

CONNECT THE DOTS



Zephyr
Art and Literary Magazine
Richard S. Sherman
Great Neck North Middle School
2020 Edition

Brain Circuits
by Julia Huang

ZEPHYR LITERARY MAGAZINE

A Magazine of Art and Literature
2019–2020 Edition

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Great Neck, New York 11023

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ZEPHYR LITERARY MAGAZINE

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SPECIAL THANKS

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Zephyr's Philosophy

Great Neck North Middle School's literary magazine, *Zephyr*, provides students with the opportunity to share their poems, short stories, and graphic artwork with the school community. *Zephyr* is a unique way for students to express themselves, to demonstrate their talents, and to articulate their feelings through a creative outlet. This school-based publication is a student-run activity where students are encouraged to contribute not only as writers and artists, but as members of the editorial staff.

Explanation of Theme

"Connect the Dots" was imagined by the students of the *Zephyr* club. The theme was inspired by the concept that everyone and everything is connected. In life, people are bonded with the others around them. We develop relationships that alter our existence and fate. In stories, points of plot are linked in order to arrive at a resolution. In mysteries, clues are collected in order to solve a crime. Dots become lines, lines become shapes, and shapes become pictures, allowing us to see the world more clairvoyantly.

We hope that you enjoy "connecting the dots" with us!

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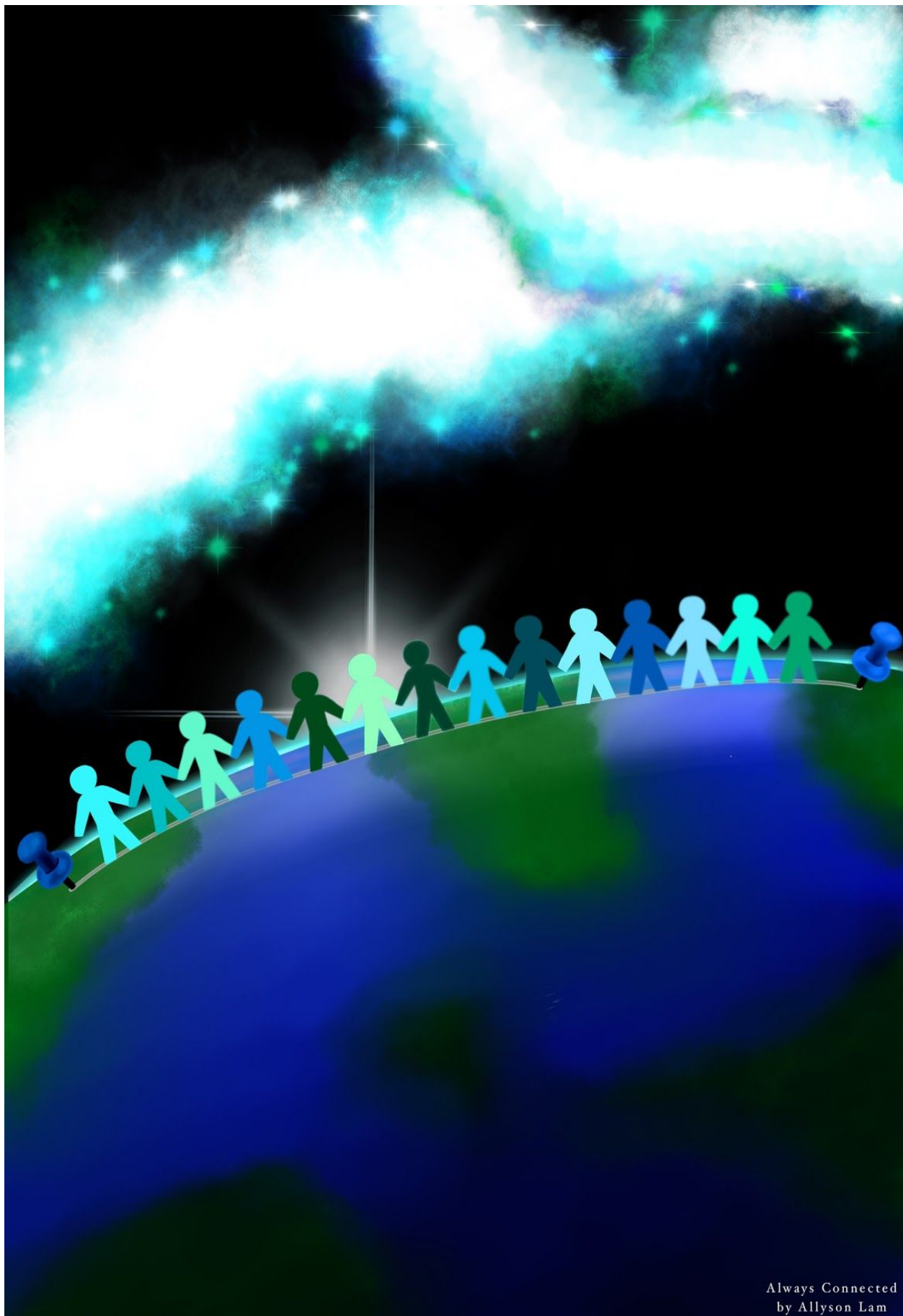
“Pencil Strokes”

by Evan Nasab

My swift pencil goes back and forth
The small tiny dots are connecting as one
As my brain is thinking of its next move
Each pencil stroke connects the dots like moments
Lines are forming from the dots
The ruler touches the paper and then the pencil
The pencil goes back and forth again
Making a complete firm line on the paper
The dots become farther and farther
Then they become closer and closer
As I think, my pencil moves itself
It travels swiftly with ease
As the solid lines grow even darker
Connecting the dots...

“Masterpiece” by Maytal Imani

The pieces of a puzzle
Complicated and intricate
You are a mere puzzle piece
Life itself is the puzzle
Sometimes the pieces don't fit as they should
So we take them out
And find a place they could
The tiny pieces scattered around
To force them in places only ruins the art
If a piece doesn't fit then set it aside
It will be important later
It will have to be applied
The trouble brought from the puzzle
If one piece is missing the puzzle is incomplete
Never give up though
The piece that has been taken
Will leave the puzzle with no end
Soon there will be a perfect fit
The pieces once lost are now found
The finished product...
A masterpiece



Always Connected
by Allyson Lam

“Wildfire”

by Jules Sanders

Grassy remains lay at feet
As sol descends with soul
Ground and hands are stained like beet
As limb sinks into hole

Crimson ribbons dance high in the sky
While myrtles halve and calve
Though birds can fly and embers die
They cite all who ‘could have’

Yet fires rage and ash pollutes
Brush burned by conflagration
Eucalyptus bears no fruit
And flames see no cessation

But scarlet skies mean zilch to zat
As leaf turns over leaf
These patterns show that not a gnat
Can pass to feel such grief

“Beyond the Shadows”

by Nina Zar

in the place beyond the shadows
the clouds all seem to fall
the only sliver of light to be seen
with the darkness, will always brawl

neither noticed by anyone
both will try, but fail
both just seeking the eyes of others
but neither ever prevail

as I watch them clamor
for the one to end up on top
I can't help feeling overwhelmed
I want to make it stop

light and dark, day and night
shadows rise and fall
suns rise and set, they pay their debt
none quit til they have it all

beyond the shadows we can see
none will ever stop
they continue to fight, yet another night
no one ever makes it to the top

“Piecing Together the Logic”

by Oliver Goldwyn

Puzzles are like life. You can't solve them unless you have all of the right pieces. Those pieces represent how life works out. Each puzzle piece is connected to another, much like connecting the dots. The troubling thing about life and about puzzles is when you are missing a piece. What will you do if you can't find that piece of life to solve the puzzle? Will you give up, or can you see that you don't need that last piece? Like life, puzzles can be flawed. No matter how many pieces fit, and no matter how many pieces there are, there is always a defect. Instead of giving up, there is something that you can do. You can make your own puzzle piece, and continue living your life with blemishes. Nothing in life is perfect, and nothing in life will ever be perfect. You can either persevere with the flaws and move on, or you can get caught up in the puzzle and worry about that one missing piece. Remember, there isn't only one way to solve a puzzle. There are countless ways. There are also an infinite number of ways to live life. So live your life your own way.

“Pieces”

by Bryan Moreno

Life is like one big puzzle
You're always adding pieces
Each puzzle piece is a memory of a certain person
A friend that made you feel some type of way
Sometimes mad, sad, happy, or glad
Everyone has their own puzzle
It always looks different from everyone else's
Never try to take away pieces
Because you might forget the person you truly are

“Dissatisfied”

by Jolie Nassi

I look at her face. The soft, swift curves of her jawline join together to form a too-pointy chin. Peppering her forehead are spots of acne she tries to cover up with no success. Her eyebrows used to be sharp and defined, but short, dark hairs poke out slightly below the soft arch. Her eyes are big and too dark, like rich mud in April. But when the sunlight hits her irises just right, they glow with a light honey color. Lining her oversized almond eyes are a thick swathe of eyelashes, full and jet black. Formed in the inner corner of her eyes are darker rings caused from a lack of sleep and excessive smiling. Her nose begins narrow at the top, then widens into a larger, bulbous wad of cartilage she’s grown to hate.

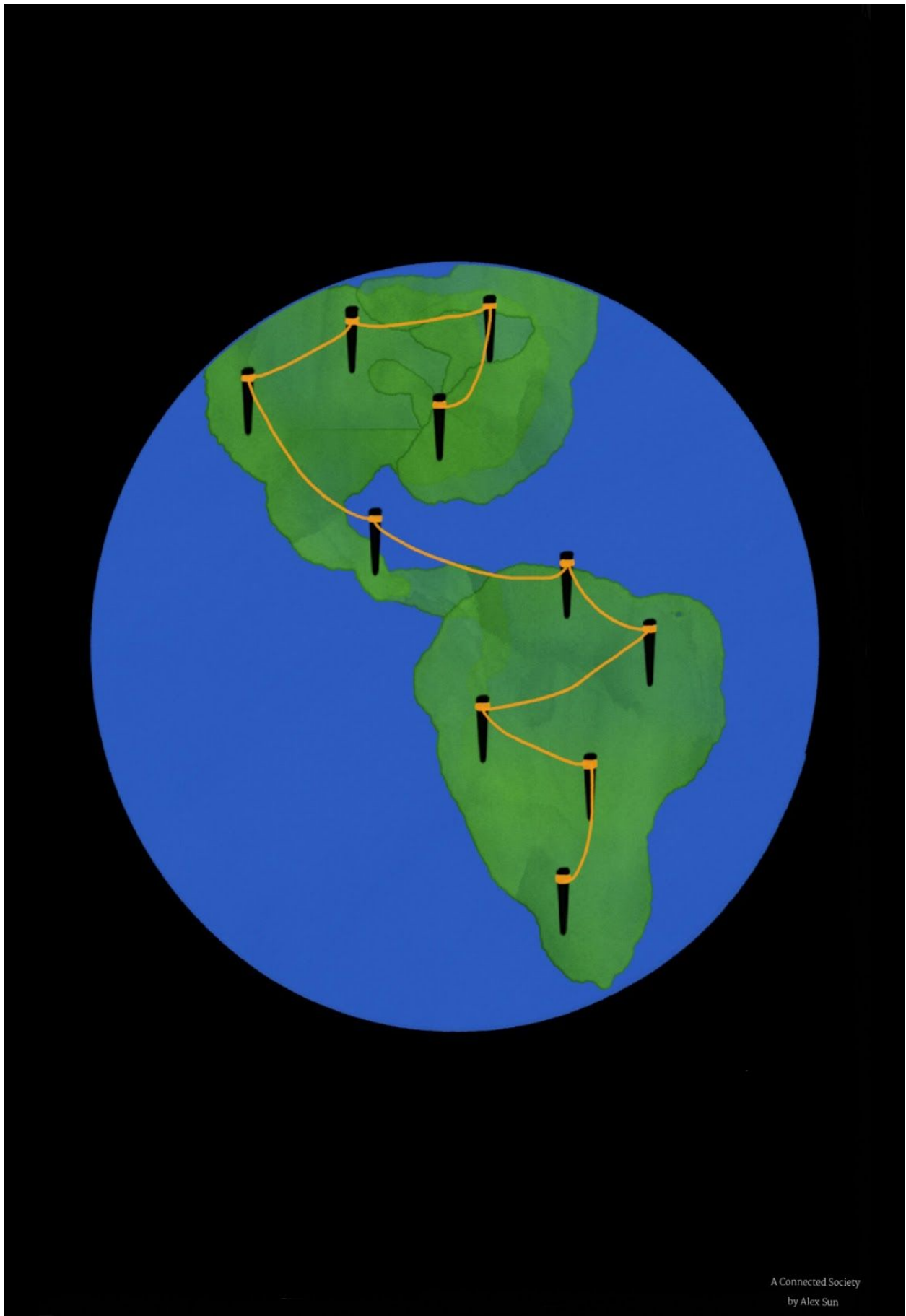
The genetics of her Middle Eastern parents cause the short hairs above her upper lip that she’s been teased about for most of her life. The soft arch of her Cupid’s bow declines down to the corners of her mouth, where the chapped monstrosity of her lower lip begins. Her parted lips reveal a small sliver of a tooth gap that’ll never close no matter how many years she ages.

I practice a sad smile, and walk away from the mirror, dissatisfied with what I see.

“Little Fish”

by Jacob Podwall

We are all pieces of a puzzle. Some may be smaller or bigger than others. Some might be more important or less important than others. Some can be oddly shaped and ugly, while others are good looking and perfect. Those good looking, perfect pieces are the ones who can hurt you the most. They can get inside your head and mess with you. Like stepping on a piece of gum with your brand new pair of sneakers. You just can’t get them off and you definitely cannot beat them. Then you start to feel jealousy. You wish you were them. You feel as if you’re a little fish in the ocean. Meanwhile, they are the big fish in the pond. You will do just about anything to become them. Just remember, these puzzle pieces all come together to teach you a lesson. They start to form a much larger picture. All of these experiences mold you into the person who you are today. So don’t worry, Little Fish. Just keep on swimming.



“Striped Pajamas”

by Nina Bikhman

The first time Mama told me the story, I was eight years old. I wanted to hear the story again when I was nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, and so on. And here I am, twenty-two years old, sitting at Mama’s lap and begging, “Please, Mama, tell me the story. I promise I will go to bed afterwards.”

Mama laughs and says, “Okay, Jonas, as long as you’re quiet.”

I pretend to zip my lips in response, and she begins with, “In the year 1942, I was out walking in the woods with my group. My instructor sat us down and talked about the many trees in the preservative. I became bored, and decided to walk a little further. And that was when I saw the dreaded place, covered in barbed wire and dead vines. People as thin as sticks sat on the pavement. I saw a boy peering at me through the wire, his hand curled around it. He was as thin as a stick, like the others there, and he wore striped pajamas with a golden star pinned onto his chest. I walked up to him, curled my fingers around the wire, and smiled at him.”

“That was Papa?” I interrupt.

“Yes, but you also promised to keep quiet,” Mama says with a smirk.

She continues, “He looked so miserable, I almost cried. I took out an orange I bought at the local market, and I slid it through the barbed wire. He looked at me like I was his savior, and said in a raspy voice, ‘Thank you, Miss.’ Soon, it was time for everyone to go home. But the next day, we covered how to recognize a Jewish person. My parents, even when I didn’t want to, enlisted me in the Hitler Youth. My blood ran ice cold at the thought of it. And so, everyday since, I gave the boy fruit or a piece of my lunch, until he was released. The war ended, and he became my husband.”

“Did you,” I ask, “by any chance, find out you were Jewish?”

“Only when I was fifteen years old,” Mama says.

“The Great Rivers of China”

by Ashley Dong

A long time ago, when there were no rivers on the earth, there lived a great dragon. The Jade Dragon decided when rain would fall upon the land and when it would cease. She was very prideful of her power and basked when humans paid her reverence. Jade Dragon had four dragon children: Yellow, Long, Pearl, and Black. They flew and spiraled happily in the sky, roaming all the corners of the earth. The Jade Dragon traveled the entire earth, seeing all of its beauty.

One day, she grew tired of this frolicking. She settled herself on the largest continent of the earth. Looking down from the skies, she saw a small village. People were chatting and farming in the field below. The Mother Dragon listened to their conversations eagerly.

“Thank goodness the rain has stopped,” one farmer said. “Many of my crops failed and drowned.”

“Yes,” replied another, “I am so tired of the rain. I can finally see the sun shining again.” The words filled Jade Dragon with anger. She puffed up with indignance. How dare the people insult her like this?

“These villagers can enjoy the sun forever, then,” she said haughtily.

The people on earth were in despair. The sun beamed brightly down upon them, almost tauntingly. Rain never came, and so the people suffered badly. The villagers’ skin became dry and rough, pockmarked with painful sores. Animals and plants shriveled and died and the people begged and prayed for rain, but Jade Dragon ignored them.

The people’s anguish did not go unnoticed by Jade Dragon’s children, Pearl, Long, Yellow, and Black, so they hatched a plan. They gave their mother a delicious feast and after the Jade Dragon ate her full, she slept soundly. Then the four dragon children flew off to a distant cave to discuss the plan.

“We cannot let Mother continue this. Humans are dying and suffering,” Pearl said, “But we also should not shame our mother by disobeying her.”

“What should we do? We need to stop this. If humans don’t get rain soon, each and every one of them shall perish,” replied Yellow. There was a pause, then Long looked down on the earth.

“I will sacrifice myself for the humans,” Long said bravely. His siblings stared at him in astonishment. “I will lay down my body and let it become a great river.” Nobody spoke for a moment, each pondering their own thoughts.

“I shall do that, as well,” Black said, “For the people’s sake and to cure our mother’s pride.”

“And us, too,” Pearl said, gesturing to herself and Yellow, who nodded vigorously.

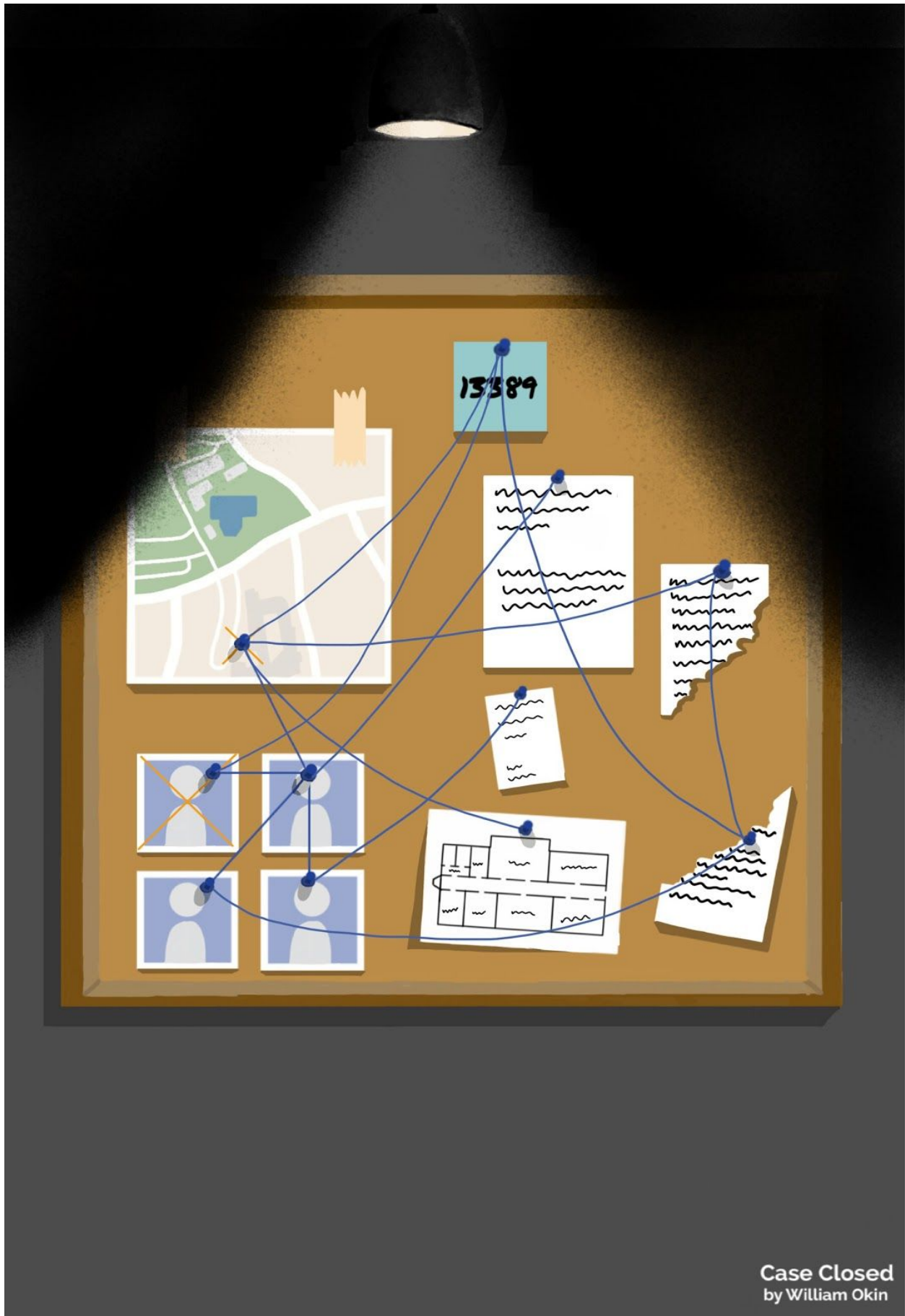
And so each of them said their farewells, and zoomed down to the earth in unison and laid down upon the earth. They suddenly became roaring rivers, the four great rivers of the land: the Yellow, Long, Pearl, and Black Rivers. The people rejoiced at the sight of water. They bathed their dry, dirty skin and flooded their fields.

“Water has come! Water has come!” They shouted joyously, running through the streets of the village. Life became normal again for the villagers.

When Jade Dragon awoke from her nap, she called for her children and was surprised they did not reply. Perhaps they were resting also? She emerged from the cave where she slept and flew all around the land, looking for her children.

“Long?” She called nervously. “Pearl? Yellow?” She took a deep breath. “Black? Where are you?”

She flew up higher in the clouds and looked down, eager for a better view. Suddenly, she felt her heart shatter. Four long, jagged rivers streaked across the ground. She cursed herself for her pride. She lost her children because of her dignity. She would no longer fly in the sky with them, no longer be able to see them, no longer be able to hear them call her name. The mighty Jade Dragon fell from the sky, her heart broken. When she hit the earth, she herself became the great Jade River, symbolic of her eternal tears. The stones that line the riverbank are the shattered pieces of her heart, never able to be put back together.



Case Closed
by William Okin

“Sprinting for Glory”

by Willie Benjamin

It was Saturday, and Tracy Adams was in the lead.

“I got this,” she yelled. “I’m gonna win!”

Feeling the wind against her face, and the concrete below her feet, she was ready to win the *2020 New York City Marathon*. But when Tracy crossed the finish line, it was everything but what she expected. She pictured crossing the finish line, and everybody running towards her in excitement. She thought of people throwing roses at her, and her family dumping Gatorade on her and her blue clothes and pink running sneakers. She imagined that there would be bedlam because she had won!

Instead, she saw a man; a little older than twenty, with brown eyes, a long nose, and short legs, holding up the shiniest, biggest trophy she had ever seen.

“Woohoo! I won the race! I get the \$850,000,” the man exclaimed, kissing the golden trophy.

Then, out of nowhere, a man who looked just like the winner ran up to him shouting, “Brother! You did it! You won!”

Tracy stared at the man and his identical twin brother with a stern look, watching the brother’s beauty mark glimmer against the sun. She now really wanted to strike the winner and his brother across the face! She couldn’t accept that somebody else won her race!

Then, all of a sudden, Tracy realized that no one ever passed her during the race. She was in the lead the whole time. Instinctively, she ran over to the winner and cried, “What? You never passed me! You must have cheated. Admit it!”

“Whoa, whoa, whoa, Mrs. Adams,” the man replied. “Don’t be pointing your fingers at me.”

“But you cheated...you had to.”

“Not at all. I passed you in the tunnel where it was very dark. You just didn’t see me.”

Tracy stormed past the man to greet her family, but all she could think about was the reporters saying, “Ronald Fischer...Mr. Fischer, how does it feel to win first place?”

Ronald Fischer: the cheater. Interesting...

The following day, Tracy woke up in her two bedroom apartment, feeling like a loser. “I have to fix this,” she stated. “I can’t have a cheater win the race.”

Within a few minutes, Tracy was dressed and on the phone with her friend, Jillian Cosgrove, one of the race officials.

“I just don’t get it,” Adams complained, “I know for sure that I was in the lead at all times.”

“I’m sorry, Trace,” Jill replied, “I cannot say anything to the other officials unless you have proof.”

Jillian could tell that her friend really believed that she had won, and knew that she was really upset she hadn’t. Jill wanted to help her, but she couldn’t. There is no way that she could go up to Ronald and say that he was disqualified from further races, and that he had to give back the \$850,000, just to make Tracy happy!

“Tracy,” Jill calmly presented, “I’ll talk to you tomorrow. There is nothing I can do without proof. But I will let you know if I see or hear anything suspicious.”

Feeling despondent, Tracy hung up the phone without saying anything. A few minutes went by and Tracy suddenly thought that maybe she could find some proof that Ronald was guilty of cheating if she checked the race course.

Maybe I can find some clues.

So, she put on her pink sneakers, which reminded her of the day that she lost her spirit, and took off for a 36-mile walk, in hopes of finding some evidence. After about 15 minutes of walking, Tracy realized that her sneakers were getting sticky. Tracy looked behind her and saw a trail of a black, shiny liquidy substance on the ground. She bent down to look at the substance more carefully and noted that the chemical seemed like oil.

*Could this be oil from a car? Could this oil have leaked out of a car?
Could Ronald have been driving this car to win the race?*

Instantly, Tracy began sprinting. Her hopes were high. She would meet with the race officials at their headquarters to give them the proof they would need to call Ronald a cheater.

Once she arrived at the headquarters, she approached the offices and shouted, “I have proof that Ronald Fischer didn’t win the race. In fact, he cheated to make it seem like he had won!”

Hearing a wild lady screaming at the top of her lungs, a race official wearing a name tag gestured to her gently. He was attempting to calm her down. “Slow down, Miss,” Ted said. “What’s your name and why are you here?”

It didn’t take long for Tracy to explain the chaotic events that had occurred over the last two days. “And so,” Tracy concluded, “that is why I believe Ronald Fischer cheated in the race.”

“I’m sorry, Mrs. Adams, the car oil that you saw came from the car that I drove in, because I had an oil leak while I was observing the racers. I was tasked with making sure that no one got hurt during the race. Ronald did not cheat this way, if he cheated at all.”

Depressed as a caged animal, Tracy turned away from the official and trudged back to her apartment. She turned her key into the lock and took a long, deep breath. She stepped inside and looked around her room. Cracked walls, broken lights, and dilapidated furniture surrounded her.

That was my ticket out of here, and I blew it.

* * *

An hour had gone by since Tracy’s visit to the headquarters. While lying like a couch potato, she got a call. When Tracy picked up her phone, she heard a booming noise. Tracy put her phone to her ear and listened. Jill was crying out to Tracy that she thought she saw some proof of Ronald cheating! Suddenly, Tracy became ecstatic.

“I looked at Ronald’s records from the race,” Jill began, “and I saw that he crossed checkpoint 8 only 4.5 minutes after checkpoint 7.”

“So?” Tracey questioned.

“That’s impossible! Checkpoint 7 and Checkpoint 8 are 2 miles apart!”

But Tracy realized that this didn’t prove anything. There was a chance that Ronald was just very fast. The other officials wouldn’t take this as solid proof. After describing this situation to Jill, Jill felt badly for Tracy and apologized to her.

“It’s okay,” Tracy responded. “We all have mista...ooh wait! Weren’t you talking to Ronald? Did he say anything odd?”

“Well, after I pinned Ronald’s bib on his shirt, he came back to me saying that the wind blew his number off. This was odd because we were indoors!”

“Oh! That is weird! Where did this take place exactly?” Tracy questioned, taking out her pen and paper.

“It was in the meeting room at 555 Bulletin Boulevard.”

“Thanks, I am on my way!”

* * *

It didn't take long for Tracy to arrive at 555 Bulletin Boulevard, a neglected looking place. Carefully, Tracy scrutinized the meeting room, looking for the tiniest detail that could blow Ronald out of the race. After many minutes of circling the room, she spotted something small but bright against the shining light coming from the chandelier. She walked towards the small bright light, picked it up, and soon realized that it was a fake beauty mark.

“What the...” Tracy said, examining the beauty mark again.

Suddenly, Tracy realized what had to be done. She raced to her car, feeling like this would set all things straight once and for all. In the blink of an eye, Tracy was back at the race officials' headquarters. She was looking for Jillian, in hopes that she would guide her to the security cameras. Feeling her confidence rise and her worries decreasing, Tracy hoped that what was captured on the security cameras would tell the real story.

Once Tracy and Jill were able to review the security cameras, Tracy asked if she could look at the footage from 7:00am, the start of the race. While waiting for the 7:00am footage to come up on screen, Tracy recaptured the feeling she had that day when she lost the race. When the security guard put up the video, Tracy's eyes immediately fell towards Ronald.

“Here!” Tracy exclaimed to Jill. “Ronald has a beauty mark at the start of the race!”

“Yeah, so?” Jill asked.

“Can you put up the footage from 3:00pm, the end of the race?” Tracy questioned the security guard.

The security guard nodded. It took awhile for him to put up the 3:00pm footage, and all Tracy could think about was what she would do with all of the money she would get if she proved that Ronald had cheated. Minutes later, the security guard had the footage up and running.

“See!” Tracy stated. “There is no beauty mark on his face!”

“This doesn't mean anything,” Jill replied. “Just because Ronald had a beauty mark at the start of the race, but not one at the end, doesn't mean he cheated.”

“I believe that it does. Ronald has an identical twin brother who has a beauty mark. I met him at the end of the race. Ronald’s fake beauty mark probably fell off when you were pinning his bib on his shirt. Ronald number 1 probably went off the course at the start of checkpoint 7, and Ronald number 2 came into the race ahead of me at the end of checkpoint 7. That is why I never saw anyone pass me by, because they didn’t!”

“Well, you may be right! Now that I think of it, Ronald seemed shorter at the end of the race than at the start of the race.” Jill admitted.

“Donald!” Tracy shouted. “Donald is the brother, the one with the beauty mark. I looked it up! That is how people tell them apart.”

“Well, Tracy Adams, prepare yourself for a big load of money and a handful of glory!” Jill exclaimed.

* * *

Tracy and Jill approached the twins, who were smoking 5 feet away from the Apple Store. “Ronald and Donald Fischer,” Jill screamed into her megaphone, grabbing the boys’ attention. “As of today, you are disqualified from any further United State races and you must return all prize money!”

“Nah, I’d rather not!” Ronald mocked.

“Why not?” Tracy questioned, eager to retrieve *her* money.

“Cause you can’t fine us if you can’t catch us!” Donald shouted.

Instantly, Ronald and Donald took off and sprinted away from Jillian and Tracy, not realizing that Tracy was faster than both of them combined.

“I’ve got this,” Tracy said to Jillian. Suddenly, traveling at lightning speed, Tracy bolted towards the boys, who were already half of a block ahead of her. Fortunately for Tracy, the twins were no match for her!

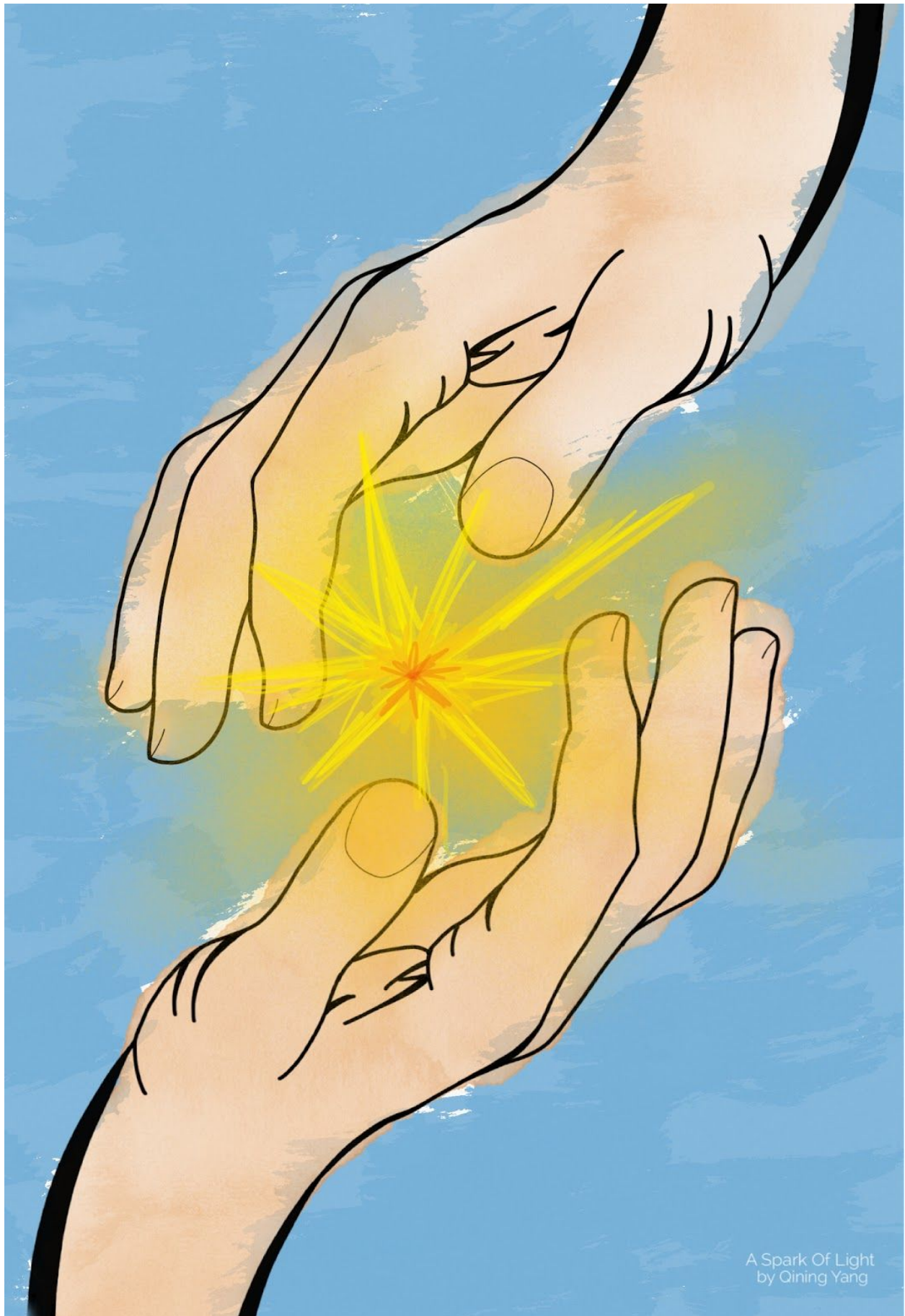
* * *

The following week, while sitting on her brand new sofa with Jillian, Tracy looked proudly at her golden trophy and its engraved label. *WINNER OF 2020 NYC MARATHON.*

“At last,” Tracy cried. “I can enjoy my luxurious new home, instead of putting mouse traps around the fridge.” All of a sudden, she started to cry.

“Hey, are you okay, Trace?” Jill asked, seeing her friend gush like a water fountain.

“Yeah,” she replied, grinning. “Never been better.”



“Another Hour Passed”

by Antonio Kawai

A boy looks at the calendar, as the first hour in his day passed. Today, he turns another year older.

He hears his family cheer for him, as he eats a meal that his parents have prepared. While he wore a smile on the outside, he had an opposite feeling growing on the inside. What was so important about birthdays? As he finished eating, another hour in the day passed.

His friends called him and talked to him with joy in their words. The boy thanked them for their messages and gifts, but he still asked why? What was worth taking out so much time in your day for another person? As he finished talking with his friends, another hour passed.

The boy wanted to distance himself from everyone else, so he went for a walk. As he walked, his younger sibling followed him, talking about how much fun he was having celebrating his brother’s birthday. He shooed his younger brother away, and tried to think about anything but his birthday. As he walked, another hour passed.

The boy walked through his favorite park, and climbed up his favorite tree. He pulled an apple from the tree and munched lightly on it, as he thought about schoolwork, monotony, maturity, and his future. After all, that’s what happens to everyone as they get older, right? As he pondered about his future, another hour passed.

He decided to walk into town and use his pocket change to buy something for himself. The boy always believed that everything tasted best when you worked for it. He bought some candy, sucked on it, and walked around town aimlessly, as another hour passed.

The boy then returned to the park and walked some more, growing more frustrated by the second. He finally found a bench, after silently storming around the park in anger. His father had been telling him about the massive party that was being thrown for him, and how much he knew the boy would enjoy it. He ran from his father in anger, and sucked on his last piece of candy. Suddenly, an old man sat down next to him, as another hour passed.

The old man asked the boy if there was something wrong. The boy ignored him at first, but eventually divulged what was bothering him. The boy went on about how he hated his birthday, because it was a sign that he was getting older and that he felt he had done nothing with his life. The old man responded with a story similar to his. It was about how he used to hate his birthday, until he realized that he'd never have one again. The old man told the boy, "You know, I'm going to die some time, whether it's in months or years. But at the end of it all, I just regret not spending those birthdays enjoying myself. You are young. Take this time and enjoy it while you still have it." The old man got up and walked away, as another hour passed.

It was late in the day now, and the boy knew that it was time for him to return home. By this time, he realized that the old man was right. He was still young, and there was so much time that he had left. He thought about what he had, and he smiled. He realized that there wasn't much time left in the day, but he knew that he could enjoy what he still had. As he walked through the front door to his house, another hour passed.

As his family ate dinner, he smiled and laughed. There was so little time, yet so much fun to be had! He ate his cake and opened his gifts with a huge smile. As the festivities died down and he went to clean himself up, another hour passed.

The boy slid down and unwound in the bathtub. He smelled the sweet fragrance of the soap he used and he smiled. He knew that his birthday went from bitter to delicious, a feeling of strong hatred followed by peace. As he dried himself off, another hour passed.

As the boy slipped into bed, he knew that he was tired. He began to read a book that he had just received, and he refused to sleep until his eyes strongly objected. He put his book down and turned his light out. Another hour passed.

“Connect the Dots”

by Sarah-Elizabeth Spence

Connect the dots
Formed from many thoughts
Like a period at the end of a sentence
Or what separates the numbers on a clock
Connect the dots
Like wet drops of rain
That fall down the glass windowpane
That stop and start again
Connect the dots
To find great treasure
Or to multiply an equation
There forever
Connect the dots
Who really knows
Where it stops
Or where it goes
Only my teacher knows

“Dots”

by Talia Elyaho

Dots
Like the stars in the sky
No exact formation
Just scattered on the page
But black stars
Sprinkled everywhere
Boring black dots on the pages of the Zephyr Magazine
Suddenly, they aren't so boring anymore
You pick up a pencil and draw
Connecting the dots
You finally realize what those dots make
The point of all those boring black dots on the page
Connected together to form five flowers
Trying to show growth
The growth of one's imagination

“The Paint and the Paintbrush”

by Sharon Zkarya

I am the paint and the paintbrush
I wonder how this picture will turn out
I hear the bristles on the canvas, like the wind in a cartoon
I see the painting finally coming together, like there's a path to follow
I want it to be beautiful, yet unique
I am the paint and the paintbrush
I pretend I am there, but I'm still about to start
I feel different shapes and feelings
I touch the canvas like it's my world
I worry that it will be too much or too little
I cry when my paint runs out and gives up
I am the paint and the paintbrush
I understand that I will not be perfect
I say that I will finish this one day
I dream of being flawless, but know I will not be exact
I try to be priceless and precise
I hope that day will come soon and stay forever
I am the paint and the paintbrush

“The Puzzle of Life”

by Benjamin Ijadi

Life is one big puzzle. Nobody knows how many pieces there will be. When you do something wrong, it will be hard to put the pieces back together. The puzzle keeps getting bigger and more complicated, just like life's problems keep getting bigger and more complicated. Whenever you solve a section of the puzzle, that's when your problems start getting smaller and more simple. But if you ruin an edge, you can never use that puzzle piece again. So make the most of each piece in your puzzle, because each piece is an important part of life. Never take finishing a puzzle for granted, and never look back when it's over. That means you have completed an important challenge in life.

“We’re All in It”

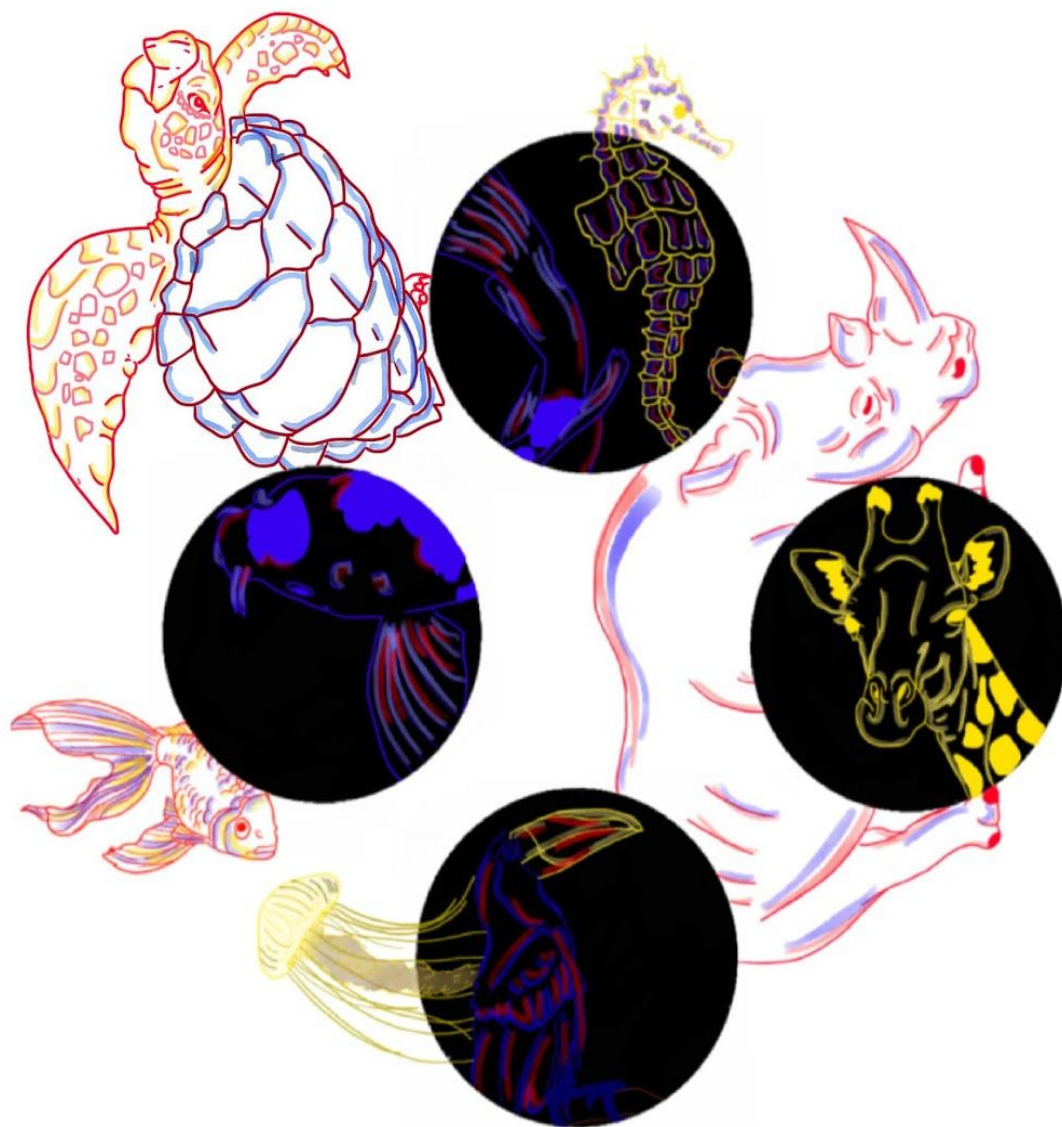
by Kayla Golyan

The beaches are empty, there are no people to see
The silence is deadly, as quiet as can be
The parks are so quiet, you can hear a pin drop to the floor
That only sound is an ambulance, making a loud roar
The disease is so deadly, people are dropping fast
So quickly that we can’t even find time to laugh
Face to face conversation is not a thing anymore
Telephone calls, FaceTime, and group chats happen more
Six feet apart, that’s what they say
To save your life, that’s the only way
Going outside is just not a thing
Unless you need to go grocery shopping
We all want things to go back to the way they were before
If only someone would find a miraculous cure
Hoping and praying, that’s what we can do
No matter what happens, we’re all in it, too

“Puzzle Piece”

by Phoenix Wang

Our lives are one big puzzle, in a pattern so unique.
Life is like a puzzle, full of obstacles.
Obstacles are staircases, each step you take must be precise.
You never know where the next puzzle piece may be.
Everyone has their own puzzle to solve.
You won’t know the final result until you solve it.
Once it is done, it will turn into a grand masterpiece.
Sometimes you may lose one of the pieces.
But in the end, you will locate it.
Each piece takes more than one try to find its spot.
Life takes more than one try to discover where you belong.



Unexplored Imaginations
by Anna Beauchesne

“Field of Flowers”

by Ugin Sun

There once was a field with only one flower. It stood upright on its own. That flower in the field was small, a few petals at best. One day, the flower opened its eyes to find a neighbor. That flower in the field was not very pleased with the addition. I would not agree with its new neighbor. They would argue over everything.

One day, that flower in the field was visited by a bee. This bee visited the neighbor flower, too. This made the flower realize just how much they meant to each other. From then on, they pollinated together. And soon, they multiplied day by day. Growing larger and larger in number. Together, they made each other feel warm, much like the sun that they relied upon.

That flower in the field had to bond with its neighbor in order to see how much their connection meant. The relationship blossomed and that single flower that once stood alone, became an entire field of flowers.

“Puzzled Thoughts”

by Alec Dilmanian

I choose to write about puzzles because they can be so simple, yet also so challenging. Puzzles can take minutes to complete, or years. Puzzles represent so much more than just a bunch of pieces. Puzzles can represent whatever you want them to be.

If life were a puzzle, everyday would bring new pieces. The world changes so often, it can be puzzling. The puzzle of life can be so simple, yet also so challenging. Sometimes the puzzle pieces practically jump into your hands and solve themselves, while other times the pieces just don't click.

All of this explains how a puzzle can represent whatever you want it to be. These are my thoughts on puzzles...and my thoughts on life.

“A Time for Inspiration”

by Ethan Shirazi

The Coronavirus has definitely impacted everyone on Earth. Some people are just mad and don't care about helping out. But looking at it on the bright side, we see people donating masks, gloves, and toilet paper.

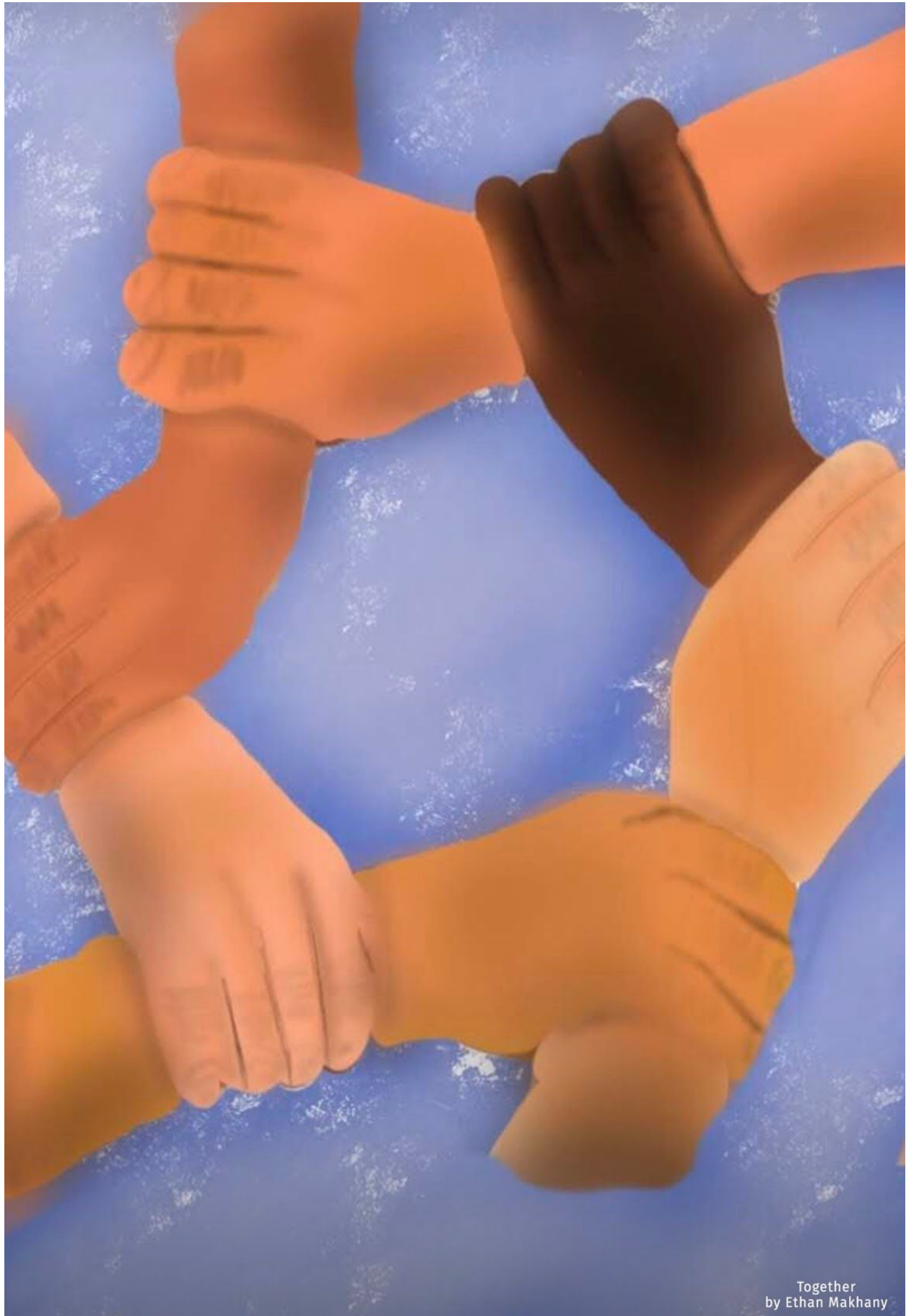
Some people wonder what there is to be thankful for, but I also think there are many things everyone can learn from this global pandemic. Unfortunately, many people are dying. The goal of the government is to protect people. Clearly, we were unprepared for this to happen. Yes, more precautions could've been taken earlier. In a fight against anything at all, you have a choice. Sometimes, if you fall to the floor, it wasn't your choice. But staying there is. That is what is happening in the world right now. People can get off the ground and battle together. You can still make something marvelous out of a very bad situation. While staying home and social distancing, things can still be done. Isaac Newton created the theory of gravity after sitting for hours at home and watching an apple fall from a tree. The best things come from having the time and space to think and be creative.

I am thankful for being with my family. I'm thankful for people who are still helping those who are sick. I'm thankful for people like my grandpa. My grandpa donated a lot of money to people who need it. It didn't come to him easily. He worked super hard every day when he was young to create a successful business. He is using some of his money to benefit others. Even in times like this, I am thankful for the support and comfort of my parents at home. I'm also thankful for my best friend. We FaceTime each other every single day to talk. We help each other when we are feeling down and make each other laugh. Even if we are not physically together, we can still appreciate each other's company.

This is a great time for inspiration. Especially for me. One of my biggest inspirations, Bill Gates, predicted a pandemic. He was right. I read many books about Bill Gates. This, in a way, inspires me to work my hardest and give my all. There is no easy road in life. Life is difficult. But if you do those hard things in life, like staying motivated for school while being at home, and studying for exams before you know you have them, you will be successful.

“Wanderer”
by Janeidy Da Silva

This old man is a wanderer.
He is a single fish in the depths of the sea.
This old man lives in obscurity,
all by himself, all on his own.
This old man has a hatred for humans.
His book will always be closed.
One day the old man was wandering,
And a thunderstorm was heard below.
He sat by himself so the storm would pass,
And an old little lady heard the storm too.
Luckily, she brought some soup in her basket.
This old lady, all dainty and small,
Offered some soup with a grin on her face.
This old man looked into her blue, beautiful eyes,
And saw everything that he was missing.
With pleasure, he accepted the soup,
And the storm was finally calm.
They talked for hours,
Oh how he wished it were for days.
His heart began to thump,
And his heart began to jump.
And suddenly the old man wished he hadn't wandered.
How he wished he'd spent his younger years,
Opening his heart and connecting with others.
This old man wanted to open his book,
Open it and read it, to the lady he loved most.
This old man wasted his time,
Walking alone, thinking he was fine.
I just hope he makes the most of it,
Before it's the end of the line.



“Puzzles”
by Ariel Ganjian

Puzzles are red, puzzles are blue
If I can do them, so can you
Puzzles are big, puzzles are small
You can be any age to try one at all
Puzzles are black or white
Any puzzle could serve your delight
200 or 2,000 pieces
Lock them in and see if the finished product appeases
Puzzles, puzzles, and more
An educational tool galore
Connect the dots and you will discover a surprise
Just like puzzles, you will realize

“One Big Puzzle”
by Benjamin Salamatbad

Life is just like one big puzzle
Sometimes there are problems
Other times there are not
Some are meant to fit into your puzzle
And other people are not
New memories are added as pieces
Laughter and tears join to form a picture
No matter how big or small any piece is
It is still part of the big puzzle

“Solving Puzzles”
by Jonathan Shtainer

There is always a way to solve a puzzle.
You solve a puzzle step by step.
You have to connect the pieces together.
Some people say that puzzles are easy.
Other people say that they are not.
There is always a way to solve a puzzle.
Puzzles can be tricky like machines.
Puzzles can take a long, long time.
Puzzles can take a short time.
We can all solve puzzles.

“3 Beats”

by Nina Bikhman

My dad is too busy being an accountant to spend time with children. He comes home at midnight, and leaves again at four o'clock in the morning. My brother, Daisuke, comes home at eight o'clock in the evening, due to practice. Despite being a senior, he doesn't act like a role model at all, and he doesn't help very much. Whatever needs to be done, is done by my mother. So who is left to keep me occupied? My grandma, or *obaasan*, in my language.

She was the one who got me into piano in the first place, most likely thinking that I could play without pounding the keys down like a kindergartener. Once I played the melody of *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* without botching it up, *Obaasan* taught me privately. She taught me how to read notes, how to play scales and chords, and the first few lines of Mozart's *12 Variations*. And once I was ready, *Obaasan* enlisted me in competitions, and made me practice excessively from ten in the morning until six in the afternoon.

I stopped going to school frequently, but there was soon a change in schedule. Before I knew it, I was sitting in my classroom listening to a lecture from Mr. Harrison. He insisted that I stay in school, since I had already missed one full week and he did not want me to be absent for another.

I was sitting in my seat listening to the teacher, when my friend Mia whispered to me, “Are you sure you're joining? You already missed one week.”

I rolled my eyes, and said, “Of course I'm joining. It's not really a big deal.”

Obaasan enlisted me in yet another competition—the tenth one so far—the International Maihou Competition. It really must have been a big deal. As soon as the competition was announced, *Sobo* enlisted me right away and taught me one of the most difficult Chopin etudes she knew: Chopin's Étude Op. 10 No. 4. But, when she was done ridiculing me, I picked up Chopin's Étude Op. 25 No. 5, one of the pieces that I wasn't allowed to play because of its difficulty.

Mia gave me a concerned look, then right away looked at the board because the teacher was yelling at someone for not paying attention. I assumed it was that stupid Taylor Hollister, who for some reason hates my guts. She doesn't know how to think, much less act properly, because her attention span is approximately

two seconds. Taylor looked straight at me and shot me an accusing stare. I didn't really care for her at all.

When it was time to go home, everyone was making a commotion with their friends. When I arrived home, *Obaasan* was nowhere to be found. I only found my parents and Daisuke.

"Mom," I said in Japanese, since they are just learning English, "where is Grandmama?" That was the first time I used the term "grandmama" and I was pretty surprised with myself.

"Honey," my mom said, in her shaky English, "Grandmama...has gone overseas. She has gone to Europe to go to a concert."

At that moment, I noted my parents' early arrival home. Mom's cheeks were tear-blotted and her eyes red. Even Daisuke was crying, even though I'd never seen him cry before. They had been saying goodbye. I suddenly feel sick. My hands started shaking and my head hurt like when you drink milk too fast. I sank down to the floor, defeated. She promised to be there and watch me perform. *Couldn't she have waited until afterwards?* I was kneeling on the floor crying now, because Grandmama wasn't there with me.

Weeks passed, and I was still waiting for Grandmama to come back home. I was practicing until I felt dizzy. Reviewing the scores when class was in session, and singing the piece to myself so much that it was visibly noticeable. Mia asked me multiple times if I was okay. *Of course I'm not*, I wanted to say, but at the same time I didn't want her to worry. So, instead, I plastered a fake smile, and said I was ok every time she asked.

Then came the days of the competition. I breezed through the preliminaries, quarterfinals, and semifinals, due to my excessive practicing. I had to wait a few weeks before the finals, but the time finally arrived. I was sitting on the floor. My back was against the wall in my new black dress and Mary Janes, with my shiny black hair brushed, feeling sick to my stomach. I noticed that this had never happened before, and that made me feel even more sick. I fit my head in between my knees, and found the position to be peaceful.

At that moment, I heard someone walk over and sit down beside me. "Performance jitters?" the person asked.

"I guess so," I said, without raising my head. The person sounded like a boy.

“Maybe you should raise your head,” he said, “you’ll look more polite.”

I raised my head and saw this boy smiling at me. He was wearing a black tuxedo and black Oxfords, with his sleek, brown hair brushed upwards in the middle. He made me feel a little bit lighter for some reason.

“What’s your name?” the boy asked me.

“Um,” I said.

“Okay, ‘Um,’” he said, “mine’s Oliver.”

I looked at this so-called ‘Oliver’ like he was crazy, but he was still shining that playful smile of his onto me. My face felt hot all of a sudden.

“It’s Kanade, thank you very much,” I say hotly. “And I believe that you, good sir, have no right to joke around in a place like this!”

“Well,” Oliver said, “no one is here stopping me, huh?”

I looked at him with my mouth open in horror. I suddenly realized that I was blushing a whole lot. That made the situation a whole lot worse! I tried to cover my face with my hand to hide my humiliation. But, in truth, it didn’t do much.

I took out my *bento* box (like a lunch box) and started eating. I looked over at Oliver and noticed that he was staring at me—well, my lunch.

“Um,” I said, “do you have lunch with you?”

Oliver replied, “I was in a rush, so I didn’t have time to pack it.”

I felt bad about the fact that he didn’t have any food, and remembered that I had extra chopsticks in my bag. I gave them to him.

“Don’t expect much,” I said to him. He looked at the chopsticks like they were something from another planet.

I gave him an annoyed look. “What now?” I asked.

Oliver gave me a stare that let me know he didn’t know how to use them.

I rolled my eyes, and showed him the basics, and before I realized it, he ate all of my egg and most of my spring rolls.

“Hey!” I yelled. “You’re eating most of the food!”

“Sorry,” Oliver said, “I guess I’m a bit too hungry for my own good.”

He started laughing at this, while I was a bit too busy trying to eat what was left of my lunch. And then, without even thinking, I started to laugh. We sat there, laughing for the heck of it, and all of my sick feelings went away. I gave him an extra egg sandwich that I’d made, and finished my *bento* box. All the while, talking with Oliver about nothing in particular.

Eventually a staff member called, “Contestant number twenty-three, please get ready to go onstage.”

Oliver got up, and said, “Well, I guess it’s my turn now. Wish me luck.” And with that, he walked away with a bit of a swagger.

I stood up, and walked over to the TV room, where they broadcast the stage live. There was a music stand with the current contestant number on a card, and a glossy black grand piano. In his black tuxedo, now unkempt, Oliver walked onstage and took a bow. He propped himself up on the piano bench, composed himself, and played the opening notes of Chopin Étude Op. 10 No. 4. This was the same exact piece that I was going to play. I felt a sudden sickness, knowing that Oliver was practicing the same piece that I was. If I were to play something of an easier difficulty, I was sure I’d get ridiculed. I clenched and unclenched my fists over and over again, trying to calm myself down.

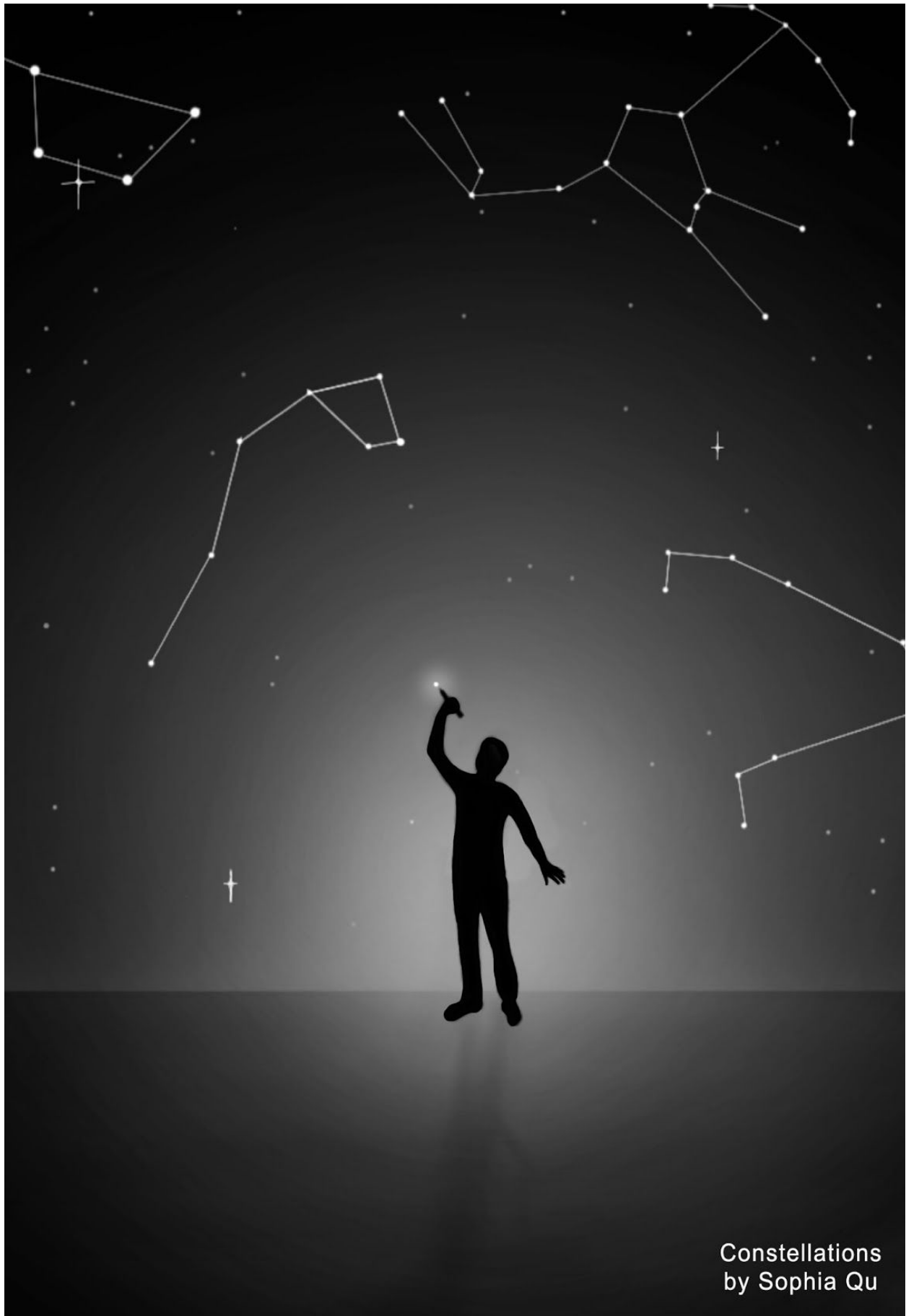
Before I knew it, he was finished. The roar of applause was raining down onto him. I was back leaning against the wall. I breathed in counts of three, which is what I always do when I need to calm down. I quickly realized that breathing wasn’t doing a thing for me. The staff member continued counting off numbers, from twenty-four to thirty-five. When he got to my number, thirty-six, I already felt my head aching.

I staggered towards the stage door, but someone stopped me along the way. I turned around to see Oliver. This time, he was more concerned than playful.

“Listen,” he said, “maybe things won’t turn out the best for you, but just keep on playing.”

He flashed me a small smile, and walked into the TV room. I looked at him for a few seconds and then turned toward the stage door. I smiled to myself. Even though Grandmama was gone, even though I’d been working myself to the bone, and even though I couldn’t stand stupid Taylor Hollister, I was a musician.

I had to keep playing no matter what.



“Separate, but Together”

by Ariel Gryn

There is no ‘I’ in team, so we must work together,
This storm we call a virus, seems to be the weather.
Let’s not forget all those we care about,
Even though we are living in times filled with doubt.
Try giving a call to family and friends on the phone,
Putting a smile on their faces just by hearing your tone.
Being apart from one another is like a terrible storm,
It makes me want to be together and gives hugs that are warm.
The SLAM of the door, telling us all to stay home,
Trapping us inside this quarantined dome.
It is important to keep these connections alive,
In unison together like the BUZZ of a beehive.
We can still share our lives with others,
Our friends, parents, sisters, and brothers.
Together we can achieve more, and we can win with love,
Connecting to each other, fitting tightly like a glove.
While we cannot gather, we can still share,
Showing others how much we still love and care.
So no matter what happens, we will all rise,
As our future together holds nothing but clear, sunny skies.

“Cakes, Cakes, Cakes”

by Katie Bell

Baking a cake is like connecting the dots. Waiting the 30 minutes for the cake to bake can seem like forever. Baking with family can be so fun. Combining all the ingredients is like connecting the dots. There are many flavors of cake you can make. A finished cake can turn a frown upside down. All the ingredients mix together to make something tasty. Sometimes they are so good, you feel like you can eat 100. People make cakes for birthdays, but sometimes just for fun. A freshly iced cake can be as beautiful as a fashion model. Connecting the dots from beginning to end can be like making a cake all over again.

“A Time for Appreciation”

by Willie Benjamin

During our lifetime, there are many unpredictable scenarios that could happen at any time and in any place. Unfortunately, a major catastrophe has struck our lives and has created bedlam throughout the world. This catastrophe is COVID-19. During this precarious time, people globally are struggling to deal with this virus, which has been impacting our lives severely. Both international and national government leaders are urging all of us to social distance, which many people have trouble doing. In my mind, social distancing is maintaining a good distance between yourself and others during this unprecedented time. This is a new and difficult concept, which has personally affected me.

This pandemic has greatly changed my life, but I am not the only one affected. People all around the world are attempting to manage their lives during this dreadful time, as well. In doing so, they have to adapt to the changes that life may bring. For example, these circumstances have significantly demonstrated how marvelous the Internet can be. Whether FaceTiming grandparents and friends, or Zooming with teachers, the Internet has been an outstanding tool to connect people with one another. Specifically, my family celebrates Passover. During this joyous holiday, all of my family gets together for one huge dinner to laugh, cry, and sing together at the table. It really is a blast! However, since we couldn't be together this year, we didn't want to cancel this special occasion. As a result, we all gathered and had a Zoom dinner, which was still lots of fun. Although it may have been hard to get everyone online at the same time, there is no doubt that all of us had a very enjoyable evening.

Although it is terrific that schools are able to continue teaching online, it has been a very challenging time for me. If I need help with my work, it is a lot harder to ask my teachers since I am not physically in the classroom with them. This becomes very frustrating for me. However, I know in my heart that I am lucky to have the ability to pursue an education during this time.

I also live in an apartment building. This means that I usually take the elevator to my floor. However, recently, my parents forbid me from using the elevator, since I could attract lethal germs. As a result, I have to walk up the stairs everyday. This has forced me to think about the people who live in apartment

buildings who are unable to walk up the stairs. I can only imagine how they may be scared to use the elevator. So instead, they stay inside all day.

Lastly, I am quarantined with my mom, dad, and older brother (whom I share my room with). As you can imagine, being so close to one another all day and all night makes it very easy to get on one another's nerves. However, no matter how aggravating the day gets, we always come back to each other. I now realize how fortunate I am to have a family that is loving, kind, and most importantly, patient. This makes me think about all of those families who may have trouble dealing with each other, especially during this tough time when we could all use some extra help and kindness. I hope this crisis is a time for families and friends to come together (not physically, of course) and support one another.

As a result, these significant adjustments have altered the way that I view the world and have made me more thankful for everything that I have in life. My social distancing experience has been a humongous challenge for me. It has caused me to change my life and adapt to a new routine. As a result of this terrible situation, I have to cope with these unfortunate events everyday. For example, during this time period, I have become extremely confused and overwhelmed with what is happening throughout the world. Whenever I turn on the television, I try to avoid news stations because it makes me very despondent and sad. In my mind, news stations today always focus on the negative. I feel that news stations should focus more on the positive aspects of life, rather than on these frightening moments. Don't people have enough to worry about? This has encouraged me to appreciate peaceful things. Things that I never noticed before. I realize now that I don't want to become someone who is always concerned and pessimistic about the future. After all, none of us knows what tomorrow might bring. Instead, I want to be the person who encourages others to open up their eyes. I want to light the way through this dark and scary world that we live in.

In conclusion, I feel that it is very important for us to show our appreciation to first responders, nurses, and doctors. These people are risking their lives, and I think it is our duty to be thankful for everything that they do for us. Also, I think we should be sympathetic to others who have been seriously impacted by this virus. I know many people who have lost loved ones from this pandemic, and I think we should all do our best to show them that we are thinking of them. My life has changed greatly because of COVID-19, and this uncertain time has taught me to be more thankful for the little things in life.



Clues
by Rachel Liu

“The Shadow” (A poem told from multiple perspectives)

by Victoria Cho

On the night of Halloween
I tucked myself into bed
Wondering where my candy had been
When a shadow appeared in the hall
Like a puppet behind a screen
I stifled a scream and dove under my blanket

I am a maid at this mansion
I was mopping the hallway floors after the Halloween celebration
I caught sight of a dark shape in my vision
I squeaked and shuffled backwards into the bathroom
There was the silhouette of a monster coming from the closet
It had deformed wings and clawed feet

I was walking up the stairs to gather bird food for my pet parakeet
It was eerily quiet upstairs
The maid was squished against the bathroom doorway with a terrified expression
She pointed to a shadow coming from the closet
I approached the closet cautiously and peeked into the doorway
There sat a tiny injured robin, with a bent wing
It was nibbling on my parakeet's food
I noticed an open window at the end of the hall and glanced at the robin
I sighed in relief, scooping the poor bird into my hands

I enjoy playing pranks on the maid and my younger brother and sister
Especially on Halloween
And it's a full moon
But I think the maid won't be able to handle it
My sister said the maid got scared by a robin in the closet earlier
But during the Halloween party, I heard scraping sounds coming from the closet
Even as I walked past the closed closet
Those same sounds could be heard

I was washing the dishes after the Halloween party
My children were supposed to be asleep
It was nearly midnight
Their father was nowhere to be seen, but was most likely in his office
But where was the rock music that I always heard coming from there?

At midnight, there was a loud roar from the closet
And five people screamed, “Monster!”
Then they all began to laugh

Who played the prank?

“Connecting Dots”
by Jordan Lalehzarzadeh

Connecting dots is like solving a puzzle.
Solving a puzzle is like solving a mystery.
Putting together pieces is like putting together clues.
When you connect the pieces, you solve the mystery.
Puzzles, mysteries, and connecting dots are all alike.
One clue is one piece.
One piece is one dot.
So find a piece and put it in its spot.
Complete the puzzle to connect the dots.
Connect the dots to solve the mystery.

“Boring Sunday”

by Ethan Elgadeh

It is Sunday with some dark and gloom
I'm pretty bored, wouldn't you be too?
That's when I decide to look at some games I keep in my room
Like Tetris, Terraria, Minecraft, and Doom
A game about somebody raiding a tomb
There's one with invaders from outer space
Boxes are scattered all over the place
They're up on the dresser and down on the floor
The Legend of Zelda and Street Fighter IV
And Roblox, Pac Man, Fortnite, and more
There's Sonic the Hedgehog and Dragon Ball Z
Mario Party and Madden for Wii
Even FIFA 19 for the Playstation 3
They're littered and strewn all around me
There's Kidz Sports, and Kirby, and Kingdom Hearts III
Plus Jurassic Park, Just Dance, and Jeopardy
But don't forget Pokemon Red, Green, and Blue
Those few on the floor right next to my shoes
So, when I realize my fantasies won't ever come true
I just think of the games that I keep in my room

“Memories Made”

by Noah Ahdoot

So many pieces, what to do
Put them together, then there are few
Start seeing a picture, bold and bright
Shining like the stars, what a wonderful sight
Final pieces are really so hard to fit in
Like life when it gets tough, yet we still strive to win
Hard work pays off, putting the last piece in place
Victory, just like finishing a race
Puzzle pieces put together
Memories made to remember forever



“I’m (Not) Fine”

by Anonymous

I was feeling a little off today, more so than usual. I don't really know why. My "friends" didn't really seem to notice. I guess I was also really tired, because I fell asleep in the middle of earth science class. The bell signaling the end of the period woke me up. When I got home my mom, as usual, asked me how my day was. After a minute or so I replied, "Fine," which in "female" usually means that something is up. As I was doing my homework, blood started dripping from my nose. I assumed that it must have been seasonal allergies, since it's December.

I woke up in a huge bed, with needles in my arms. My parents sat in chairs on the other side of the room. My mom's face was buried in my dad's chest. I've never seen my parents cry before. Even my dad's eyes looked red. I wanted to ask what was going on, but for some reason I couldn't. I couldn't move. What was going on? The doctor sat beside my parents and told them something, but since they were across the room I couldn't make out his exact words.

The doctor then walked up to me. I think he knew that I was awake, because my eyes were open. "Liana, can you try moving at all?" he asked me.

After trying super hard, I was finally able to sit up and talk. The doctor explained that I had trouble moving because one of the medicines he fed me would limit my mobility for a couple of hours. This kept me wondering what was going on. Why did I need the medicine in the first place? The doctor exchanged a worried look with my parents, and then looked back at me. This made me worried.

"You have been diagnosed with Leukemia. Leukemia is a form of cancer that forms in the blood. It replaces some of your red blood cells with white blood cells, and eventually you don't have enough red blood cells and too many white blood cells in your body. It is unclear as to why you have it, but the symptoms prove that it is for sure Leukemia. This form of cancer usually isn't hereditary, but both of your grandparents and your sister have been diagnosed with it. Again this probably has nothing to do with how you got it in the first place. Sadly, considering that your family members who went through this horrible situation aren't with us today, you also might not be able to win this fight. However, I assure you and your parents that we will try our absolute hardest to get rid of it," the doctor stated.

I was in complete shock. Scared. Confused. I didn't know what to do or think. I doubted there was anything that I could do.

It's been approximately two months since I've actually gone to school. I have been stuck in the pediatric hospital for cancer patients. I have received at least ten shots a day, including blood extractions for testing and IVs. I have also been receiving chemotherapy, so my head literally looks like an egg. I am finally being (temporarily) released to start attending school.

I was finally reunited with my two best friends, Shira and Berta, after over two months of us not seeing each other. As my best friends, I am obviously excited to see them at school, but I don't know what they will think about me and my condition. I don't want them to think any differently of me. After all, I am still the same person they met three years ago in the fifth grade. Forget about what I said about going back to school and seeing Berta and Shira. I am scared to death, although I don't really know exactly why.

From my hospital bed, I overheard my parents talking to the doctor. I think I heard them say something about mood swings and me being sadder than usual.

The doctor sat down on the bed beside me, "Dear, I really don't want you to think of this as a bad thing, but rather something that could be improved upon. Plenty of other kids diagnosed with cancers, such as leukemia, also have depression, anxiety, or bipolar disorder, because of the amount of stress put on their shoulders. Your parents and I have already spoken about this, but starting next week, you will be going to therapy."

I didn't know how to respond. Not only do I have cancer, but apparently there are now more things wrong with me. Honestly, just the thought of me being mentally messed up made me feel way worse than I did before. I guess my parents were right when they said that I had been "off" over the past couple of weeks. The therapist was really nice and understanding. It was comforting to know that the way I felt wasn't "wrong" or "messed up." It was actually quite common.

After five months, my Leukemia has been getting worse. Even though I completed chemotherapy one month ago, my condition has worsened over the past couple of days. I've lost more than seventy pounds over the past two months, and I have bruises all over my arms and legs. Last night, I literally woke up in a puddle of sweat. According to the nurses, I have been sleeping fifteen hours a day.

Later that night, I fell asleep and never woke up.

About the Author: A Peek Into Reality

About 33% of children (ages 4 - 17) diagnosed with Leukemia don't survive, and 1 in 5 teens (ages 12 - 18) have been diagnosed with a mental disorder. When you think about it, everyone has something going on in their personal lives, whether they choose to cover it up or completely break down. I decided to keep myself anonymous, because I want people to know that it is okay to talk to others about their problems. Everyone is forced to go through life, dealing with both the good and the bad. Some people have depression and anxiety, like me. Others might have bipolar disorder, ADHD, or other mental disorders. Being diagnosed just gives the emotions a name; it doesn't mean that you are a "messed up" person.

Last year, my best friend and I went through a lot. I was having some trouble at home, and my best friend was also struggling a bit with some personal problems of her own. At the time, we were both seriously depressed. (There's a difference between being depressed and feeling sad.) At one point, she considered harming herself. However, after speaking with the school psychologist, she had a change of heart. The simple act of talking about her feelings with an experienced professional, saved her life.

At the same time, I was struggling with severe anxiety and had both panic attacks and anxiety attacks at least once per day. (Panic attacks are random, while anxiety attacks occur from worrying about something specific.) I have since begun attending therapy once per week. I am doing much better than I was a year and a half ago. Things at home have cooled down and the anxiety I experience is more moderate and controllable. I encourage anyone who is experiencing emotional distress to speak with someone. Teachers, guidance counselors, and trained medical professionals are available to help you through your difficult times.

“A Journey Completed With Pieces of a Puzzle”

by Shuyue (Lucy) Xiao

A puzzle is just like the journey of someone's life, long and difficult to complete. There are many pieces that are needed in order for the puzzle to be completed. Some pieces are easy to figure out. However, others take much longer. Each piece can represent a small portion of our lives. Figuring out which piece goes where can be challenging. Corners of the pieces should never be cut to finish more quickly, because there is no easy way to complete this puzzle. Ultimately, the puzzle won't turn out the way you expected.

In life, taking shortcuts might be the easier way out for the time being. However, it is not always the way to solve your problems. Many times, you want to give up. Sometimes people do. Other times, when the puzzle is complete, the pain it took you to finish washes away. You are suddenly filled with joy, amazed at what your hard work has made.

This journey may be long and difficult. But in the end, when you finish, you will recognize your mistakes and see the unique puzzle that you have made with your own life. Your puzzle is created like none other, and imperfections are part of what makes you special.

“Connection”

by Suqi Tian

I used to wrap myself up like a burrito
And stay away from others
The best time of the day
Was when I learned it was indoor recess
I was isolated from everyone else
Away from people
Away from laughter
Connection lost between me and them
Or, was there ever a connection?
When I wanted to reach out to them
To connect the dots between us

Fear and insecurity would overcome me
Keeping me away from them
Until one day
A telegraph wire came
Led me through fear and insecurity
Led me to where the laughter was
The wire lead me
Weaving through the dots
Slowly to where the crowds were
This was when the dots
Between me and them
Finally connected
I am no longer disconnected

“Complete”

by Samantha Bokhour

Puzzles are like lives
At first, they are hard to put together
Like when we encounter a problem
But eventually, puzzles get easier
Just like our lives do
We see our puzzles begin to form
Like we see our lives form
We leave for college to begin a new life
Every piece seems to click
And fit just perfectly
Just like finding the perfect job
Or the perfect person
When the puzzle is complete
We have fit every piece into our lives

“One Single Piece”

by Kiana Moslem

Starting with one single piece
I connect it to make a collage
I attach one piece to another
And keep on going
I struggle at first
But as more time passes
I get better
And it gets bigger
I’m halfway done
I switch my spot to the floor
It’s getting large
Yet still so small
I slowly realize
I’ve run out of pieces
I finish the puzzle
I feel accomplished

“Jigsaw Puzzle”

by Joshua Ahdout

So many different pieces

Impossible to solve

Ridges on the sides

Like a saw

Suddenly I find

One to fit the other

And they match

It continues

And each piece fits

Like a cracked mirror

Being put back together

I finally complete it

I feel wonderful

Like a hot spring in my soul

For now I see

I can do anything

If I just look

And if I stay calm

Life is like a jigsaw puzzle

Everything can work

If I just try



“Submission Investigation”

by Ugin Sun

It was a normal Tuesday for me. My day began with checking the mailbox. I noticed something darting for the nearby forest. I was intrigued, as I always love to solve mysteries, but knew I had no time for it. I reached inside the mailbox.

“What the...” I mumbled to myself, as I pulled out an adult-sized t-shirt and pair of pants.

I examined the clothing, and deduced that it was some simple \$5 clothing. I figured that it was some weird idea for a prank and proceeded to throw it into the garbage bin.

The bus arrived and I stepped on. To my dismay, the bus was littered with gossip. I consider myself to be a quiet kid who never partakes in gossip. I sat down, waiting for the ride to end. I eavesdropped, as my mind drifted to the kids next to me. This was fairly boring until one mentioned the news.

“They said he ran super fast. An employee went to stock clothing and, *bam* the alarm went off with no one in sight,” he chirped.

Huh? Super fast man that has stolen some clothes?

I decided that I would watch the news that morning for more information. But who would steal such cheap clothing, and why leave it in a mailbox?

When we arrived at school, I got off of the bus and proceeded to my locker. My locker is far down the main hallway, so it always takes a while to get to. After unpacking and locking back up, I noticed the flyer taped on the wall and remembered the assembly.

Special 8th Grade Assembly! SWIS 1 students report to the auditorium during period one on Monday. SWIS 2 students report to the auditorium during period one on Tuesday.

After my team had marched into the auditorium and sat down quietly, we heard about something new, rather than your average lecture. It was an announcement from a world-renowned art program called Ghibli. Apparently they chose to hold an art contest to pick their next artists. They even planned to showcase the winning painting. The special contest would begin next week.

After the assembly, my friend Jack told me that he was so excited for the competition. “If I’m at least an honourable mention, that will prove that I can be an actual artist!” he exclaimed.

School went by normally that day, as it did the next few days. I had nearly forgotten about the figure and clothing from the mailbox. That was until Friday. I had a playdate with Jack, and his desk was a mess when I got there.

“Dude, what happened?” I asked.

“Oh, you know, typical workaholic desk. I’ve been working hard on ideas, and now I can finally draw something,” he claimed.

“Wow, you must really care about the contest, huh?” I asked.

“Who wouldn’t? It’s a once in a lifetime opportunity, and could pave someone’s future!” he exclaimed.

“Jeez, you’re making me sound like an idiot for not participating,” I joked.

“I’m just still stuck on what to draw,” he confessed.

By now, the mailbox figure was basically being treated as a myth, or a joke. I had believed it, as well. I mean who puts their clothes in someone’s mailbox? We were supposed to mail our submissions to Ghibli through the main office. I didn’t submit anything, as my artistic skills stink and Jack could probably use the better odds. I was standing right outside the school’s main entrance, enjoying the cool spring breeze, as a “mailman” approached me.

“Excuse me, but do you know where the main office is?” he asked.

“Yeah, it’s on the second floor. Why do you ask?” I questioned.

The mailman left without responding, as soon as I told him where the office was. He looked extremely sketchy, almost like a ripoff.

Maybe a new recruit? I went back to my homework. The mailman drove out of the parking lot a few minutes later. A short time after that, another mailman approached me.

“Excuse me, but do you know where the main office is?” he asked

“Um, one of your new recruits already came here today and asked the same question. He probably forgot to mark this place as complete.” I replied.

“Recruit? Stop joking. I’m the only mailman for this avenue,” he replied.

I winced when he said that. “Really, I’m not joking. I legitimately saw someone in uniform who asked me the same question,” I admitted.

“I think I’ll need to contact my boss about this. See you later, kid.”

I decided to do a quick Google search and found the nearest Ghibli. Luckily, I had my Metrocard on me, and was able to take the bus there. I rushed toward the building and recognized the same car that the fraud had driven parked out front. I entered the Ghibli establishment.

“Hello, how may I help you?” the receptionist asked.

“Hi...um, I need to see the judges for the art contest,” I replied.

“What for?” she asked.

I stood silent, unsure how to respond.

“Sir?” she asked again.

“I-I need to ask them about grading...rules,” I stammered.

“Oh, of course. Right this way,” she pointed.

I walked down the hall, following her directions, and came face to face with the fraud. He was anxiously organizing some papers.

“Excuse me, Sir, but could I see your ID?” I blurted out.

He looked up at me. “Yes of course,” he said nervously.

I watched him dig around in his pockets and eventually produce a fake ID.

“I need to be going now,” he quickly announced.

He stood up with a handful of papers, and left a bunch lying on the cushion where he had been sitting. I grabbed them and realized just how much effort had been put in. These were submissions!

I quickly rushed into the room that he entered and interrupted.

“Sir!” I gasped at whom I assumed was the judge. “He forgot to submit these,” I exclaimed, as I pointed toward the fraud. I handed in the rest of the artwork and continued, “I would also like for you to call the post office and tell them that we’ve found the man from Talon Middle School.”

The fraud attempted to leave, but I stopped him.

“You need to stay here,” I demanded.

“What are you doing? I need to get back to work!” he shouted.

“I’m sorry for wasting your time, but we need to sort this out,” I explained.

Amazingly, everyone waited until the real mailman showed up.

“There you are!” he pointed at the fraud. “You nearly caused me to lose my job! You think pretending to be someone else is funny?” he shouted.

“I think I need an explanation,” the Judge declared.

By now, I had pieced everything together. “I can explain. As you’ve probably heard on the news, there’s been a figure going around town. That person left his original clothing in my mailbox on Tuesday morning, most likely so that he could get away with robbery. What he stole was that sketchy outfit, which is most likely a costume. He then tried to sabotage the art submissions from my school, by only submitting a select few. Most likely, he did this to improve the odds of a specific participant winning,” I proudly announced. “I think that covers everything, although it’s still just a theory.”

After a brief pause, the fraud began to cry. “Is it so wrong that a father wants the very best for his daughter?”

This was not at all what I had expected. The real mailman then attempted to calm down the fraud, and after some minutes, he confessed.

“I’m the father of one of the participants. My family isn’t really doing well financially, and I can’t seem to get a better job. My daughter attends Talon Middle School. As soon as she came home and told me about the art contest, I couldn’t help myself. This would be her only chance to learn and study in a world-renowned art program. I searched for the most convincing mailman outfit that I could find, and then I attempted to deliver only artwork that looked worse than my daughter’s. So, there you have it. I confessed. Are you going to send me to prison now?” He exclaimed.

“Bud, I know how hard life can be, but you can’t cheat your way through it. You won’t be going to jail, but don’t expect free shipping from us ever again,” the Mailman tried to make light of the situation.

“I can recommend an online art program for your daughter, if she truly wants to become a professional, but I’m afraid I cannot accept her contest submission,” the judge announced.

The mailman carried the crying father out of the room.

“And you, thank you for bravery. If you were an actual contestant, I would have snuck you a few extra points,” he confessed.

“Actually, can you do that for a friend? His name is Jack Smoothstone. He’s a contestant, although he hasn’t submitted anything just yet,” I admitted.

“Of course,” he answered. “Tell him that I like flowers.”

I smiled, “I will.”

“The Other Side of the Story: A Story About a Villain”
by Nina Bikhman

At first you might not trust me,
but come closer, I am telling you a story.
Now I am telling the other side,
if you understood you would know why.
I am talking about the other side of the story,
her name, at first, was ordinary Rory.
One time she ran away,
away from problems that awaited her everyday.
Always hurt by people she knew,
maybe they wanted to see her through.
Others never knew their schemes,
only Rory knew about it, or so it seems.
And so she said to herself, “One day, when I get away,”
“I’ll make sure to make them pay.”
And so was the day she ran away,
promising herself the same old “I’ll make them pay.”
Everyone knew she couldn’t mend her heart,
because of the way it broke apart.
But some people with broken hearts can mend,
but it will not be the way they intend.
And this so happened to ordinary Rory,
but I’m afraid this is the end of the story.
Except for when she pulled off pranks,
she knew she was making big mistakes.
But, even when no one forgave her,
she still waits for a hero to save her.

“One Song”
by Daliah Segal

I sit looking at my stand
A sheet of music resting on it
My instrument in my hand
I get ready to play
The band is composed of different instruments
Clarinets, saxophones, trumpets, flutes, and so many more
But I wonder, “What for?”
I glance at the music of the person sitting beside me
Their part is completely different than mine
I wonder why
The conductor raises his arms in the air
I lift my instrument to my lips
We begin to play
The drums start first
The flutes begin with the clarinets
The other instruments join in, as well
Creating a beautiful mixture of melody and harmony
We produce a whole new song
Now I realize that each instrumental section has its own unique part
That fits perfectly together with the rest
Each section contributes one piece
Which combined, creates one song

“Together”
by Cyrus Sedgh

Sometimes life is confusing
Friends and family find it hard to see
The little kid coming of age
Walking the path that everyone has
To be united in the end
Where we will spend the rest of our lives
We find challenges very often
Children practice solving these everyday
Which is why we find them very easy
Children don't always solve them so quickly
Which is why we need to help
Like a chain of dots
All connected together

“Connecting With Creatures”
by Ashton Kahen

I connect with the creatures all around me
I connect with my dog, through the skin on his hood
I connect with that hawk, flying above my neighborhood
I connect with that squirrel, and the dangers he sees
I connect with the creatures all around me

I connect with my lizards, for we both see the same
I connect with my fish, who are longing for fame
I connect with my planet, who is dying in vain
I don't connect with people who kill everything they see
I connect with the creatures all around me

I connect with the creatures all around me
for the creatures, too, connect with me



Stargazing
by Emily Lin

“Good Enough”

by Abigail Monasebian

I am as beautiful as the gorgeous daylight sky
and as fascinating as the glowing nighttime moon.
I wonder if the beautiful world knows how beautiful it is.
I hear birds chirping in unison.
I see twinkling night stars shining down upon me.
I want to be as beautiful as my surroundings.
I am as beautiful as the gorgeous daylight sky
and as fascinating as the glowing nighttime moon.

I pretend that I am. At least I try.
I feel alone and unappreciated sometimes. Like I’m not good enough.
I touch my reflection in the mirror, and I ask myself, “Am I enough?”
I worry that I am not. There are so many that I compare myself to.
Look at all the beauties surrounding me. I will never be as good as them.
I cry alone in my bed, while trying to convince myself.
I am as beautiful as the gorgeous daylight sky
and as fascinating as the glowing nighttime moon.

I understand that I do not have to be as beautiful as Madison Beer,
as smart as Albert Einstein, as successful as Jeff Bezos.
I say that everyone should be unique, and focus on herself.
I dream of the day that I will stop being compared to others.
I try to spread positivity.
I hope that people will listen to my voice...and their own.
I am as beautiful as the gorgeous daylight sky
and as fascinating as the glowing nighttime moon.

“We Complained”
by Daniela Souferian

We complained in our longest class,
when the hands on the clock walked slowly like snails.
We complained when we were running through the hallways,
and we heard a teacher yell, “Stop,” from a distance.
We complained during lunch period,
when we discovered it was indoor recess.
We complained when we got a bad test score,
and we had to get it signed by our parents.
We complained when it was two minutes until homeroom,
and we had to leave our friends to begin the day.

But little did we know,
it would be the last time we could learn in a classroom.
Little did we know,
it would be the last time we could laugh while speed walking down the halls.
Little did we know,
it would be the last time we could eat lunch in the cafeteria with our friends.
Little did we know,
it would be the last time we would compare test scores and wrong answers.
Little did we know,
it would be the last time we would rush to avoid receiving detention.

Little did we know how our daily life would soon change.

“Our Lives Are Just Like Puzzles”

by Emily Shaul

Our lives are just like puzzles
Millions of pieces
Some don't fit
While others do
Our lives are just like puzzles
Some pieces you find first
While others you find last
Our lives are just like puzzles
Some give you a problem
Just to try and solve it
Our lives are just like puzzles
We often think it through
While some of us are new
Our lives are just like puzzles
Sometimes we can't solve them
While other times we can
Our lives are just like puzzles
We must look at where
The puzzle began

“Masterpiece”

by Liona Kohansieh

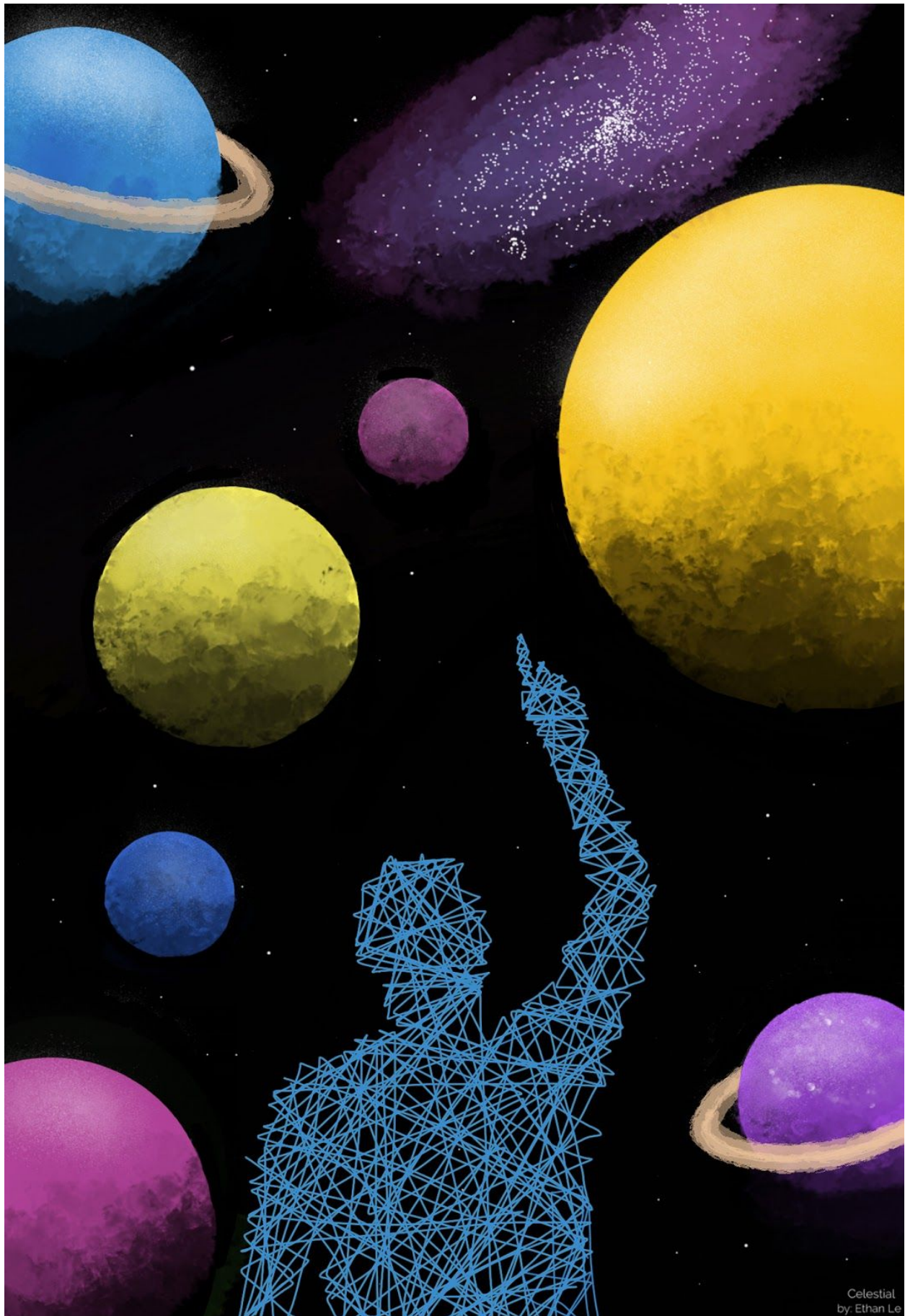
Confuzzled by the pieces of a puzzle
A missing piece makes it incomplete
Some pieces may not click
But there will always be that perfect fit
Trying to make the wrong connection
The pieces shout, “We don't fit!”
Scattered around the floor
The parts to a masterpiece
Tick tock
Hours go by
Still, so many pieces to go
The puzzle bringing so much trouble
Don't give up though
The result of hard work...
A piece of art
No holes to be found
No pieces lost
Finally at peace
The final result a beautiful masterpiece

“Scattered”

by Sharon Zkarya

Scattered all around
the floor filled with pieces
The pieces are all needed
Why does it have to be so complicated?
The time goes by like the wind
There's still so much to go
But I don't give up though
The pieces begin to fall into place

I've almost found that perfect fit
My heart races
Thump, thump, thump, thump
Am I almost there?
The final result...
My beautiful masterpiece



Celestial
by: Ethan Le

“Missing My Flowers”

by Nina Zar

when will my flowers return from the war?
at first it just seemed like any open door
smiled bright as they walked away
not to be seen, not any other day

and so now we watch them go off with pain
wishing them strength, which none ever regain
they trot off smiling, but they can't see
they're done with you, and soon done with me

wanting to see them, to remember their smile
it's been some time, it's been quite a while
they could have forgotten, but I hope not
most likely HAVE forgotten, most likely quite a lot

as the rain pours down, we watch them grow
they really can't see us, we really don't show
watching them blossom, and blissfully open up
all without giving us a single checkup

my longing to see them doesn't factor in
to how busy they all seem to have been
I could write, text, FaceTime, DM, or call
but they can't seem to answer, not now or at all

I've grown to accept it, and I hope you can, too
because I'm sure they miss me, and I'm sure they miss you
we may get to see them, maybe someday
but for now, it doesn't seem it'll turn out that way

“King and Prisoner”

by Willie Benjamin

I am a king and a prisoner
I wonder why the world is bowing beneath my feet
I hear the stories of inexorable crimes, which I am powerless to prevent
I see our land crumbling under the pressure
I want the strength of a warrior to heal the wounds of those in pain
I am a king and a prisoner

I pretend all is well, though the streets are a witness to destruction
I feel the pile of broken bones rotting in the torture our world has created
I touch my crown which protects me from suffering like my subjects
I worry that the wrong ruler is sitting on the throne
I cry at my inability to put an end to the torment that surrounds me
I am a king and a prisoner

I understand the obstacles that I must overcome
I say to myself that I will not wait to take action
I dream of the sun, rising and shining on all those on Earth
I try to put my name in the history books
I hope to find a map that will lead me to the treasure
I am king and no longer a prisoner

“Clueless”

by Tova Shafran

Whoosh

The door swung open
A wave of cluelessness washed over me
Like cold waves at the beach
Where to sit?
Who to sit with?

Where do I fit in?
The lunchroom tables
Pieces of a puzzle
Each student group
A perfect fit of personalities

“Making Connections”

by Jin Leung

Once there was a scarecrow without any friends. The scarecrow was standing lonely in the fields. He wanted to play, but he was shy about making connections. The sky was blue, but in his mind it was black. The hot, humid summer made his eyes water.

This scarecrow was depressed until he met the birds. They were standing upon his shoulder, singing and laughing. Suddenly, the scarecrow’s tears vaporized into happiness. He was once broken into pieces, but the birds were able to fix him with finesse.

The scarecrow lets the birds rest on his chest. Winter is coming and the crow came to mess. The birds wanted a nest, but there was no place to address. So he scared the crows away, so his friends wouldn’t be stressed. Winter is now here and they all have to rest. They have made a strong connection, which makes their friendship best.

“1000 Piece Puzzles”

by Abigail Israel

1000 piece puzzles are very aggravating
It is not easy putting all the pieces together
Sometimes you want to quit, but you persevere and get it done
Life is very similar
In life, there are times that are downright difficult
During those trying times, it can feel impossible to move on
But eventually, we get through it
Puzzles and life are similar, because they take a lot of time
They both also give a reward
With a puzzle, you can look at the product and admire it
The colors, the art, and the story that it tells
In life, after getting through a hard time
You become a stronger person
1000 piece puzzles and life are challenges
Both are challenges that come with rewards



Grains of Sand
by Noa Marzuk

“Three Part Mystery”

by Raquel Landerer

Could a stinky train or an expensive boat change the fate of your life?

Jill was a traveler for years. She was advanced and fabulously wealthy. Her whole life was perfect. But when she met Duff Buttonto, her life changed forever. They became happier together. They were better together. They knew everyone thought they were cheesy, but Jill and Duff would say, “We do love cheese!”

So when Jill’s dying wish was to buy a boat and sail together to Mexico, Duff was glad to do it. One thing that is important to understand, is that Duff was a secret scientist. He was working on a way to make the world a better place.

Would he ever know that his company had a different secret? One that could jeopardize his relationship with Jill.

The Spies:

I figured it out. Even my boss said that I’m the best spy recruit. The only case I can’t solve is the missing boat. Where could it have gotten? It just disappeared into thin air on June 19th. My main suspects are Samantha Cad, Saku Rasinal, or Duff Buttonto or anyone else that works for his company.

Hillary’s train was to leave at 8:30. No later. She was a late bird, so she knew she had to stay for a while. Every morning, she would wake up to the aroma of garlic and she always had her hair tied up. Most importantly, she always wore her string bracelet around her right wrist. It was tight and fuzzy. She had gotten it from the same person who gave her a free boat.

Hillary’s last name is Duff. No, she is not the famous Hillary Duff. Her parents named her Hillary, but Hillary’s company insisted that she change her last name to Duff. She understood why, and she loved suspense and attention anyway.

The following is a flashback to a time two months before Mexico.

The notebook was pink and fuzzy. Glue outlined a “D” in the fuzz. When the spies opened the notebook, little did they know that it was covered in a chemical that could kill them two months later.

Jill touched the notebook and then coughed and coughed. Her voice became scratchy and her eyes started to water. The next thing Jill remembered was Duff standing by her side. He reached out to touch her. His hand covered her hand like a swaddle. They were in a hospital.

“My love, I am going to get you some water. Don’t move!” Duff insisted.

“What was that?” Jill asked, confused.

Jill then felt heavy pressure in the side of her neck.

“I know you’re a spy solving the boat crisis. Unfortunately for you, you will never find it,” a woman began.

“Who are you?” Jill gasped.

“Relax, I’m Hillary!”

“I only read the book for Duff,” Jill began.

“I only read the book for Duff,” Hillary mocked her. “Stop with that crap!” “Now, we both know why you’re here. If you tell a soul, Duff dies.” Hillary threatened.

Hillary made it quite apparent that she did not care if Duff lived or died. Jill had met Duff on a mission, and that mission was for her colleagues. Now, Jill couldn’t decide nor feel anything, literally.”

“9...1...1” Hillary dialed the phone, while trotting out with a fake frown on her face, as doctors paraded into the room and a swarm of medics arrived.

“Hahahaha,” Hillary cried. “Oh wait, poor Duff. Hello, 911, my emergency is that Duff Buttonto has stolen my money and has gone missing. Please ask the police to find him and tell him to give me back my money and my pride!”

On their way to Mexico, Jill had died. But before she had, she told Duff the whole story. Then she told him not to tell anyone. But will Duff survive, knowing exactly what he knows? Jill had told him about the hidden tunnels, as a way to protect him. Sadly, Jill would never know Duff’s fate.

Baby and Issue Dog:

I was alone, forever. I would never find a home, even with my sad puppy dog eyes. I wish I could restart my life, although Malia says that I am too old. My wife, Samosas, and her sister, Tequila, say I've never looked better. I like to say no one owns me, but they call me "Issue" or "Issue Dog."

"Peace it together, Amigo. Connect the dots. You're going to the pound," Sagittarius laughed.

All of the others barked at me. "You'll never find a home," one shouted.

"Another one going to the dump," another exclaimed.

But I didn't reply. It wasn't my place, and I wouldn't stoop to their level. I knew Carlos would never take me to the "dump." Our neighborhood of dogs loves to call it the "dump." Carlos is my best friend. He gives me treats three times a day. Why would he bring me to the Dog Dump? We like to call ourselves "Dogs" because of a simple acronym:

D: Done with cruelty, animal abuse, and pounds.

O: Over with no treats.

G: Gone with the wind to start our own lives.

It is only a matter of time before we become extinct. If people don't try connecting the dots about global warming and corruption, then we all end up in the pound. I think Sagittarius is just confused and scared for what's happening next. But we all remember the night they took Baby to the pound. It was never going to be me. I knew that. It was always going to be my niece instead.

The breeze made us shiver, as we were all nervous. No one had any idea what would happen. Tequila and Saggituarus had five pups: Carly, Sam, Sal, Baby, and Ferly. Tequila was licking each of them to sleep, when Carlos's hand appeared. There was blood dripping from it and he was wearing a bracelet around his wrist.

When Baby started whimpering, we all heard. We attacked Carlos' hand, but it was no use. It was the pound, and it would always be the pound. At that moment, I realized that Carlos had taken the smartest, cutest, and healthiest dog there was. He would never take me, because I was the Issue Dog.



*RE-Connect
by Jacqueline Park*

“My Friend”

by Tehilla Saidian

She helps me when I'm stuck,
She listens whenever I speak,
She laughs at my jokes,
She's my friend.

She's as kind as anyone else,
She likes to be around me,
She makes me feel brave,
She's my friend.

She texts me very often,
She makes me feel good,
She's a tornado of kindness,
She's my friend.

She sits with me at lunch,
She works hard like me,
She makes me feel confident,
She's my friend.

She tries to make me laugh,
She trusts in me completely,
She's as fair as anyone else,
She's my friend.

She's the best friend,
anyone could ever ask for.
I don't know,
what I'd do without her.
She's my friend.

“Koala Puzzle”

by Jonathan Yehezkel

Silence around the room
Thoughts running through my head
30 minutes to complete
I have mentally given up
The pieces have disappeared to sand
I can't find them, I am digging
Try to focus, I whisper
20, the nose appears
15, the head appears
10, the body appears
5, three pieces left, my last shot
0, last two pieces
It was realistic, too realistic
The two pieces in my hand are wet
My nerves make me look at the koala
It is three quarters done
It looks like it was made by a newborn
Sloppy, it makes me feel mad
I am hypnotized
A loser, in tears, I am broken
The rage takes over
I open my eyes back up
Pieces are on the floor
They are folded, ripped, and some gone
A figure comes to greet me
The koala
I follow him
I climb the stairs
I enter a new place of peace

“Big Brother”

by Jayden Haghani

Families and friends are together playing on the playground. I am by myself. I am alone with no friends or family. A boy about 16-years-old stands right beside me. This boy is believed to be my brother. My older brother. Before walking away, he leaves me with a message.

“You are never alone.”

Like a leaf on a tree, he flies away without a goodbye. I feel as if a light has shone upon my life. Week after week, I return to this special spot. This spot where he left me with a non-answerable message. And week after week, I am left standing alone on the playground. Watching the others enjoy themselves with family and friends.

One winter weekend, when the trees are shaking goodbye to their last leaves, the boy comes back. He returns with an older man and woman, claiming that we are all family. Although things have followed a step-by-step sequence, this still feels so sudden. Yet, somehow, I accept that this is what is meant to be. Once more, my so-called brother gives me a message.

“You are never alone.”

With a cautious grin on my face, I ask, “Are you my family?”

“The Hunt”

by Jacob Levine

My hair filled with snow, yet still soft.

As I scour the dense forest for my next victim, I get ready to take my shot.

My focus fuels the fire for my fortuitous attack.

My target stops, and I am lightning.

The forest now silent, the cold wind whips my face.

I take my kill and leave, heading back to safety.

As I walk home, I admire the mysterious black sky.

Full of life’s unanswered questions, trapping us beneath its expansive shadow.

As I arrive back home, I am welcomed by my family.

I bark at my children to begin their feast.

Their dry fur becomes wet, as they rub against me.

My family whole again, cubs and all.

“Mysterious Dots”

by Nicole Harooni

Dots, Dots, Dots
Like a circle big and round
They make up shapes like animals and towns
The circle in the sky is the sun in the day
And the moon in the night
Dots, Dots, Dots
Oh, the things they make when you connect them
Swish the pencil goes, as you move it round and round
Connecting dots one by one
But what do they form?
It can't be said, cause it's a mystery
You never know what they will create
Dots, Dots, Dots

“Step by Step”

by Danni Zheng

Step by step

I give my dancing a try, but I only get back laughs
The only thing you do is talk behind my back
My dancing is a stiff cloud that won't move the way I chose
I practice and practice, but nothing is ever good enough
The only thing you do is talk behind my back

Step by step

I work extremely hard, and then I improve
Now it is my chance to be on the stage
One movement at a time, I am as happy as I can be
The only thing you do is talk behind my back
But I accomplished everything I ever wanted

Step by step



“The Girl in the Mirror”

by Nina Bikhman

There once was a boy named Oscar, and he was one of the most wealthy in his kingdom. His parents died just when he was born, and all of the people in the kingdom tried to make him happy. That is, a little too much.

Oscar grew spoiled, always demanding for more from his people. More food, more toys, more games, and so on. He was always dissatisfied with what he saw in front of him, and he didn't realize until he was sixteen.

Oscar had many toys in his room, which he later threw out to replace with jewelry, gold, and diamonds. When he entered his parents' room, he saw something gleaming under the bed. He plucked it out, looked at himself, and became dissatisfied.

“Maids!” Oscar shouted, “Get me some makeup!”

Upon hearing his yell, the maids scampered about and, after a minute or two, appeared in front of him.

“Now,” Oscar said, “put it on me.”

“But, Mister Oscar,” one of the maids said, trembling, “you are a boy. Boys shouldn't have makeup on their—”

“I said put it on me!” Oscar demanded.

As the maids finished the makeup, Oscar once again looked into the mirror. This time he smiled at himself, feeling so proud.

A law was passed after that day that Oscar was to have makeup on him at all times: when he ate, when he slept, when he took a bath. But, he never did notice anything strange happening to the mirror.

One faithful day, when Oscar picked up the mirror from the night stand, his reflection became a girl. A young-looking girl, in fact. The girl had silky blonde hair and skin the color of edelweiss. She had eyes the color of pure emeralds and a look on her face that looked like Heaven itself. And the poor, poor boy fell in love with her.

“Hello, Little Oscar,” the mirror said, with a soothing tone. “Do not worry, I am not evil.” To this, she let out a little laugh that sounded just like the sun.

“How do you know my name?” Oscar asked the girl.

“Trust me,” she said, “I know everyone who picks up my mirror. Even your mother, God bless her soul.”

Oscar then began to recall his frightening experience with death, especially war deaths. You see, when Oscar was born, it was during a time of war. The only way to stop the war was if a prince was born. Once Oscar was born though, soldiers burst into the hospital. His parents left him with the nurses to keep him safe. Only the captain of the guard returned.

He shook the thought away, and said to the girl, “Well, since you know my name, I should know yours. It is only fair.”

The girl gave a little smirk, and said, “Well, I cannot do that.”

“Why?” Oscar demanded, “You should give me your name!”

“Well,” said the girl, “you have to do something for me first. Then, I will give you my name.”

Oscar saw this as a chance to acquire true love. You see, many girls didn’t like him very much. Some saw him as bossy. Others saw him as immature. But, this was no other girl. This was a girl that thought differently of him. He thought this to himself. If only he knew the truth, he would’ve stepped back.

“What should I do for you, my lady?” Oscar asked the girl, as generously as he could.

“I would like you to get me a stone,” the girl in the mirror said. “An emerald that looks like the color of my eyes. Get it and I will tell you my name.”

And so Oscar started his perilous adventure through the kingdom. He eventually found a trader willing to give him an emerald for eight hundred gold. Oscar agreed on the offer, and with the emerald he raced back to his room.

He held it out to the mirror, and said, “My lady, I’m back.”

The mirror changed into the girl once again. She smiled and laughed her sunny laugh.

“I guess a deal is a deal, isn’t it?” the girl said to herself. “No matter,” she continued, “my name is Honey, and I have been trapped here for a long time. Now, if you say my name three times, I will be let free. But, close your eyes. This is too...well, dangerous for your eyes.”

“Yes, my lady,” Oscar replied, as he closed his eyes and said her name three times. When he opened them, Honey was still in the mirror. “But, why?” Oscar asked, with a pleading tone to his voice.

Honey sighed, and frowned. “Wow, you really are a stupid boy,” she said with a smirk.

Oscar gasped, and demanded, “You take that back!”

Honey replied, “Would you just hear yourself now? No wonder everyone hates you here!”

Oscar looked around and realized how selfish he had been. The maids were trembling because of him, for God’s sake! His perilous demands, his almost impossible requests, his amount of money given because of fear. He looked back at Honey, who seemed to be sighing at him.

“Well,” Honey said to him, “I bet you went to get me the emerald for true love, yes?”

Oscar nodded to her, then hung his head low.

“How about you learn to grow up?” Honey said. “Maybe change a thing or two around here, huh? Everyone’s miserable.”

Oscar looked up, and looked around. “Maids,” he called out, “please get me some ink and paper!”

The maids scampered around, finding him in his room. The maids walked up to him, trembling for fear of being yelled at again. But instead, he took his materials gratefully, and politely said, “Thank you.”

The maids looked at one another in amazement. Since when did the prince act like this? They then noticed the mirror with the young girl’s reflection. And watching Oscar sit down to write, they smiled and walked out of the room without making another sound.

“Red Road Mind Running”

by Andre Goldberg

People on the Red Road Running

Reminding me of a different time

When we were able to go outside without gloves and masks

It feels like this is never going to end

Three months already feels like a decade

March was long

April was worse

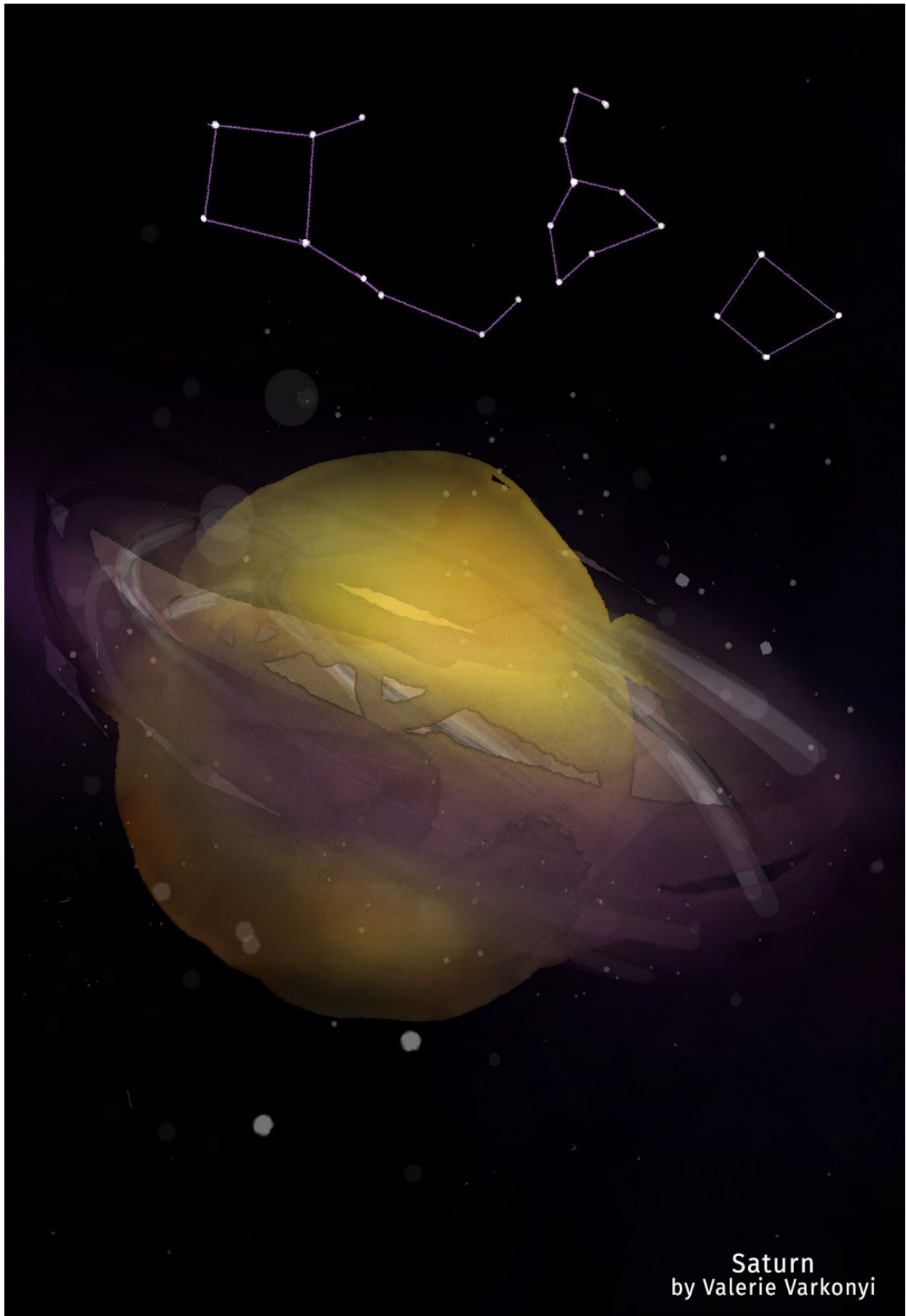
Spring is gone

Summer is canceled

This year was a mess

I’m connecting the dots in my mind

To figure out when this ends



“The Missing Work”
by Emelin Miranda

The missing work
I thought I left it near my desk
But it wasn't there when I looked
I asked my mom
She hadn't seen it
I asked my dad
Nothing either
Then there was my sister
She'd been at my desk most of the day
I connected the dots...
There was a chance that she took it
So I asked
“Did you take my work?”
She answered
“No, why would I take your work?”
This mystery was very confusing!
All of a sudden
I saw my missing work!
Peeking out from underneath her bed
I accused her
“There's my work!”
“Why would it be near your bed?”
She shrugged
“Oops, I guess I did take it.”
The mystery had been solved

“The Last Cookie”
by Taejun Chang

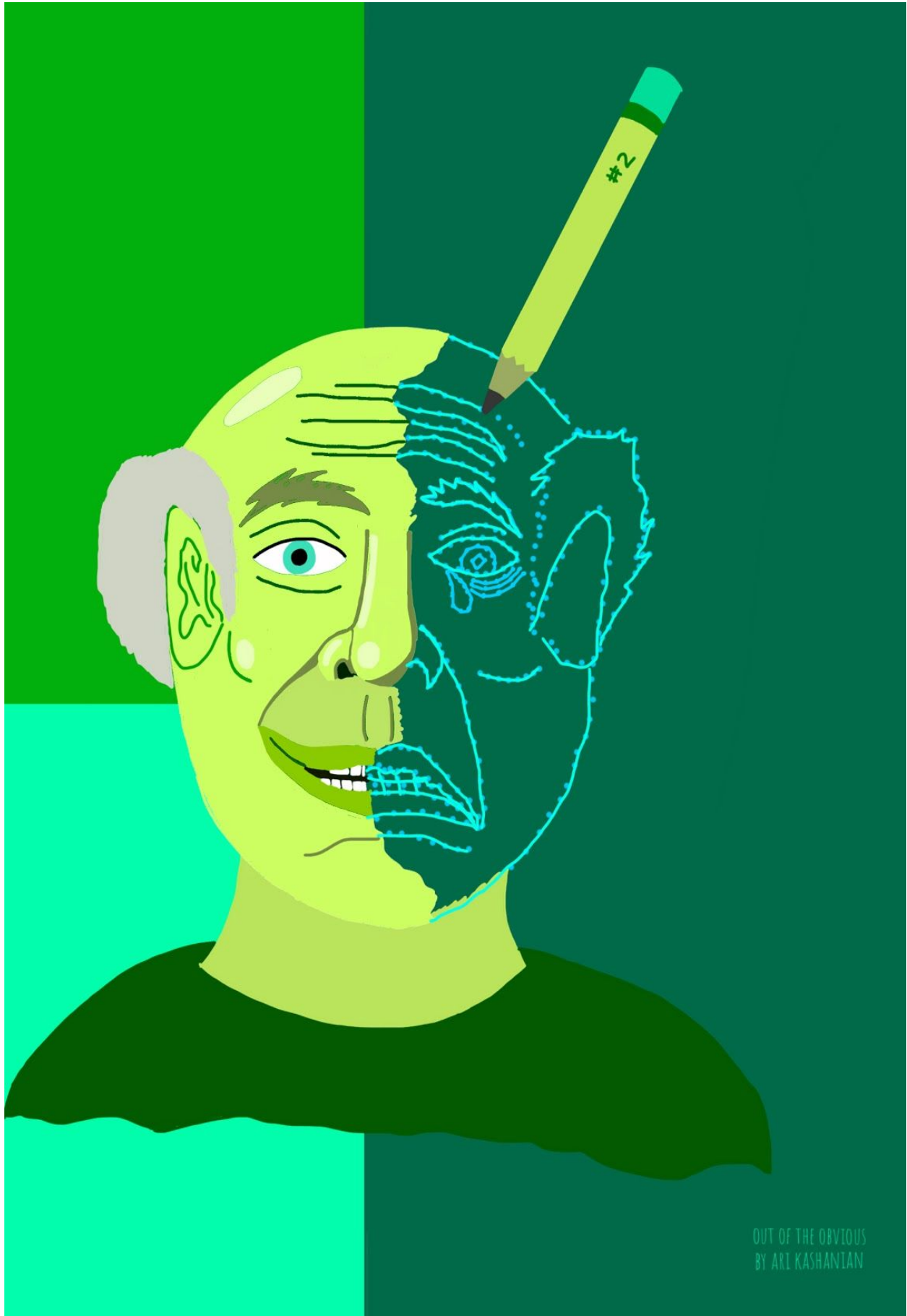
Who stole the last cookie
From its place
The lid is lifted
The jar is empty

If only that cookie was seen
If only I was keen
Let's connect the dots
And find out who stole it

My friend likes cookies
So I ask him
He denies any such thing
I am at a loss

Defeated and drowsy
I try not to give up
My friend likes to play tricks
Is he playing this time?

I check the cookie jar
One last time
And there it is
The last cookie



OUT OF THE OBVIOUS
BY ARI KASHANIAN

“One Dot to Another”

by David Dallal

As your hand moves the pencil from one dot to another
You see how they come together
Like a puzzle slowly getting solved
They turn into imagery that 10 seconds ago wasn't seen
Like a jumpscare in a horror movie
The mystery is close to being solved
The music is playing, and the aroma is glistening
A simple puzzle for a simple day
One dot to another
Piece by piece
The parts coming together
Like the *Stranger Things* logo
You start to see the final product
Slowly but surely, it comes to you
The details of the creature start to appear
One of the most interesting creatures of the sea
You can feel its gaze staring at you
You close the book now
You are finally finished

“Thinking About the Past”

by Donya Kaidanian

Grandma told me I'm too young to understand
The days that she and Grandpa had to stand
She takes my hand and we walk down the park
While Grandpa watches and protects like a hawk
I turn back around and see him shed a tear
His face filled with bliss and no longer fear
Grandma says that Germany had nice parks, too
She enjoyed playing with her friends before World War II
Although those days seem like long ago
I could tell that for her, it did not seem so

“Retracing Steps”

by Sarah-Elizabeth Spence

A day that started out with a great morning, took a turn for the worse. Today, Maggie’s social studies assignment was due. This assignment was very important because it was worth 25 points of extra credit. Maggie needed this extra credit. She was probably failing her social studies class by now. However, her social studies assignment was gone! She had to find it, so she had to connect the dots and retrace her steps.

“Okay,” she said softly, “I know I took it out of my locker at lunch, because I know my next period is social studies. After that, I went to the cafeteria and I got my lunch. I had it in my hand when I bought my food, and I sat down to eat with my friends. My friends...maybe they know where it is.”

As Maggie ran downstairs to find her friends, she was alarmed as she heard the warning bell ring.

Oh no, five more minutes!

When she arrived at the cafeteria, she saw her friends walking out, laughing. “Hey guys!” she yelled.

“Oh, hey Maggie!” they yelled back, as they walked swiftly towards her.

“Guys, this is really important. Have you seen my social studies project?”

They looked thoughtfully, “Yeah,” Sofia chimed. “You had in your hand when you walked out of the cafeteria.” She giggled. “Did you lose it already?”

“Thanks Sofia,” Maggie yelled, as she sprinted down the hallway upstairs.

She looked around and there it was, in a chair in the middle of the hallway. She smiled. She remembered now that she had put it down to go to the bathroom and had forgotten to pick it back up. At least, she had connected the dots and retraced her steps to find the assignment.

Now, hopefully, she won’t fail social studies.

Hopefully...

“Without Just One”

by Aava Glickman

A puzzle is very complicated
Every piece is needed
Without just one
The puzzle is not completed

The piece you need is not always found
You work elsewhere til it comes around
Pieces may not always fit
But you shouldn't give up
Because once you find the right piece
It will be perfect

Until every piece is in its place
You may not know what the outcome is
But once it is done
Then you will see
That what you've created...
is more than just a masterpiece.

“Just a Piece”

by Ethan Shirazi

Life is a puzzle
Each person is a puzzle piece

You are a piece of a much larger puzzle
You fit next to some puzzle pieces
And not next to others

But in life, people change
So if you fit next to one piece now
You may not fit there later

You have to cherish certain times
Times where pieces fit next to you
Those pieces are family and friends

Since they won't fit forever
You must cherish these moments
Before those people go away
Move to another side of the puzzle

So remember
You are not a puzzle
You are just a puzzle piece
Life is the puzzle



“Looking for Answers”

by Dian Gu

As diseases ravaged the land
People sought an answer to why
Why *their* life was impacted
As the Earth shuddered, shook, and shivered
People persisted in finding answers
Connecting the dots and connecting the leads
Day after day
As the rain pounded on stone
As the sun baked the ground
People would find the source
As long as hope existed
As well as despair
Some would stay
But others would fade

“For My Teacher...”

by David Shirazian

For my teacher...

When I started in school
This day seemed so far away
Sometimes in life you are stuck
But remember you have your teacher
When you are confused, she helps you learn and grow
With wisdom she leads you along your way
Some may think teachers are annoying
But in the end, they are there to make your life easier
She guides you along a timeline
When you look at how far you’ve come, you’ll see
Your teacher was the one who led you down the path
Connecting the dots of life.



STARGAZER
BY JAYDEN WEN

“A Dark, Stormy Night”

by Liam Friedrich

It was a dark, stormy night.

I was assigned the job of investigating a house. I arrived at the home and realized that the owners were not there to greet me. It would be difficult to identify the haunting. I listened from the doorway. The house was as quiet as a mouse. Not even a footstep could be heard.

I decided I would enter the house anyway. The floorboards creaked under my feet as I stepped inside. I turned around just in time to see the door slam behind me, and a shadow figure run like a cat chasing its prey across the room. I then saw what appeared to be a dark-haired woman wandering the hallways.

I cautiously walked up the staircase and made my way to the room where I'd been told the ghost is often seen. I entered and noticed papers scattered across the floor. Someone had clearly made a mess. It looked trashed like an afterparty. I did some investigating and discovered the names of the couple who used to live in the house. John and Maria. I grabbed my phone and looked up their photos, in an attempt to gain more information.

While I was distracted by my phone, I heard a quick sizzle. It sounded like a circuit being cut and fried. The lights went out. It was then that I found out that Maria had similar hair to the woman who I'd seen wandering the halls. Again, out of the corner of my eye, I caught a glimpse of the shadow woman. I saw her face and determined that she was indeed Maria.

I quickly realized that the shadow woman must be the ghost.

What does she want? What is she planning? What does she intend to do?

I couldn't figure it out, but my gut was telling me that I should leave. I ran like a cheetah down the stairs and exited the house. I then called 911 and reported the frightening incident.

I have no clue what happened in the end. I never did see the shadow woman again. But she haunts me, nonetheless.

“Surprise Birthday Party”
by Maya Salim

I woke up that morning
Realizing my birthday was one week away!
My parents were working
As they were busy everyday

I needed to plan my own party
I asked my parents how many people I could invite
They said, “None,” and I was shocked
No party this year?

A couple of days later, I saw balloons in my parent’s room
Were they for me?
Then I saw my favorite perfume!
Wrapped in blue ribbons that matched the color of the sea
My favorite color!

My mom told me that she’d pick me up from school tomorrow
I was happy because I don’t like the bus
She picked me up and was driving slowly
I recognized 10 of my friends pass by in a separate car
I was disgusted that they would leave me out!

When we got home, I opened the door
I heard a faint whisper
My friends’ voices saying, “Ready, 1, 2, 3.”
All I heard after that
“SURPRISE!”

“The Mud Bowl”

by Everett Bailey

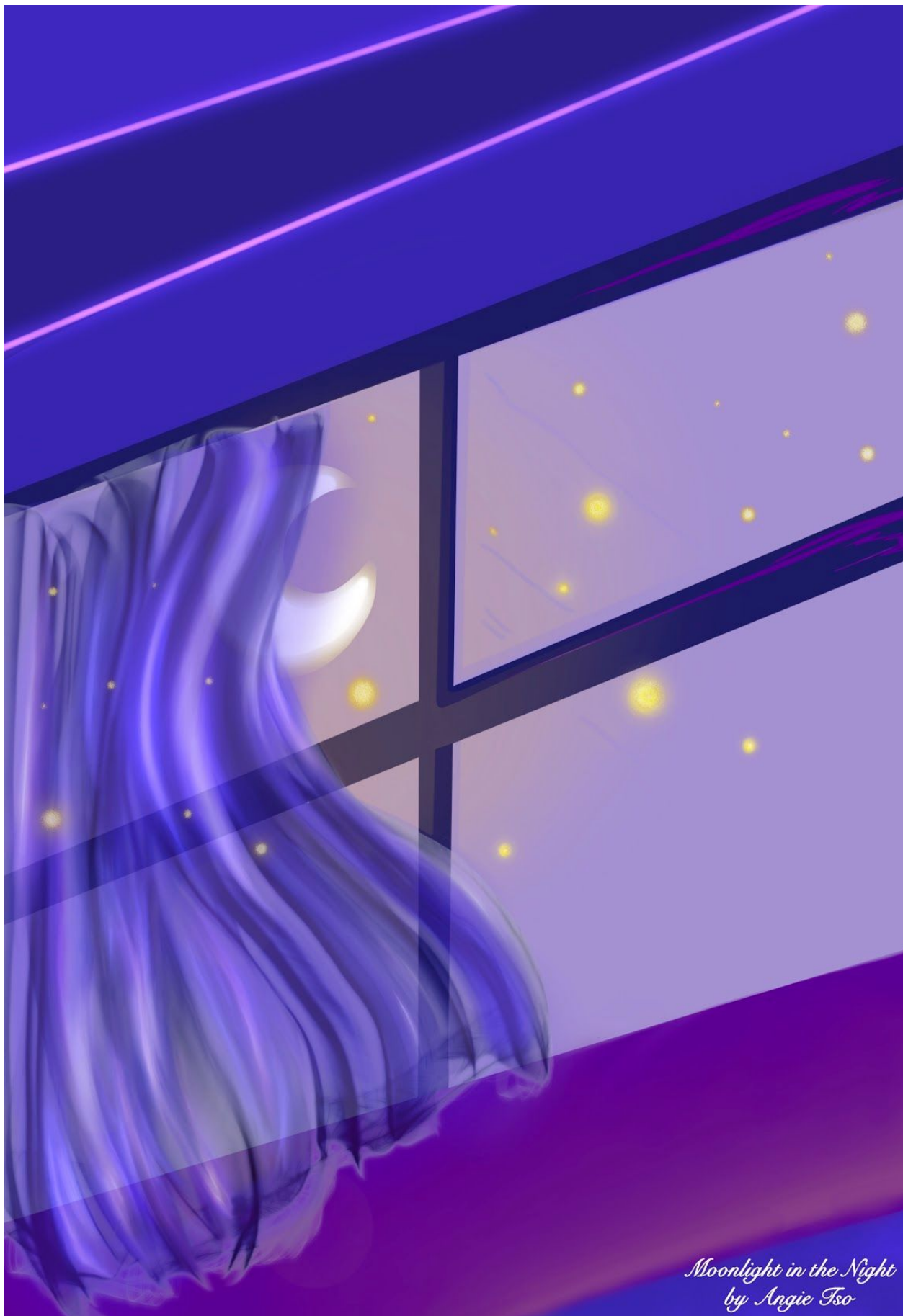
Nicknamed the mud bowl, based on the weather
Our jerseys dripping, never has this happened before
The sun would not make its glorious appearance, imprisoned by the clouds
Like late at night, our visibility was low
Like many television shows, it was survival of the fittest
At the middle of the field, a pool of mud almost two feet deep
The more time spent on the grass, the darker and dirtier our uniforms
Each of us a small dot, in a sea of mud and puddles

The game went on for ages, as it never seemed to end
The whistle finally blew, signaling only halftime
We were all happy for the break, even if it was short
But we understood, the game wasn't even close to being over
To add to the pain, needles of rain started to beat upon us
The second half of the game, more brutal than the first
The rain was ruthless, and a wild wind had developed
When the game finally ended, a change of clothes and hot shower was needed

“Sam’s Story”

by Ariel Nassimi

Sam started middle school
The work became harder
Sam began to struggle
Sam thought about the positives
Not having to stand in a straight line
Moving from classroom to classroom
Sam thought about the negatives
No more snack time
Not being able to play Connect the Dots
Sam decided to take the good with the bad
Now he likes middle school
Sam no longer struggles



Moonlight in the Night
by Angie Tso

“#UCLAbound”

by Abigail Monasebian

Am I #UCLAbound? It was the day. The day I had been waiting for. The day I dreamed of. The day had finally come. I grabbed my computer as fast as the Flash. Everyone huddled around me. I opened the website as my fingers shook as hard as a California earthquake. There it was. The email.

All of a sudden, I froze. Sitting there, just like an ice cube. My hand's sweat raining down onto the computer mouse. The email was shouting at me to open it, but I was afraid as to what it would say. I wasn't ready. *I have to.*

“Open it!” they shouted, “Open it!”

Click. I read, *CONGRATULATIONS, you're #UCLAbound!* I sat there as if I was paralyzed, unable to move. All I could focus on were my mind's boggled thoughts. Those four words kept replaying in my head.

CONGRATULATIONS, you're #UCLAbound! CONGRATULATIONS, you're #UCLAbound! Am I dreaming?

I heard a voice exclaim, “You got into UCLA! Oh my gosh!”

Did I really get into UCLA...or is this a dream?

I finally woke up from my thoughts.

“I know it feels crazy, but you did it! You got into UCLA! Good job, I'm so proud of you! I'm gonna miss you though,” Abi admitted.

My friend snapped me back into reality. *I really did it. Wow,* I thought. *Phew,* I whispered under my breath. *I really am #UCLAbound.*

“Lost and Found”

by Joshua Ahdout

I am lost and found	I worry where I might go
I wonder where my compass is	I cry that I am stuck
I hear nothing in the distance	I am lost and found
I see endless roads	I understand the obstacles
I want to be there	I say that I can cross them
I am lost and found	I dream of reaching the finish line
I pretend to hold a map	I try to go ahead
I feel confused	I hope to have a guide
I touch the trees on the way	I am lost and found

“The Jiggly, Wiggly Tooth”
by Jonathan Sharif

It was loose like a child hanging from a tree
Almost about to fall off
My jiggly, wiggly tooth
I was told if I pulled hard enough
A magical creature would give me money
So I pulled and pulled
But it just didn't work
My tooth was super slippery
But my mom told me a secret
We got a string and attached it to the door
I wasn't scared but I knew it would be painful
I thought of it like a tug of war game
A fight between my tooth and the door
But before I followed through
I decided to have a sweetish savory caramel
Before I knew it my tooth was out
It buried itself into my caramel bite
Later I realized my mom just wanted to trick me
She knew from the start
Eating the caramel would do the trick
Everything suddenly connected
It all just made sense
And my jiggly, wiggly tooth
Did not jiggle or wiggle anymore

“Challenges”

by Owen Flood

Puzzles of all shapes and sizes
Sometimes strange
Sometimes simple
Consisting of physical or mental pieces
Puzzles can be fun and fictitious
Or sour and serious
Puzzles can also be somewhere in the middle
Puzzles are like making food
Hard to do and easy to ruin
Puzzles must be solved with careful precision
As if you are 3D printing
Plan carefully and make changes as you go
Puzzles are challenges that we must overcome
Life also provides us with challenges
Puzzles are the gateway to the tests life hands out
You must complete the simple challenges before the hard

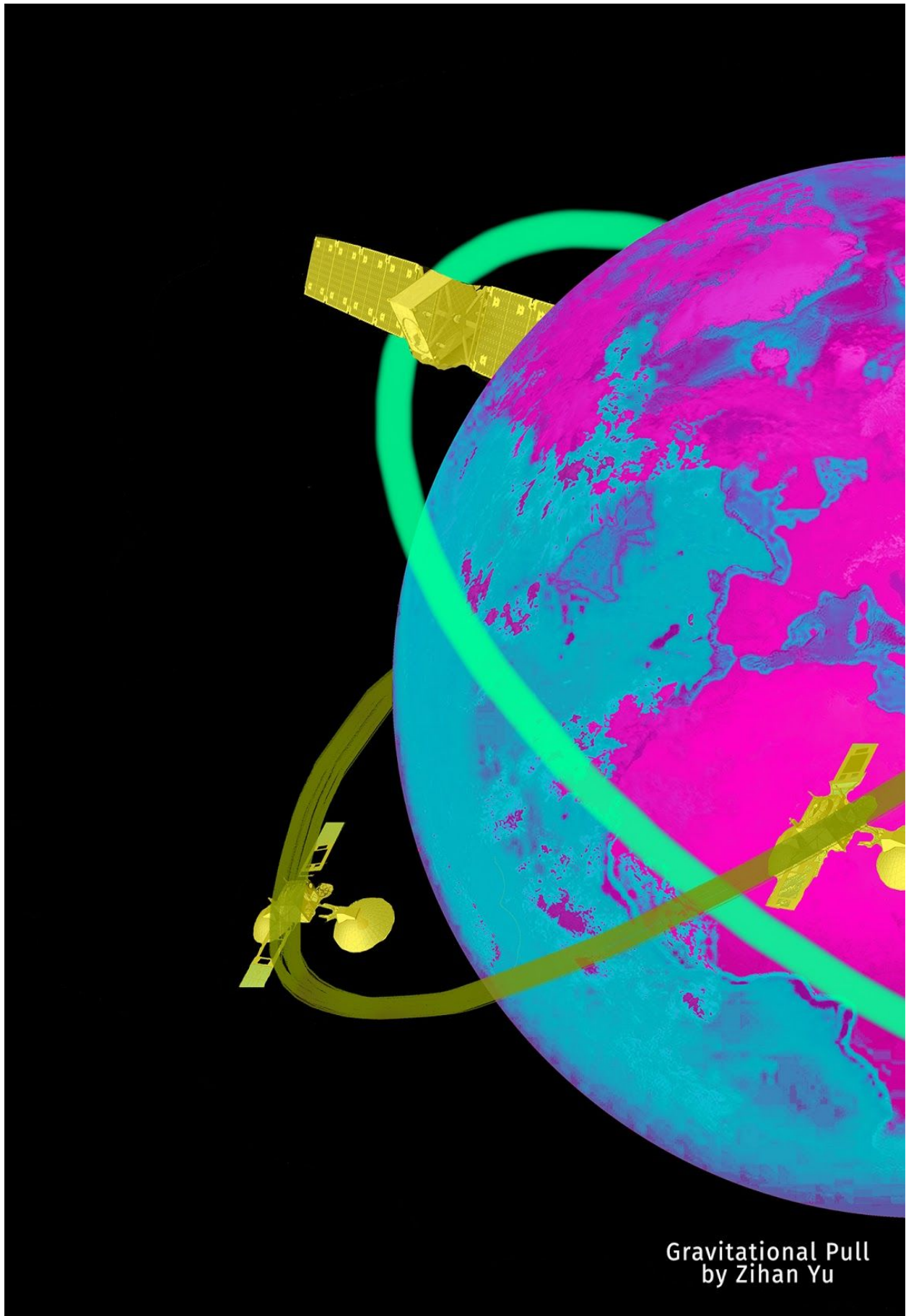
“Giving Up”

by Elan Tavari

There once was a boy who always gave up. His work piled up as high as a mountain. Whenever a difficult assignment came along, he would say that he couldn't do it. It was always an impossible task. He would just give up. But impossible just wasn't true. All the boy really needed to do was try.

Now the boy received a written assignment. He got stumped with the directions and didn't know what to do. He decided that he would just give up. Then, another boy came along. He said that he was willing to lend a hand. He said that giving up was not the way. He insisted that they get the work done.

In the end, the boy learned something. He realized that he kept making the same mistake. He never really gave himself the chance to succeed, because he never really tried from the start. He would always just give up.



Gravitational Pull
by Zihan Yu

“The Monster”
by Willie Benjamin

I could feel it coming
Silently, staring me down
Taking everything from me
The people I love
The things I possess
And the space I call mine
Keeping me up all night

I walk around with it
Observing people who gasp
As they see it coming closer
My parents and friends
Everyone is under its spell
Keeping me up all night

Its evil green eyes
Fiery, red hot cheeks
Its disgusting, slobbering mouth
Spitting saliva all over me
Keeping me up all night

Mom and Dad frighten me
As the demon grabs hold of them
They walk closer, and I feel darkness
Spreading throughout my body
Like an infection taking control

My hands sweating
My lips twitching
My head about to burst
Keeping me up all night

The thing is shoved onto me
Forcing me to rub against its silky skin
As I look down
Eyeing the intruder’s smile
He giggles and whispers my name
I grin, knowing
He’ll be keeping me up all night

MY LITTLE BABY BROTHER!

“Procrastination at Its Finest”

by Youngjun Chang

It is 1:10am and my eyes are bloodshot
I am supposed to write a poem and submit it by 8:00am
I don't know what to write
Instead of being productive, I've spent my time on different things
I regret every moment of not sleeping, and not being productive

I have to include three types of poetic techniques
Alliteration, assonance, consonance, rhyming, onomatopoeia
There are so many to choose from, so I have to think quickly
What if I write a poem about tonight?

Suddenly, I hear a loud thump on the stairs
Somebody is coming up
Thump, Thump, Thump
I get scared, and wait
Nothing happens
I take a deep breath and sigh in relief
I reexamine the Zephyr theme
“Connect the Dots”

Then I realize a wonderful, beautiful (perhaps even sleepy time-saving) idea
I can write a poem about my current problem!
This will work
I, the narrator, need to connect the dots to solve a problem
I rejoice and write the poem down

It is now 1:35am and my eyes are beginning to close automatically
My body becomes more powerless by the minute
I think I've learned my lesson
I slowly accept my fate
Temporarily shutting down my body

Well, I think this is it
My last stanza

“The Last Piece”

by Jordan Zubli

Waking up and getting dressed for the day
It starts pouring and you get bored
You really wanted to play outside
Now you want to stab the clouds with a sword

You open the closet and find a puzzle
Instantly, your level of fun increases
Lying in a box, begging to be put together
But in order to solve it you need all the pieces

You work for hours and almost finish
Clicking in sections you must commit
But you're missing one pesky puzzle piece
So you search around and finally see it

The glorious, shining look of the last piece
You fill it in and you feel complete
You rub your hands over the smooth surface
And you get back up on your feet

You stare at the masterpiece sitting in front of you
The sun comes out and the rain finally stops
You know that you are done with the task
You've finally connected all the dots



Stargazing
by Sasha Livian