

Deerfield's Literary Magazine

FEATURING CREATIVE
ART AND LITERATURE
FROM DEERFIELD'S
MIDDLE SCHOOLERS

Folio

2026

volume 9

FEATURES:

ART

POETRY

FAN FICTION

SHORT STORIES

GRAPHIC DESIGN

PERSONAL NARRATIVES



Isabella Rinaldo

Letter from the Advisor

Art: Matthew Gonzalez



Dear Readers,

Welcome to the 2026 issue of Deerfield's own Literary Magazine!

I am once again honored to serve as the advisor of Folio as we produce the magazine's ninth edition. The incredible ideas that fill these pages show how truly talented our middle school students are. Thank you to the Deerfield staff, administrators, Board of Education, and members of the Mountainside community for your support of our magazine each year. Also, a big Thank You to Ms. Onore for dreaming up Folio and making it a reality!

Our magazine includes a variety of visual artwork including drawings, paintings, collage, and photography. Writing genres range from poetry, to personal and fictional narrative, fan fiction, and creative essay, all from our incredibly talented Deerfield Middle Schoolers! We invite you to jump into the pages and get lost in the worlds on display!

Sincerely,

Lori Topel

Me Before You

Fan Fiction by Adriana Oliveira

As Lou walks through the streets of Paris, she sees a fuzzy and funky sweater with a bumblebee directly in the middle at a small boutique on a mannequin through the mirror. This makes her remember the tights Will bought for her for her birthday. She smiles as she remembers with her heart feeling heavy. Lou opens the door and a worker with the name tag of “Chloé” immediately greets her in French, but the only thing Lou understands is her saying “Bonjour” and “Lou.”

Lou responds back in English, “I’m sorry, how do you know my name is Lou?”

The worker smiles and looks at the sweater as she says, “This sweater has been waiting for you; someone knew you would like it.” Lou understands immediately who it was, of course. The worker begins to take it off the mannequin and put it in a bag, which says across it, “Louisa.” Chloé sees Lou looking at the bag with tears sliding down her cheeks.

“This bag was made for you, very special.” Lou replies, “Merci!” as she takes the bag. Lou takes a deep breath. As she walks out of the store, she sees a sign on the door that says “Hiring.” She knows exactly what to wear to her interview to get hired.



Kennedy Moore

GILMORE GIRLS (PREQUEL)

Fan Fiction
by Micaela De Barros

I used to think mornings were quiet. Then I had Rory.

"Mom," Rory whispers.

"Too early," I mumble into the pillow.

"But Luke's is open."

That gets me. I roll over and squint at the clock. "It's not even six."

Rory shrugs from the doorway, already dressed, already awake, already... Rory.

"Luke said if we come early, the bell sounds louder."

"Well, I can't miss that," I say, sitting up.

"It's basically culture."

Stars Hollow is still half asleep when we step outside. The air feels cold but gentle. Rory slips her hand into mine. Luke's bell rings when we walk in, loud, like Rory promised. Luke looks up. "You're early."

"She made me," I say, pointing at Rory.

Rory smiles sweetly. "Hi, Luke."

Luke pours coffee without asking. "Same as usual?"

"Forever, Baby," I say.

I watch her carefully. She's little, but her thoughts are already big. "You happy here?" I ask her. She nods.

"Yeah. Are you?" I take a sip of coffee.

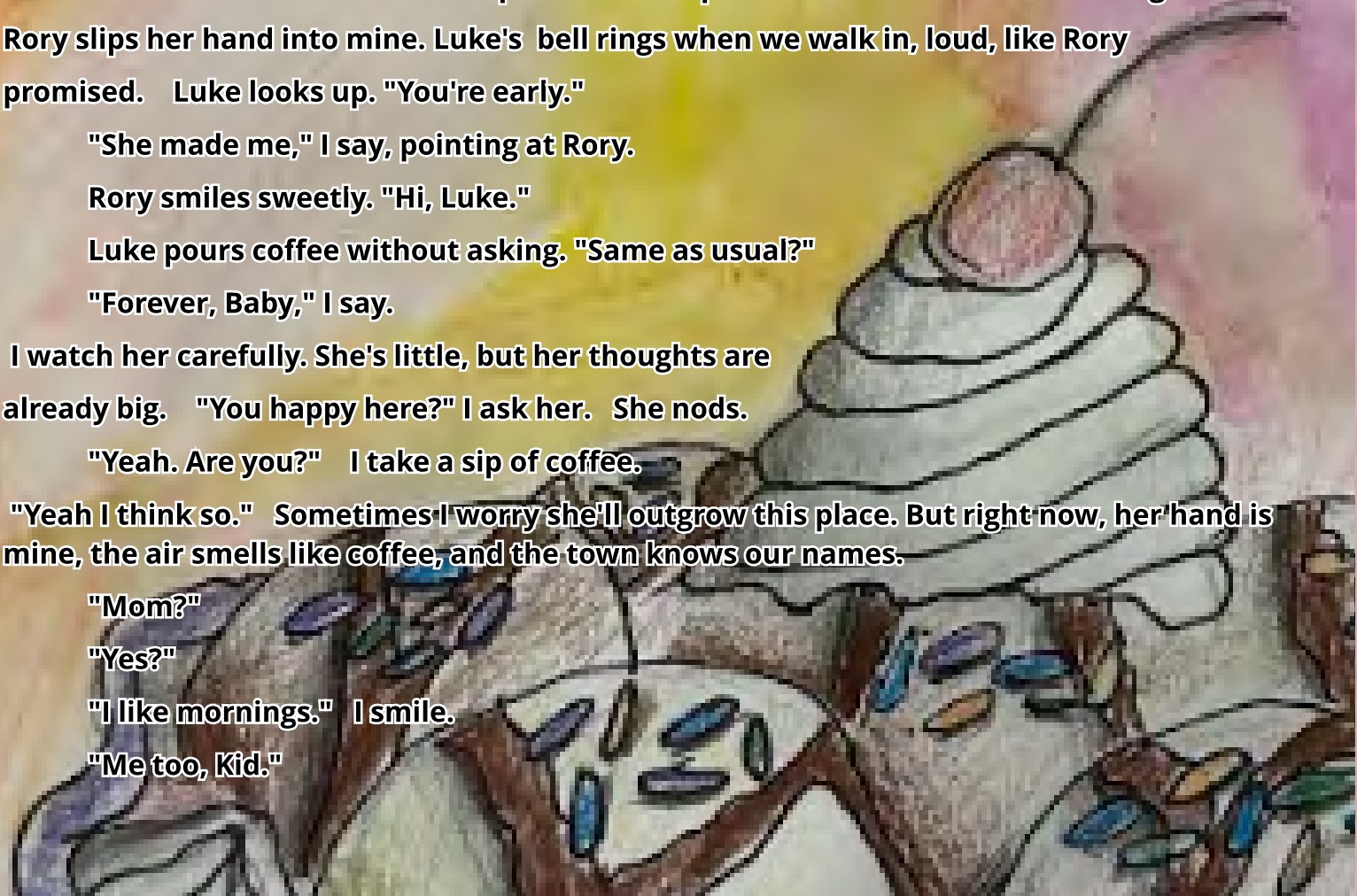
"Yeah I think so." Sometimes I worry she'll outgrow this place. But right now, her hand is mine, the air smells like coffee, and the town knows our names.

"Mom?"

"Yes?"

"I like mornings." I smile.

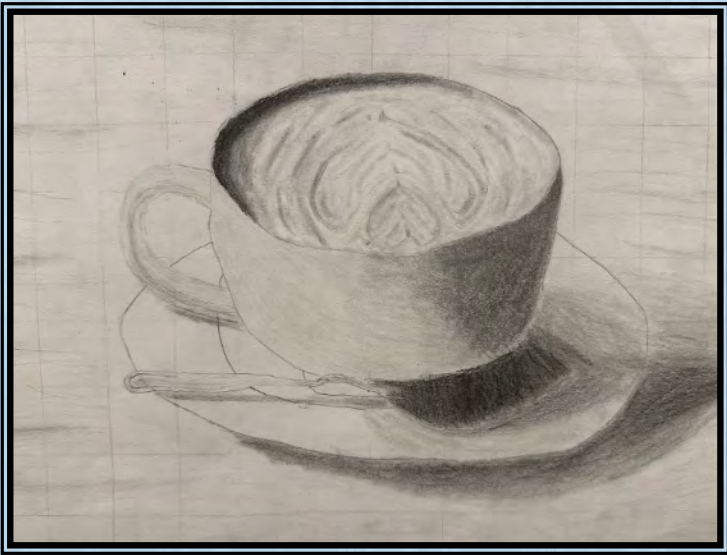
"Me too, Kid."



Fan Fiction
by Emma Hasselgren

GILMORE GIRLS (DELETED scene)

Aiden Choo



Rory pushed open the door to Luke's Diner. The bell jingled, and she froze for a second, staring at empty stools. "Rory? Is that you?" Luke's grumpy voice came from behind the counter.

"Yes, Luke," she said, walking toward him. Her

hands were shaking a little, though she didn't know why.

"You look...different," he said, frowning. "Back from college, or just visiting?"

"Just visiting," Rory mumbled, glancing around. The diner smelled like fresh coffee and bacon. Everything looked the same, but somehow it felt strange, like she wasn't supposed to be here.

"Everything okay?" Luke asked, noticing her quietness.

"Yeah, I... I just missed this place," Rory said, forcing a small smile. She sat down at her usual stool. The quiet hum of the diner made her heart pound a little. Stars Hollow was safe, but something about being back made her feel...off.

The Notebook (Nicholas Sparks)

Fan Fiction - Deleted Scene by Karissa Malet

It was the summer of 1918. Call it Summer Love, call it Puppy Love, I don't care. It is a canon event in every young girl's life. You meet a boy in the 80 degree heat and fall in love. For me, that boy was James.

I never forgot the day we met. My best friend at the time, Janice, and I went to the lake. Her older brother came too. Although Janice was my dearest friend, I had never actually met her brother. I brought my other friend, Randy, and the boys hit it off quickly.

"Oh come on, Anne. Jump in!" James called to me.

"Sorry! I didn't spend all morning on my hair for it to get ruined! I'm okay tanning, thanks," I replied.

"Fine... Chicken," he mumbled.

I got up and put my book down. Walking up to him, I got so close I could feel his breath on my face. "You know, I am many things. But a 'chicken' is not one of them." I don't think he knew I heard what he said until I snapped back. I jumped in and we all splashed around. Just the four of us. Life was perfect.

From that day on, James and I were inseparable, seeing each other nearly every day. Our love grew more with each visit. But, alas, Fall came, and I was forced to face reality. James would run off to some big, fancy private school where girls could not attend. I would stay in this small town, learning to be a lady and finding a suitable husband. Simply put, this love could never be.

Packing his last bag, James kissed my forehead. "You know I would stay if I could."

"I know, James. Perhaps in another life?" I spoke softly, as tears rolled down my face. Goodbyes were hard, and for weeks I was sick, yearning for him.

Eventually, John came along, and we got married. Life continued on. As for James, I never saw him again. Randy and Janice came around every once in a while. After all, we were young and dumb.

That's just what summer does to you.



Kayleigh Alseika



Emma Reichard

What Happens to a Dream Deferred?

Does it cripple
Like a sour face?
Or does it take up too
much room
Like a planet out in
space?
Does it get put off
Like alarm clocks?
Or does it go up, then
down
Like stocks?
Does it wreak havoc
Like a tsunami?
Or does it stink
Like rotten salami?

**Michael
Silva**

What Happens to a Dream Achieved?

Does it soar over
mountains
Like a cloud?
Or does it stick out
Like a diamond in a crowd?
Does it fill you up
Like ice cream on a
hot day?
Or does it shine bright
Like a sunny ray?
Does it grow big
Like a sponge in water?
Or does it get rejoiced
Like a newborn daughter?

Wall-E

Fan Fiction Prequel by Aaron Feng

Wall-E was a Cleaning Robot; there were others like him cleaning up the trash of the Humans. The Humans were building a huge ship, their desires unknown. As the day began to end, Wall-E started driving back to the robots' charging system, but suddenly, his power cut out. He stood still there on the highway, traveling robots accidentally bumping into him.

The long line of robots passed after a while, and the night's dark sky started to come back. The moonlight illuminated his rusted metal and the trash towers around silent robots. Suddenly, Wall-E's system booted back up as if a Higher Being had recharged his systems. He didn't start driving to the robots' charging system, but instead looked around in confusion. He wasn't being controlled and he could now move freely around.

Wall-E drove himself until he found a small garage-like room. He entered, looking around. It looked comfortable, and he decided it was time to rest in the garage.



Isabel Silva

CROSSOVER

BY KWAME ALEXANDER

Deleted Scene by
Connor Triarsi

I sat on his bed, holding my basketball and spinning it in my hands, but didn't feel like playing. The house was too quiet. It didn't feel normal.

I heard my mom and dad talking in the kitchen. Their voices were low. I stepped into the hallway and listened in. "That scared me," Mom said. "You collapsed. You just dropped right in front of me."

"I told you, I'm okay," Dad answered, but his voice sounded tired.

I walked into the kitchen. "You collapsed!"

Dad tried to laugh. "I'm still standing, right?" I didn't laugh back. *Was there something funny?*

"That doesn't mean you're fine." Mom looked at Dad. "The boys are worried." Dad rubbed his chest and looked away.

"I don't want you worrying about me," he said, and I could feel my chest tighten.

"Too bad. We already are." The room went silent. I stared at the floor. I could hear my own breathing.

"I'll take it easy," Dad finally said. I nodded, but I didn't feel better. I went back to my room and shut the door. I lay on my bed staring at the dark ceiling. Basketball usually made everything make sense. Now, I don't think anything will. I turned over and closed my eyes, but sleep wouldn't come. This fear stayed with me, heavy and quiet.



Victoria Aleman

Crossover by Kwame Alexander

Fan Fiction by Gabriel Papio

AFTER THE FUNERAL, JOSH AND JB HEADED OUTSIDE. THEY SAT ON THE BACK STEPS QUESTIONING WHAT LIFE WAS EVEN ABOUT. JOSH THOUGHT ABOUT ALL THE BEST TIMES HE HAD WITH HIS DAD BEFORE, LIKE THE PICKUP GAMES, AND THE FAKE THROWS THEY HAD SHOT TOGETHER.

"WHY DID HE HAVE TO GO?" repeated in Josh's head over and over, like rereading the same page of a book again and again. Except he didn't know how to flip to the next page.

How was he supposed to move on without the one person who understood him?

"I remember when Dad took us to Krispy Kreme after all of our games even though Mom kept telling him how bad it was for him," JB started. "Where did it all go?" he continued.

"I wish I knew," Josh replied.

"I wish we could play just one more game of HORSE with him, like we used to," JB said.

Josh thought for a moment. "And why can't we? Why don't we play one last game, for him?"

"Okay," JB replied, "For him."



Amelia Lee

THE HUNGER GAMES

BY SUZANNE COLLINS

Fan Fiction
by Maya Elhabash

The sky looks pale, like it knows something bad is about to happen. The lady with the poofy hair, Effie, walks up to the stage. She smiles too much, like she's trying to cover something up.

"Ladies first!" she announces in that uncanny Capitol accent.

Then I start to think, what about Katniss? *Her name is in there 20 times. That's 20 chances to lose her. What would I do without her?* Even though there's a chance I get picked, it's very slim, so I haven't let myself think too much about it.

Effie reaches all the way down into the glass bowl, like she is fishing for something at the bottom of a well. She pulls out a name, smiles, and reads it proudly.

"Primrose Everdeen."

What?!

My heart just drops, deep down into my stomach. I feel frozen, as if there is a snowstorm inside my body.

I want to cry so badly, but my mind is just blank. I start to walk forward, slowly, like I'm not even in control of my legs.

Then, I am startled by a sound, "Prim! Prim!" I turn around and I see Katniss sprinting towards me like a storm charging across the stage. I must look awful, because I feel awful. She gets to me and shoves me behind her.

"I volunteer!" she yells. "I volunteer as tribute!"

A slight feeling of relief goes through my head. Until it hits me. My sister has just volunteered to die. For me.

Effie claps her hands and says, "Lovely!"

But it is not lovely; it is terrible. She doesn't know who Katniss is. She doesn't know what she just cheered for. Katniss isn't just my sister, she is my Everything. My mom

doesn't really see me anymore, not since Dad died. Katniss is the one who makes sure I eat. Who keeps the fire going in our house. If she dies, that fire goes out. The Mayor and Effie are talking, but I'm not listening. I'm staring at Katniss. My heart is racing, but everything is happening in slow motion. Then I hear, "Let her come forward."

It's official. Katniss is a tribute. I completely lose it. I am crying, yelling, not even sure what I'm saying. I run to her and grab her like I'll never let go. "No, Katniss! No! You can't go!"

Katniss is holding back her tears, I can see it in her eyes. "Prim, let go," she says firmly. "Let go!" she repeats.

Gale picks me up from behind. I push at him, but it's no use. I just scream and scream as Katniss climbs up the stairs. Each step she takes feels like she is walking farther away from me, forever.

Mom is crying, too. She whispers, "It's going to be okay."

"No, it won't!" I yell at her. "You will never be the same as Katniss. You already abandoned us once, so why should I believe you won't do it again?" She stopped being our mom when Dad died. She disappeared. But Katniss didn't. Katniss kept us alive. So, no, it's not going to be okay.

Effie asks for her name. "Katniss Everdeen," she replies.

"I bet my buttons that was your sister. Don't want her to steal all the glory, do we? Come on, everybody! Let's give a big round of applause for our newest tribute!" trills Effie. *Glory?* There's no glory in this. Just fear, cameras, and death.

Instead of clapping, I observe the crowd and notice they are doing a strange gesture, a type of three-fingered salute. I don't know exactly what it means, but I do it too. It seems as though it is some type of sign of respect or farewell (or both), and Katniss deserves that.

Then they call out the name of the Male tribute, Peeta Mellark. I know him. The baker's son. He is kind; he once gave Katniss bread when we were starving.

We listen to the Anthem, and the Peacekeepers take Katniss and Peeta into a building. My mother and I go to see Katniss. I climb on her lap and hold her tight. Mom sits behind Katniss and hugs us too. Katniss starts to give instructions to my mother for what to do while she is gone.

"I'll be alright, Katniss. But, you have to take care, too. You're so fast and brave.

Maybe you can win."

I say it, even though I don't believe it. I just have to say it.

"Maybe," she replies. "Then we'd be as rich as Haymitch."

"I don't care if we're rich. I just want you to come home. You will try, won't you? Really, really try?" I plead.

Katniss has a sincere look on her face, "Really, really try. I swear it."

We all hug like it's the last time. It might be. We say "I love you." Then, the door shuts. It's closed. It's like I'm staring at the end of something. And all I can think is: will I ever see her again?

Not on the screen. Not in the games.

But here. With me. Alive.



Sophie Li



THE NOTEBOOK

BY NICHOLAS SPARKS

FAN FICTION SEQUEL BY ASHA MARWAHA

I was always told about my parents when they were younger. I knew them as a quiet couple. People told me they kept to themselves and that you could always find them together. When I got the news that they passed in their sleep, I felt almost relieved they got to stay together.

As I was cleaning out their things, I found something I had been wondering about: The Notebook. I had seen my dad reading it recently, and I had been curious about it ever since.

I sat down in their old, dusty attic and began to read. My father's delicate handwriting filled the worn pages, telling the story of their love, from the summer they met to the years when their memories became hard to hold onto.

It was a quarter to midnight when I finally finished. Before I closed the book, I noticed a line of small print on the last page.



Lila Khan

"Our love didn't end when our memories were lost. True love finds its way back."

The note was marked with the date of the night my parents passed. I closed the book and set it down. I finally understood: true love will never fade, even when people do.

The Last Leaf by O. Henry

Fan Fiction

by Micaela De Barros

I can hear every raindrop striking my window, each one a sharp note in a cold and relentless song. The storm rattles the glass like a warning, but all I can think about is poor Johnsy and how the rain she once adored now frightens her, how the light she used to paint with has dimmed, and how she sees the empty space where hope should now be. If she gives up tonight, all of that beauty will mean nothing.

It has become my job —my duty— to keep her alive. The wind outside snarls louder, tugging at the vines like an angry beast. I remember Sue's trembling voice when she told me the last leaf might fall before morning; if that leaf goes, so will Johnsy.

My old bones ache as I hurry down the stairs, but fear pushes me faster than youth could. The moment I step outside, the rain hits my skin like needles. I clutch my paints and climb the ladder, praying the storm won't swallow me first. Every brushstroke is a battle, the wind steals my breath, the cold gnaws my fingertips, but I will not stop. I paint with everything I have left, shaping the stubborn little leaf that refuses to die.

Hours later, the storm softens. I step back from my work. My hands tremble, my face is numb, yet pride glows in my chest. If this painted leaf gives Johnsy a reason to live, then every shiver, every bruise, and every heartbeat will be worth it... and for the masterpiece I was always meant to make.

THE LAST LEAF BY O. HENRY

FAN FICTION BY ISABEL PHILLIPOU

The sun sunk low at fifteen after four on a cold December afternoon, pulling all light from Greenwich village. The scent of cinnamon from the neighbors' kitchen came through the walls. Mr. Behrman, an aspiring painter of 20 years, was sitting in the wooden rocking chair in his bedroom, attempting to paint a cafe nearby.

Later that evening, when Mr. Behrman called his daughter, Clara, for supper, she didn't respond. He found her asleep on the couch, running a high fever. The man called a doctor, and when he arrived, Behrman quickly ushered him inside. "You could boil soup on this girl's head! Golly, I know just what this is." Mr. Behrman leaned in, anxious to hear his daughter's diagnosis, "Your girl's got pneumonia."

"Will she live!?"

"She should," the doctor replied, in audible doubt. He was hesitant, but they needed money.

The next morning, Mr. Behrman went to work as usual, leaving Clara. When he arrived home, Clara laid motionless in bed, drained of color. In an instant, Behrman's sole reason for living, his daughter, had been stolen from him. He wept in agony as the guilt washed over him in waves. "*Why didn't I stay home to care for her?*" he pondered.

In the evening, the coroner came and took Clara. He tried to comfort

Mr. Behrman, but he was inconsolable. He vowed that from then on, he would always be the first to extend his help when someone was in need of care.

Still laden with grief, the man shut himself away until many years later, when two young women moved to the second floor of the apartment complex...



Vidushi Pandey



LAMB TO THE SLAUGHTER

BY ROALD DAHL

Fan Fiction by Emma Hasselgren

Mary Maloney sat curled up in her favorite chair, the soft yellow yarn resting in her lap, as she knitted a tiny pair of baby socks. The room was warm and quiet, the kind of quiet that made her feel calm, and every few minutes, she smiled to herself and thought, *"Wouldn't these look grand?"* imagining the little feet that would one day fit inside them. Thinking about the baby always made her feel happy and safe because she knew that she would soon have a real family.

As she continued knitting, Mary picked up one of the finished socks and thought about embroidering the baby's name on it. For a moment, she froze. They still hadn't chosen a name. Her fingers tightened on the yarn, and her stomach did a little flip. Patrick hadn't talked about names at all; she tried to brush the thought away, telling herself he was just tired from work, but something about him lately felt off.

He had been quiet and distant like he didn't want to think about the future. Mary shook her head, trying not to worry. This was supposed to be a happy and exciting experience not only for Mary, but for Patrick, too.

She put the socks and a small blanket on the table, then got up to straighten the living room. As she moved around, she kept glancing at the clock, waiting for Patrick to come home. She tried to smile, even though something inside her told her that tonight might be different.



Kalli Georgiou

Lamb to the Slaughter

by Roald Dahl

Fan Fiction by Reagan Flynn

Liam Aguiar



Patrick pulled up to the tiny house where Elizabeth lived. It was hidden away behind the trees, and in the daytime, the sun glistened against the light blue sky. Patrick was familiar with this house, for he had been seeing Elizabeth for around a month and a half now.

Patrick rang the doorbell and the door swung open. "Darling, how are you?" Elizabeth kissed him on the cheek, "How was work?"

"It was good." Patrick responded while making his way to the sofa. Patrick picked up the newspaper he had set there the other night. He had begun leaving more and more of his stuff in her house each time he came. There were some of his clothes, jackets, and one of his good pairs of shoes already in the closet.

"So, you're telling her tonight, right?" Elizabeth said, sitting down, "Oh I can't wait for you to finally live with me fully."

"Yes, of course," Patrick responded, "I'll tell her and then get out of there as quickly as possible. She doesn't know where you live, so she would never suspect where we are."

"Wonderful," she responded, while adjusting the flowers Patrick had given her days prior.

They sat in silence for a couple of minutes. Patrick read his newspaper while Elizabeth sipped her tea. Patrick checked the tiny watch on his wrist. He stood up and she kissed him once more. "I'll be as quick as I can," Patrick reassured her, heading out the door.

"I'll be waiting for you! Remember our plan!" she said, waving to him from the door, while Patrick hurried off.

Fortnite

Fan Fiction by Jack Kane

I wake up already running.

I don't remember jumping from the Battle Bus, but my feet move fast across the ground anyway. Trees blur past me, and the storm crackles behind my back. I can feel it getting closer. My heart is beating hard, like it always does.

"You need to survive," a voice in my head tells me.

I duck behind a wooden wall and reload my weapon. I don't even think about it; my hands have just memorized the motions. That's when it finally hits me: I'm not choosing any of this stuff. It's like my body is playing the game for me.

Why can't I stop?

I peek around the wall and see another player sprinting across the field. I don't want to shoot whatsoever. I don't even know who they are. For a second, I freeze.

Then, my finger pulls the trigger.

The player disappears, leaving loot all over the ground. At first I think I feel happy, but I realize quickly that I am empty.

"This keeps happening," I think. Over and over again.

My head starts to hurt, and memories flash through my mind. The Battle Bus, the storm, the island resetting. Every time I start to understand what's going on, it feels like something pushes the thought away.

A loud horn blasts above me. The Battle Bus.

The world starts to fade, and suddenly, I'm standing in the bus again. Players are lined up next to me, all quiet, all staring straight ahead. No one looks confused or scared.

I try to yell and warn them that this isn't normal.

Nothing comes out of my mouth.

The doors open, and the island appears below us again. The voice in my head comes back, stronger than before.

Jump.



UnDivided by Neal Shusterman

Fan Fiction - Deleted Scene by Declan Flynn

Connor's dad woke up in the morning, feeling somewhat excited. He had booked their flight to the Bahamas, and they would leave in only a week. It was a celebration of sorts because his son, Connor, would be taken away for unwinding soon. He had been so troubled, and the ads said he would "serve a greater purpose in his parts."

He walked towards Connor's room expecting to hear his loud snoring, but he was not there. His blankets had been tossed aside, and his shoes were gone. He must've seen the three tickets in his drawer and known that none were meant for him.

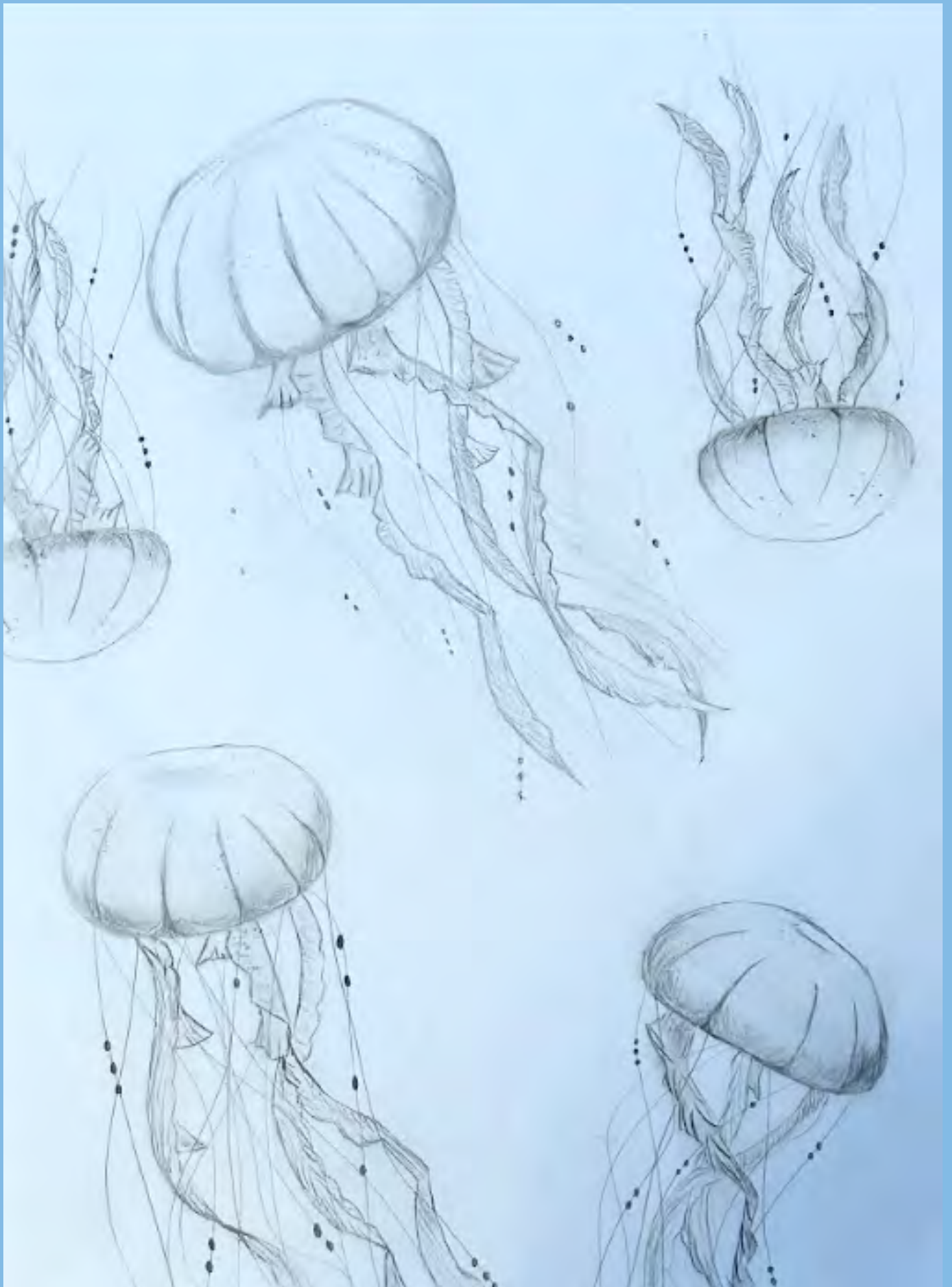
But as Connor's father stared at the empty bed, he felt something change inside him. He had raised Connor for 15 years, and he had always been troubled. But all kids were. His job was to help him grow as a person, and he had failed. The ads said unwinding was "the right choice," but was it a choice of laziness? He suddenly felt sick to his stomach. What had he done?

A door creaked behind him, and he saw his wife, seemingly distraught at his expression. She immediately understood. It was too late to stop it; the order had been signed. Their consciousness became as heavy as stone, making it difficult to stand.

From that day on, they would never stand as tall. Even as news of Connor's escape reached their ears, they could never take back what they had done. The tickets remained in the drawer, gathering the dust of their everlasting regret.



Brian Daley



PATRIOT'S PEN ESSAY

How are You Showing Patriotism and Support for our Country?

Nathan Ford

There are millions of people in America today who came to our country for a multitude of reasons. Some came for freedoms and liberties. Others came for a better life. While a lot of us take the time to enjoy these liberties, not many think what they can do to give back to this country. How I am showing patriotism and support for my country is by being a good citizen and by learning in school. In school, I am studying diligently about the many people in America's rich history who have fought hard to defend America's rights. I am also taking the time to thank veterans who have risked their lives to help this country thrive.

One way I show patriotism and support for my country is in school. Every day at the beginning of school, I recite the Pledge of Allegiance and look at the flag to show support for my country and the values it represents. In Social Studies, we learn about the Revolutionary War and how many people, including our Founding Fathers, fought hard to protect the rights and freedoms we enjoy today. By learning about these topics in school, I can not only appreciate the rights and freedoms that I have today, but also support the future generations to come by ensuring that these virtues and ideas are passed on.

Another way I show patriotism for my country is by writing thoughtful letters to show thanks to the veterans who have fought hard to defend America and our way of life. I also attend important American holidays such as the Fourth of July and Veterans Day celebrations with my family every year, hang flags and talk about what these days mean to us. By doing this, I am reflecting on America's many freedoms and honoring those who fought hard to protect our liberties.

I show patriotism and support for my country by learning about our past and honoring our veterans, as well as celebrating what it means to be an American. Patriotism is not about big gestures - it is about everyday choices Americans make to honor our country. Every act of pride and respect matters. Whenever I have the chance to support my country, I do what I can to take the lead. My goal is that in doing so, others will follow, making America stronger.

There Is No "I" in Team

Gianni Cerullo

OVER THE YEARS, I HAVE ALWAYS PLAYED SPORTS- FROM BASEBALL AND FOOTBALL TO SOCCER AND LACROSSE. IF YOU NAME IT, I HAVE PROBABLY PLAYED IT. BUT ONE ALWAYS STOOD OUT TO ME. ITS INTERESTING PLAY STYLE AND ITS IMMENSE POPULARITY THROUGHOUT THE WORLD ALWAYS SEEMED SPECIAL TO ME. I FELL IN LOVE WITH THE GAME OF BASKETBALL. BUT WHEN I FIRST STARTED PLAYING, I WAS TOO YOUNG TO REALIZE THAT NOT ONLY WOULD I BENEFIT PHYSICALLY FROM ALL THE EXERCISE, BUT ALSO ALL THE MENTAL BENEFITS THAT CAME WITH IT.

I REMEMBER ONE GAME DURING MY SEVENTH GRADE SEASON. MY TEAM WAS DOWN TWO POINTS WITH ONLY 16 SECONDS LEFT TO SPARE. THE GYM WAS CROWDED, AND THE FANS WERE LOUD AND HOSTILE ON A COLD WEDNESDAY NIGHT IN LATE JANUARY. THE BALL WAS INBOUNDED TO ME, AND I STARTED DRIBBLING UP THE COURT. AS I DID, MY DEFENDER STEPPED UP TO GUARD ME. AS HE DID, I QUICKLY CROSSED THE BALL OVER TO MY LEFT HAND, CATCHING HIM OFF GUARD, AND DROVE TO THE BASKET. WHILE DRIVING, I CAUGHT A SMALL GLIMPSE OF A WIDE-OPEN TEAMMATE UNDER THE BASKET. BUT HE WASN'T GOING TO MAKE THE GAME WINNING SHOT. I WAS.

"PASS THE BALL!" MY COACH YELLED WITH FURY IN HIS VOICE.

"THREE! TWO! ONE!" THE CROWD SCREAMED AS THE BUZZER WENT OFF AND I THREW THE BALL UP IN THE AIR AND ... I AIRBALLED, MISERABLY.

AFTER THE GAME, MY COACH YELLED AT ME FOR MY SELFISH DECISION WHICH COST US THE GAME. "I DON'T CARE IF YOU'RE THE BEST PLAYER ON THE TEAM, I WILL BENCH YOU. BALL HOGS DON'T BELONG ON THIS TEAM," HE SAID WHILE STARING DEEP INTO MY SOUL.

WHEN I GOT HOME, I GOT TO THINKING. I DID NOT WANT TO BE BENCHED, NOBODY DOES. HOW DO I AVOID IT? THEN, WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT, I SEARCHED UP "TEAM BASKETBALL" AND STARTED WATCHING VIDEOS. I WATCHED THE SELFLESS PLAY, THE PASSING AND PLAYMAKING, THE MOVEMENT OF THE BALL. AND IT WORKED. EVERY TIME THEY WOULD PLAY AS A TEAM, THEY WOULD GET OFF A GOOD SHOT. I THEN REALIZED THAT I REALLY WAS BEING SELFISH AND I COULD NEVER WIN JUST BY MYSELF. IF I WANTED TO WIN AND BE GREAT, I WOULD HAVE TO BECOME SELFLESS AND QUIT BEING A JOCK. I THEN CAME ACROSS THE QUOTE, "THERE'S NO 'I' IN TEAM." I HUNG IT UP ON MY DOOR SO THAT WHENEVER I LEFT THE ROOM, I WAS REMINDED TO BE SELFLESS FOR THE DAY, NOT ONLY ON THE COURT, BUT IN LIFE, TOO.

I HAVE COME TO REALIZE THAT SPORTS AREN'T ONLY JUST A CURE FOR BOREDOM, NOR PHYSICAL PLEASURE, BUT THEY CAN ALSO TEACH LESSONS THAT ARE MORE THAN ESSENTIAL IN LIFE. THESE LESSONS NOT ONLY INCLUDE SELFLESSNESS, BUT HARDWORK, COMPETITIVENESS, AND PERSEVERANCE. ALL THREE OF THESE LESSONS ARE VERY SIGNIFICANT IN LIFE, AND KNOWING THESE THREE LESSONS WOULD BENEFIT YOU VERY MUCH.

THANKS TO BASKETBALL, WHAT I HAVE LEARNED FROM PLAYING THE BEAUTIFUL GAME, I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO TRANSLATE IN ORDER TO INCREASE MY CHANCES TO SUCCEED, ALTHOUGH IT MAY SEEM LIKE THE TWO DON'T RELATE AT ALL.

Kicking Off a New Start

by Nathan Ford

When I was five years old, my dad first got me into soccer. Since then, it has been my life. Every weekend, I was off to another soccer game or practice. Through all my efforts on the field, I was able to grow my skills and reach the highest levels of play. Even though my success in soccer continues to be great, there is more behind the trophies.

There are injuries, mistakes, and countless practices to be the best. This process was a part of the game, and I understood that, but I had not yet understood how soccer would help me build character, handle tough moments, and grow as a person off the pitch.

I was 10 years old; it was another hot summer day. This week's tournament brought me and my dad to Pennsylvania. The sun was beaming down on my back. As I heard the final whistle ring out, I jogged off the field. I felt the hot metal of the bench as I sat down, looking around to see the ongoing games. Irritated at the loss, I waited for that typical talk and look coaches usually give the team after a disappointing game, but this time was different. I looked at my coach, who had his shoulders hunched, and a relaxed demeanor. He broke the news swiftly. I did not even realize what happened. I thought, *What?! Is our team done? Maybe I heard him wrong.* Then I realized I did not hear him wrong. The team was done. For good.

My face was blank, struck with so many emotions all at once. Those emotions quickly turned to tears as they ran down my cheeks like a waterfall. The next week, we had our last game. As the game kicked off, the team was prepared. We knew we would win and did, 5-3. We cherished every pass, shot and steal that we got, knowing it would be our last while playing for this team. Some plays, I would look back at my coach. This time he was not encouraging and energetic, but quiet, with a melancholy look in his eyes. Before we knew it, the game was over. I thanked my coaches and teammates for all they had helped me with and was off, cherishing the past, and preparing for the future.

Three weeks after the last game, I decided I wanted to quit soccer. If I was not going to play for "my" team, I was not going to play at all. However, after discussing this with my parents, they convinced me that I should go to some tryouts. I did excellent in the tryouts, but sat out the summer season until the fall when I started playing for my new team with a renewed motivation and appreciation for the game.

Through this experience, I now realized that life is not perfect. There are ups and downs, highs and lows that I had to deal with. While these setbacks are out of my control, my response and attitude are not. Instead of holding on to my childhood team forever, I learned to be thankful for the experience and to grow from the moment. By doing this, I was able to move on in soccer and in life, and I am now playing for one of the best teams in New Jersey. My experiences also taught me to live life with a joyful attitude and to improve from the hardships and mistakes. As my childhood coach once said, "Soccer teaches you many lessons about life, so learn from it in any way you can."



Caitlin Freeman

Popular Unpopular

Isla Happich

Who am I if not popular?

I will never say again

Popularity does not matter

It is true

In the real world

Smarts do not matter

Never again will I say

I'm smart and that's all that matters

If you're not popular

They make fun of you

And I'm not okay with that

I wish I was popular

(Now read from bottom up)

The Difficult Path by Grace Lin

Fan Fiction by Hana Barboiu

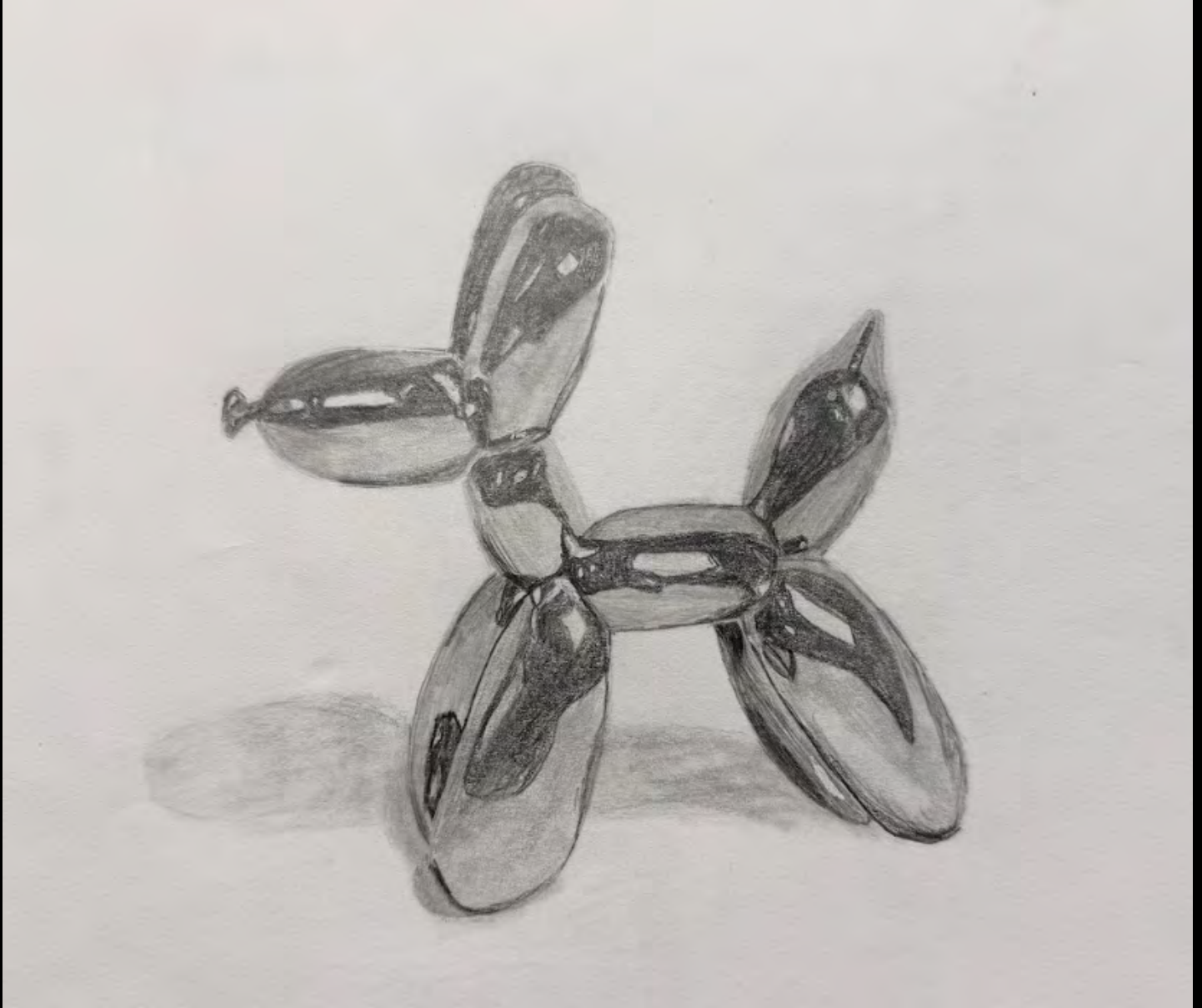
I take a deep breath and close my eyes, readying myself to face the crew. I feel the sway of the ship beneath my feet, the feeling I've always known, and it calms me. The crew is currently unloading our latest haul, and recently every meeting with the crew keeps me on my toes. There are rumors floating around the boat, rumors of a coup. With every passing day, I feel my crew become more questioning of my ways, more distant, more skeptical. I brush off these thoughts, as being the female captain of the most feared pirates wasn't bound to be an easy task. I step forward towards the rail of the ship, watching the ocean. The sea has been with me my whole life, following my journey as it hasn't been an easy one, and it's a comforting thought. It was witness to my struggles and my triumphs; there have been many of each. I abruptly turn, and, with newfound strength, I walk towards the main deck to oversee the crew.

Looking over the deck, I see a group of my crew surrounding something. They are enclosed around the thing, blocking my vision. I make my way down the creaky wooden steps with a stern look plastered on my face. I overhear one of my men say, "The captain's not going to like seeing these prisoners." So, prisoners? This is what's happening? The feeling of unease settles over me, though I don't show it. I had said prior that this was to be a grab and go, with no prisoners, yet they disobeyed. As their captain they should respect my orders, yet I was ignored. Could my crew really turn on me? I feel as if I am losing my power and control over them.

"Indeed," I say, trying to seem as menacing as possible despite my growing unease, I speak loud to draw their attention, "She does not." Over 20 heads turn to look at me and instantly I see the fear in their eyes. They scramble and speak over each other trying to explain, explain why they had disregarded my orders. One pale face in particular that I recognize as Weigu, stands out to me. I question him and learn that he took the dazed younger girl, while Dihan was the one who took the crying older girl. I dismiss them and turn my attention to the prisoners. Suddenly, Dihan speaks up.

I turn to him as he stutters over his words. "I thought...you know how the Po Tsai pirates asked us for a woman to trade, and we owe them from that fight with the Imperial Navy when our ships were late and...and..." Dihan stammers. It suddenly clicks to what he's implying. Instantly, I want to shout "No" at him, how could we trade such innocent people to these filthy pirates? However, I restrain myself knowing that there's no room for weakness on this ship. I fight the feeling, but I still feel my eyes fill with pity as I glance at the girls. I know I must think fast, I can't let them trade the poor girl. I can only guess what would happen to her.

"Too plain," I announce firmly, trying to leave no room for argument, "They won't take her." I am met with sighs and groans of protest, however I hold my ground and announce that we will drop the prisoners off at the next port with some cash. I feel relief when no one pushes back on this, but I still feel the unease and the questioning looks. The constant doubt from the crew returns. However, I ignore it and feel the tension leaving my body, trying not to show it, because I knew I just saved this woman and even if my crew turns on me, I know I'd do it again.



Emma Alarva

SO WHAT ARE YOU ANYWAY? BY LAWRENCE HILL FAN FICTION (ANONYMOUS)

James sat down next to his wife on the couch after tucking their daughter in for bed. "Look, Mary, I really don't know if this is right. She's only eight. I'm worried someone will say something to her, something that will change the way she sees herself. You know how people are these days. All anyone sees when they look at us is a 'mixed family,' and many don't support that. They don't support her, and they don't support us."

"James. We've been over this. She's going to see my parents tomorrow. End of story. She's going to be fine."

"Mary, I know you love me and you don't see race as anything negative, but many other people do. Remember when we got married? Half of our families wouldn't even attend the wedding because we are a bi-racial couple."

"It will be okay. It's only a plane ride, and my parents are really looking forward to seeing her. Sure, maybe my parents weren't thrilled when they first met you, but once they got to know you, they loved you. People are so much more than the color of their skin."

"I really hope you're right. Maybe the people on the plane will be just as accepting as your parents. I just really hope they don't expose Carol to any of the horrible things we have tried to protect her from."

"I hope so too. I just want her to stay this innocent and happy forever- she shouldn't have to worry about other people's issues with race."

James began to speak, but he held back his words. He thought about the silent stares that other people gave them in grocery stores, in the park, anywhere, really. Each time, he prayed that Carol had never noticed. Now, he was hoping it would stop completely, just for one day, just for Carol to make it to her grandparents with a smile still on her face.

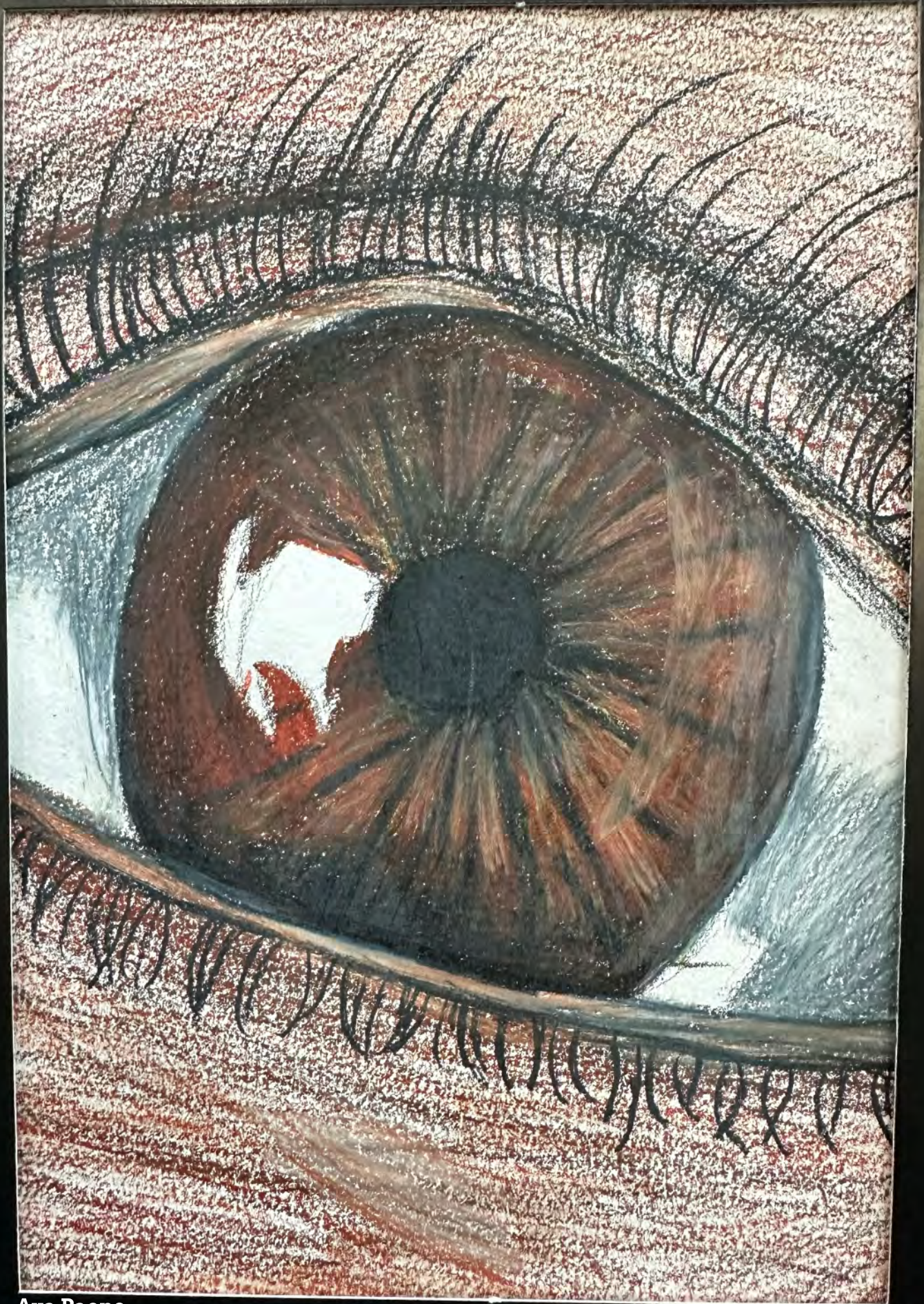
He looked at Mary, his wife, who had been with him no matter the struggles they faced. "Tomorrow, she's going to get onto a plane filled with people who may not like the idea of her. It's not fair."

Mary sighed. "She'll be brave."

"She shouldn't have to be."

With that, the two went up to bed, checking in on their daughter, fast asleep, clutching her very own Black doll, peacefully unaware of the ugliness of the world. They both paused and looked at each other, praying their daughter would be able to stay protected from the world without them there to guard her.

"The world better learn to accept her," Mary sighed, grabbing her husband's hand.



Ava Paone

Untitled (Anonymous)

I am different and strong.

I wonder what other people think of me.

I hear the soft sounds of murmuring as everything is about me

I see the deep, dark, daring, dying clouds seeping through the twilight sky

I want to fly, a bird flying away from everyone

I am different and strong.

I pretend that people's words don't matter.

I feel hurt like a blade is piercing right through me

I touch my soft blanket as its wrapping its arms around me

I worry I'm the person who messed everything up.

I cry into my pillow, hoping I'm not hated.

I am different and strong.

I understand that it's okay to be different.

I say it doesn't matter what people say

I dream of people liking me for who I really am

I try to be "normal", but the truth is, there is no normal.

I hope that people realize that being normal is just being yourself. Being normal is like being a leaf.

I am different and strong.



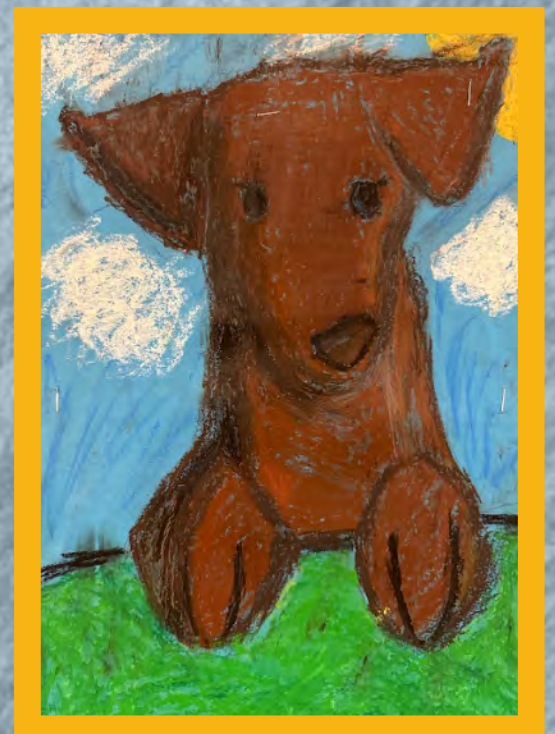
Maia Lemos



Kayleigh Alseika



Kennedy Moore



Matt Worgan

A Retrieved Reformation (O. Henry)

Fan Fiction by Hana Barboiu

Mr. Spencer strolled through Elmore, silently observing. "It's a pleasant town for sure," he thought to himself, "but I couldn't ever settle down here." Under different circumstances, he would have had the bank robbery planned by now, but something was holding him back. He recalled the lady from the bank. Her hair had flowed down her back like a mesmerizing river, enchanting him with its spell. The young boy at the bank's door had said she was Annabel Adams, daughter of the bank's owner.

Mr. Spencer continued on his aimless walk, pondering his feelings. He checked his watch, knowing he should have been prepared to rob the bank by now. He knew that the longer he stayed, the quicker the police would catch up with and then arrest him for his crimes. "Staying's certainly not an option," he recited to himself, trying to believe it.

Mr. Spencer suddenly felt a gentle tap on his back, pulling him from his thoughts. He turned and was soon face-to-face with the lady from the bank, Annabel. He awkwardly cleared his throat and stumbled out a greeting. They made light conversation, with her welcoming him to town. As they spoke, time slowed for Mr. Spencer, until their conversation ended, and it suddenly felt too quick. Before he wanted her to, Annabel was saying her goodbyes and turning away, leaving him standing alone. Mr. Spencer had never been one for love, but after Annabel, he had felt a change within him. "Maybe love really can change a person," he silently contemplated. He decided at that moment that settling in Elmore might not be as impossible of a thought anymore.

Defrost

Karissa Malet

Just like a rose,
You have a soft, fragile exterior.
You picture yourself like it,
As you stare in the mirror.
A layer of ice coats the flower,
And over you, cold chills shower.
Your reflection glares again,
Hoping to see a change,
Some sort of power.
You zone out,
and thoughts begin.
Sweat drips down your spine,
Your cold demeanor is undefined.
You let go of your rigid spikes,
And burning color strikes.
You're reincarnated,
Beautiful and fulfilled,
No longer chilled.
All across,
You defrost.



Thank You!

Thank you for your support of Folio's ninth edition! As always, thank you to Deerfield's art teacher and art club advisor Mrs. Tiscia for helping with art selections, and Language Arts teachers Mrs. Ridley, Mrs. Scanlan, and Ms. Onore for assisting with creative writing submissions.

I also want to praise our dedicated Folio student staff for all of their hard work on selecting works for this magazine and helping to put it all together! This brilliant and talented group of eighth grade editors is pictured below: Maya Elhabash, Alia Gruszecki, Hana Barbiou, and Yumna Soomro.

Lastly, I want to thank Mrs. Jenks, Mr. Kinney, and the Mountainside Board of Education for supporting the magazine and allowing our vision to come to life! See you all in 2027!



Sincerely,
Lori Topel

