

***SONAR* 2016**

SFDS Upper School Literary Magazine

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Swimming

by Camillia Amiri

Breaststroke is my favorite stroke. When I'm doing it, I literally glide. Through the water I go, fast as a eagle.

But my life is not like that. No. My life is like the butterfly, my least favorite stroke. All you have to do to swim butterfly is do the dolphin kick twice. Easy, right? But that's not it. You need to use your arms. You have to reach both of your arms over your head at the same time. This should be easy. But for me, my timing for arms and legs is the same. This pushes me forward, but at the same time drags me backwards, so I go forward an inch every stroke. To do butterfly, you have to have a lot of perseverance.

Just keep swimming, just keep swimming, just keep swimming. Yup, my life is more like butterfly.

One time I had to persevere was when I was eight. I remember I was in the car, driving to Koret. Earlier that day, when I had come home from school, my dad spilled the beans. He and my mom had seated me in the living room, after I had a snack.

"Camillia," my dad had announced. "You graduated from pre-swim team." Whew, I thought. I was starting to get really nervous about what was going to happen next.

"So your mother and I decided that you would start on the swim team." It took me a second to process the information dad had given me. But after the second was over, I was off like a tornado.

"DAD! You promised me once I got onto the swim team I could stop! You know I don't like competitive swimming!" I looked at my mother for help. "Mommy, do I have to go? I don't wanna go!" My tantrum was back on. " I AM NOT GOING!" I yelled as loud as I could. Then I squeezed my eyes shut. Would they make me go anyway? Would they be angry? Questions swirled in my head. Finally I couldn't stand it. Little Seals, the level below swim team, was horrible. Our coach made us do 100s' all swim practice. If I

were to go swimming again, I would burst with anger. I was sick and tired of getting cramps all day.

"So I'm not going?" I asked hopefully.

"Oh, no. You're still going no matter what," my father responded.

This was my worst nightmare. Swim team? I could only imagine what swim team was like.

"I packed your things," my dad said, interrupting my thoughts. "Have you had a good snack? We need to head out soon," my mom said.

"I'm not going!" I shouted out.

"Camillia," my dad urged, "if you don't go, you will not have movie night for three months." Wow, I thought to myself. That was a big step. I love movie nights -- all four of us cuddle together eating popcorn while watching a movie. I struggled to remain emotionless.

"I don't believe it," I responded, very matter-of-factly.

"Camillia, the point is that we want you to grow up strong and tall. We want you to be prepared if something happens and you need to swim to safety," Mom insisted.

"But mom, I know how to swim!" I argued.

"No. You're going," Dad said. And with that, he took my swim bag, which contained the tools for torture (also known as swim suit, towel, comb, and shampoo), grabbed my hand, and towed me down the marble steps to the garage, where he opened the car door and pushed me in. I was too upset to argue.

"Fine," I muttered, looking down at my neon pink sneakers. After what seemed like 20 years, we got out of the car, and arrived at the grayest, darkest building ever.

"Oh, I forgot, Anna is also on the swim team." Okay, that made competitive swimming on the swim team a bit better. I sighed and shuffled my feet towards the door.

"Have fun!" my dad called after me.

"Oh, don't worry, I won't," I mumbled, as I walked through the turnstile, grudgingly swiping my card. I plodded down the two flights of stairs to the women's locker room. Slow as a snail, I changed out of my school clothes and into my

multicolored racing suit. Grabbing my pink goggles, I was ready to go. I walked the 30 feet to the door that lead to the pool, pausing at the artificial blue door. Just do it, I thought. It will be over before you know it. I dragged open the heavy door, and the smell of chlorine hit me. I scanned the pool deck for my team.

"Swim team!" a voice hollered. "Gather around me!" I obediently directed my feet to follow the crowd. All of a sudden, Anna, my friend, appeared.

"Hey Kiki! Your dad told me you were swimming. I was waiting for you on the deck forever."

"Hi Anna." I didn't even bother to sound cheerful.

"Hey, what's the matter? Anna bent her head down and moved the curls that were covering her eyes. Then she looked at me. She was one of my good friends, so she could tell when I was upset.

"Nothing. My dad made me go swimming, and I'm really pissed." Again I sighed and turned my gaze at the coach. He looked pretty laid back, with blonde hair and a long, oval shaped face.

"You know our coach? He's Peter," she said without further explanation.

"Come on," she grabbed my arm and dragged me over to the instructor.

"Hey!" I called out, poking her. Anna just giggled.

"Kiki, I'm really happy that you came." she admitted, uncomfortably adjusting her purple swimsuit, so that it crossed perfectly on her back.

"Aww, thanks!" I said, hugging her.

"Ladies! Get moving!" Peter yelled, spit flying out of his mouth 90 miles per hour.

"And we're gonna be stuck with him?" I rolled my eyes.

"Yup," she replied. "But he's not that bad."

We grabbed our kick boards and pull buoys and headed towards Peter.

"Stretches!" Peter yelled. "Right arm across! Left arm across! Get in the pool! 100 choice warm up!"

This is when panic started to kick in. What if I was slower than most of the other swimmers, and they started talking about me behind my back?

What if I was lagging and every one else was laughing at me?

Just trust yourself, I thought.

With one leap, I dived into the water.

Coldness was the first feeling I felt. It hit my like falling headfirst into hard snow.

The icy water swallowing me whole. I ricocheted off the bottom of the pool and gasped a breath of air.

"No diving!" Peter shouted.

I sighed. Doing breaststroke, I pushed off the wall. The song ' I lived' played over and over again in my head;

Hope when you take that jump, you don't fear the fall

Hope when the water rises, you build a wall

Hope when the crowd screams out out, they're screaming your name

Hope if everybody runs, you chose to stay.

The song gave me a thrust of confidence.

I took that jump, I didn't fear the fall. And all of a sudden, I thought, well, all of my problems went away when I was swimming.

Gliding through the water was where I wanted to be.

Sure, at first butterfly stroke was hard for me, but I hadn't learned how to do it yet.

I bet if I just tried, I could do it perfectly.

I took that jump, and at first I was scared, but I realized I hadn't jumped before.

And after all, butterfly isn't so bad.

Memoir

by S. Faye Callaghan Sansone

I look back up at Anika. She has no clue that I am drawing her. Good. It always turns out better that way. As my pencil drifts across my page, I get that comforting sort of adrenaline rush I have when I'm drawing. I can tell it'll be a good one. At least I hope it will. They're never good enough for me, no matter how many "oohs" and "ahs" I get from my friends. Suddenly, I gasp and jump in my seat. I look to my left -- Ms. Graham's hand is rested on my shoulder. I quietly exhale.

"Faye, honey, you can't draw on the side of your paper like that anymore. Pay attention, we're in the middle of a math lesson," she whispers.

Ugh. Math.

"Sorry," I whisper back. I guess my mind just drifted off...again.

My moms knew I was going to be an artist just after I learned how to pick up a pen. They walked into the living room one day in our small apartment, and saw me with marker and paper in hand. On the paper, my name. *In perfect block letters*, they say, *but all in the wrong order*. I laugh every time I hear that story. I think it describes me perfectly, because I'm a perfectionist in a weird way that no one is expecting.

I love to draw. Most people assume that I'm just *good* at drawing. But it's not just that. Drawing makes me feel more comfortable. It helps me when I have anxiety. It gives me something to hold on to, to be proud about, to shape my entire identity. I feel *safer*

with a pencil in my hand. Some people just don't understand that. That's okay though. Because I am the only person who needs to understand.

My teachers think that I pay worse attention when I draw in class. They're probably right, but I think maybe we can change that. One thing we can't change is the fact that I do have a hard time paying attention in class. That will probably always be a fact. But hopefully it won't always be a problem. Though it definitely is now.

I was in the classroom in fourth grade one day writing down my homework, and Ms. Buttery Green came up to explain it. I squinted at her. She was saying something about fractions. Then I started thinking. Everything just kind of silences as I drift off to my own little world, just staring into space for what feels like the longest amount of time. Thinking...*Wow, the angle I'm seeing Chiara from would look perfect on a piece of paper. Where's my pencil? There it is. But...I don't want Ms. Buttery to think I'm not listening...which I'm not. Wait...*

"You may now continue writing your homework."

I realized she was finished. Oh my god, what do I do!? I have no idea what my homework is! The teachers tell you things like, "It's okay to ask questions," and "No one will judge you if you don't understand the homework," but I can't just raise my hand and say, "Excuse me? Could you explain that *entire* thing just one more time? Thanks!" I'm pretty sure the *teacher* would judge me for saying that. I mean, I'm sure they wouldn't, but it would feel like they were.

Later that day, I did my homework wrong, if you couldn't have guessed.

This wasn't the first time my mind drifted off into its little art perspective world at school. In first grade, Ms. Gray and her assistant teacher Mr. Wood had a very hard time accepting me for who I was and who I still am. I remember thinking her ultimate goal was to make me feel bad about myself. She and Mr. Wood sent my parents weekly reports about what I was doing wrong. *I'm not kidding.* (Although when I read them now they are kind of hilarious.) But Ms. Sturm, my second grade teacher, was like an angel of hope to me. She helped me figure out which seating in the classroom was best for me, and she even gave me two little sketchbooks. She understood me. And then it came to fifth grade. I asked a stupid obvious question, so Ms. Graham asked to meet with me.

"I notice you might have a hard time paying attention in class," she said. "Would you like to talk to me about it? Do you have any strategies we could use to help you?"

I shook my head.

"Maybe we can brainstorm throughout the year?"

"Kay," I said quietly. I thought she was mad at me. Then she spoke again.

"I know you're capable of focusing really hard on something. I've seen your drawings."

She was right.

When I'm drawing, my eyes are like lasers. My mind cancels out any other sounds in the room besides my pencil. My hand moves across the page almost effortlessly. I am completely and totally *focused*.

I don't think anything can compare to the way I feel when I'm drawing.

Later this year, I started talking with my teachers about doing some testing.

"This test is not going to give us any diagnosis, but it will help explain what is going on in your brain," they said.

"Okay," I said.

When the results came back, I was super scared that it would say that there was nothing happening and everyone would think I was lying. Or that there was something very *very* wrong and that we couldn't fix it. But neither of these problems occurred.

The test results were set up like this: severely below average, significantly below average, below average, average, above average, superior, and then very superior. We found two things that might affect my attention. First, my processing speed was in below average. Meaning, when the teachers are talking it might take me a while to understand what they're saying. Second, my inductive was in superior and very superior. This means I try to take in as much information as I can, which can be distracting. Finally, visual learning was in superior, which is something I didn't need a test to prove.

Those were the only three test results I really paid attention to. And though this test gave some confirmation of my "special" brain, I still felt like I wanted to know if there *was* a diagnosis. My doctor said I might have a thing called inattentive ADHD, but my moms aren't sure they want to get me tested. It's fine though. What's important is that however my brain works, I will still always be Faye. The girl who calls her bag of art supplies her "survival kit." The girl who wanders off in class *every day*. That's me. And as I finish my imperfect sketch of Anika, I look up at Ms. Graham, and listen.

The Jumpy House

by Rye Kushner

It was pitch black, the walls were closing in, and the house was devouring me alive. Let's back up. I was seven, and at my friend's birthday party. My friend was turning eight. Back then that was like turning fifty, so it was a nice party. There was a jumpy house with these dummies that when you punched them, they came right back. There was a mini-basketball hoop in the corner, so obviously I had to slam on it a few times, and there was a slide; a slide fit for a king. It was long, wide and had the perfect amount of friction. It was potentially the best slide I had ever seen. That was how I spent the majority of the party, just going down the slide. I know, it was awesome -- remember, I was seven.

Now that we have our setting, it's story time. Please turn off all cellular devices (looking at you mom) and enjoy the show. My mom and I got out of the car, spreading hugs and hellos to everyone there before the parents went off to brag about their kids. Blah, blah, blah. But here comes the good part: the jumpy house. Let's just call it the house, ok? Ok. The house was so innocent, so simple, with its gaping mouth staring back at me with those jaunty red flaps. I had no idea it was planning its trap to eat us kids. So, I took off my shoes and got right in. I was just punching dummies, sliding down the slide, and dunking over my friends. But then, I looked up, and the terrible big kids came in. They marked their territory on the top of the slide, sitting there doing nothing.

I wanted to go down the slide, so I decided to get in line. I was finally at the top of the line when I tripped and fell into the person behind me. My feet flipped into the air as my back made contact with a big kid's knee. The person behind me came crashing down on me, and we went flying onto the big kid. The weight of us all made an enormous crevasse in the side of the house and a large number of us fell in.

It was pitch black, the walls were closing in, and the house was eating me alive. Then, the whole side of the house collapsed. My body was upside down and I couldn't see because the house was compressing me. I couldn't move because deflating rubber everywhere. It was scary. But then, light! I saw through some mesh that THE PARENTS WERE JUST STANDING THERE! How could they do this to me? I'm practically dying and they're just standing there drinking BEER! But then, it felt like the house was loosening up around me. Someone grabbed me and pulled me up; it was a big kid.

Maybe, just maybe, they weren't so bad. At least they helped me, while the parents just stood there. I sprinted out of the house, watching it slowly lose air.

Today I am 11, and I have a fear of spaces where I can't see and can't move, and even now I can't do anything about it. I learned even though you may feel like you're dying, someone will always be there to help you, although the help might come from an unexpected place. You may feel like you will never get out, but if you don't, then who's your mom going to brag about?

Meeting Eleanor

by Maddox Rochman-Romdalvik

I'm an only child. That's why meeting my sister was completely unexpected.

I was relaxed at the kitchen table, eating dinner with both my moms. That's when they announced the big news. My moms gave me that look when they have been keeping something from me and now I'm ready to find out.

One of them said, "Maddox, you have a half sister." I could feel my mind processing what this meant. A half sister: I knew that she would play a big role in my life. I mean, we are related. All I knew was that her name was Eleanor.

That was the only thing we talked about for the rest of the night; I asked my moms all the questions that they couldn't answer. What does she look like? Does she also have two moms? Does she know about me? And of course, how is it possible? They told me that we both had the same birth dad. That took a moment to register. I understood that I had my mom and a birth dad. But I didn't realize I could have a sibling. I wondered if there were any other secret things that I would find out about.

For the next three days, I couldn't focus on anything other than saying over and over to myself, "I have a sister, I have a sister, I have a sister."

Later that week, I walked in through the front door and told my parents all about my day.

I asked, "Mom, can I use your computer for homework?"

"Of course," she answered with a hint of a beam creeping across her face.

I walked into the living room and sat down at my mom's comfortable desk chair. I turned on the computer to find an email signed, "from your sister, Eleanor." I read through the email as fast as I could, trying to interpret every single word. As I thought about what she wrote, I realized that having the same birth dad comes with lots of similarities and I wondered if we also looked like each other. We might both really like the color pink but do we both have brown hair?

The next day, I got home from school, did my homework, and then asked my mom if I could talk to her. She said that we couldn't Facetime tonight because Eleanor lives three hours ahead of us in New Hampshire and it was already ten o'clock there.

"But," my mom said, "we have been talking to her parents and they said that they are really looking forward to talking to us tomorrow."

"Tomorrow!" I exclaimed.

At school I could barely pay attention to reading about Egypt. I wished that I could make time go faster, just for the day.

When we Facetimed for the first time that night, I realized how similar we looked. We spent about half an hour trying to figure out how many things we had in common. For starters, we both had freckles, a cleft chin, brown hair and brown eyes. The weirdest part was that she could have been two years older than me, or even two years younger, but no, she was only three weeks older than me.

The next morning, I walked into the classroom with two pictures in my hand to show my friends and explained all about her. The same day, in New Hampshire, Eleanor

was doing the same exact thing. I was staring the clock down, eager for it to be three thirty so that I could race home and ask the question I'd been dying all day to ask:

"When can I meet her?"

My mom answered quite immediately with, "I've been waiting for you to ask that question. Why don't we hook up another Facetime to find out when we can go to New Hampshire and meet her."

"Okay, sounds good," I returned.

Minutes later, I turned on my iPad to call. After what seemed like an hour later, she answered.

I started with, "Hi, I've been thinking about you all day."

She answered, "Me too! I told all my friends about you and they have asked so many questions like, 'When will you get to meet him? Does he look like you? How did you find out about him?' The thing that I've been the most excited about is when I'll be able to meet you."

"Really, that's exactly what I've been thinking about. Hopefully we can meet this summer," I said excitedly.

Sure enough, after about thirty emails and facetimes, I could hear the sound of the old convertible, moving its way up what seemed like the longest, curviest road ever. Breathing in the fresh air of Elma, New Hampshire, I stuck my head out the window feeling the nice breeze as we pulled up to the dirt driveway.

At first I wondered if we were in the right place, but all of a sudden I heard the clicking sounds of two dogs' feet against the concrete, bounding towards us. One was a

light brown color that I had never seen before. The other, barking the loudest, was covered in dark brown fur. I got out of the car and saw her big house along with a barn right next to it.

When I looked to the side of the house I saw acres and acres of grass that never seemed to stop. Off in the distance a small little river with tons of water was rushing somewhere I will never go. I felt like I was stuck in the middle of this land in the middle of nowhere, with rolling hills in front and the Appalachian mountains in back. It felt as if time had stopped for a moment as I took everything in.

I heard the sounds of an old front door opening and then slamming shut. I turned my head to see Eleanor and her moms racing towards us as we stood there in awe. They were standing next to us in seconds. My moms hugged her moms as we just stood there, not knowing what to do. They started to help us unpack the car. Eleanor and I were both super excited but still hadn't said anything. Her mom broke the silence.

"Why aren't you guys doing anything?" she asked. "You're half related."

"Mom!" she shouted, "don't embarrass me."

"Wow, this is so amazing. I mean, we didn't know about each other for a long time and all of a sudden, I'm visiting you!" I practically shouted.

"Yeah!" she said, "I didn't even know it was possible."

"Me neither," I responded.

So we hugged. Everything stopped. All four moms staring. The hug was barely a hug, it was more like putting our arms around each other's shoulders. I wanted to hug her. She wanted to hug me. When everything resumed we actually hugged. No one

watching. Arms around each other. A real hug. I was thinking, "Why was I afraid to hug her? After all, she is my sister," and after that we hugged a lot more.

We stopped hugging and she said very excitedly, "C'mon, I'll show you around."

"Wow, you have a lot of space. Do you have any animals?" I asked.

"As a matter of fact, we have chickens," she answered.

"No way, that's so cool."

"Yeah. Follow me, I'll show you."

I followed her and she showed me the chickens. I had never been close to chickens before, so I was pretty scared. She thought that it was kind of weird to be scared. I told her it's because we live in the city, and there are not that many people who have chickens.

I realized then and there that even though we are related, there are a lot of things that we don't have in common. She has barely even been close the city and I am there every single day.

She told me about her school and how there were so many people. I asked her what that meant. Two hundred, she told me. I thought about that. Two hundred was a lot to her. My school has twice as many people as that.

She doesn't live close to any of her friends and is by herself a lot. I am usually with my friends and am almost never by myself. So many similarities yet so many differences. That is what makes us, us.

A sibling is someone you grow to know and understand because there is a reason to. It can be because you are always with them or because you are genetically related.

Eleanor changed from being a random person to someone I am supposed to know and supposed to be with. Not everyone is an only child. Not everyone has a sister. I get both.

My Name

by Geoffrey Kim

Geoffrey. Pronounced like Jeffrey, but not spelled like it. Unique. Different. Not many people have an unusual name spelled like Geoffrey. My classmates were confused when they found out how my name was spelled. It is different, not like many oh-so-popular names. My name means *gift*. Yes, I looked it up in one of those 3,000 page baby book names, but it is almost as if it is a gift. A gift of diversity.

Green. That is the color of my name. It's not supposed to be alliteration, but it compares along with my name if you think hard about it. Green. A boy in a field of grass, playing. Energetic. He plays as if he could all day, and stops to rest. He is a cheetah, sprinting across the nature-covered land. He climbs trees like a monkey. Monkey. Also the Chinese Year I was born in.

Creative. Artistic. He is an animated character, scrolling through pages of drawings and then starting a new one. He keeps drawing and drawing, concealed in his book, and walks into it. He stares at his pieces of art, studying the shading and lines, and turning the page, as he hears the echo of the wriggling paper flapping, and gently landing on the next page.

Robust. He dribbles the ball, concentrated on the orange, air-filled sphere, bouncing up and down, from his hand to the ground. His jersey is gripping onto his shirt like millions of suction cups. Basketball, you might've guessed. There is only so much time on the scoreboard. He looks for a pass. No one. He takes the shot. The buzzer loudly buzzes and rings, as people cover their ears. But not this animated character. He

cannot hear it. He is too concentrated on the ball, as it brushes pass the bright red rim and into the net. A drop of sweat hits the floor.

My name is Geoffrey, and to me, I have defined its meaning. Unique, creative, robust, energetic. These are the main diverse concepts to my name. Would I want to change my name? My answer is no, because my name is a gift to me, and there is more to my name. This word echoes in my ear when I think about it. Geoffrey.

My Name

by Amelie Gantert

Amelie. That name I've always liked. Especially the sharpness of the A and the dullness of the M. My name is rare and unusual. I know Emily's, Amelia's, Amalia's, but no Amelie's. I feel special. My name is like a mountain and the challenges of getting to the top. It's like the burnished snow on the top of Mt. Everest. My name is hardworking, striving, industrious. It makes me think of the memory when I summited Giant Mountain in upstate New York at age 6. How I hated all of the obstacles and challenges while hiking, but when I got to the top it was astonishing.

My name is also like when I traveled to Paris the first time. How we walked around the city of warmth and people. My name reminds me of how my grandfather always says my name with an accent and writes it like that just because he likes how it sounds. My grandfather always wanted someone in the family to be named Amelie. My parents call me Lee Lee, Chee Chee, Am, and more. My friends call me Am-Ams and Ami. My name is silver like metal or the glistening waterfall you would see on a cliff of a mountain. It makes me think of a dull but electric orange like my hair. I was not named after anyone, which I like, because I feel like my own self.

This is my name and who I am. Sharp and conscientious. Amelie.

The Spartan Boar

by Sonali Feeley

Ulysses and his wife Penelope sat at the musty old dining table, staring mournfully at their son Telemachus's empty spot. It had been years since Ulysses returned from his 20 year journey, and he and Penelope were now old and frail. Telemachus had taken control of Sparta, a Greek city, a decade ago. Ulysses's mind wandered back to the days when he had just returned from his long voyage, when he was known all over the world for his feats of bravery, and he feasted on praise and delicious food every night.

But now he was old news. Nobody thought about him. There were no more feasts, just him, Penelope, and their servants in the old castle of Ithaca. The walls were no longer decorated with appreciation and approval for Ulysses. The castle rooms were no longer filled with laughter and people, no longer filled with celebrations for him. Ulysses wished that there was a way that he could be known all over again, so there could be feasts and praise every night, so he could celebrate every day.

"Ulysses! You are getting more and more ungrateful as you get older! You wish for things that you don't need and you hope for fame again, though you have had plenty of it," Penelope scolded him.

"I am sorry. I did not mean it. It was wishful thinking," Ulysses assured his wife, not realizing that he had spoken out loud.

“You have all that you need here. You do not need more fame,” Penelope chided him. She kept talking, but Ulysses wasn’t listening. He was devising a plan to make himself known all over the world, yet again.

He had heard rumors of a rampage of a wild boar in Sparta. The boar was terrorizing the people, and try as they might, not one Spartan could kill it. It had a pelt as hard as metal, and tusks as sharp as swords. Ulysses knew he would have to be lucky to kill it. Though he was old, he had not lost his mighty strength. Unfortunately, he did tire easily, so he would have to spare his energy.

As night fell, Ulysses said goodnight to Penelope and snuck off to gather his weapons. They were dusty and old, as they had not been needed throughout the rest of Ulysses’s life, after he had slayed the suitors who were competing to marry his wife. He strummed the indestructible string of his bow, making a low, forlorn sound that bounced off the walls of the room, echoing into the black night. He grabbed his sword and stared at its magnificence. The sword’s blade was made of pure silver, sharper than a tiger’s tooth. Ulysses sheathed his sword, slung his quiver of arrows across his back, and journeyed out of the castle and into the dark, dense forest to begin the long journey to Sparta. He wouldn’t be able to travel overseas because he would surely be noticed as the king of Ithaca, so he had to travel overland. He was lucky; he didn’t meet any troubles along the way, and he got to Sparta by dawn.

Sparta, a barren landscape, had hills and rocks scattering the earth, and no trees to block out the radiance of Helios, the Sun Titan, driving the sun across the bright blue sky. Ulysses found a small cottage made out of straw and branches and rapped on the

door, almost knocking it over. An elderly woman opened it and gasped in amazement. “Why are you surprised? I have just come for food and rest,” Ulysses said.

“You must be a god in disguise! Come, come, what do you need? I was making a lovely roasted lamb,” the woman said as she beckoned him in. “I have a spare bed, so you can rest your feet.”

“Dear woman, it is not a god, but I, the great hero Ulysses! It was I who blinded Polyphemus. I visited the Land of the Dead, and withstood Circe’s powers! I am the greatest hero that has walked the earth!” Ulysses cried out in pride. The woman blinked, obviously disappointed that he wasn’t a god, but she fed him, gave him clean clothes, and a nice bed to sleep in.

When he awoke, Ulysses was refreshed and ready to take on the Spartan Boar. Eating the breakfast that the woman served him hastily, Ulysses thanked her for her hospitality and ventured out of the cottage.

Ulysses heard the terrified shrieks of Spartans before he saw the boar. It had a snarling mouth, dripping with foam and blood, with enormous gleaming tusks protruding from it. It was two times the size of an elephant, and Ulysses, the bravest man on Earth, trembled before it. The mighty boar was trampling Spartans beneath its iron hooves, not even noticing. This beast was more terrible than the Nemean Lion, which Hercules himself killed, and more dreadful than Scylla and Charybdis. Ulysses’ hands got clammy, and his heart started beating as fast as a hummingbird’s wings.

Ulysses almost ran away in fear, but he managed to tell himself, “Ulysses, why are you so afraid? You went to the Land of the Dead! You have faced much worse than this!

You can defeat this beast!” So Ulysses, his confidence restored and his courage taking over, charged at the boar, racing across the hard ground, swinging his sword wildly. The boar just looked at Ulysses, not even moving. Ulysses stopped in shock.

“Why aren’t you moving?” He asked, though the boar couldn’t understand him. The boar was possibly even more intimidating when he was not doing anything. Ulysses, uneasy, stepped up to the boar and swung his sword. The sword clanged against the boar’s pelt and bounced harmlessly off. Ulysses tried again and again, but the boar just stood there, looking at him, not reacting.

Ulysses worked his courage up to make one last final strike. He backed up and ran across the rough terrain as fast as he could. He jumped up and shoved the sword at one of the boar’s eyeballs. As the sword made contact, the boar finally moved, yelping and moaning in pain. It stumbled around, half-blind. Ulysses, proud that he had injured the boar, turned to the crowd of spectators. “I am the mighty Ulysses! I have wounded this boar, and now, I will kill it! I-”

Ulysses was cut off by the boar’s tusk spearing right through his body. Ulysses gasped in pain, astonished that the boar was able to defeat him so easily. The Spartan Boar shook its head around, trying to shake Ulysses off. Ulysses was flung to the ground and lay there, his eyes glazing over in pain. Ulysses was just barely able to stagger onto his feet to string his great bow. With the last remains of his strength, he shot the arrow right down the boar’s throat, killing it instantly. His head swam with dizziness as he collapsed to the ground, unconscious.

When he awoke, he was in his own bed in Ithaca, Penelope standing over him. Instead of flying into a rage like Ulysses thought she would, she said,

“Oh, finally you are awake! Are you okay? What were you thinking? You could have been killed! What do you think I would have done? I couldn’t have lived without you!”

“How did I get here?” Ulysses asked, mystified.

“After you announced that you were Ulysses and you fell unconscious, a Spartan man brought you home and told me the whole story,” Penelope replied angrily.

“I am sorry, my dear. I promise that I will never do such a foolish thing again. I was selfish, and look what happened. I almost died, and nearly frightened you to death. I have learned my lesson. I will never do such a thing again,” Ulysses finished.

Penelope forgave him, and with those words, Ulysses kept his promise, and he lived the rest of his life with Penelope.

The Island of the Dangerous Cheese God

by Kirin Atluru

The cold wind blew hard as they sailed across the ocean, looking for food. His men were tired and hungry, groaning as they rowed the oars. Ulysses knew his men would not last long and that he needed to find an island for supplies. After many days of struggling, they found a beautiful island about a mile long. Ulysses ordered his men to dock the ships and disembark. Ulysses was about to tell his men to search the island for food when an owl flew down to a branch in front of him. It was a beautiful owl with white feathers dotted with black spots.

One of Ulysses men shouted, "Kill it for food."

Ulysses said, "No, don't, the owl is the sacred animal of Athena, Goddess wisdom. She will kill us if we do that." To Ulysses and his men's surprise, the owl opened its mouth and began to speak.

It said, "Leave this island at once. There is a powerful God that lives on this island. He keeps all the food and water on this island to himself. The only way to get the food is to defeat him, but that is impossible, for he is the great and powerful God of Cheese!"

The owl flew away so fast that he was gone in an instant.

Ulysses thought to himself, "I should not go against the Gods. That owl could have been a message from the Gods..... but we need supplies. When have the Gods ever helped me? It's probably a trick from Poseidon, trying to kill me again. I can take on this

God of Cheese easily. I am the great Ulysses."

Ulysses shouted, "Men, we will attack this God at once."

One of Ulysses's men said, "Are you sure that is a good idea, captain?"

Ulysses yelled angrily, "Do you want to die of hunger?"

"Of course not captain," said the sailor.

They headed inward through forests and over rivers. As they walked, the wind seemed to howl at them like dogs. It got louder and louder as they got closer to the middle of the forest. It seemed to be trying tell them something. It was blowing down trees in their path and pushing them away from the middle of the forest where the God was. Ulysses knew it was a message from the Gods, telling him to back away, but he ignored them. He and his men kept going against the howling wind until they reached a huge break in the forest. It was on a cliff overlooking a beautiful waterfall that fell into a magnificent lake. The sky was blue dotted with a few clouds. The wind had stopped like they were in the eye of the storm. The only sound you could hear was the chirping of birds and the flowing of water.

In the middle of the beautiful grassy field there was a group of satyrs, half-goat and half human, surrounding a guy sitting in a comfy looking lounge chair. The satyrs were fanning him with giant leaves and feeding cheese into his mouth. Ulysses and his men gasped when they saw the giant piles of cheese surrounding the guy. The guy noticed Ulysses and his men and stood up. Even though he had eaten so much cheese, he was still very healthy. He had a huge sword and shield strapped to his back and had the strength of a bull.

Ulysses yelled, "Give us all your food or die!"

The guy said, "You dare threaten the God of Cheese, mortal? You have no chance." He laughed so hard the mountain shook and his voice could be heard all the way in Ithaca.

Ulysses yelled, "Attack!"

Ulysses and his men charged forward with their swords swinging. The God began to glow with the power of the Gods. He was radiating golden light as they got closer. When they finally got in range, an explosion of golden light happened around the God that sent Ulysses's men flying and knocked Ulysses off his feet. His men landed a hundred feet away, all of them unconscious. Ulysses got to his feet and attacked the God, swinging his sword wildly, but he could not hit the God. The God kept blocking and dodging his swings with incredible speed.

The God laughed, "You fight well for a mortal, but you have no hope. The God swung his massive sword at Ulysses. Ulysses managed to parry his sword, but even with his incredible strength, the God's power was too much for him. Ulysses' strength failed and he dropped his sword.

The God kicked Ulysses to the ground and said, "For disobeying a God, I will trap you and your crew on this island forever!"

The God waved his hand and cages appeared around them. The God waved his hand again and Ulysses and his men disappeared and reappeared in the cages. Ulysses banged on the cage, trying to escape, but the door did not budge. Ulysses knew that no matter how strong he was, there was no breaking the cage. He and his men were trapped

in those cages for several days with little food and water. Finally, Ulysses came up with a plan. He knew the God was powerful, but he was not sure if he was smart. He was going to try to outsmart him.

Seven days later, he yelled to the God, "Hey, you think you're so powerful for defeating me, but I have another army making its way towards you. If you don't let us go they will kill you. You better let us go quickly because they're only 1,000 feet to the north.

The God chuckled, "You think your army can defeat me, nonsense! I will go to destroy them as I destroyed you!"

Right after the God left, Ulysses grabbed a stick and a stone and started carving the stick into a key shaped stick. For hours he pounded the rock into into the stick, trying to make it perfect. He worked on it for so long that the beautiful blue sky turned into a pitch black night. He finally finished and escaped from his cage. He had just finished freeing his last man from his cage when the God came running down from the north, sword in hand.

He yelled, "How dare you trick me. Attack!" The God sprinted down in their direction, yelling as he ran.

Ulysses yelled to his men, "Run!"

Ulysses and his men sprinted through the forest, jumping over rock and rivers while ducking under branches. The God got closer and closer until he was right behind them. He swung his sword and hit one of Ulysses's men. He went flying into a tree and did not move after. The God kept knocking Ulysses's men flying. They were 10 feet away

from the the ship when the God started glowing with golden light, preparing to fire at their ship. Ulysses saw the God powering up and through his sword with all his strength at the God to stop him. It went flying through the air and hit the God right in the head. Golden blood poured from his wound, the blood of the God. He fell to the ground, screaming in pain. Ulysses knew that since the Gods were immortal, they could not die and that he had only bought them a few second. He and his remaining men ran for the ship. They weighed the anchor and began sailing away from the island as fast as he could. There was no wind that day so they had to row the oars. They made it a quarter-mile away from the island and all the sailors seemed relieved that they made it out. In the distance Ulysses, who was on the mast, could see the God rise, his wound healed, and yell so loud it sounded like an exploding volcano.

He said, "Ulysses, I will find you, and when I do I will kill every one of your sailors and I will make your death the most painful and slow death the world has ever seen!"

The Speech

by Eric Abrahams

It had been a month since I changed schools. I thought that it would be the experience of a lifetime: new friends, better teachers, and a welcoming environment. It was all a big lie. In fact, I was beginning to think that Davenport Academy was worse than my old school. It all started on the first day.

"Good morning students!" piped Principal McElheney, "Welcome to another year at Davenport Academy. We have some new students with us today, and I wish you a wondrous time here." Those warm words of welcome made me a little more uneasy than I already was. I heard that middle school well, sucks and that you often can't trust a principal. I had a feeling that this wasn't an exception.

By lunchtime, that hopefulness had drained completely. When I walked into the cafeteria, the distinct smell of hotdogs and potato salad made my stomach grumble, but by the time I went to go find a seat, I could feel the butterflies flapping. I decided to go to a table with a few kids that I met earlier in history class. Since they were deep in conversation, I thought that it would be best to sit as far away from them as possible.

As soon as I sat down, a sense of disgust came over their faces. One moment later, they were moving to a different table. I then walked to another table and the same thing happened. This continued for 15 minutes, until finally the bell rang and lunch was over. I was left with an empty stomach and an even emptier heart.

One week passed and I began to grow weary of this "quest for a table." With my tray in hand, I went to the last resort: the corner. One day, I noticed a girl who I've never seen before. She was softly mumbling something between spoonfuls of tomato soup. I

decided to keep my distance, not wanting to distract her from whatever she was doing and sat down in a different corner in the room. I was still in earshot of her though, and I caught a few sentences here and there of what she was saying. It sounded like a speech for some sort of student council. I wasn't sure, because I didn't think that there was such a committee. The adults were the masters and we were their servants (at least it felt that way).

For the next few weeks, I listened and, for the next few weeks, she read the same speech from the same sheet of paper until one day, right around the part about "changing the school for the better," she suddenly stopped. She looked frantic, as if she just remembered that she had to be somewhere. In an instant, she was bolting out the cafeteria door heading who knows where. She left her paper.

Curious, I made my way to where she had been sitting. I grabbed the paper, and after checking to make sure that she was gone, started to read it. It was amazing. This mysterious, brilliant girl had a vision to change the way that the school worked. Having a prominent student council that headed dances and fundraisers and all the things that should never be run by school administrators.

I had only been at Davenport for few months, but I already knew that it was in desperate need of a student committee (things like this are obvious when the "Hokey Pokey" is played at the winter dance). This seemed so important to her, so I finished my "food" and tried to find the girl.

After 30 minutes of meandering the halls, I found her outside of Principal McElheney's office hands-in-face and crying. I went up to her and held out the paper. "Here," I said, "You left this in the cafeteria." She looked up at me and offered a sad smile.

"Thanks, but I don't need it anymore," she said.

"Why? What it says, about the student body and the dances, it's all really important."

"You read it?" She asked, furrowing her eyebrows in suspicion.

"Yeah, sorry." I felt guilty for reading her personal stuff.

"It's fine," she said with a warm smile, "I'm glad you liked it. I'm Sara by the way."

"I'm Benjamin." This was the first time that I could remember that a girl had talked to me in such a friendly way. It felt good to know that at least someone wasn't scared of me. "What are you doing outside of the principal's office? Why were you crying?"

"Oh, I had a meeting with him to talk about my plan during lunch, but he didn't take me. Said I was too late."

"That stinks," I said, not able to think of a better thing to say. "Will you be able to arrange another meeting?"

"I don't think so," Sara said. "All that hard work for nothing."

"Don't say that! I love your cause. I would be more than happy to help you."

"You would?" she said excitedly.

"Of course," I replied, "Here, I'll help you up, maybe if we work together, we can get this student council thing on the road by the end of the semester!"

And so the story goes. Sara and I got the student council thing on the road by the end of the semester and I realized, maybe Davenport wasn't so bad after all.

A Bad Winter

by Owen Flanagan

His eyebrows furrowed and he took a deep breath as the plane landed. He closed his eyes because he wanted to remember this moment when he came home. He remembered leaving, and when his parents had told him just like that. It was so sudden. His face was bruised to the bone from the beating he had taken in the school in Mexico City school the day before and he could barely move. He exited the plane nervous, dragging his feet. The following day, walking into the familiar hallways, he felt different. People embraced him and showered him with smiles left and right.

He hated the cafeteria. As he shuffled through the line, he cringed. The food was a brown sludge with something jiggly on the side. The lunch lady glared at him and poured a spoonful of sludge. Well, ok then, he thought. He'd been eating Mexican specialties while in Mexico City for the past year and a half, so he had pretty high standards. He fell to eating an apple and some jell-o and sat down in his old spot. Tom stalked up to him, and said "Hey, I'm going to go sit with them. So, do you want to come or not?" Drew glanced over to see some guys and a bunch of popular girls, he recognized, sitting down. He looked at them, and then Tom, over and over again until he couldn't tell the difference. He shuffled over with Tom and laid his tray down. They talked for a while but Drew could barely get a word in.

Someone said out of nowhere, "Nice clothes, loser."

That's when he left.

As he jogged out of school that day, his backpack slipped off his shoulders and fell to the ground. He smiled, shook his head, and picked it up. Something about the normal, damp winter day was satisfying. It was like all the other days, crisp air and school.

Routine. He began to jog, picking up his feet. His sneakers were calling for duct tape, again. Then he said out loud, "Gosh, I guess I do deserve a break." So he pranced into his favorite corner store, bought a root beer, and walked out. A smile spread across his face. He strutted into the park, with his shoulders back and his head held high.

The smile quickly faded. His head dipped and a defeated expression spread across his face. Tom. He guessed you could say he was his friend, but he couldn't know for certain. Tom and...them? They were laughing, smiling with the smile he had in his hand just 30 seconds earlier. He didn't really care. Even if Tom had invited him he probably would have said no. He just wanted the attention he guessed. Drew just wanted to have the option. We live in a pick and choose world but he hadn't really been doing much of either of late.

He walked home on the following damp, winter days alone. The days were getting colder by the minute. The season continued to surprise him, as it used to be his favorite, but it was beginning to feel that every day was the same. The days were dull and short. He could barely crawl out of bed because of how dark it was outside.

The bell rang. Finally. He got up in time to see Tom exiting. Tom looked at Drew for a second, and glanced away. Tom opened his mouth as if to say something, shook his head and walked away. Drew no longer felt alone but angry. He was blushing, and he had a screeching headache. His head burned, and he stalked out after class. When he got home, he pulled his hair in frustration. His books lay in array on the floor. The sun set and the windows were shut tight against the cold outside. He no longer knew if this was just about Tom. He would barely talk all day. Not because he was going crazy but because he had nobody to talk to.

The next day he couldn't escape a frown. Rings formed under his eyes. He put his hood

up and walked on the outside of the hallways. His expression was angry and he couldn't wipe it away. He felt like everything that went wrong from a grade to tripping on a chair leg. People frequently shied away from him in the hallways. But he would walk straight down the middle because he couldn't care less.

Or could he? He wasn't sure. Gosh, he envied those root beer moments, or at least that's what he called them. This is more like a Mountain Dew moment, he thought. He hated Mountain Dew more than anything, but never more than he hated Tom. He hated everyone. Even though he knew he shouldn't hate him for not hanging out with him. It was just his instinct nowadays. He'd accepted this part of him and it wasn't going to change.

Brown and Beautiful

by Simone Jacques

Alicia stands in the checkout line of her local Safeway with her mother. She gets annoyed with the constant beeping of the item scanner and the "cha-ching" of the cash register. She asked her mom, Terry, if she can get a fashion magazine, a sparkle of hope shimmering in her eyes. Terry sighs but agrees. As Alicia walks to the magazine aisle, an excited smile flashed across her face. Alicia loves fashion magazines, whether it's from the shiny gloss they carry or the creativity each outfit holds. From sparkles to nude colors, she absolutely adores them. She grabs a random magazine that catches her eye. She skims through the magazine quickly, licking her fingertips every now and again to be able to grasp the corners of the pages easier. Alicia starts to take notice of what features the women and men in the magazines have, and none of them look like hers. All the models have eyes bluer than the Mediterranean Sea, hair silkier than the fabric itself, and slim noses. All of which contrasts sharply with Alicia's dark chocolate eyes, kinky wild curls, her wide nose, and large plump lips. Her smile falters, but thinking about hanging out with her friend Ashley at the mall tomorrow begins to lift her spirits.

Alicia is thankful that Ashley asked to hang out. She wants to clear her head and talk to Ashley about the mixed emotions she's feeling about the magazine she bought. There is a pit in Alicia's stomach. The only beautiful people she saw in the magazine were white. She begins to look at her brown skin as a flaw.

Seeing Ashley walk into the mall makes Alicia smile. Ashley has auburn hair and thousands of freckles scattered on her pale skin with narrow green eyes and dark lashes. They both greet each other with a smile and a quick hug, wasting no time as they scan the many stores in the mall. Alicia wants to talk about how she feels she did not meet the

standard of beauty, but she is scared and can't find the right words to say. Instead she keeps quiet. Ashley notices of Alicia's discomfort, her one-word responses, the way she is fidgeting with her fingers, and how she casts her eyes onto the ground below her. They wander through the mall, stopping at a Brandy Melville. They stare at the store with eyes as big as moons. Both dash into what is heaven for the two teenage girls. Alicia's frown slowly melts into a small smile, displaying each one of her pearl colored teeth.

Out of the corner in her eye, she spots the perfect top. A maroon-colored long sleeve shirt with a black string in the front that weaves through, creating a zigzag pattern hung invitingly by the rack. The fabric is softer than a bunny. Alicia grabs the shirt off the rack as her brown eyes twinkle. Ashley spins around in hope of spotting her best friend in the store. She sees Alicia who is now standing in front of her.

"Do you like it?" Alicia asks, seeking favorable review. Her face, hopeful, mimicking a kid asking her mother if she can get a candy bar.

"Um, yeah, I do! ... But not necessarily on you," Ashley says, her voice trailing off. Ashley's body language suddenly changing as she shifts her shoulders, causing her to turn away from Alicia and look at her own scuffed-up black hightop converse, the laces so dirty they are barely passable as white.

Alicia no longer plans on talking to Ashley about anything. For the rest of the hour they spend at the mall, Alicia keeps quiet, only answering questions with a yes or no.

When Alicia gets home, her silence continues. She runs up the stairs, not saying a word to her mother. She swings the door open, almost as if she wanted to break the door off its hinges. She flops on her bed, not caring that her shoes and jacket were still on, her head facing the ceiling. She sighs, feeling emotionally drained. Instead of feeling comforted by the warmth of her bed, she feels the cold magazine.

Alicia sits up quickly. She sees the magazine she bought earlier. Suddenly, her aggravation turns into sadness as she starts to cry. When she saw the magazine it was just another reminder that she didn't look like the models people thought were beautiful. The more she thinks about it, the more she begins to sob. The clear salt substance filling up the vision of her dark chocolate brown eyes. Alicia doesn't notice that her mom has come in; instead she notices the warm embrace of her mother's arms wrapping around her. Her mother notices Alicia's strong clutch around the magazine. The shiny pages begin to crinkle as Alicia's palm turns red from her strong grip. Terry takes the magazine from under Alicia's hold and places a different one by her. Alicia looks at her mother, her eyes red and stinging from her salty tears. Her mom nods towards the new magazine that she has placed near her.

Her mom speaks up. "I found an amazing magazine, one that shows the beauty of having dark skin, just like your beauty."

Alicia stares at the magazine with the model Atong Arjok on the cover. She stares at her dark brown skin and her short and small Afro. Alicia's eyes have a glow in them like never before. She smiles at her mom and whispers, "Thank you."

"I have something else for you," her mom says, smiling as she speaks. Terry pulls out a little black bag from behind her. As her delicate caramel-colored hands reach into the bag, she pulls out the small maroon top Alicia had fallen in love with earlier at the mall with Ashley.

"How'd you know?" Alicia asked her mother, her voice barely reaching above a whisper.

"Ashley came by. She seemed frustrated with herself, but she just told me that she bought you this." Her mother shifts her body to kiss Alicia's forehead. She rises off her bed and makes her exit from the room.

Alicia's dainty hands slowly creep towards the magazine in front of her. The cover girl wears neon makeup that makes her skin glow. Alicia notices how her shimmering, dark chocolate eyes, her plump burnt sienna lips, and tight curly haired coils. She is beautiful. Alicia decides that she will wear her maroon top to school tomorrow. She can't wait to show Ashley.

Dad Issues

by Tabitha Cahan

Inside a large blue house with gaudy decor and a hodgepodge of photos on the walls, I sit there in what they thought was solitude in the only non-cluttered spot in my house, my room. If my dad really understood me, he'd know that I'm upset. How couldn't he? I told him everything...but I guess I'll trace it all back to the start of that very Wednesday, December 2nd. It has been a week since the incident.

Wednesdays make me forlorn; not meaning in the abandoned sense, but in the lonely, nobody to talk to sense. Dad's house is a void, a missing spot where my mom should be. My dad's house has always been defined by the lack of my mother. I can't stand it here: it doesn't feel like my home, it feels like a cluttered, unfinished house. At my mom's I could be sitting all alone in the darkest part, and I'd feel safe and secure because it's my mom's house.

On December 2nd, I was at Dad's. I was feeling especially apathetic while absentmindedly doing math homework in the kitchen. It was a typical foggy day, and the events at school were highly uninteresting. Mostly, I had sat there just anticipating tonight's dispute with my dad as he paced around the kitchen on a phone call.

All of a sudden, my dad started harshly correcting my math while not listening to whatever I had to say, as per usual. He has always been that way, criticizing me for everything I do. Ever since I was little, my dad was critical of everything, but after my lesbian-turned mother hurt him, it grew worse. However, the room started to get quieter as the night went on. The longer he stood there in the kitchen, the longer the silence. I began to ruminate about my talk over tea with my mom's girlfriend. Earlier that week I was upset with how he was acting, so I had written an angry letter, yet I never sent it because I felt apprehensive about his response. I had every right to be. When he's mad

he says my name like a question, "Aspen?" and then he says, "Look, here's my issue." I wasn't to question his emotions, unless I wanted yelling. As I trudged across the kitchen, he didn't notice my agony. I had realized that I needed to give him the letter. My palms started to sweat; I slipped and nearly fell on the kitchen floor. As I reached out to give him that very letter, I figured this letter would make him change for the better and realize how rude he was to me.

This letter included: the fact that he doesn't listen to me; he turns everything into a problem about himself; he makes me feel guilty by crying in front of me; and he constantly jumps to conclusions, suggesting that I don't want to be at his house. I also wrote that his girlfriend had changed him from a hilarious, Mac-and-Cheese-atop-pizza-eating dad, to a flax-eating and workout junkie dad. Lastly, I had written at the bottom that since the letter was finished, so was the conversation.

However, upon reading this, he inexplicably strode into my room and declared: "Aspen, I've been having some issues with you too." He sat down on my bed as he scratched his ruffled black hair. He looked down on me like I was merely an angsty teenager.

I held my breath and clutched my sides for his emotional breakdown. I was practically shaking; I didn't know I could be so afraid of my own father. Apparently, I was always rude and short with him. I cut him off after that statement by saying that I would never do that. He shot me a look and continued his long, yet hurtful soliloquy. I don't contribute anything to the family, I always miss my mom and never talk to him, I am so rude and never pay attention to his feelings, he says. "You're also never happy," he concluded. At this point his brown eyes became glassy as they welled up with tears.

"Aspen," he burst out crying, "you used to be such a happy kid...and now you're just angry all the time!" His voice shook and he began to choke on his tears. I curled up into a ball in order to deflect his low blow, and my short blonde hair became damp, covering

my face. It felt like he pronounced that I was a terrible kid. It felt like an ant, vulnerable to a large hand squashing me and my feelings alike.

Tears streamed down his face like a waterfall as I quietly fidgeted with a piece of thread on my couch. Uncomfortable, I shoved my toe under the rug, holding back my own tears. I also held back the flood of tears. I couldn't show weakness to him. I couldn't take it anymore and burst into tears. I also told him I needed some time and he needed to leave. I screamed, I sobbed, I kicked, I wrecked immediately after he left. It was booming loud inside my head with words that I should've said: "I'm not trying to hurt you -- I'm really sorry I hurt your feelings!" As I slowly drowned in my regret, I couldn't take back the words I said.

So much to tell him, and most of all it hurts to know that I could make him feel this way. I obnoxiously bawled into my pillow, secretly hoping that he would hear and know how hurtful he was. I called my mom still sobbing and told her that she needed to come get me and take me home.

"I would do anything!" I cried out to the phone, "Please! I need you!"

I interrupted her at a party, so she was unable to help. Naturally, by feeling guilty, she called my dad and told him I needed comfort, and he tried to do just that. Five minutes later, dreaded as ever, he attempted to come in and comfort me, but I immediately told him to leave yet again. Approximately five minutes after, he came in. He hugged me, he petted my hair, all in an attempt to comfort me. I was so upset with him, he couldn't possibly comfort me; no matter how hard he tried, it would just make me more angry.

"Don't touch me! Get out!" I had yelled.

"I'll get lost..." he trailed off.

"So leave!" I screamed.

As anticipated, he arrived in my bedroom another five minutes later. I thought I was simply out of tears, because I had sobbed what felt like an ocean's worth of tears. So, I told him that we should talk later. He said I always push things off and I couldn't push this one off, but I did. At roughly midnight I had officially cried myself to sleep. I thought I would never forgive him for what he did.

Now here I am on the following Wednesday, sitting in what he thought was solitude. I'm quietly sobbing and wondering what to make of that December night, it really does still hurt. Nevertheless, I regret nothing now. I do love him though, although I don't say it enough.

Beginning to Now

by Sophie Byrne

I was born four days late,
And I was the first child.
Nonni was in town,
She made Opa bars,
But he wasn't there.

There was a long hallway in our first house,
All the way down and to the left was my room,
Light pink walls and a white bunk bed,
One bunk filled and the other
for the next daughter.

We would sit around the
long wood kitchen table,
eating our Raisin Toast
with a glass of milk.
Because milk is supposed to
make our bones strong,
At least that is what my mommy says.

My sister and I both have brown hair,
My brother is blonde.
We are both tall,
But my sister is not.
We all have hazel and green eyes.

Some people say I look like my mom,
And the others say I look like my brother,
But I don't see it.

My mom is a Schloz but my dad
is a Byrne,
Now we all are.
Irish and German,
But it is thought,
That somewhere in there
we are Italian,
but I guess we will never know.

People say I laugh a lot,
Sometimes they say even
too much,
But how can someone laugh too much?

I have grown up in San Francisco,
In the seven by seven
I call home.
But Nebraska is also home,
We travel there every summer,
Ever since I was six.
To the same house my grandmother grew up in.
We call it: "The Homestead."

We don't have any pets,
But my favorite animals are in Nebraska.

I ride the horse Scooter, and my grandfather rides J.R.

We ride them like cowboys,

My dream job as city kid.

I guess I'm a city kid,

It's what people call me.

Where I'm From

By William Denton

I am from over-used wooden cutting boards

From clorox and H₂O

I am from the closet to the right of the stairs

(My legs brushing against the plastic box

holding my nerf guns, my coat rack

behind me)

I am from the pear tree

The fallen log that we sat on with a view of the beach

(The grains of wood beneath me

The line of ants bringing food to their home)

I am from chocolate chip cookies and contacts

I am from Denton and Futter

I am from Growth mindset and Zest

I am from breaky time and go to sleep

I am from waking up with heavy eyelids and running down the stairs to get my presents

I am from the redwood, salmon and Arnold Palmers

From the fingernail that fell off and never grew back from the door

The divorce my parents made to keep the love

Under my desk there was a container

spilling old keychains,

a sift of my memories and the people I loved

to fall into math.

I am from those moments --

Snapped before I fell like so many leaves in the fall --

Moving out from two houses I called home.

Editors' Note: Video recordings of the “Mockingbird Monologues” by Catharine Paik and Lulu Savageaux were unfortunately deleted from the site SFDS uses to record performances. We have also been unable to obtain written copies of these pieces.

Congratulations nonetheless to Catharine and Lulu for being selected for SONAR 2016. We hope you continue to pursue creative writing in high school and beyond!

--SONAR Editors (*Meredith Landis, Amanda Ellison, and Sabina Piersol*)