

Spartan

Newsflash

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FIFTH ANNUAL PHOTO EDITION

The Spartan Newsflash was born out of the pandemic. Students needed more opportunities to share their voices, and more spaces to feel seen and heard. Each year the student staff has grown in numbers, and in the strength of their voices. Students are given freedom to write, draw, and create based on the topics that are important to them.

Every year a challenge is presented to the newspaper students to create an edition that focuses on the idea of “photojournalism.” Students are encouraged to tell a story with as few words as possible, or no words at all. This is that edition.

This year, the exception to the photojournalism challenge is the conclusion to “A Universe Hoppers Journal” by Pearl Catlin. Readers couldn’t be left hanging.

I would like to congratulate the Spartan Newsflash staff on creating an incredible fifth volume. The enthusiasm and excitement has been infectious this year, and it has reinforced my deep love for the newspaper and our newsies.

Have a safe summer and I know the sixth volume of the Spartan Newsflash will be amazing!

- Ms. Maloney



A UNIVERSE HOPPERS JOURNAL

by Pearl Catlin, grade 7

January 12th (they/them)

Sorry for cutting off yesterday.

I can't believe I'm apologizing to a journal.

TJ came to us on the brink of tears in the middle of our movie marathon. He had a really sucky day. He's an IPH, (if you remember, is an Inter-universe Pirate Hunter). He sees a *lot* of disaster universes. Most of the time he can tough it out, but sometimes it gets to him. Today was one of the days where he broke.

Oh, by the way, me, Mika, and TJ all share a cabin. We get our own rooms, but we share a kitchen, two bathrooms, as well as the living room, which is ironically un-lived in. That's actually how we met TJ. He's a reasonably chill dude who doesn't get angry easily. He, unlike me and Mika, cares a whole lot. Which, unfortunately, is not a good trait to have in this business. That's the reason a lot of good hoppers and IPH's fall into depression. Or worse.

Thankfully for TJ though, he has me and Mika, and we are pros at making sure people don't hate their lives. We have to do it for each other all the time.

Wow. I just realized how much exposition I'm giving instead of actually explaining what happens in my day-to-day life.

Well, that sucks for you, I'm bored of my day-to-day.

Anyways, it turns out TJ is a huge Potterhead (he refused to admit it but we could tell) and he watched the movies with us to calm down. Then Mika asked if we wanted to have a sleepover in her room. Like middle schoolers or something. (This is not uncommon for us.) TJ declined, but I didn't. We went to bed at 10. Because we're sane, we both have a job, and we're both tired.

What did I actually do today, rather than last night, you ask? I threw up. Most of the time, that means you go to a doctor and they pump you full of meds that will let you hop universes anyway. I didn't do that. I will use any excuse to skip work as humanly possible.

Mika, of course, offered to take the day off with me, but she already skipped work yesterday so I waved her off. She's sweet as sugar but sometimes she forgets she has rent to pay too. Plus her job is vital. She spots universes getting close to disaster territory and how to avoid it. People like her are the only reason people like me have jobs. It takes a whole lot of studying and watching tiny itty bitty details. Overall, it's just very taxing. I forget the official name for it, everyone just calls them spotters.

Anyways. I'm going to enjoy the rest of my day violently puking and catching up on all the wizarding world things. Bye.

January 19th (they/he)

Yes, it's three in the morning. It's barely even the 19th. But I have things to say and thoughts to get out.

A few hours ago Mika came to my room. I knew it was her before I opened the door. I could hear her crying, which meant the nightmare was a particularly bad one. Usually she cries quietly.

I don't have the right to talk about Mika's story here. I know it's just a journal, but still. This determines what's in my obituary.

The quick summary is Mika had a really bad boyfriend back in her home universe. Combine that with religious trauma and a really crappy family who have a bad habit of victim blaming, it means she has nightmares a lot. Sometimes the best I can do for her is just listen. Sometimes she needs more. Tonight she needed someone to be with her, so she slept in my bed with me. Usually I try to let her pick the level of closeness. I lay down on my back, as far to one side as I can, and she can choose to get close if she needs it.

With pretty much everyone else, it's a no on physical contact for me. That requires a certain level of trust. Mika has my full trust, so she can hit me and hold my hand and *whatever*. For TJ it's a little different. I trust him plenty. I go on missions with him sometimes. He's saved my ice plenty of times, and vice versa. Neither of us really wants physical touch. It's still needed sometimes. Like when he came home crying last week. Me and Mika hugged him and it was fine.

I have my own issues too. I try not to ever let myself sit with my thoughts. That leads to my imposter syndrome acting up, the depression, the memories... Yeah, it's bad.

Sometimes I have ways to ground myself. Like right now. I'm writing things down, listening to Mika's quiet breathing, trying to take deep breaths, blah blah. I rarely get bad enough that- You know what, that's a talk for a different time.

Right now, I'm going to get my stupid story out of my head and into this document. Trauma dump time.

When I was younger, I was raised illegally. I was born mid universe jump, so I don't count as a UR. My dad was a hopper, and my mom wasn't. I actually had a twin. Past tense.

My dad decided it was a good idea to tell ten year old me about the UCC. He had all the tech "locked up" in our garage.

Fast forward and I'm fifteen. I have a depressive episode. My anxiety was getting to me, and it wasn't pretty. Instead of doing what most normal depressed people do, I started messing with my dad's equipment.

News got out. I don't remember exactly what I did, but everyone started to know about the multiverse. People tried to reach it. Find universes where they were happy. The government wasn't having it, and tried to control everything. Until new people got elected, and the government became split. And that's just America. Places with different governments handled things a whole lot differently.

The UCC found out fast. They tried to find a peaceful solution for all of two days before deciding a massacre was necessary. Of course, they didn't kill *everyone*. They tried to wipe a good percentage of the population's memory. But memory tech is tricky, and doesn't always work the way it's supposed to. Some people forgot how to breathe, others forgot their whole life story, and some people forgot their survival instincts.

My family wasn't so lucky.

I'm not going into detail, but I remember both of my parents' last words. My mom said, "Honey, I promise it'll be okay. Just keep going, okay?"

"Aster, this isn't your fault. It's mine. Please remember-" my dad never finished.

I felt like I could never be clean again. Everything was red, people were screaming, and I couldn't find my brother. I never found out what happened to him. I was about to join...

continued on next page.

A UNIVERSE
HOPPERS
JOURNAL,
CONT.

by Pearl Catlin, grade 7

continued from previous page.

...my parents, but some spotter found out who I was and didn't let the hopper in front of me finish me off. I was brought to the UCC.

Most people would probably resent

the UCC. I don't. They were just making sure the chaos I caused in my universe didn't spread. In the end, they just wiped my universe out of existence. That's not a thing they do often, but they couldn't stop all eight billion of the people from remembering. From trying to spread the news, trying to escape. In its place stands a UCC outpost.

I still hate myself for that to this day. I know what my dad said, and I do blame him for telling me, but I also blame myself for messing with dangerous equipment. I should have settled for what I had. I ruined all of those people's lives, I have so much blood on

my hands, and yet *I'm* the one who gets to sit here in a comfortable bed with a job I (somewhat) enjoy?

These are all thoughts I have a lot. I shouldn't be here. I shouldn't have all of this.

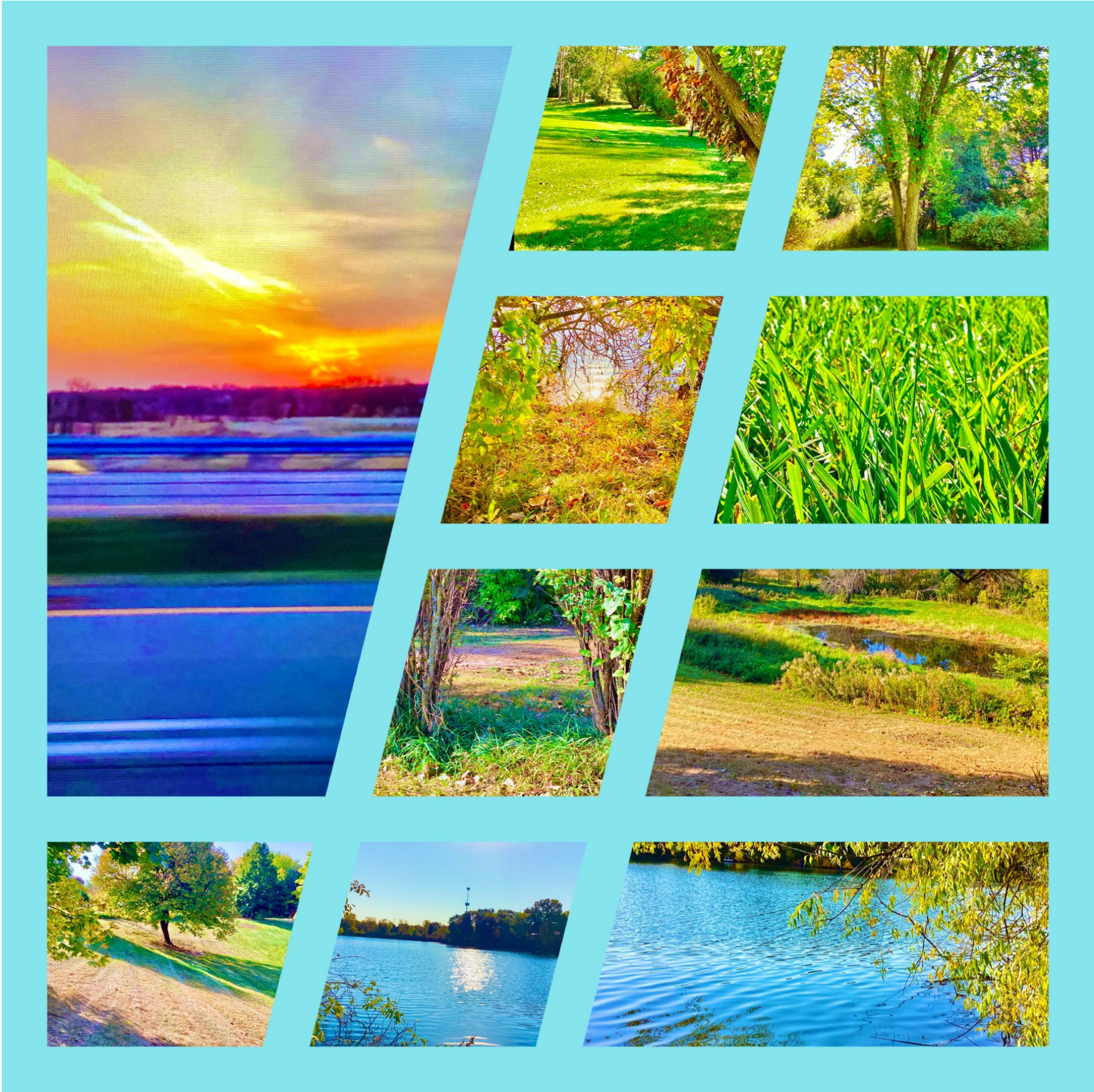
Mika knows about all of this. I could probably wake her up and talk to her right now, but I won't. She needs sleep. I'll manage.

I'm probably not going to write an actual entry today. This is long enough. I'm so tired.

Bye.

-Aster







ANIMAL OF THE MONTH

by Juliet Fillmore, grade 6



