poetry, much like this.

I do admit I've a long way to go
But I don't really care if I'm progressing that slow.

I have quite a while to figure out my life –
So I'll just enjoy it, without all that adult strife!



By Megan Hill



By Donna Dong

IT WASN'T YOUR ORDINARY DIAPER RASH

By Karina Burke



How was I supposed to know? I mean I was only one and a half. The naiveté I had was undeniable; I was too young to comprehend right from wrong. Victoria, my sister, and I always played together; from the day I was born up until now, we did everything together. Some people might have even called us inseparable. At my Nanny's house Victoria would be found playing dress up and I always followed her like a lost puppy. Innocence glistened in my eyes as if I could do nothing wrong.

It was not your ordinary Saturday afternoon, today unlike all the other days Victoria did not want to play dress up, she wanted to play with cars. I played with her and everything was great, up until the moment she tried to use my cars. I liked playing with her do not get me wrong, but I always had a problem with her taking my toys. My grandfather always told me that she took them just to see how mad I would get. That is why on this particular day I thought of a new tactic to hide my toys from her. In the past I would hide them behind the couch, in my bed, or even in the laundry machine. The idea that I had been stirring up in my head was the idea of placing the items in my diaper; I mean, why would she ever look there?

From that day until summer, she never suspected a thing. We kept playing and I kept putting my toys down my diaper. The diaper that I wore was like my own transportable treasure chest. We would play with Barbie's; if I had a favorite Barbie there it went down my diaper. Even though I couldn't use them while they were down my pants, it still felt better knowing that my sister could not use them. Even though I hid all my toys down my diaper it does not mean that my sister and I did not get along, it means that I was naïve and did not know better. My parents would change my diaper and find all kinds of toys. One day

unlike any other, they found an unusual object in my diaper.

The memory still on replay in my head: entering the wine store, scouting out the corks. My Grandma liked wine and anything to do with wine. For that reason I made an initial approach to the cork section. Since I used to hide toys from my sister by putting them in my diaper, I thought that it would be okay if I hid a cork there. I had successfully snuck away from my parents, the only thing I needed to do then was get something for my Grandma. There it was on the second shelf, a shiny silver corkscrew and a pink decorative cork. I stood on the bottom shelf and reached as high as I could, grasped onto the corkscrew and brought it down. Then, I stretched up to the counter and grabbed the pink cork. Somehow I managed to sneak a cork along with a corkscrew from the shelf, and place it in my diaper without anyone seeing. It was only after we got home that my parents discovered that I had something in my diaper. They originally thought that I just had an incident, but after they started changing my diaper they realized the mischief I had gotten into in the store.

Even now, my family constantly reminds me of all the things that they used to find down my diaper. It seems like it was always their entertainment for the day, seeing what treasures they would find. The toy hiding has passed, and now Victoria and I share everything. You would have suspected that we would be hiding clothes and shoes from each other, since I used to hide my toys, but I guess that toys meant more to me than clothes do today. I suppose that part of it is that I have grown up and now enjoy sharing. My innocence on that specific day could potentially get me in a lot of trouble today. I am sure the reason my parents started to teach me right from wrong was because of this exact day. I am happy to report that my sister and I matured, and are closer now than we have ever been before. She is currently living on the other side of the country, and I realize that you should never take for granted what you have today, even if that does mean sharing a Barbie.



By Jordan Chin

A TREATISE ON THE CULTURAL AND PERSONAL RELATIVITY OF COMEDY

By Spencer Arshinoff

I was, for the first time in the history of my schooling, excited about writing an essay. And though I may have been interested, amused, or even glad about projects for English before, I would never have imagined that it would happen now, in Grade 9, where school is seen as the part of the day you have to get through before you can play video games. And why was I excited about this essay? Because the goal was to be funny.

Being funny is something that I can do. I mean that in the same way that someone can play the didgeridoo or speak Yiddish, except that being funny is something you'd want to do. Humour has been a part of my life for a while. While I know that everyone has some sense of humour, I think that I can actually be funny, as opposed to just being able to laugh at people who take the time and effort to be funny. In the same way that someone whose parents speak German to them at home (presumably as a punishment for something) would end up speaking German, I think I can be funny, just because my parents are always joking around. My relationship with my father, in particular, is very humour-based. He was in an improv troupe in Montreal. And his father, who by some strange coincidence is also my grandfather, is always joking around, which I assume is how my father got his humour. He got it from his father, who got it from his father. I can only assume that, in the 16th century, one of my paternal ancestors somewhere in the Russian Empire made a joke about Tsar Ivan "The Terrible" and narrowly avoided beheading, which I am thankful for.

Also, I have taken many youth improv courses at Second City, the elite comedy facility that has given me a great amount of knowledge about humour and an even greater amount of t-shirts. This summer, I finally was able to progress to the "advanced" level, which I did by discreetly signing up for the advanced courses. We drew diagrams about humour, but every once in a while we played some games so we didn't forget that it was a camp and not school. We then wrote our very own sketches with the knowledge they had given us (still awaiting a reply from SNL). They told us when to be funny in a scene, and what to be funny about. But they never told us how to be funny. And until you can upload skills onto yourself, like they once did in *The Matrix*, that isn't something you can really teach someone else. Being funny is something some people develop, and others may not. But you can't make everyone laugh (well, I certainly can't). People, even if they are very much like each other, will laugh at different things. And if you're trying to be funny—and even if you're succeeding—you will never be able to please everyone in your audience.

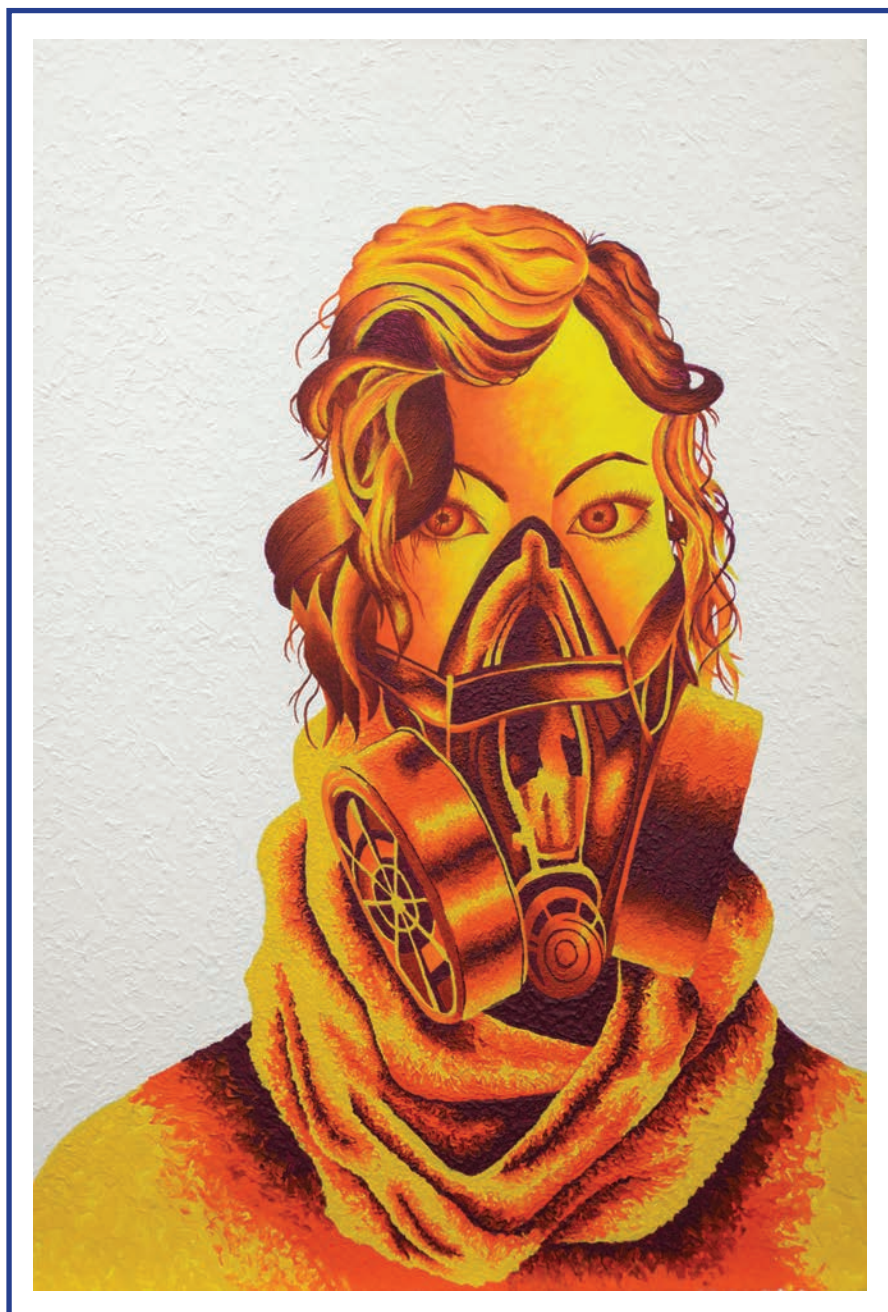
All people are raised with some sense of humour. Even the really cranky old people you see on the bus probably were. But a lot of who we are is controlled by our parents, and our culture. This includes comedy, which does not always easily translate from one location to the next. A good example of this is Japan. For those of you who don't know, for most of recorded history, the Japanese Empire was secluded from the rest of the civilized world by the East Sea. In that time, it developed customs and culture significantly different from anywhere else in the world. In other words, it became weird. Now Japan is a developed, first world country with some of the most advanced intellectual achievements in the world, but it is still really weird. And the comedy shows it. Once, I watched a clip of a Japanese comedy show where

to celebrate the Chinese Year of the Sheep, a man was stripped down to his underwear, had face paint put on him and ran with a pack of stampeding sheep. When he arrived back at the studio, they shaved his badly dyed hair off. (Look it up.) And Japanese people find this hilarious, in the whole-hearted way that a North American would not-ironically find, say, this essay. They laugh at it, and not because it was weird. And yet, they don't get our funniest stand-up comedians, or our best sitcoms (not that there's anything great about them, to be honest). But from this we can learn that whoever and wherever you are, someone probably finds you funny. You may get laughs from middle-aged men. Or teenagers. Or you can get a cult following overseas. You just have to find a type of humour that suits you.

And though not everyone can get up on a stage and tell jokes, we should consider ourselves lucky that we are born finding something funny, whatever that may be. All of us, even those who may not seem to be able to, can laugh at something, and that is truly the best way to make us feel better, if you don't count those mini-donuts they serve at the CNE. And yes, you may be jealous of a person who supposedly has a better sense of humour than yours, but rest assured you still have one, and if you find them funny, you are doing a good job already. Just don't expect to ever get paid for it. Laugh as much as you want to, at what you want to. Humour is the greatest thing ever, and I am very, very grateful that I don't live in one of the humourless alternate universes scientists are on the cusp of maybe discovering.



By Katherine Kocik



By Alexandra Douramakos

COFFEE TASTING

By Annie Chen

Day 1:

I don't know what the school was thinking.

She emerged into the classroom wearing the most ridiculous floral pantsuit from the 70s. The mere sight of her gave you the impression of an over grown peach. Framing her pudgy spray-tanned face was helmet hard, salon styled hair with heavy-artillery hair sprayed bangs that stuck vertically away from her forehead by at least four inches.

In her hand was a steaming cup of black coffee.

Taken aback, we gawked as we waited for her to address us.

"Children of the Lord!" she boomed, flashing her unnaturally white smile.

We stared.

She was our new substitute.

Day 2:

When we entered class the next day, the first thing we noticed was the new substitute dangerously wobbling on a stepladder, pinning up a large poster with twinkling letters. We stopped dead in our tracks.

WHEN YOU WISH UPON A STAR

YOU'RE A FEW MILLION LIGHTYEARS LATE.

THAT STAR IS DEAD.

JUST LIKE YOUR DREAMS.

Were we hallucinating?

She snapped us out of our daze by announcing the two words that sent all students to their own living hell.

"Pop quiz."

I looked at the first question.

1. After countless requests, Principal Hagar still refuses to offer a raise to the substitute teachers. He is thrown horizontally off of a cliff 122.5m high at 10.0m/s.
 - a) How long does it take for Principal Hagar to reach the bottom of the cliff?
 - b) What is the horizontal displacement?
 - c) What is Principal Hagar's final velocity?

** PLEASE SHOW ALL YOUR THINKING! **

WHAT?

She was taking her anger for Principal Hagar out on a middle school pop quiz.

20 years of built up anger.

Day 3:

On Tuesday she sported a bright pink turtleneck dress sort of thing, which frankly made her look like an overdressed flamingo. Her coffee mug had a tacky childish print to match. She began handing back the quizzes from the day before. Shortly after I received mine, I noticed something stapled on the back. I flipped it over.

It was a job application for Burger King.

I flipped my quiz back over to see a short message inscribed at the top.

With marks like these, you have no future. Have fun flipping burgers.

(At least stupidity isn't a crime!) 😊

How touching.

Day 4:

She entered with another cup of steaming black coffee.

"Children of the Lord!"

We didn't know why she kept calling us that. Because she wasn't holy. Not at all. She was far from holy. If anything, she was Satan's secretary.

"Please take a look up on the board, where I have marked your essays from yesterday."

We all turned to face the board, where there were 3 titles. Under each title there were four to five student names. The titles were as followed:

Crap.

Crappier.

Crappiest.

"As you can see, I have marked your essays into three reasonable categories. Please come see me if you have any issues with my markings." She glanced up at us. "Not that you would though," she added, giving us a devilishly sweet smile.

A bold voice piped up in the back of the room.

He had a death wish.

"I don't feel comfortable with your marking style."

Her round face contorted with fury. And then it disappeared. In a flash she had immediately composed herself- anger gone as quickly as it came. She clenched her mouth into a wide smile. She looked like she was on a psychotic break.

Her smile widened.

"Sorry, what was that?"

He shrunk back against his chair, instantly regretting his audacity. There was a tense feeling in the air, the sort you feel when a person in the room wants to, say, *terminate*, or possibly *abolish* the soul of another.

Her smile widened two more inches.

He had inspired her inner serial killer.

"Maybe rereading your essay will help you understand."

And with that, she whipped around – her plastered hair barely moving an inch – crumpled a heavily marked piece of paper blotted with red ink (she might as well have had a nose bleed on it), and hurled it across the room.

We watched as the paper ball flew across the room and landed neatly on his lap.

At first, everyone was silent. And then, as if someone had pulled a trigger, everyone burst out laughing. Apparently this demonic woman thought a paper ball could devastatingly wound a middle schooler.

The boy who first spoke up was panting on the ground, face a furious red from laughing.

"That's all you got? A paper ball?" he mocked, friends jeering along with him.

Surprisingly, she smiled.

Ignoring the hot shot's superior remark, she leisurely strolled towards the back of the classroom, carrying her mug with her. He shrunk back against the wall, all smiles instantaneously wiped off his face. With each step she took, he grew smaller.

And she was still smiling.

"Children of the Lord, please understand that the intention of the paper ball was not to *hurt* him, no no," she paused and chuckled, carelessly throwing her hair over her shoulder. "It was simply to... *prepare* him."

We all watched as she took a long, languid sip of coffee, letting the cup linger by her lips for a couple moments before she calmly lifted the broiling black liquid above the boy's head – slowly rotating the cup – and dumped the entire mug on him.

There was a choked gasp followed by a piercing scream. He was cowered over, doused in steaming coffee. Within seconds it morphed into a blistering pain that brought welts of tears to his eyes.

He stared at her.

She stared at him.

We all stared at them.

She spun around, marched straight back to her desk, and sat on the very edge of it (the desk was in danger of collapsing). We all gaped at her in deep shock.

"Get over here!" she barked.

He timidly limped to the front of the room, where she first eyed him, and then snapped her fingers and pointed downwards, indicating for him to kneel down before her. He gingerly crouched down at her feet, where she propped her tree trunk legs right onto his back. He winced.

"Listen up! Now you all know the consequences of not obeying. Follow his path and you will have the privilege-" she smirked, "to taste some coffee as well."

She looked downwards at the boy huddled below her feet with disgust.

"Class dismissed!"

Day 5:

Last day of the week; last day that flagitious monster was filling in. As soon as the bell rang, I knew I would never have to see that satanic woman with her fake twisted smiles, her undivided coat of hair, and her five terrible 70s outfits again.

Children of the Lord, indeed.

THE PROM CONUNDRUM

By Sarah Wong

April 15, 2015
2:37:13 a.m.

I have solved The Prom Conundrum.

Just ten days, three hours, and twenty-two minutes ago, the probability of my attending prom with a date was zero. Okay, maybe zero point zero zero one because Beastly Betty grunted to me in Calculus once, and her grunt might have been some sort of mating call. Still, the probability of my surviving prom with Beastly Betty without being mauled to death is definitely a zero, and I am determined to live to see the look on Charlie's face when she sees me strolling into the gymnasium with a date on my arm.

You see, our parents deem me superior to Charlie in every respect except for social intelligence, and Charlie is quite smug about it. For instance, over last night's dinner at 6:13:18 p.m., she inquired of my parents if she could "hang out"¹ with her companions this weekend.

She presented her request right before my face.

However, Charlie will attend prom unaccompanied, as Thomas ended their relationship fourteen days, seven hours, and six minutes ago, presenting the opportunity for me to become the social superior at the universally-acknowledged most significant social event of the year.

Like all great Ronald Weeber research projects, I began my research in the library. After three hours and sixteen minutes of searching—I apologize, the physical exertion of digging through those heavy books made me lose track of the seconds—I employed the librarian for assistance. The poor woman, she must have a muscle fasciculation condition, because the labial commissure of her mouth twitched uncontrollably. I was flabbergasted when she handed me the same absurd movies that Charlie watched when she was twelve, but I conveyed the movies home so as not to offend the poor librarian. Despite the obtuse characters, they were surprisingly informative.² Clearly, the librarian's muscle fasciculation condition does not encumber her in her job, which I tried to tell her when I returned to the library twenty-eight hours, thirty-three minutes, and fifty-one seconds later. However, she quickly turned away, and her shoulders convulsed violently. Poor woman, her condition progressed rapidly.

I still needed primary evidence to create something truly original. Thus, on the seventh day of April at 8:55 a.m., I began my observations. I must admit, The Female is quite a unique species. It tends to travel in packs. After I closely followed my first pack for two hours, three minutes, and twelve seconds, the members warily glanced back at me and quickened their pace from class to class until my asthma compelled me to stop. The Female, similar to skittish deer, must be approached with care. My next four

¹ I cannot fathom how Charlie has friends. Her diction is pitiful.

² Note to self: Purchase a lawnmower and a boom box, preferably a lightweight one. Learn to manoeuvre a lawn mower.

packs generated significantly more data, as I was able to follow each for eight hours once I learned to observe from afar, made difficult by my astigmatism.³ From my observations, I created two beautiful, innovative equations,⁴ the first being The Pack Factor. The Pack Factor is a power equation that describes the relationship between The Female's time away from her pack and the likelihood that The Female will say "yes." The Female is a social, pack-dependent species, so when she is separated from her pack, and after even a mere hour apart, the pack greet each other with aggressive embraces and squeals loud enough to impair one's eardrums. Based on my observations, I hypothesized that the longer The Female is separated from her pack, the more she craves the company of another, and therefore, the higher the likelihood that she will accept an invitation to prom from someone whom she would have declined if she were happily with her pack.

My second equation is The Giggle Factor. What struck me the most from my observations is The Female's irrepressible, perpetual giggle. I recorded the giggle of twenty different females to try to define The Call of the Female, but each was frustratingly different from the next. I heard high-pitched screeches, quiet squeaks, short squawks, and even one booming roar from Pack 5 when its members congregated in the bathroom. When Female 5-3 emerged from the bathroom, I inquired as to what they did in there. Her eyes widened in horror at the video recorder in my hand, and she shouted some unnecessarily perverse words⁵ at me before she darted away with her pack. I forgot about The Female's skittish nature, but as with Einstein's errors, my mistake led to a helpful note: The Female is hostile after she emerges from the bathroom. Do not approach.

I listened to my recordings for five hours, thirty-eight minutes, and eight seconds, struggling to connect these sounds to create an equation, and finally, on this fifteenth day of April at 2:34 a.m., I found the pattern. As the intensity of The Call of the Female increases, her judgment decreases, thus increasing the likelihood of The Female saying "yes" until Intensity 5, where the likelihood decreases because The Female is rendered speechless by her giggle. In this, it resembles an upside-down parabola.

If I perfect my timing and successfully execute my plan, I will have a date by 6:32 p.m. tomorrow. Oh, mathematics, my beautiful science of numbers, you never let me down. If only you were a *Homo sapien* and not an intangible science, I would bring you to prom.

³ My astigmatism, though cumbersome, does not affect the reliability of my data, as it was a control among all five packs.

⁴ The data from Pack 1 may be skewed and was not used in the construction of my theory, as I followed them for five hours, fifty-six minutes, and forty-eight seconds fewer than Packs 2, 3, 4, and 5.

⁵ Her diction was worse than Charlie's. Perhaps poor diction is in The Female's nature? My next study: The Female and Diction.



By Yixuan Wang

GOOD MORNING

By Georgia Gardner

I hear The Voice yell, "Bedtime!" Right on schedule: it's 10:00pm. My eyes dance around the pretty pink room frantically, and sweat drips from top to bottom. The room appears to be some weird Disney - Kardashian hybrid. One minute it's tutus, the next it is mascara and lipstick.

Click. The big light turns on, and The Voice continues to rant. The tic on my left side is starting up again, and my insides are racing faster than ever. I picture the future ahead and notice that my tics are getting worse by the minute. I squirm uncomfortably, as the terra cotta coloured flowers sprinkled along my left side fit like a pair of shoes that are three sizes too small. The floor vibrates with tension, and I realize that She and The Voice are both at full strength tonight. I prepare for the absolute worst.

The Voice yells, "You have a test tomorrow, and you know how tired you get when you don't get enough sleep!" I sigh with the knowledge that tomorrow morning is going to be...well, one of the bad ones.

10:30pm. They are still fighting, as if it will never end. My nerves, my circuits, every connection in my loud orange shell is shaking. Finally, as though the Gods have heard my prayers, the great bellowing appears to be coming to an end.

11:00pm. Finally, the big light is turned off, and my racing circuits can finally take a breather. I take a long, deep breath and try to prepare for my exasperating morning duty ahead. *Oh no*, not the small light. *Click.* The small light comes on. The tics start up again, this time twice as fast. She holds the light in the palm of her hands and doesn't take her eyes off of it. She almost seems to be in a trance. I wish I could speak up and say something. On the other hand, if I had such a wish, instead of wishing for a mouth and a tongue, I would wish for a pair of strong legs so that I could run away from this eternal pink damnation.

11:30pm. This is bad. This is very, very bad. She is still in the trance from the small light. Tomorrow will be insufferable. I can feel the stinging of her nail-polished fingers against my metal back and the hard pounce of her warm fist as She presses snooze.

1:00am. Finally, the small light is off. I begin to rest but then the memories flood my thoughts: The Great Horror of '13. It had been a late night, like tonight. But it was different. She was coughing and The Voice kept coming in with soft words and glasses of juice. Like always, I did my job at 7:00am. Then it happened: not the usual whack, but cold sticky stuff all over me, followed by the sting of the glass. It was as though every circuit in me was shocking me. Please, God of the Morning, let there never be such horror again.

1:30am. I wake with a start. I can't sleep. Tomorrow's going to be rough, I can feel it. I have been doing this job for quite a while now and have learned a thing or two. First, never allow yourself to be unplugged. It's very confusing. You wake up in a sort of time fog. Everything is blurry, and you can't tell what time it is...which causes an identity crisis if you are an alarm clock. Second, under absolutely no circumstances, whatever you do, never, ever leave your immediate area. Thankfully, the great unmentionable has never happened to me, but I've heard stories. When you cross the border, the invisible line of time-zone torture, time actually changes. And it's almost too scary to say out loud, but without warning, the clock becomes wrong but has no way of knowing it. I shudder to think of it.

6:50am. It's almost here. I feel like Prometheus on the top of Zeus's mountain, chained to a rock, and waiting for a vulture to eat out my insides only to have the same result the next day. If I had to pick between the two, I'd pick the vulture.

7:00am. *Beep. Beep. Beep.* I howl as I await what is coming. Before I have anymore time to think, I see a hand come down from the sky and...*THWACK*. She pressed the wrong button, and I continue to yell. *Beep. Beep. Beep...**THWACK*. The wrong button is pressed again, and I am running out of patience.....*THWACK*. Finally, I think it's over. But it's only the beginning. To my horror, She pressed the snooze button.

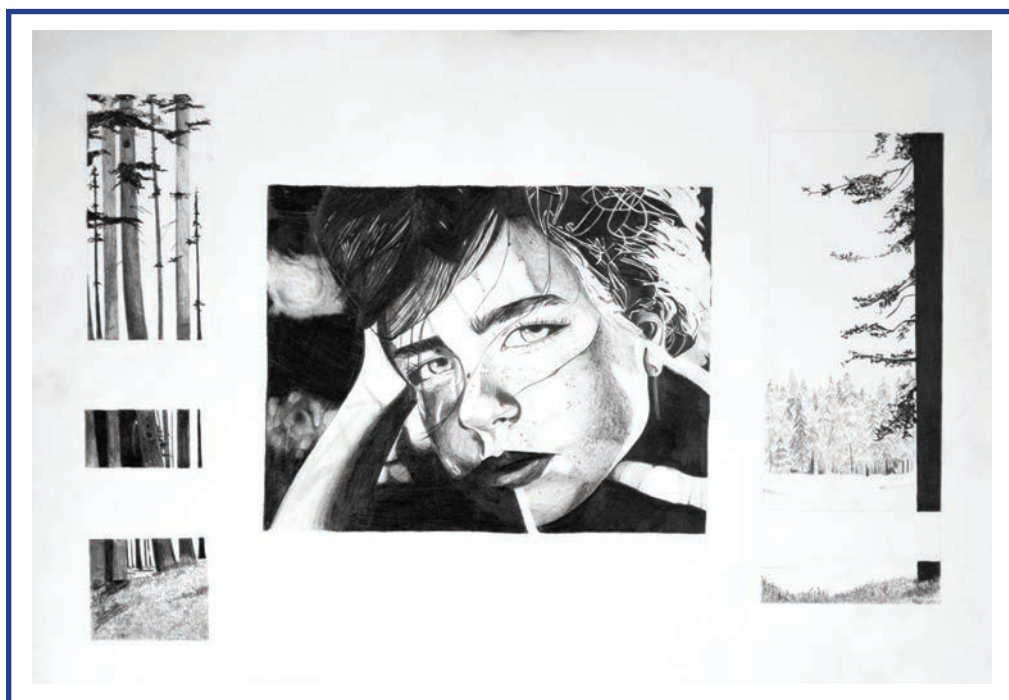
7:07am. *Beep. Beep. Beep...**THWACK*.

I wait. She is not moving. I hear movement below and The Voice calls, "Are you up?" She is still not moving. The Voice calls again, "The bus will be here in 15 minutes!" Still, She is not moving. I hear loud steps on the stairs and The Voice yells, "Are you awake?" Still the mound on the bed remains motionless.

Suddenly, in one swift motion the door opens and I hear The Voice scream as if life as we know it was about to end. She is moving now. She is up and clothes are flying everywhere. I fear an unmentionable may land on me. That happened once before and it was bad.

I watch, hardly able to comprehend what I am seeing. She is moving faster than my circuits can process. Books are flying everywhere. At one point it looks like the lamp may not survive as a large textbook heads its way. The lamp looks scared, I mean really panicked. It's not used to being thwacked and unlike me does know how to take a hit. Fortunately, the book lands on the bed and the lamp looks relieved to have been spared.

Then as fast as it began, it is all over. I settle in and reflect. I never wanted to be an alarm clock. If only I hadn't slept in on that day of all days: that magical day at the factory when electric circuits are given their casings. I would've been at the front of the line and had my pick of small appliance identities. Imagine the possibilities! I could've been a toaster, or a hair straightener, or maybe even the television. But I slept in that day of all days. By the time I got there, alarm clock was all that was left.



By Sjørland Gibson

LUNCH IN LAWSON HALL: THE RUNNING OF THE BELLS

By Christopher Kolios

At 12:45 the mad dash begins. Students and teachers barrel out of their classrooms and take to the hallways en route to the doors of Lawson Hall. Imagine their frantic recoil when they come upon the doors to the dining hall barricaded! After a fair bit of stairwell careening a stream of people trickles through the doors, gradually working up to a gushing river. The hungry students have to move in behind their chairs and stand at the ready for the tolling of the bells, but the teachers grab their plates and rush to the middle table, a place of salad, soup, and lunch extras. The students watch agog and terrified as massive mounds of leaves and vegetables are heaped onto the plates of the teachers. Only after grace can the desperate students rush to the ravages of the middle table to pick at the scraps.

One of the loveliest features of Lawson Hall is the proximity of the tables to one another. Anyone wanting to leave their seat, peopled in on all sides, must squeeze past them. This builds a close physical intimacy and a sense of community amongst the students. Imagine, when eating rice or pouring water, an innocent bump to the back or the elbow. That little spillage accompanied with a half-hearted “sorry” never fails to brighten my day! Perhaps HSC could consider allowing students to dine with arms linked, sitting on the ground as they eat. The students would feel closer than ever!

After working hard during the morning and staying late for class, there is nothing better than the sudden realization that you will not get to eat any food. This happens because the lunch system ensures that dishes are cleared some three minutes into lunch. Many a time I have come to lunch only to find the main dish already gone! I have a suspicion that this is a kindness of the kitchen staff letting me know that I need to lose some weight. It is incredible how considerate some people can be!

Speaking of considerate, I adore how students grab the crackers with their filthy hands. The tongs are right in the bowl, but the primary directive of this strategy is to get people sick. This way, they will not have to attend school. Another kindness on display in our dining hall!

The ambience of Lawson Hall is difficult to characterize, as it is an obnoxious cacophony of students helping to damage my eardrums. No doubt this will save me from a boring fourth period lecture that I will be hard pressed to hear.

Let’s not forget the all-too-frequent purloining of the water jug or food bowls, wrenched from our hands by those sitting at other tables. I imagine that they needed that water more than me. This can happen with any food, and when your favourite kind of food is taken it serves as a reminder of the kindness and manners of your peers.

A few people are not fans of wiping down the table with a tablecloth. This is understandable, as HSC has been using the same rags (or are they face cloths?) for some 5 years.

The best thing by far about our lunch is the running of the bells. When there are five minutes left, a student at the head table grabs a bell and rings it. Students proceed to stampede and swarm the small dish stations. Arms fly up and down as students place their dirty dishes and cutlery in a flurried dance of madness. Navigation is nigh impossible, and the mass hysteria during cleanup is comparable to that in a fire drill egress.

Then Lawson Hall calms itself down and the room heaves a heavy sigh, preparing itself for the oncoming assault of chair legs. The second bell rings out and the students continue talking for a few seconds to make sure that they are able to finish up their private conversations. They wouldn't want to be rude by abandoning their chats for grace and announcements. This has the effect of keeping us longer in the Hall. After announcements, a near-prayer is heard as the students are dismissed. One cannot imagine the sense of peace and respite offered by our 20 minute lunch repast.

THE LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL

By Elise Kennedy

My favourite subject is biology. I find it fascinating how different beings interact together. Even though I see it every day at school. School can be called “school” or “the animal kingdom”. This is not the Animal kingdom you find in Disney World with fun rides, rainbows, and unicorns. No, no, no. The animal kingdom where I’m from follows the rules of the jungle; the survival of the fittest or kill or be killed. But it really more like survival of the most popular or humiliate or be humiliated. In a stereotypical sense.

Before I continue on, I should introduce and explain the different species in high school.

The students, come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and personalities. Some are loud and obnoxious, charging through the plains. Others are quiet and stealthy, crawling along the forest floor. More carnivorous species tend to target the weak and lost. On the other end of things, species that are herbivores are kind and tend to go unnoticed. There are also omnivores, species who eat both animals and plants. But here, they’re all over the place, helping others or tearing them apart. Finally, there’s what I like to call “natural disasters” which have the common names of teachers, principals, vice principals, and heads of school. Now, we can’t blame them for the unkempt hair or uptight personality, it’s just a few of the things that make them natural human beings and disastrous, hence the name “natural disasters”.

Here’s how a day usually goes in the ecosystem called “the local high school”. The sun begins to rise, stretching above the tall, monstrous building of bricks. The rooster or the bell as it’s commonly known, calls out to signal the day has begun and that all students need to get to class. Right at that moment, a stampede of students collide at all hallway intersections. But most of the time, the different species of students manage to work together and communicate to manage to get where they want to go. Whether that be AP calculus or chemistry. Now that’s fascinating.

The activity of the first classes is loud and boisterous but not without the sleepwalkers, half awake and confused. After all, it’s the beginning of the day and most of the animals are either rowdy and don’t even want to be here or the species have lacked sleep. The possibilities include insomnia, excessive gaming, and going to that one party on Sunday night that ended at one or two in the morning. These species are nocturnal; awake at night and asleep during the day.

After, the bell cries out again and people speed out of the class as if they were being chased by a large, threatening, and hungry predator. Only to head to the next one of course, unless they skip class; in that case the student(s) search for food or laze about. But mostly they take cover by using camouflage so a natural disaster does not swallow them up and then spit them out, (i.e. catch them skipping class and giving them detention).

After eighty long-paining minutes, the beasts are let loose and they all head to the same location in the ecosystem, the waterhole- or cafeteria, but being the ecologist and the only sane person present, I call it the waterhole. The waterhole, is a place where the species from all around the school gather to dine. However, the waterhole isn’t very big, so it tends to get crowded causing fights over territory. A common tactic that is used is “seat saving.” This lasts for a good hour before everyone is kicked out, not forcefully, only to get to class.

Classes directly after lunch usually result in many of the students resulting from food comas. This can cause aggressive behaviour from natural disasters due to students asking if they can take a trip to the washroom every five to ten minutes until the class ends and the next and last one for the day begins.

The last class of the day, is where everyone is the most anxious- especially on Fridays, I think you already know why. The class, no matter what it is, consists of tapping noises, hungry looks at the clock, and noise. Lots of noise. This greatly upsets natural disasters causing the chances raining detention slips. There are many casualties. But I can't blame anyone for getting riled up. There's just so much hatred with everybody, it's explosive. Especially when that ringing sound fill the halls. It's silent for a second and boom! Everyone spills out of classrooms like lava from a volcano and rushes towards the nearest exist. But there two things about existing and entering in the local high school ecosystem; one is that there is only one exit/entrance which leads to much pushing and shoving. Two is, you almost always have to come back.

That is a day in a nutshell. I smile a bit, I save the document and-

"What are you writing? Why aren't you paying attention?!" demanded a harsh voice. The biology teacher.

"Nothing, I'm taking notes," I replied.

"May I see?"

"Sure." I throw my laptop towards the angry spinning tornado as it consumes my beloved piece of technology. It looks, it reads, it gets angrier. It's glaring towards me. It gives me a detention. Sorry, not it, she. "Today, four to five in room 204. That should teach you not to make personal remarks about people," she replied briskly.

"But Mrs. Smith your hair really looks like a tornado gone rouge. And how many plastic surgery jobs have you done now, I've lost count," I say smugly.

The tornado suddenly becomes red as lava, a volcano. Tornado gone volcano. "Mrs. Smith, you look a bit red. I think," but I'm cut off.

"Enough! Double detention! Triple detention! I don't care, just get out of my classroom!"

People these days, they don't seem to understand research! I leave the classroom, deciding I heard enough yelling for the next year. I find a comfortable spot in the hallway and write my observations for the day. Oh yeah, I forgot to mention that writing your observations down is very important and is the best way to learn more about the animal kingdom. Or in this case, school. Field research is never complete without observations. I take out a notebook and note what behaviour and other stuff I witnessed today.

One, smugness provokes the elderly natural disasters. Two, hallways are comfortable places. Three, bringing food into class increases your rate of being struck by a natural disaster.

Well, at least I have my laptop back. She really shouldn't have left it on her desk that was right by the door. I suppose the damage is done and another day of successful research done. Maybe I'll start typing up the book in detention. I'm a regular, after all.



By Rachel Bronshteyn

THE IRONY OF FORSYTHE DORFF

By Tristan Vena

Forsythe had been hoping for a promotion ever since the day he became an associate at the law firm, Brixton Forban. That was 7 years ago. But still, every day Forsythe woke up and hoped that this would be the day.

Even at 7 AM, Forsythe Dorff could tell it was going to be a particularly miserable day. The road was covered in hail and a rather large piece had dented the hood of his Cadillac. He was very proud of his car but never told anybody that he purchased it at a gas/repair station for \$8,999.99 (tax not included). He didn't know why he was so distrustful of the gas station owner. Maybe it was because his office was a pickup truck with the engine running. The reason Forsythe was heading out in his car at that eye-watering hour was simple, he liked to get to work early.

When he got to work he sat down at his cubicle, right beside the squeaky washroom door and the two chatterboxes who were constantly talking over his head as though he was not there. The paralegal offices were just across from him, and he could always hear partners and associates noisily voicing their demands. Quite frankly, he was sick of it. He was sick of the irritating noise, the unpleasant smells, all of it. But still he stayed in at lunch to work. Not by choice though, he had been spurned for life from going out for lunch with the other members of the firm ever since a certain unfortunate incident regarding yak's milk and a senior partner's coffee.

Even though Forsythe had always hoped for a promotion, he had never considered that he was being overlooked. But today, as he sat down at his cramped noisy, unpleasant smelling desk for the 2,527th time (but who's counting) he considered that he just might be getting passed up. Once he realized, he called his only sort of half friend, Ima Ture on the phone.

"Hey Ima," said Forsythe.

"Forsythe?" said the voice on the other end.

"Yep," said Forsythe. "Listen, I'd love to chat but I need to get right down to business. I feel that I am being passed up for a promotion. Can you tell me why?"

There was a pause. "I don't think you want to hear this Forsythe....", said Ima.

"Maybe so, but I need to," was the reply.

"You haven't been promoted yet because people don't like you." All Ima heard was a beep as Forsythe's phone disconnected. After a few seconds the phone rang again.

"What do you mean?" Forsythe demanded as soon as Ima picked up the phone.

"Exactly what I just said," said Ima somewhat timidly. "I mean, you're nit-picky, you're condescending and a bit boring."

"Thanks for nothing," said Forsythe, angrily hanging up the phone again.

But as he sat at his desk, still fuming, he thought, maybe there's something to that. So for the first time in his career, maybe his life, Forsythe sat at his desk, ignored his work and daydreamed. By the time it was lunch, he had devised a plan to become a partner.

His idea wasn't overly complex, but he was sure it would work – or at least as sure as a perfectionist like him could be. His logic was that his superiors would not put him in a position of leadership over

people who didn't respect him. Therefore if the associates respected him, the managing partners would be far more likely to make him a partner. After a bit of research he devised that the best way to get people to like you is to buy them things. And so it started. Now, as we know, Forsythe has few interests aside from work and competitive ping-pong, and he fully realized ping-pong was not properly understood by the masses as the endeavor of skill and perseverance that it was. So, he decided to buy people office supplies. The first person he targeted was Jack, the unfortunate victim of a misunderstanding involving xanthine and a thermos full of lemonade.

As Jack saw Forsythe approaching he instinctively pulled away his glass of water. "What do you want now, Forsythe?" Jack said, a touch bitterly.

"Well, I wanted to reward you for your good work on the Jennings-Hathaws merger, so I got you this," said Forsythe removing what appeared to be a very large stapler from his bag.

"A stapler," said Jack dryly.

"But not just any stapler," said Forsythe, "it's the Lazac 400 deluxe." Jack gave him a blank look. "It has 40 pounds of pressure, is able to staple 250 pages with one staple, and has a laser sight on it so you know exactly where your staple is going to go."

"Thanks, I guess," said Jack somewhat furtively.

"Alright, bye," said Forsythe, walking away.

It proceeded thus for many months, and lo and behold, the office was rife with expensive and high quality office supplies (tempered with the occasional ping-pong paddle). Indeed there were some good tidings for a certain Forsythe Dorff from his colleagues. But, as tends to happen over long periods of expectancy, Forsythe grew impatient. He would spend all day waiting for the managing partners to call him to their office to congratulate him on making partner. He even made a little speech to say to all the senior partners about his gratitude and that he would not disappoint them. Why, he had even packed up his possessions in a box so as to be ready to move to his new office.

But days turned into weeks, and finally weeks into months, and Forsythe had still not been promoted. He fidgeted at his desk, muttering to himself sourly, jumping at the slightest sound. He had blown \$2316.97 on niceties and had nothing to show for it but a bad credit score and an empty wallet. He just didn't get it. He had bought people gifts, he had complimented them on their work and still, there he was, in his dingy little cubicle, miserable again.

One day he decided that he'd had enough. He came to work with a megaphone and as soon as he walked through the door, he turned it on and shouted in a voice not even remotely reminiscent of his usual mousy timbre. He shouted, "All right everybody, listen up! As you all know my name is Forsythe Dorff. While some of you may question my character, none of you could question my work. I have given 7 years of toil to this firm, and all I have to show for it is this," he said pointing to his cubicle. "And this," he said, opening his newly emptied wallet for all to see. His rant went on for some time. By the end he was red faced, fuming and had a voice that sounded like a dying frog. But as he tucked his megaphone under his arm and headed for his cubicle, he heard on the intercom,

"Mr. Dorff to the managing partner's office." He wasn't quite sure what to expect as he made his way up to the forty-third floor office that he had been summoned to.

"Forsythe," said James Brixton as he walked in, "While somewhat uncalled for, your little rant has opened my eyes to the fact that you feel overlooked. Coincidentally I have been looking for the right person to take on a very important case. If you do well on it, you're a lock for partner," Mr Brixton said

as he slid a folder toward Forsythe. Forsythe read it out loud.

“Wrongful dismissal of Rueben Cufilen against Pulushin Oil.” He opened the folder and a knowing smile spread over his face as he said to Brixton, “Somehow I think I can handle this.”

MEET THE LITERALS

By Sydney Kalya

The Literals seemed like perfectly normal people at first glance. They lived in what seemed to be a perfectly normal house; a white picket fence, a tire swing just visible under an elm tree, and a porch where you could imagine parents watching their children play. The introductions had gone quite smoothly. The Literal family consisted of a teenage girl named Curiosity, a younger boy whom Delia could guess would be about 9, named Mikey, and Mr. and Mrs. Literal, though they insisted on being called Doug and Leanne.

The inside of the house was rather a different story. Right amid the foyer stood a huge painting almost double her height. It was a piece of art covered in words, there had to be hundreds of words. As if reading her pondering thoughts, Mrs. Literal said, "One thousand." Obviously seeing the confusion on Delia's face she repeated herself, "One thousand words. You know what they say about pictures needing to be worth that many. It was quite hard to find one; I had to paint it myself. Odd, that they wouldn't have any if that's what pictures are."

Delia was blatantly shell-shocked, "I don't think that's what that saying means, it's--"

"You should go speak with Curiosity, spend some time getting to know each other," Mrs. Literal said, cutting of Delia's train of thought.

She found Curiosity and her brother sitting in the living room discussing something on a piece of paper. "Well you see, my mother asked me to draw the curtains as it was too bright out. So this is what I drew. Do you think I got the swags right?" Curiosity asked.

"Um, it looks good Curiosity, you're good at everything you do," Max responded admiringly. Delia was just thinking about how her brother Max was up to it again, falling in love with every pretty girl he sees, when her mother called her.

"Girls! Boys! Come to the kitchen and fill your plates!" she yelled, as to make sure the children heard her.

"Coming!" they all responded in unison.

After a wonderful roast beef dinner, the children went to play in the den and the parents sat down to chat and make polite, as all adults are obligated to do. They made small talk; their children, their work, their interests.

"You're cooking is incredible Leanne. You'll have to give me a few lessons!" Mrs. Lancaster said.

"If I have to, how about tomorrow?" Leanne replied.

"Oh! Tomorrow? I believe Delia has dance practice, would you be able to rain check?" she asked innocently.

That's when the most peculiar thing happened. Mr. and Mrs. Literal quickly leapt up from their chairs and moved to the closest window. They pressed their foreheads to the glass and their eyes scanned their front yard spastically.

"You see any?" Mr. Literal asked.

"Nope," Mrs. Literal responded, and then to the Lancaster's, "No rain!"

Mr. and Mrs. Lancaster looked from the adults standing against the window to each other, not quite

understanding what just occurred. Leanne and Doug returned to the table as if nothing happened.

"So tell us about how you met?" Doug asked.

"Oh, well, I worked as a waitress when I was in my twenties, he came in as a customer, and the rest is history," Mrs. Lancaster responded.

"And you love each other?"

They looked at each other. "Well of course, he's my husband. I get butterflies in my stomach just thinking of him," she answered, as if reassuring herself more than the Literals.

"Did you say butterflies in your stomach?" Leanne asked, sharing a quick glance at Doug that was so fast Mrs. Lancaster couldn't even be sure it happened.

"Um, yes, I did."

"Wonderful! Would you like to join me in the kitchen? Doug, why don't you men go check on the kids?"

The Lancasters gave each other a sidelong glance, and followed their respective instructions. Mrs. Lancaster was about to turn to Leanne and ask what they were doing when she turned and locked the door to the kitchen.

"Why would you lock—" Mrs. Lancaster began.

"This is going to be rather unpleasant. And I was just beginning to like you. You know, I think we could have been great friends. So unfortunate, yes, very unfortunate," Leanne spoke as if speaking to herself.

"What do you mean? What's going on? Let's just go back to the children." Mrs. Lancaster rushed as the words spilt out of her mouth. She could feel a bile rise in her throat.

"Please don't scream, it'll make me feel worse. Although really it's your own fault, your very own fault. And I guess you won't be able to scream, so unpleasant." Leanne repeated.

Mrs. Lancaster was about to reply, when she found herself unable. The bile she thought was in her throat was moving, she grabbed her throat and struggled for breath.

"Butterflies in the stomach. What a terrible choice of words you made."

She could feel them now, flapping not moving as she previously thought, her face turning colour after every second without air ticked by. Soon she stopped struggling.

The children were playing in the den when Max grabbed Delia and yelled at the top of his lungs the word tag. Delia quickly tapped Curiosity on the shoulder.

"No touch backs!" Delia laughed.

"Come and get me, I bet you can't!" Max taunted as he ran.

"I'll get you, Max," Curiosity said playfully.

"Over my dead body!" he yelled, enthusiastically.

Curiosity's face dropped quickly. "Game's over Max, come over to the pantry please. I want to tell you a secret," she said almost ruefully.

Max rushed over to the pantry. Curiosity quickly closed the door and sighed, as if she was being faced with a task that rather bored her.

"Please don't scream. I promise I'll try not to make it hurt too much, just a quick snap of the neck. I really wish you hadn't of said that, I really do."

After it was done, she stepped over the body and tagged the lifeless boy. "You're it," she whispered.

The fathers joined Delia and Mikey in the den. Mr. Lancaster pondered the location of Max, but

quickly put the thought aside. He was probably just chasing after Curiosity, as he often chased after older girls.

"So Delia, you about ready to go?" he asked.

"Yep, I'll find Max," she answered.

"We have to get you to bed soon, you've got that big dance performance tomorrow,"

"Dad, I know. I'm ready. Stop putting me on pins and needles, I need to be focused." Delia practically groaned.

"Seriously?" Doug blurted out, "I was starting to like you guys, you know?"

"What? What are you talking about Doug?" Mr. Lancaster asked.

Suddenly from the corner of her eye, Delia saw a low object appear. She turned and saw a small wooden bedlike structure seeming to gleam with sliver.

"What is that? That wasn't there before was it, Dad?"

"What's going on Doug? Delia, we're leaving, grab your brother." Mr. Lancaster said angrily.

"We can't let you do that," Doug sighed.

Suddenly, Mr. Lancaster was being dragged over to the structure by some force. He saw that the same appeared to be happening to Delia. He found his arms suddenly jut out from his body without his control. Delia quickly scrambled up into his arms and was now hovering over the bed. From this angle she could see that the silver glow was actually what looked to be a million needles all protruding from the bed. Slowly, ever so slowly, her father lowered her closer and closer to the pricks.

"At least she said he put her on the needles instead of us, I would hate to be the one doing this," Doug said calmly.

"What's happening?! Make it stop, oh please make it stop. Delia!" Mr. Lancaster struggled with his body fighting against him as he screamed.

The image was rather grotesque. Her body sunk into the needles after Mr. Lancaster removed his arms. The blood was everywhere. After regaining control of his arms, he slowly backed away, and then turned and fell to the ground. He just covered his head with his hands and muttered to himself something along the lines of why and what just happened. Leanne entered the room, sweating as if she had been lifting something heavy. She barely glanced at the scene in the corner.

"This is a joke right? A magic trick? A new television reality show? Please, oh please God be one of those," Mr. Lancaster cried.

"Unfortunately not, but it's really only your fault. The only thing the house and ourselves did is do what you said, it wasn't our idea," Doug stated in a mater-of-fact tone.

"Where's my wife? My son."

"Dead. Butterflies in her stomach, how silly," Leanne answered.

"And your son happened to tell me to hop over his dead body," Curiosity said as she entered the room.

"Oh my God, no, oh my God. DO YOU NOT KNOW WHAT A FIGURE OF SPEECH IS?!" Mr. Lancaster screamed.

"Everything is literal, you should have learned that by now," Curiosity spoke innocently.

Realization struck Mr. Lancaster and he began to laugh. He had wondered why Doug and Leanne would choose to name their child Curiosity. "Let me guess, you used to have a cat, huh Curiosity? What happened to the cat?"

“I’m not allowed to talk about that. My therapist said so.”

Mr. Lancaster laughed. Laughed so hard he cried, and he fell to the ground clenching his sore stomach. “You guys are really killing me right now,” he said nonchalantly. And he shut his mouth. And closed his eyes and realized what he had just done to himself.

The next day the Literals sat around the kitchen table for breakfast. Everything had been cleaned up and the house looked good as new.

“I wonder why we can’t make any friends” Mr. Literal stated, dumbfounded.



By Susan Pan

YOUR CHILD'S WORST NIGHTMARE: HOW DENTISTS DESTROY

By Anne Broughton

"This might hurt just a little." Although as a parent you may think this disclaimer fools your child, she knows that this sentence means she is about to have a hole drilled in her mouth while she screams from both physical and emotional pain because it always hurts more than "just a little". Many parents mistakenly believe that going to the dentist is good for their kids. However, as long as kids brush and floss fairly regularly, then there is really no need to force them kicking and screaming into a dentist chair. In fact, trips to the dentist are more harmful than helpful for children. At the end of the day, going to the dentist is detrimental to children because it traumatizes them, teaches them poor life lessons, and lowers their self-esteem.

To begin, going to the dentist is detrimental to children because it traumatizes them. For example, children generally feel attacked at the dentist, even though the intention is to help them. The large, noisy, metal machines can paralyze children with fear. The sharp, whirring tools shoved inside of their mouths only add to this fearful sensation that they are being attacked. I am sure everyone is aware that the feeling of panic and fear when under the impression of being attacked is not a positive experience, and often traumatizes children. In addition to making children feel attacked, trips to the dentist often make children feel as though they are trials in scientific experiments rather than people. In order to aid those who are ignorant to the suffering of an average child sitting in a dentist chair, allow me to share her experience. There is an extremely bright light shining in her eyes while a person in a surgical mask sticks four or five different buzzing machines into her mouth, making her promise not to close it. That is enough to make any person feel as though they are some kind of fungus with little significance sitting in a petri dish, which is extremely traumatizing for a child. It is clear that going to the dentist is traumatic for children.

Furthermore, the dentist teaches kids poor life lessons. For instance, the dentist allows kids to believe that creating excessive waste is acceptable. As per usual with most people, whenever I am at the dentist, I am always asked how often I brush my teeth. I always respond that I brush my teeth twice a day, effectively telling my dentist and hygienist that I do, in fact, have a toothbrush. However, at the end of my torturous appointment, they still insist on giving me a little plastic baggie with a toothbrush in it. This routine results in almost every family having a cabinet in their bathroom full of extra toothbrushes that they will never use, which is extremely wasteful. Since children are impressionable beings, they will believe that this excessive waste is all right, which is truly a poor life lesson to teach kids. Moreover, the dentist teaches children that lying is acceptable. Whenever something involving pain comes into play at the dentist, they blatantly lie to children about how much it will hurt. This despicable untruth leads children to believe that lying is acceptable, which carries on later in life. In fact, in a University of Massachusetts study done in 2002, it was shown that 60% of adults could not have a ten minute conversation without lying at least once (Benjamin). This constant lying is a serious issue that clearly stems from children learning from their dentists that lying is okay. In short, the dentist teaches children poor life lessons both in waste control and lying.

To add insult to injury, going to the dentist lowers the self-esteem of children. No matter the

number of times anyone brushes, flosses, and uses mouthwash, it is never quite good enough for the mighty dentist. As a child, I found that I would walk into my appointment proud that I had brushed so well and so often, and would walk out feeling poorly about how I had done, simply because the dentist would focus on what I had yet to accomplish, making me believe that my achievements were unimportant. This type of belief is extremely detrimental to a child's self-esteem, and it is all because nothing a child does seems to be good enough for the dentist. Going to the dentist also lowers the self-esteem of children with the unachievable standards that are displayed all over dentist offices. When one thinks of a dentist office lobby, typically one would think of large posters on all walls of people with extremely white smiles whose teeth all the right size and completely straight. These images are setting a completely unachievable standard, yet children are generally exposed to it from a young age. Before they are capable of realizing that they are being brainwashed, children are being constantly exposed to the unrealistic standards of conventional beauty in our society. A dentist office is one of the worst places of exposure to these types of standards, which is extremely damaging to the self-esteem of a child, because no one can live up to the standards produced through altered pictures in a dentist office. Clearly, trips to the dentist lower the self-esteem of children.

Considering the evidence above, it is without a shade of a doubt that trips to the dentist are detrimental to children as they are traumatic, teach them poor morals, and damage their self-esteem. Despite the misguided beliefs many people seem to have in regards to bringing their children to the dentist, it is truly harmful to have kids grow up in such an emotionally destroying environment. The dentist may help kids in some rare and special cases, but these cases are so uncommon that the pros of bringing children to the dentist are far outweighed by the cons. So next time you think about bringing your children to their next dentist appointments, take a moment to think about how it will always hurt more than "just a little".

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By Zoey Petrobon



By Yara Al Sakka

THE SWEET FRUIT OF EDUCATION'S BITTER TREE

By Sonny Rogers

It was a bright and early morning – seven-thirty a.m., to be exact. The lovely sounds of my mom screeching and banging on my door like a trapped and tortured animal woke me up. It was time to go to solitary confinement, better known as “school”.

My name is Jack Andreatti. I have an Italian and American background, so my house is pretty rowdy all the time. I’m kind of like one of those meatheads from Jersey Shore, except I’m not a juiced, Incredible Hulk that feeds off late night clubbing, alcohol, and melodrama over who slept with whom. I’m just kind of a witty Italian-American; in fact, I don’t even consider myself as attractive as the guys on Jersey Shore, but at least I’m educated. So maybe I don’t resemble a Jersey Shore character at all... Anyways, I’m not going to spare you the details of my daily routine, because it’s pretty much the same garbage from when you start high school to when you retire: just rinse and repeat.

So I go to this dog-pound of a building called school, not looking forward to seeing the same bunch of mutts. Aside from all the bullying, gossip, drama, workloads, pain in gym class, emotional pain in every class and teenage insecurities, there was one reason why I liked going to school, and that was my Math teacher, Ms. Jordan.

Ms. Jordan was the love of my life. She was in her late twenties to early thirties, and she had beautiful, curly-blond hair and the face of a Victoria Secret model. Her Math class was the class I tried my hardest in, and it was what I looked forward to everyday. I became one of the biggest teacher’s pets when it came to Ms. Jordan. I couldn’t even count the amount of apples I brought to her class and the amount of extra-help sessions I attended. I remember for one of her unit tests, I tried so hard that I forgot about all of my other subjects and just focused on that one unit - I even failed a Chemistry test that same week. But it was definitely worth it. When I got that test back, I got one hundred percent, and there was a sticker and a comment that said, “Hey, great work, Jack! Keep it up! -Ms. Jordan.” I swear to God, I had never felt the true meaning of love until that moment.

Today was actually a special occasion. I had Ms. Jordan last period, and it was our third-term anniversary. After that perfect test I got back from her, I knew we were soul mates and that she obviously had a crush on me. It was lunch, so I had some time before her class. I decided, since prom was, like, a month away, I should ask Ms. Jordan to go with me - I bet she would be thrilled! So I decided to set up a camera in her classroom, and I paid this guy named Chris Goulet – who wasn’t the sharpest tool in the shed – five bucks to distract Ms. Jordan before class started. When everyone in my class came in and sat down, they shot me some confused looks. I was standing at the front of the room, hair slicked back, and wearing a button-up plaid shirt that was tucked into a nice pair of jeans – all from the Gap, of course. I held a single rose behind my back, ready to be pulled out on camera.

When Ms. Jordan walked in, she looked a bit confused as to what was going on. I pulled the rose from behind my back and said, “Will you go to prom with me, baby?” All of a sudden, a roar of laughter erupted from the other students, and Ms. Jordan ran out of the classroom in embarrassment.

I was in shock. Was it something I said? Then it hit me: so this is what rejection from a loved one

feels like. I felt like I just got my heart ripped out of my chest by that guy from the Mortal Combat video games. How embarrassing – and I couldn't imagine what Ms. Jordan felt like. I noticed that the laughing from the class hadn't stopped, and I saw Chris Goulet take my camera off its tripod, sharing the video-replay with the other students. I decided, then, to settle the situation. I did what most grown men would do. I started crying, ran off to a solo-bathroom and locked myself inside. I've never felt so upset in my life. It felt like something inside of me died, like my heart stopped beating.

I sobbed in the bathroom for another fifteen minutes when, all of a sudden, I got really angry. I was really pissed off at Ms. Jordan. I mean, how could she embarrass me like that? I worked so hard in her class, and she actually recognized that. She gave me so many hints that she was into me. She even put a damn sticker on my test! If that doesn't say we're in love, then I don't know what does.

You know what? I don't need her. I'll be better off without her. In fact, I'm going to come back to this dumpster of a school ten years from now and I'm going to be a filthy rich doctor and she's going to regret not going to prom with me. Oh yes, I can see it now. I pull up to the school in this spaceship-looking car, and as Ms. Jordan runs to me with an astonished look on her sexy face, I throw a wad of cash at her and burn out my tires accelerating out of there, leaving her in a pile of smoke where she'll be heart-broken, just like I was today. Then I'll probably go home to my mansion and my sixteen beautiful wives.

The thought of that kind of cheered me up a little, but I still wasn't feeling good. While I was still sitting in the bathroom stall, I got a call from my dad, saying he was on his way to pick me up. When I got home, I got the usual, "Why did you do it?" and "What the hell were you thinking?" and "You embarrassed yourself and your family!" blah, blah, blah. I just needed some time to myself in my room. I was too embarrassed to go to school for the rest of the week.

A few weeks, many guidance councillor meetings, many principal meetings, lots and lots of bullying, teasing, tears, and difficulties later, the whole thing with Ms. Jordan passed. I finally realized how much of an idiot I was and how embarrassing the whole thing turned out to be. I hadn't talked to Ms. Jordan since the incident, but I was forced to write an apology letter. I was also forced to switch out of her math class into some sweaty ogre's who I hadn't seen at all that year until then. I even decided to skip prom, to save myself from all the teasing.

But then I thought, who knows? Maybe when I come back in ten years, we'll both fully understand what really happened, and she might want me back. I still had feelings for her, after all, and you should always follow your dreams.



By Veronica Pentland



By Lantian Chen

A WORKING MAN

By Chloe Eidlitz

It was a typical Saturday night; Leon sat in the basement transfixed by the flickering blue screen as he watched his favorite movie, *Royal Intrusion*, a British-set-in-Europe-critically-acclaimed-foreign-nostalgia drama. A particularly tense scene with a prolonged, meaningful silence was abruptly punctuated by a horrific caterwauling that Leon would later describe as a disagreeable cross someone being strangled and several car engines failing at once. Flicking on the light, he was greeted by the source of the cacophony, his aging, obese cat Tabatha who was violently emitting putrid grey-auburn fur balls from her tiny mouth.

"Not the new carpet!" he groaned, looking helplessly at the rapidly multiplying islands of fur on the soft, white floor.

Tabatha gracefully sidestepped her handiwork, settled herself comfortably on the top stair and was soon softly snoring. Leon glared at the cat; he knew that the minute his mother saw this, all hell would break loose. You see Leon lived what he liked to refer to as a "unique lifestyle." At the age of 32, he had yet to move out of his mother's basement, a situation that he claimed was due to his difficulty working with others and not at all related to his cloddishness, profound laziness and consistent use of sarcasm.

"Leon!" bellowed a voice from upstairs.

"Yes Mom?!" Leon answered.

"Come fill out this job application!"

Leon rolled his eyes, irritated by his mother's persistence in urging him to work. Stumbling into the living room, he found his mother hunched in front of her laptop with the words "Table Tennis Referee Application" clearly visible on the illuminated screen.

"Oh wow, another truly great find," he drawled.

"Come now Leon, this could be fun!" his mother responded pushing the computer towards him.

"Mom I can't possibly referee ping pong! It's not even a sport! It's called ping pong for God's sake and 95% of the game is spent chasing the ball around the room."

"TABLE TENNIS, Leon, has been an Olympic sport since 1988!"

"So has Equestrian Dressage, Mom, but that doesn't make it worthy of being titled a sport! I'm not interested in a job!"

"That's it!" she shouted. "I have had enough of you lying around all day doing nothing! If you don't get a job in the next three days you will find yourself out on the street!"

"Three days? That's hardly any time!" Leon whined. He tried to slam the laptop shut defiantly but succeeded only in cracking the screen and pinching his own fingers in the hinge.

His mother shook her head and stormed up the stairs to bed.

Up to this point, Leon had been used to getting his own way. This shocking ultimatum sent him staggering back to the security of the basement. Blinded by his fear of working, he failed to notice Tabatha still curled in a ball on the first step. What followed was an impressive

tumble down the entire flight of stairs, in which Leon demonstrated his remarkable clumsiness by successfully slamming his head onto every single step on the way down. Tabatha, the only witness to this dubious feat, hissed in annoyance at the woeful figure lying at the bottom of the stairs.

As he slowly regained consciousness the next day, Leon discovered that while he had spent the entire night crumpled on the floor, his forehead had been busy developing a large purple and blue goose egg. Despite the splitting headache, he was able to decipher a note pinned to his shirt in which his mother reminded him that he now had only two days left in which to find a job. In desperation, Leon decided uncharacteristically to venture outside to clear his aching head.

As luck would have it, there was a "Help Wanted" sign in the window of Sam's Smoothies. Normally, Leon would never have responded to such an advertisement but perhaps because he was dazed and confused, he pushed the door open and introduced himself to a large woman behind the counter.

"Hello, I'm interested in a job," he heard himself announce.

"Boy what the hell's on your head? You tryna grow a mountain up there?" the woman replied with an obnoxious laugh.

"I hit my head. It's a long story," he said trying unsuccessfully to rearrange his hair to camouflage the bump. "I was wondering if I could speak to the manager," Leon continued.

"Well you already speakin' to 'er honey!" The woman eyed him closely. "You know how to make a smoothie?"

"I think so."

"Good. Why don't you and yo unicorn-ass head make a strawberry banana smoothie and I'll tell ya if you got the job or no." She launched a stack of ingredients at him and waddled into the back room, whistling.

Leon decided to ignore the unrefined manners of the woman as he scanned the counter. He had never actually used a blender before; Leon had never had to do a thing for himself on any day in his life. He was blissfully unaware that most fruits had to be peeled prior to consumption so he threw a banana, peel and all, into the blender. The remaining ingredients were added with equal enthusiasm and complete disregard for the conventions of a recipe. He proudly hit the "blend" button, being quite ignorant of the fact that blenders function best when a lid is applied.

Within seconds, Leon was caught in a hurricane of fruits, yogurt and ice cubes.

"Help!" he shrieked, taking cover from the airborne debris.

"Awww hell no! Boy what the-" but the woman was unable to finish her sentence (which Leon was sure would end in a crude fashion) as she was violently slapped by a large fragment of frozen strawberry which swiftly lodged itself in the back of her throat.

Crouched behind the counter, Leon could hear the sound of the woman choking over the swishing hail of soaring foods. Luckily, he had seen enough action movies to know what he must do. Using a nearby bowl as a helmet and his sweater as a shield, he bolted toward the blender and ripped the plug from the outlet. He then ran towards the choking woman and did his best to imitate the Heimlich maneuver as he had seen in movies time and time again.

The slimy chunk of strawberry flew across the room as the manager began gasping for breath.

"You," she croaked, "You saved my life! I nearly labeled you a complete fool but I guess ain't nobody a total idiot! Thank you boy, god bless ya!"

“No problem ma’am,” Leon replied.

“But you still made a ratchet mess of ma store! Tell you what, you can have a job as cleaner. You gon’ get your first paycheck today once you wipe up this damn sight! I’m taking the day off, headin’ to church to thank the Lord I ain’t dead! Lock the damn door when you done!” The manager turned and shuffled out, still covered in a rainbow of fruit.

Leon couldn’t believe it: he got a job and saved someone’s life in the same day. He was excited to tell his mother. There was just one little problem: he had never cleaned before either.



By Hannah Gill

THE SPRITE

By Aidan Bennett

“So, if I give you a hundred bucks now, you can give me two hundred later?”

Jim was thinking very hard about this. He considered himself a man of moderate intelligence, moderate being a word he learned from an episode of some television show about celebrities overcoming various addictions. It was a very popular show among Jim’s demographic.

He had met the man he was now talking to earlier that hour when the man had given him a strange proposition. The man himself was also strange. He had mostly normal features: average length brown hair, green eyes that Jim could only describe as “tricky”, which a person with less moderate intelligence would’ve called “sly”, and a rather thin build. For some reason, Jim could see some sort of glow about him.

The man had approached Jim while he was enjoying a breakfast of pancakes, bacon, and a single fried egg at his favourite diner. The man had told him that he was planning to start a business but required some start-up money. Jim wondered why he had asked, of all people, a moderately paid, moderately smart office worker to help him start a business. When he pressed the man, he responded with some malarkey about the most successful people being the ones you least expect, which appeased Jim’s curiosity. The man called his plan “investment”; essentially, Jim would give him some money to start his business, and, later on, he would pay Jim twice that. Jim thought that this was completely legitimate.

“Yes, that’s the gist of it, though I’ll require more than one hundred dollars.”

Rem was elated that he had found someone foolish enough to fall for his scam. He had been doing this for centuries, and never before had he seen such a buffoon. Rem was, of course, not human. Anyone with even moderate intelligence would have been able to figure that out. Rem was a sprite, one of the four immortal races. He spent most of his time in the Spritelands, one of the five realms and the only immortal realm that sprites could access, so he wanted to enjoy his time in the mortal world. Unfortunately, one usually required money to enjoy the finer things, so Rem had to find a moron and take as much money as he realistically could. He would then proceed to spend as much of the money as possible on luxury hotels, fancy restaurants, and theme park tickets until either his vacation was over or the moron caught on to his trick. “I will require one thousand dollars,” he said.

It was the moment of truth. Would the moron fall for it?

Jim tossed the thought around in his head for a minute. A thousand bucks was nothing to laugh about. And he had to be careful to not make any impuls--

“I’ll do it!” Jim said, acting entirely on impulse and making a spur-of-the-moment decision. Jim considered himself a man of moderate intelligence.

He was not.

“Excellent!” Rem exclaimed. “You won’t regret this, moron - I mean- you won’t regret this sir,” Rem lied. He was in the home stretch, so to speak, and all he had to worry about now was The Meddler.

Right then, the door to the diner was broken down in a violent explosion. Rem knew before the dust had even cleared that the person behind it was The Meddler. Sure enough, he was right. The Meddler stepped out of the dust and grabbed a hold of Jim’s shoulder.

“Sir, don’t listen to that man. He is trying to scam you out of whatever money you promised him,”

The Meddler warned Jim.

"Well, when you put it like that, it sounds like I'm trying to steal from him," Rem protested. "I'd prefer to say I'm trying to deceive him."

Jim considered himself slow to anger. He was not. He charged at Rem and was instantly tossed onto a nearby table. The diner patrons were moderately concerned about the table.

"Why do you always show up right when I'm about to seal the deal?" Rem was furious.

"Because it's more amusing," The Meddler replied. He chuckled. "As the guardian of the mortal realm, I can't simply let you go around scamming innocent morons."

"Not scamming, deceiving," Rem reminded The Meddler. "And besides, how am I supposed to make money when I'm in the mortal realm? It was much more convenient when it ran on the barter system. I could take a rock and use an illusion to make them think it was a chicken, but those stupid coins and bills are too complicated to accurately copy. It's like they were specifically trying to stop us sprites from forging money!"

"That's because I was the one who suggested it," The Meddler reminded Rem.

"Thanks for that by the way, Jack." Rem's words were dripping with sarcasm. "As if it wasn't hard enough for immortals to take a vacation in the first place," Rem groaned. He was trying to get the sympathy of Jack. He was not succeeding.

"May I remind you," Jack began, "that you are not on vacation. You are here because I specifically requested for you to come."

"You didn't say why," Rem stated, with a hint of curiosity in his tone.

"And you were too busy trying to get money to ask me," Jack retorted. "If you listen, I'll tell you." Jack paused for a few seconds to take out a bottle and drink from it. Presumably fully hydrated, he walked to the counter and asked the waitress if he could have something for brunch. He didn't want too much; he didn't want to spoil his dinner. He was fine with just a plate of bacon and eggs and maybe some home fries. After he settled on the Sunday Morning Combo, he took a seat, all the while maintaining perfect eye contact with Rem. "It's about the wraiths," he finally said.

The wraiths were one of the other three immortal races, known for their vicious nature, ability to become intangible or tangible at will, and terrible cuisine. They resided in the Wraithzone, one of the other three realms. Recently, the wraiths had gained a new leader. He was very focused on "reclaiming the glory of the wraiths".

As soon as Jack spoke, Rem felt a chill in the air, in his bones, and in his left pinkie toe. It didn't take a genius to realize that a wraith had entered the vicinity. Rem looked around. The diner was completely empty. Jack stood, unmoving as a fridge that had been broken so long that no one desired to open it, but no one could go close enough to pick it up and take it to the dump, so it just sort of sat there.

Rem heard a raspy breath, and then he felt a powerful blow to the head. He was exceptionally angry, but he was also blacked out, so he was unable to do anything but snore menacingly. In his dream, there was a single phrase repeated over and over: "The wraiths are coming. The wraiths are coming. The wraiths are coming."

To Be Continued...

THE TYRANT'S HEAVEN

By Charlie Hilberdink

Up, up, up in the sky
up where no one else may fly
there exists a paradise secure
for tyrants who are considered pure.

A rare utopia, it's entrance is rigged
above the masses who dance their jigs.
It's all ebony suits and ivory wigs
and dinners of gold-flaked figs.

Yes, the Khan still has his horde,
and, yes, Napoleon remains lord;
All the Louis fight to be coward
And the Kims are nicely showered.

Let the light of Elysium shine upon their faces;
Tighter be they than the sticks of a fasceses.
Lives in death are no differently spent
When the straight line to heaven is so oddly bent.

THE COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO NAMING

By Owen Hammer

Searching for a name that will
Fill your child with pride?
Sir or Madame look no further
Than this helpful guide.

Let's start with all the common ones,
Always a safe bet:
Michael, Emma, Matthew, Hannah,
Andrew, and Annette.

Looking for a famous name?
You really can't go wrong with
North, Moses, Free, Puma, Seven,
Sailor, Song.

How about you make your own
And mix a verb and noun:
Twinkletoes, Dragonsnort,
Snaggletush, Blubberclown.

Don't worry about what others say,
Punctuation's fine,
& (ampersand), * (asterisk),
~ (tilde), and the § (section sign).

At this point you'll likely take
Any name at all,
4Real, Variable, 27,
Bladder of the Gall.



By Joe Zhou

2015 WINNERS

MIDDLE CATEGORY - GRADES 7 AND 8

First Place:
Second Place:
Third Place:
Honourable Mentions:

UPPER CATEGORY - GRADES 9 AND 10

First Place:
Second Place:
Third Place:
Honourable Mentions:

SENIOR CATEGORY - GRADES 11 AND 12

First Place:
Second Place:
Third Place:
Honourable Mentions:

LIST OF PARTICIPATING CIS ONTARIO SCHOOLS



Appleby College
Bayview Glen
The Bishop Strachan School
The Country Day School
Crestwood Preparatory College
Havergal College
Hillfield Strathallan College
Holy Trinity School
MacLachlan College
Pickering College
Ridley College
Royal St. George's College
St. Clement's School
St. Andrew's College
The York School
Villanova College

