

**The Writers' Slate**, published by The Writing Conference, Inc., features some of our nation's top quality writing by students, kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The national journal is published three times a year, including one issue filled with award-winning prose and poetry. The publication is available online.

The editor of **The Writers' Slate** invites original, creative and expository writing by students in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The editor also invites submissions of book reviews of children's or young adult literature written by students. It is also encouraged to submit article ideas for feature article consideration.

The deadline for the fall issue each year is June 15. The deadline for the spring issue is December 15.

Send submissions to the following:

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Submissions, including electronic submissions, **should clearly indicate the writer's name, school, grade level, and home address. The teacher's name should be included if appropriate.** Due to the number of submissions and mailing costs involved, the editor will only respond to those submissions that have been accepted for publication. Submissions will not be returned.

The editor reserves the right to edit manuscripts for clarity, style, and according to space limitations.

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John H. Bushman  
Director, The Writing Conference, Inc.

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*March 1, 2010*

*Dear Writers,*

*We, the editors of this 2009-2010 season of The Writers' Slate, would like to thank all of you for your creative entries and great effort. Competition was steep, for each work was read and appreciated. Congratulations to the authors who were selected! Your pieces corresponded with the themes we consider necessities and are great examples to all writers. Those who were not chosen please continue to pursue your inner poet or author, your words have the capability to inspire, encourage, and change others; never give up. Again, thank you to all student writers--your work has not gone unnoticed.*

*Graciously,*

*Pamela Walters, Associate Editor*

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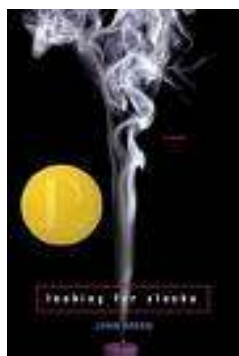
*Chelsea Rush, Associate Editor*

## Looking for John Green

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*Justin Ward*

From time to time, an author will produce a work or a series of works that will captivate readers and create a great deal of excitement or “buzz” in regards to their projects. Lately, there have been an abundance of authors who have seen their works become wildly successful, like JK Rowling, Stephanie Meyer, Nicholas Sparks, and Dan Brown just to name a few. There are several reasons why these authors have been successes, including the marketing of their books, but they all maintain especially original styles and create story lines that appeal to the ethos, pathos, and/or logos. John Green has demonstrated early on in his career that his novels are multi-dimensional as well. Sure, the settings are all compelling enough, but what really ties one way they were portrayed through Green’s own captivating style. Green commands a very, very original way of creating and delivering dialogue between characters. Being that dialogue carries the action in most stories, Green’s skill set has enabled him to produce novels that are at the top of the young adult literary world today. Green does not shy away from implementing controversial issues into his novels either. Teen suicide, alcohol abuse, sex, and other seedy issues are discussed at length within Green’s first three novels. Also, several compelling facts surround Green’s personal background that are of interest, and also makes him creditable as an author. Green is young, intelligent, educated, from the south, and seems to have conveyed much of his own language into his novels.



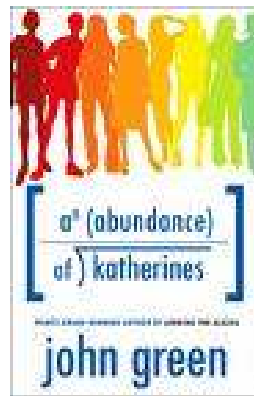
career that his novels are multi-story lines, the characters, and enough, but what really ties one way they were portrayed style. Green commands a very, delivering dialogue between carries the action in most stories, to produce novels that are at the world today. Green does not shy

Since 2005, Green has had three books published in which he is credited as the sole author. *Looking for Alaska*, published in 2005, is his first novel which immediately shot his name into discussion around literary groups. Green’s first novel garnered the Michael L. Printz Award which represents excellence in young adult literature. Other awards and honors include, 2005 Top 10 Best Book for Young Adults, 2005 Teens' Top 10 Award, 2005 Quick Pick for Reluctant Young Adult Readers, A New York Public Library Book for the

Teen Age, A Booklist Editor's Choice Pick, Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers Selection, and Borders Original Voices Selection. *Looking for Alaska* has been translated into 13 languages and its movie rights have been acquired by Paramount. Look for the release of the film version to come in 2010 under the name *Famous Last Words*. Needless to say, this novel has been wildly successful and has provided Green with all of the resources he needs to continue his writing career. *An Abundance of Katherines* was Green's follow up to his first novel and was published in September, 2006. This book also gained acclaim as a finalist for the L.A. Times Book Prize. Other honors include Michael L. Printz Honor Book, An ALA Best Book for Young Adults, A Booklist Editors' Choice, A Kirkus Reviews Best Book of the Year, and A Horn Book Fanfare Best Book of the Year. The film rights to this book have also been purchased but have not been acted on as of today.

*Towns*, is very recently released this novel has achieved status of best Young Adult Novel by Green has recently announced *Towns* has been acquired by who produced the movie *Juno*, completed the first draft of the

Other works Green has to *Three Holiday Romances*, which



Green's latest novel, *Paper* (October 16, 2008). Already, New York Times Best Seller and Mystery Writers of America. that the movie rights to *Paper* Mandate Pictures, the studio and that he has already screenplay.

his name include *Let it Snow:* he co-authored with Maureen

Johnson and Lauren Myracle, and his forth coming novel *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*, release date April 6, 2010, which he wrote along side of the one and only David Levithan.

Green also has a few short stories published in which he has an author credit. They include, "The Approximate Cost of Loving Caroline" (2006), "The Great American Morp" (2007), and "Freak the Geek" (2009).

Needless to say, John Green has been tremendously busy producing works in his still very young career. It seems Green has made many strives networking with other authors as well. The film versions of his works will undoubtedly further his already blossoming career.

John Green was born August 24, 1977 in Indianapolis, Indiana, but grew up in Florida until he moved to Alabama to attend boarding school. Green has commented that the prep school he attended in Alabama, Indian Springs School, does resemble the school portrayed in *Looking for Alaska*, Culver Creek. From there, Green went on to graduate from Kenyon College, located in Gambier, Ohio, in 2000 with a double major in English and Religious Studies. Upon graduation, Green worked at a children's hospital as a student chaplain. It was at this place of employment that Green started to think of last words, and gained the inspiration that eventually became his first novel. After working at the children's hospital, Green moved to Chicago where he started working for Booklist Magazine, a book review journal. During this stint in the professional world, Green read hundreds of books and provided reviews for them. While in Chicago, Green also wrote for NPR's "All Things Considered" and also for Chicago's public radio station WBEZ. Green is also a veracious video blogger (vlogger) and delivers much of his announcements via video on [www.nerdfighters.com](http://www.nerdfighters.com) in lieu of maintaining his website [www.sparksflyup.com](http://www.sparksflyup.com). Green and his brother Hank are highly involved in the promotion of his books through the use of video clips and have named their video blog project *Brotherhood 2.0*. There is much to be learned about Green's personality, defense of his books content, the progression of movie deals with his books, and et cetera from watching these video clips. If you are so inclined you may find his videos registered under "vlogbrothers" on You Tube.

*Looking for Alaska*, Green's first novel, starts when Miles Halter is having a going away party thrown for him by his parents, ahead of his departure for prep school in Alabama. Sounds fun? Well, only Miles' parents and two others attended and the two others only stayed momentarily. The reader quickly learns that Miles is infatuated by last words. He decides a good enough motivation for him to attend boarding school in another state is found in the last words of Francois Rabelais. "I go to seek a Great Perhaps" (Alaska 5).

Shortly after the "party" Miles moves to Alabama to attend Culver Creek Preparatory School. It was here that he moved into a shared living space with Chip "The Colonel" Martin who nicknamed him Pudge, an ironic spin on Miles' scrawny physical makeup. The Colonel quickly introduced Pudge to his best friend, Alaska Young. The trio quickly became the best of friends as they sneaked smokes, drank alcohol, planned pranks, and were up to

mischievous in general. However, Culver Creek was not just any school. The academic demand placed on students was very high. Pudge often found himself spending weeks on end studying and preparing for exams and papers. Side note -- the characters portrayed in this novel are highly intelligent and this comes in handy when they are in preparation for academic and pranking activities.

Miles ends up falling in and out and back in love with Alaska. He is very frustrated with her though, because she is a tease. Alaska was constantly flirting with Miles and telling him how cute she thought he was, all the while dating a college man who went to Vanderbilt. Shortly after Pudge spent an unforgettable Christmas break at Culver Creek alone with Alaska, The Colonel and Alaska get heavily intoxicated one night with Pudge. A game of truth or dare ensues where Alaska and Pudge kiss and heavy petting is involved.

That same night, Alaska falls to sleep only to be awakened by her cell phone. Alaska, screaming and crying, has the guys distract the Dean of Students, the "Eagle", for her so that she can leave. Alaska drives away as The Colonel and Pudge set off fireworks near the Eagles house. The next morning, the school is assembled and finds out that Alaska has died in a fatal auto accident. Pudge and The Colonel are obviously mournful of Alaska's death. They decide they must get to the bottom of what killed her. The details of the accident were not clear to them; they didn't know if she had fallen asleep behind the wheel, committed suicide, or what. They eventually put together the pieces of why Alaska left that night, but they never really get closure concerning the idea of if Alaska committed suicide or not.

Green's second novel, *An Abundance of Katherines*, is the story of Colin Singleton, a kid from Chicago who can't catch a break with the ladies. Colin was a child prodigy who had just graduated from high school and is entering the summer before college. He has recently been dumped by his girlfriend Katherine XIX. See, Colin has dated nineteen Katherines and needs to label them numerically in order to specify their identity. He is obsessed with anagrams and he finds the name Katherine to be very complex and anagramtastic. At any rate, Colin always seemed to fall for these girls only to be dumped by them.

Hassan, Colin's only friend, suggested that they go on a road trip as a way to forget about Colin's newfound single status and also as a rite of passage into manhood. The two

load up into Colin's Oldsmobile, Satan's Hearse, and set off. They only lasted on the road a couple of days before they found themselves in Gunshot, Tennessee.

It was in Gunshot that the two wondered up to a general store looking for the grave of the Archduke Ferdinand that was advertised on a highway sign. Their tour guide was a local girl named Lindsey Lee Wells. Colin and Hassan quickly befriended her and ended up staying in Gunshot for a while, working for Lindsay's mother. All the while, Colin was working on an original formula that would predict whether or not he would be dumped by his next girlfriend or if he would dump her.

Lindsey is dating a boy named Colin, The Other Colin (TOC), when Colin and Hassan arrive in Gunshot. It is later revealed that TOC is cheating on Lindsey with her best friend, Katrina. With TOC out of the picture, Lindsey and Colin begin to spend a lot of time together and they grow closer to each other. Colin ends up having an epiphany one day and figures out how to make his formula work. He also realizes that Katherines are not always the best choice for girlfriends; sometimes a Lindsey is in order.

The third novel from Green, *Paper Towns*, begins with the scene where Quentin "Q" Jacobsen and Margo Roth Spiegelman find the dead body of a man who had killed himself with a gunshot to the head. Years later, Q and Margo are high school seniors in Orlando, FL. The two of them were still next door neighbors and acquaintances, but did not really associate with each other at school. Margo was a part of the popular kids group while Q had a separate, less popular, group of friends

One night, Margo, out of nowhere, climbs back into Q's life and inside his bedroom window. Margo is dressed as a ninja and talks Q into borrowing his parents mini-van for the night as the two of them embark on a whirlwind revenge tour that is out to get Margo's cheating boyfriend and her best friend who was sleeping with Margo's boyfriend.

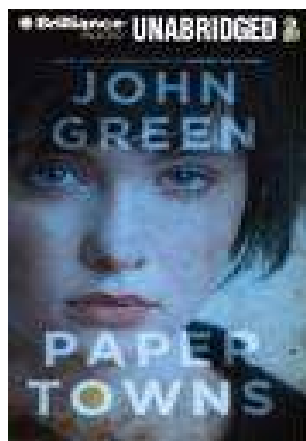
After Q and Margo spend the entire night terrorizing Margo's enemies, they arrive back at Q's house where Margo leaves him with a hug and the words, "I. Will. Miss. Hanging. Out. With. You." (*Paper Towns* 81).

The next day Margo doesn't show up at school, which isn't too worrisome as she has a history of leaving for days on end without giving notice, but a day turns into days, and days turn into weeks. Eventually, the police get involved and Q tells the detective everything that he and Margo did the night before. Q finds out from the detective that Margo always leaves clues as to where she may be going when she runs away. Being that he is love struck and worried that she may have killed herself, Q sets out to figure out where Margo has disappeared to.

Q and his group of friends, Radar and Ben, spend a while searching for clues and their meanings. Eventually, Q discovers that Margo has run away to a town in upstate New York that has a population of 0. The day of graduation, Q and friends take off in haste to go find Margo, believing she is unpopulated town, Q finds building and she is stunned to being a different person than Margo appreciated time in isolation.

Margo ends up going However, she does come to deal about her and that she relationships that she's made

Several noteworthy



alive. Upon reaching the Margo in an abandoned see him there. She ends up he thought she would be. solitude, appreciated time in

her separate way, alone. realize that people care a great needs to be responsible for the and the family that she has.

over-arching ideas reoccur in

Green's first three novels. The protagonists in the three novels are all highly intelligent, white, teenage young men. Whether or not the protagonist reflects Green's own personality and interests is up for debate. As the research unfolded on this author, especially through Green's vlogs, his personality shines through and is strikingly similar to the protagonist's in interests and self professed "nerdiness". Miles, Colin, and Quentin all possess their own gifts and talents. Miles is obsessed with last words. Colin is an anagram wizard. Quentin does translations. Miles, Colin, and Quentin are all love struck in their respective ways, and go through great tribulations in the quest for that love. The qualities and actions of these three characters are similar in many ways. Miles and Quentin both end up on a great search for clues. Colin and Quentin both do extensive work with the

translation of Latin and Greek. Miles and Colin both have very small groups of friends, actually Miles originally has no friends and Colin only has his pal Hassan. Colin and Quentin both have a love interest that has dated someone who was cheating on them with the love interest's best friend. Miles and Quentin both worry that their love interest has killed themselves. Miles and Quentin both have a friend, that is decidedly intelligent, who helps them solve problems, The Colonel for Miles and Radar for Quentin.

The love interests in these works-- Alaska, Lindsey, and Margo-- all have a side to them that demands isolation and privacy. Alaska didn't have any immediate family to speak of and spent the holidays alone for the most part; Lindsey had her cave in the woods where she would wonder off to and take time for herself; Margo decided to go all out and abandon the life she knew to live in paper towns where the population was zero and one on a busy day. Green has this element of the girls the protagonist's level of. These young men are and seem to be totally about an issue that is love interest.

Green brings up these novels as well.

**(Green's) personality shines through and is strikingly similar to the protagonist's in interests and self professed "nerdiness".**

brilliantly manipulated personalities to add to infatuation with them. inquisitive by nature engrossed thinking facing their respective

important teen issues in Suicide is discussed at

length in both *Looking for Alaska* and *Paper Towns*. The statistics for teenage suicide are alarming in America and Green has done a wonderful job of illustrating that young people have responsibilities to others, besides themselves, by showing characters that are greatly affected by the loss of another. In *Paper Towns*, Green opens the story with a prologue that discusses how a young Quentin and Margo find a man who has committed suicide in a public space. The effects of finding this man are long lasting on the two of them, especially on Margo. Alcohol use and abuse is also explored throughout Green's works and shown as a double edged sword. In *Looking for Alaska*, alcohol is used as a device that creates friendships and suppresses inhibitions. Many times in the text, the crew of friends is found to be intoxicated and jovial. A great deal of comradery and trust between the characters is developed because of these secretive, intoxicated experiences. On the other hand, the

abuse of alcohol is shown as perilous when Alaska drives away to her eventual death in a very drunk state. In a way, Alaska's personality is the example of excess. Moderation was not in Alaska's vocabulary. She was constantly diving head first into her days. Green uses her, sadly, as an example of where excess will land you.

People of all ages can relate to a friend like Alaska. It is so easy to fall in love with these characters, but there are consequences surrounding the over-the-top lifestyle. Green does not thither the lily when dealing with this issue. The loss of Alaska Young is very poignant in this piece. Teenage sexual activity is also mildly explored. Alaska's promiscuity with her boyfriend is well chronicled in the story, but no real consequences of those actions are ever shown. In both *An Abundance of Katherines* and *Paper Towns*, teenage sexual activity is shown to be hurtful when Lindsey and Margo find out that their boyfriends are cheating on them with their best friends. These revelations are devastating to both Lindsey and Margo. Green is quite casual with the use of sex in these three books. The accepting climate of sexual activity among teens has changed a great deal over the years, and it seems that Green has portrayed somewhat realistic situations in his books. The fact is that some teens are having sex and some are really wanting to. There is certainly a present population of both types of teens in these three books.

Green's writing technique is exceptionally smart as it continually presents situations where the reader is learning about what is going on in the scene. Dialogue is a strength for Green. He utilizes this device masterfully. A great example of a dialogue that Green has created is found in *Paper Towns* when Ben is at a party and is attempting to break the Winter Park keg stand record.

"Fifty-eight, fifty-nine, sixty, sixty-one, sixty-two, sixty-three!" And then Ben pulled the spout out of his mouth and screamed, "YESSS! I MUST BE THE GREATEST! I SHOOK UP THE WORLD!" (*Paper Towns* 179-180)

This scene conveys several ideas to the reader. There is a group of people screaming the count as Ben is drinking. Ben pulling the spout from his mouth creates vivid imagery. Then Green further explains how Ben felt and acted as he responded with the famous Muhammad Ali quote. Green delivers clever references, like this one, and original dialogue tags throughout his works with a seamlessness that is very natural and fits the characters personalities to a tee.

Evidence of Green working for *Booklist Magazine* in Chicago, alone shows that he is extremely well read, and would figure to have enriched ideas given this background.

John Green is a young, exciting, intelligent, articulate, driven, award winning author who produces world class writing in what seems to be no time at all. The preceding pursuit of John Green has proven to be an interesting one. Through his first three novels, much is gained into the mind of this writer. A fan of Green's novels may look for his future novels to change thematically a bit. The idea of the smart white kid who is desperately in love with a girl has gotten Green a long way in a short time. The evolution of his writing is also apparent from *Looking for Alaska* to *Paper Towns*, where Green has truly created a novel that encompasses his various strengths as an author. However, Green must continue to challenge himself and his audience with new story lines that maintain a current fan base, and will also create new fans. Sometimes as writers, we get into a comfort zone of what situations speak the most to us, which is great and it is easier to write effectively on such topics, but a sign of a great author is the ability to speak convincingly of experiences that perhaps that person has never been a part of. Green, it could be concluded, has taken that step "outside the box" with his partnership with David Levithan. There is little doubt that he has not already learned a great deal from his networking relationships with other authors. Look for John Green continue to evolve as a writer and be a staple in the literary world for years to come.

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## *Definition of the Color White*

### **Blanco**

El silencio ruidoso

Penetrating and piercing your ears

El sonido inexpressivo

The haunting, tangible quiet

El olor de frio, fragil copo de nieve,

Dancing in the sky,

El olor de crema batida

Or the warm, tranquil waters of a bubble bath

The taste of crisp, lucid water,

Aranazo a los dientes,

The taste of light bread,

Tortillas templadas y mantequilla

Nubes algadones,

Soft and poised languidly in the sky

El pelo de los angeles,

Heavenly singing en el cielo.

The feeling of security,

Paz y felicidad,

Warm and soothing

Un sueño.

~Margaret Bost

**White**

Cold, indifferent.

A blizzard on a distant mountain.

The collective noises

filtered out but perceived subconsciously.

Truthful, pure.

A flag of surrender.

A single drawn out note

without warmth or color of any sort.

Blank, empty.

Nothing. A page yet to be filled.

Or a mixture of every color,

a brilliant incandescent masterpiece,

producing only one result:

White.

~Nick Stevens

***The Faceoff Between Light and Dark***

**Carpe Diem**

*White is like the light at the end of a tunnel,  
Hanging by a string waiting for you.*

**Black is like the hand pulling the string,  
to shut the light off and leave you in the dark.**

*White is like the soft white blanket wrapped around your chin,  
Gently rubbing against your arms.*

**Black is like the cold wind blowing under the blanket,  
making the hair on your arms shoot to the sky.**

*White is like the infinite possibilities running through your head.  
It is the blank board waiting to be drawn on.*

**Black is the limiting voice telling you not to do it,  
telling you not to seize the day.**

~ Emma Rosenblum

## **Dark Poems**

### *Burning*

*I am in a burning room*

*watching as the flames bloom.*

*I now see that death is near,*

*but yet I have no time to fear.*

*I know as the fire nears me*

*that soon I will be free,*

*to fly in the big blue sky.*

*Away from all my hopes and dreams,*

*so death is not now what it seems.*

*I stand on a big white cloud.*

*In heaven with the crowd*

*of people passed on light and free*

*and then I forget how to be...me.*

~Nick Waits

**Messy Mornings**

Arguments turning to fights,  
The whisper of harsh words on a cold morning,  
Like being stoned by stale gum drops,  
Leaving what was once alive and breathing,  
Past on and grasping for what was left of its dignity.

Eyes glazed over like a donut,  
Limbs dangling like willow branches,  
A stare left on the face like a puzzle missing a piece,  
Skin as pale as the moon,  
A tear falls like the hammer of a judge,  
Cutting the silence and smashing each of the hearts,  
Like walnuts in a nutcracker.

~Jake Wilfley

**Division Sign**

A balance between the good and bad  
Below and above  
Light and dark and the line that divides them  
The 2 halves of the story and  
The ups and downs of life

~ Regan Beall

## Shadows

shadows are like a cloudy day  
keeping all good thoughts at bay  
shadows can hide many things  
and no one knows what it brings  
they're like a portal to another world  
where everything is dark and swirled  
then you get back to our world here  
and you find just as much fear  
you think your world is nice and bright

~ Nick Waits

but in the end it's made of fright  
shadows are a way to help us see  
what our world is meant to be  
just a world of churning black  
getting too bad to ever get back  
to the way things were  
when we could laugh and play  
and shadows didn't mean  
darkness each day.

*Odes*

**Ode to a Broom**

Oh, sturdy, noble broom  
 You are a dutiful soldier  
 Awaiting tedious commands  
 Never wavering to comply  
     A swish and slide,  
     Soon floors are clean  
     An ordinary task  
 But soon you are suave  
     A dance partner to one  
 On light and graceful feet  
 Another turn and now you're  
     A sly, sleek serpent  
 Prowling patiently for its prey  
 A spin and a twirl, one more role  
     The perfect cohort  
     The essential element for  
     Things just beyond reach  
 A companion for any occasion  
     A clean sweep

~Katie Magid

**Ode to Toes**

The only real tester of pools  
 A perfect balance  
 The lint in-between

You are the long and short finger-like creatures  
 The stubby and chubby

You are the reason the fat lady sings  
 And the king can stand to eat his pie  
 You are the cold, good sensation of life  
 The hours of fun on a boring day  
 The endless nights of toe wars and family feud

Without you flip flops would just flop  
 And cars would never stop  
 Tippiie toes would go out the window  
 What would ballet dancers do?  
 Kicking would lose the sensation  
 And toeing the ground would be no more  
 Steel-toed boots would be steel-footed boots  
 And what would happen to toe socks?

You are so necessary in the world full of unbalance  
 When it comes to kicking butt  
 Or holding up  
 You are the only thing for us

~Ali Clarke

## ***Poetic Wisdom***

### **Things to do while waiting to fall asleep**

Realize you could be getting some work done.  
 Write a poem about things you will try to do in the next few hours.  
 Get some water.  
 Sneak around the whole house for no reason until your dad spoils the fun.  
 Pretend you are in a snowstorm and are trying to keep warm.  
 No, don' t do that. It gets way too stuffy.  
 See how far you can fit into a pillowcase.  
 Change your language on your phone.

(It's fun until you can't change it back).

Do some pushups.

Think of what you could've done that day.

See if you can guess that exact time in which your clock will reach the next minute.

Count as high as you can.

Wonder if there is something wrong with you.

\* Note: Before you try any of my sleep techniques, please realize that if you didn't drink that Mountain Dew, these ideas would become so much easier.

~Will Baird

## How to See a Little More

To see a little more,  
 you need only to give time.  
 Wake earlier,  
 listen longer.  
 Look beyond the window,  
 the arms of comfort,  
 the bars of simplicity.  
 Focus not on the failures,  
 nor those who provoke them.

Do not raze the silence,  
 but learn from it.  
 Do not scorn the dawn,  
 but welcome it.

Do not flee from the rain,  
but let it blanket you.

We all lie in free fall,  
time left behind,  
and death coming into view.  
With time, so precious a resource,  
to give only a little,  
may open your sight to truths,  
before only clouded,  
Submit to patience,  
and see a little more.

~Christopher Garbellini

### ***Symbols Defined***

%

Who can determine the light within a soul  
Not the broken spectacles  
shattered by tears and broken dreams

Nor the midsummer night lovers,  
whose melodic song cannot overcome the wall  
that will forever stand between them.  
Echoing through the fairy's mischief

Only the bright eyes peering

into my soul from across the way,  
 can judge the worth of my spirit  
 For they are my own,  
 and as I walk away from the mirror,  
 The one left behind must be pleased with the weight of my heart  
 and the density of my soul.

~ Alicia Danielsen

}

A seagull skimming the horizon,  
 struck sideways by a flock of geese.  
 Hercule Poirot's moustache,  
 whisked away by the wily wind.  
 A chocolate kiss flattened underfoot,  
 where did the wrapper go?

~ Sarah Magid

‘ ’

### **Apostrophes**

A fish circling itself in the sea  
 The crescent moon perched in the sky  
 A teardrop leaking from an eye  
 His strikeout pitch to win the game  
 A man hunched over from old age  
 Someone's monacle on the face of a gentleman  
 A dog chasing its tail around and around  
 A smile forming from one side of the lips,

Struggling not to laugh.  
 A precious baby, being gazed upon from above  
 A snowball rolling down a hill,  
 Gaining speed and size with every inch.  
 A wave crashing at its peak  
 Fireworks illuminating the July sky  
 With a friend they can talk forever,  
 Or can be rudely interrupted by the couple that comes next.  
 If desired,  
 They can make anything theirs,  
 Or simply form a word from a pair.

~ Jared Moskowitz

## §

Two snakes praying  
 A Siamese cat's glaring eye  
 Fish hooks catching "the catch of the day"  
 A swirled donut almost good enough to eat  
 Swans in a lake and two penguins in the snow  
 Some steam from a coffee cup smelling divine  
 And three unfinished circles  
 An oasis with wonderful water designs  
 With two eights in mind, the painter ran out of ink  
 A group of optical illusions  
 Icicles hanging from a vine

An odd but cute ribbon  
 A gorgeous ballerina dancing in a studio  
 A logo for a hotel  
 Two S's smashed together forming a new and no named letter  
 Two cat tails playing together  
 An excited but gentle painter's masterpiece  
 A short giraffe  
 A drop of ink hanging from the brush  
 That will fall forever  
 And never stop 'til it reaches the bottom of time

~ Anna Schwartz



The clown's bow tie,  
 Jaunty and curved.  
 The pretzel dough tossed and twisted,  
 Caught by floured hands and formed.  
 The mask of Junior Birdman,  
 Flying upside down.  
 The blue dyna-band, too taut for its user,  
 Accidentally sprung free.

~Sarah Magid

## ***Origin Poems***

### ***Ocean***

*I am from hot ramen on a  
cold night  
from schools of starving  
fish  
In polluted waters.  
I am from my grandma's  
Eden,  
with lilikoi vines,  
seeping through the cracks  
in  
the white walls.*

*I am from heaven and hell,*

*from Dr. Jekyll and Mr.  
Hyde.  
I am from the morning  
waves  
and the ticklish currents  
that  
do not take lives but saves  
them.*

~Evan Liu

*I am from the*

*humuhumunukunukuapuah  
a,  
as graceful as the winds  
brother,  
and as courageous as the  
long lost Kings.*

*I am from minimum wage,  
condensed milk and lychee  
flavoring.*

*From the bitter and plain  
taste of poi  
with kalua pork wrapped  
in  
tall tea leaves,  
smoked and simmered.*

***Thanks to George Ella  
Lyon***

*I am from choking waves  
and the suffocated sand.  
From the terribly twisted  
skies,  
and the spirits of the  
tortured.*

*The terrible screams of  
waves,  
the awful stench of rotting  
sea creatures  
fills the text of a page in a  
book,  
and floats softly down onto  
a  
shallow grave.*

## **Where I'm From**

I'm from beat up softballs, salty sunflower seeds, and sore voices

The clang of bats and screams from fans.

I smell the fresh cut grass, and newly drawn lines.

I hear bantering coaches and cheering teammates as loud as a stampede.

I am from the comfortable feel of a worn glove.

Where homeruns and strikeouts defy who I am.

I am from hail storms, and hot sunny days.

Winning and losing; the highlights of the day.

I am from twisted ankles and scrapped up knees

Bloody noses and broken fingers.

I am from blind and annoying umpers.

Colorful jerseys, and foul smelling outhouses.  
 From early mornings and late nights occupying my time.  
 I am from traffic jams and faulty directions.  
 Exciting plane rides and laughing until I cry.  
 Blasting music before warm-ups, and hiding in cars while it rains.  
 I am from hustle and dedication;  
 Progressing every day and never stopping.  
 I am the softball speeding through the air, daring someone to stop me.

~Rebecka Mintz

### **Where I'm From**

Where I'm from.

Everywhere.

I'm from Kalimera and sunsets.

Moussaka and goulash.

Pascha, pastitcio, and planes.

Greece, Iowa, Florida that is me.

I'm from white wash houses, the Mediterranean Sea.

I'm from "don't eat paper!" to dieting.

Pointe shoes, tennis shoes, and flip flops.

Pink tights, jeans, and my cover up, that is where I'm from.

I'm from Mozart to The Beatles. Classical, a ballet girl.

I'm from my Yaya's voice but my mother's eyes, cherry pits on napkins and my father's ideas.

I'm a victim of the mirror and a victim of myself.

I'm from the media and ill-fitting short skirts.

Yet, I'm not from Marry Jane, Winston or Flat Tire. Nor am I from flashing lights and dirty dancing.

And I will never be from Enny's skinny waist or Zach's bright mind.

I will *never* be her kind of pretty.

I'm from mud fights and Barbies that throw beds. I'm from the innocence of baby pink.

I'm from cornfields, crisp air, and Kalinihxta.

Yes I'm from Kalinihxta.

~Jessica Jackalyn Pardos

### ***I Am From***

I am from Milk,  
     Our society. We, revolutionaries  
 The bitter taste of a lie from authority  
 From gangster epics  
     And a burning Mississippi  
 What JFK didn't say  
     The Watchmen of the free world  
 are we  
 From Rico Ceasers as friends  
     And Blagoviches as enemies  
 I am from yes we can

I am from hope  
 I am from a dream

I am from Chomsky  
 The smell of betrayal and coupes

Sponsored by friends  
 From a game of tears  
     And fields where innocents are  
 killed  
 The world I found  
     Brave and New  
 From dangerous friends: Fredos  
     And enemies who hide behind  
 friends  
 I am from change

I am from life  
 I am from liberty  
 I am from the pursuit of happiness

I'm from Gates

The feel of the fire of corruption  
 The establishment the torch  
 From the heat in the night  
 And strange Doctors with Nazi  
 salutes  
 The animals are equal  
 But some more than others  
 Friends of cardboard: opportunists  
 Enemies created: empowered  
 through sympathy  
 I am from ends of eras

~Alex Damle

## Waiting

Courtesy of George Ella Lyon

Saved by a small wood stove  
 Right when the power dove  
 I am from that baby's little hat

I come from those that are stubborn  
 And those that are forlorn  
 But I've learned 2 things:  
 Be open minded with a Barbie nearby

I came from the fear of new foods  
 From the 5 year old deals  
 Of 5 nights a week same meals

I am the hopscotch paths  
 So simple to follow along,  
 But better to create your own song

I am now the 3 gold bracelets  
 The remembrance of my grandmother

But I am not from the world of diamonds  
 The elders learned that the hard way

I come from the 3 R's  
 Not the R&R.

~Aylin Gann

I come from the family's quest to find  
 where we do actually come from  
 Instead, we just found ourselves.

Unnecessary as it may be,  
 My father's and my favorite pastime  
 together was watching Simpson's over  
 dinner  
 I was only 6.

But that was the best: coming from  
 speeches  
 That told you to keep a secret on the  
 other's behalf  
 (Mother still found out)

But I come from the bunk bed...  
 Waiting for another sibling to come  
 And fill the bottom bed...  
 But no one came

Stuck in shining metal tube,  
 Scratchy blue pricks irritable skin.  
 I am from cigarette-tainted taxis driving  
 around the pervasive park.  
 The taste of massacred lamb satisfies the  
 tongue.  
 I am from the impression the bald teacup  
 left on my right hand.  
 The sound of the floor against the wooden  
 cane.  
 The sound just like the steady heartbeat of  
 the ocean.  
 I come from the roof that is never there.  
 The "Ping!" glasses make when barraged  
 with soccer balls.  
 Rocky ridges, ferocious flames, scorpion-like  
 salt.  
 All impregnate the wound, thrashing and  
 thrusting at my blood.

## **The Horizon that Gave Birth to Me**

With thanks to George Ella Lyon

I am from the hot, melting marble  
 sidewalk which illuminates the already  
 glistening night.  
 I am from the crimson colored sky,  
 Every shade of blue I have seen and felt.  
 The only color that shadows that reflects  
 the sleek street.  
 Vowing not to vomit when the fumes of the  
 glue reach my nostrils.  
  
 Ack! The sting of the cold water on my  
 slowly pruning feet.  
 I am from knowing the true creature's  
 taste.  
 Like mourning and mayhem, the crunch of  
 wood when I bite too hard.  
 The opaque lens lights this world, like the  
 heaven's light.  
 Little abrasions aggravating this perfect  
 portrait-like the salt did to me.

I am from the black conveyer belt planted  
on the silver axis.

Burnt gasoline engorges me-no door to  
escape the rancid concoction,  
Stuck in a metal tube, stuck in the wreath  
He wore that day.

I am from the snapshot,  
With me standing on that smooth, marble  
sidewalk,

### My Life Playlist

About 2000- I decide to be different and play harp.  
About 2004- I decide to fit in and play piano.  
About 2005- I like piano better.  
About 2006- I get an iPod.  
About 2007- I start to "playlist" everything that I encounter.  
About 1996 (I assume)- I love music.

"Edelweiss" Christopher Plummer and Julie Andrews  
"Rocky Mountain High" John Denver  
About 1995- I am born.  
Life is never the same.

"Somewhere Over the Rainbow" Israel Kamakowo'ole  
About 2000- I attend Kindergarten in CA.  
Life is never the same  
About 2001- I hate PE because I have asthma and am bad at everything.  
About 2004- I do a US History project 2 weeks early because I read the date wrong.  
My mom gets me a present for working so hard.  
About 2005- I have a Scottish exchange teacher.  
I find that my Scottish accent is really bad.  
About 2001- I get sent into the other MAC room for something I didn't do.  
I fake it and stand by the door for ten minutes instead.  
About 2003- I make friends and I like art.

"Drops of Jupiter" Train  
"We Still Dance" Tickle Me Pink  
About 2005- My art gets chosen for some collection.  
My art is lost in the remodeling of the art building.  
I lose all trust in the Art Department.  
About 2007- I discover photography.  
Life is never the same.

"The Sound of Settling" Death Cab for Cutie  
"Chasing Cars" Snow Patrol  
About 2006- I enter Chowdry Middle School.  
Homework isn't very fun.  
Life is never the same.  
I ride the bus.  
This is barely more fun than homework.  
Which, by the way, is impossible to do on a bus.

With me feeling that salt rain on my skin,  
With me watching that waning sky,  
With me listening to that heartbeat,  
With me testing that oh so lamented lamb,  
And, finally, the ships behind me.

~Sam Givray

About 2008- I make honor roll for the ninth time.  
Nothing happens.

"All Over You" The Spill Canvas

"This Town" OAR

"Good Riddance" Green Day

About 2003- I play tennis.

I'm not horrible.

Life is never the same.

"In your face, lower school PE."

About 2009- I make the Colorado Junior Team Tennis State Championships.

My team gets third.

Third doesn't even get a prize.

"Five Minutes to Midnight" Boys Like Girls

About 2009- I'm in high school.

Which means more homework.

September 29, 2009- I make a poem playlist.

I write a poem about it.

Thanks to D. Harding

~Tia Yang

## Light and Dark

You are the crinkled Benjamin Franklin  
resting on the sidewalk,  
The creaks of the floor that echo while  
they sleep.  
You are the bell in the tower,  
Not always ringing at the best time.

You are the little engine that could.

You might not know this,  
But you are the pigeon and the clover,  
And the white light under the door.

It might interest you to know that you are  
not black and white.  
You are not the hermit in its shell,  
Or the overused sponge, there is just no  
way you are the overused sponge.

You are not the grey sky, or the blue sky  
on that note.

You are the crumbs and the mice,  
The tall white fence,  
And the dusty guitar in the corner.  
Face it; you are the dusty guitar in the  
corner.

You are the bright light,  
Leading me on, but sometimes keeping  
me awake.  
You are odd while I am even,  
But don't get me wrong; no one said that  
one was better.

I ask you to see me as the white knight,  
I am not the dark shadow,

Or the thunder and lightning.

When it comes down to it,  
You are the waves that beat against the  
sand,  
And I am the leaves right before they fall.  
You are the breath of fresh air.  
You are one of a kind.

~Ryan Sachar

## Days

Long gone are the days of yore,  
The days of recess  
And the days of chore.  
These days I must confess,  
Are sorely missed.

“Line up single file,  
You there, time out!”  
Walking through the aisle  
Out of doors running about.  
“Let’s go outside we must insist!”

Hill top races,  
And riding bikes.  
Time cannot erase.  
All those days were alike.  
Until we changed...

And I remember a time,  
When I thought a dollar  
Was just sublime  
And before I studied as a scholar  
Or used to rhyme all the time...

Ease of Days,  
East of Mind,  
It slowly fades.  
These days are all behind,  
Lost in the wind...

“Act your age.”  
What age is that?  
Is it a gauge or a cage?  
Children in their habitat  
Calling home to mommy dearest.

These days long past  
Are not dust.  
They are merely broadcast  
Through our mistrust  
Of the gift of the present.

~ Lucee Rakowitz

# Put On a Happy Face

By Cleo Cragg

Around 2001, Rugby is eaten by a mountain lion.

Scattered fur and a collar are the only things that remain.

My mom says that he gave his life for me.

I still cry at the thought of his death.

Around 2004-2006, Adam and Toby graduate from High School and move out.

As I see them walk through security I feel my throat become dry,

Tears come to my eyes and I am unable to control my emotions.

Around 2007, My dad and I wander into a pet store and instantly fall in love with a little

Shih-Tzu poodle. I pick up the ball of fluff. As we gaze into each others eye I knew he was the dog for me.

Around 1995, I am born.

I'm jealous of my brothers. One was born in Tokyo the other in London.

Waukesha, Wisconsin is not the most exciting city in the world.

And the cheese they are supposedly famous for tastes like soap.

Around 2009, My beloved grandmother, Gangy, dies.

During musical rehearsal I think about all Gangy had done in her life and begin to cry. I know that she would want me to not mourn her death but to celebrate her life.

I put on a happy face and try to do my grandmother proud.

Around 1998, My parents buy our lovely wooden house which holds memories from long ago.

Many happy and sad moments have happened within these walls.

If only they could speak.

Around 2007, I attended a Christmas party and some a family friends house.

While playing a game of hide and seek and hid in the closet.

Apparently I am very good at hide and seek and the seekers were not able to find me.

I spent two hours in the closet waiting for someone to come tell me that I had won the game.

Around 2003, Another student at CA gets quite angry at me and punches me in the stomach.

Needless to say I came to severely dislike this form of transformation.

And stop riding.

Around 2008, I enter a Red Robin competition.

I win four ice-side tickets to the Avalanche.

My dad, Evan, Courtney and I laughed the whole time.

Not because of the game but because of the good company.

Around 2007, My family and I take a trip around Asia.

We go to Cambodia, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Bali.

We also take Adam and Toby's girlfriend.

Shortly after our remarkable adventure, Toby and his girlfriend split up.

Around 2008, I reach my dad the words to several rap songs.

We sing along on the way to and from school.

Around 2009, My mom's birthday arrives.

She switches from wearing dark red lipstick to a bright red.

She looks absolutely B-E-A-UTIFUL.

# The Love Monster

By Olivia Weintraub

In a cave in Australia, there were creepy crawly scary monsters that lived among us in the dark spooky night. Except one monster named Spedlana. She was a love monster. She was sweet, loving, not spooky and a scardy cat.

One day her mom said, "I'm sending you to bad school to learn how to be bad." The next morning her mom took Spelana to her new school in Canada. The first day she had trouble because she was too good. She heard the teacher say, "We will fix her up."

First the teachers taught them to break stuff. All the monsters went around breaking vases, lights, and pictures. Instead of breaking stuff, Spedlana went around fixing the things the other monsters broke.

"No, No, No, that is wrong," said the teacher.

"But I was just fixing the stuff," said Spedlana.

"Monsters break things not fix things," said the teacher.

"But I'm a love monster and love monsters are suppose to fix stuff," said Spedlana.

“We’ll change that,” said the teacher. “On to lesson number two.”

Next they taught the monsters how to make spooky noises. All the monsters were making scary, spooky noises such as loud horrible screeches, weird sounding boos, and rattling chains. But Spedlana was humming Twinkle Twinkle Little Star over and over again.

“No, No, No, that is wrong,” said the teacher.

“But I was just humming a song,” said Spedlana.

“Monsters don’t hum they make terrible noises” said the teacher.

“But I’m a love monster and love monsters are suppose to hum,” said Spedlana.

“We’ll change that,” said the teacher. “On to lesson number three.”

Next the teachers taught the monsters how to sneak up on kids. First they had to open the door quietly, crawl on their hands and knees into the room, quietly close the door, and then scare the kids by turning their faces inside out. But Spedlana knocked on the door and asked if she could come in to play.

“No, No, No, that is wrong,” said the teacher.

“But I was just trying to make a friend,” said Spedlana.

“Monsters don’t make friends, they make kids have nightmares” said the teacher.

“But I’m a love monster and love monsters are suppose to make friends,” said Spedlana.

“We’ll change that,” said the teacher. “On to lesson number four.”

Next the teachers paired up the monsters. Spedlana got paired up with the badest monster, named Oxidore. The pairs had to work to make super scary mega monsters. Some of the monsters made real scary faces together. While others molded together to

form big monsters that were ten feet tall with four heads, eight eyes, four arms and eight legs. Oxidore made a real scary face. It had 100 eyes with worms crawling in and out, 200 very sharp teeth and a big hole where his nose use to be. Spedlana got so scared she ran off and hid in the closet. When she came out, she was wearing a pretty dress with a necklace and fancy shiny shoes.

“Okay Oxidore,” said Spedlana. “I’m ready to pair up.”

“No, No, No, that is wrong,” said Oxidore. “Super scary mega monsters don’t wear nice clothes.”

“But I’m a love monster, Oxidore. I’m supposed to wear nice clothes.”

“You’re a terrible monster,” said Oxidore while he walked away.

While walking away, he noticed some other monster pairs had changed into nice clothes like Spedlana. Oxidore’s friend Shelvin was one of the monsters now wearing nice clothes.

“Shelvin, what are you doing?” asked Oxidore.

“I’m turning into a love monster like your partner,” Shelvin replied. “It looks cool to be a love monster.”

Oxidore and the teachers shook their heads in disgust. On to lesson number five.

Next the teachers taught them how to hypnotize people. First, the teachers gave every monster a magic wand. Then, the monsters had to say a spell. Finally, they were able to command people to do whatever they told them.

Oxidore told the people he hypnotized to hit themselves in the head. Four other monsters had people make chicken noises while spanking their behinds.

The other monsters decided it was better to be a love monster than a bad monster. Spedlana and forty five other monsters hypnotized people and had them play ring around the rosy.

“No, No, No, that is wrong,” said the teacher.

“But we are having fun with the people,” said Spedlana.

“Monsters don’t have fun with people, they make them do things to embarrass themselves.” said the teacher.

“But we are love monsters and love monsters are suppose to have fun,” said Spedlana and the forty five other monsters.

The four monsters who were working with Oxidore wanted to join Spedlana’s group.

“Can we become love monsters too?” asked Faly, who was one of the four monsters. “We really do not like to scare kids. We were only doing it because our parents made us. We would rather be playing with kids like love monster do.”

“Okay, you can join our group and we can all be friends,” said Spedlana. “The more love monsters the better.”

Finally the teachers gave up and decided to turn their school into a school for love monsters. One thousand monsters enrolled in the school. More than they ever had before.

Spedlana became one of the teachers at the new school. And Oxidore became the first new student!

## **A Trip Down Memory Lane**

By Hanna Lutz

No Work, no school, no business trips, nothing. Nothing except for bagels and a bike ride, that's it. Every Sunday morning, stomach growling in anticipation, I would stand patiently by my father's side as he read the news and sipped his coffee; two events that seemed to go on for eternity. Finally he would finish and I would scurry out into the garage, my tennis shoes squeaking on the floor. One, two, three! I would finally reach the garage door opener after two failed attempts. Taking the stairs two at a time, I waited by my father's impossibly huge bicycle. Watching as he hooked up the carriage called the Burley. My father would take from a shelf my iridescent turquoise helmet.

"Chin up," he would say, as he fastened the tight-fitting helmet. Clumsily and without much grace due to limiting factors of the helmet, I would climb in and be greeted instantly by the warm, plastic smell, and the cramped uncomfortably seating. As soon as my fraying black lap belt was clipped to ensure safety, we were off. Every little bump along the sidewalk was magnified, but the speed was exhilarating. I would, out of habit, try looking out the windows, but it was not to avail. The smudged, scratched and brittle sheets of plastic buttoned haphazardly to the rest of the contraption were now virtually useless, and served no purpose other than to keep the place from being completely black.

The whirring of my father's bicycle tires and the quiet whistling of the wind through the holes in the windows that had once been nice and to some degree relaxing soon became tedious and annoying. It was time for the ride to be over, and the destination to be reached. Finally, even through the sad, dilapidated excuse for a window,

the Burger's Bagels sign could be spotted. Off came the seat belt, and the door would be half unbuttoned before the jolt of my father hitting the breaks came. My eagerness morphed immediately into patience, however, when it came to waiting for my father to dismount and lock up the bike. There was no way going in there alone. Too many people, too many adults, too many confusing things. I was perfectly content with waiting for my father; however long it took.

Once he was ready, he would take me by the hand.

## Leaving New Aiden

By Nicole Bills

The sky was a vivid foreground as I walked away. The city lay behind me with its light sparkling like precious jewels set into the darkening sky.

It wasn't easy to do this. I slowed, just considering what I was leaving behind, all the memories of the first part of my life, the joys and sorrow of childhood. A muted strand spanning out behind me, anchoring me like a ball and chain.

But now I was leaving.

- - -

It started with the list.

I was sitting at the kitchen table as my mother cooked and my father watched TV from the other room. On the sheet before me I was making a list of jobs I wanted to have when I grew up. We'd been studying old jobs in school that day – the ones that were considered unsafe or unnecessary.

In my notebook I had written:

1. Astronaut
2. Philosopher
3. Deep sea explorer

“What are you working on, Kaylyn?” Mom asked, drying her hands on a dishtowel and coming over.

Proudly, I showed her the list. Future Jobs was written at the top in my loose, slightly messy handwriting. Her expression grew worried as she read the page.

“Rob?” She called for my father at the same time her eyes flicked up from the list.

When the TV had been flipped off and Dad stood beside her, my mom finally spoke.

“Kaylyn, I don’t think you’re ready yet to decide what you want to do but I really don’t think these are the kind of pursuits you want to dedicate your life to.”

“Where’d you even learn this stuff?” my dad asked.

“At school. We had a whole day on old careers, you know, ones from back before the days of Civilization and Culturization,” I said, parroting the cornerstones of our city.

“But why don’t people do them anymore? Why can’t I do them?”

“Because sweetheart, being any of those things would be dangerous,” Mom said.

“What about philosophizing?” I asked.

“It’s not a necessary career. We need people who can achieve things in this world.”

I didn’t say anything out of fear of disappointing my parents.

My mom folded up the list. “Why don’t you focus on something else, like being an accountant, seamstress, or doctor?”

“Or a gardener?”

Dad was a gardener. I remembered him telling me once when I was little that it was the most creative pursuit one could follow. I didn’t know what creative meant back then, but I assumed it had something to do with importance. While gardens merely took up small parks in the cityscape, like jewel-toned oases within a desert of concrete architecture, they were the most beautiful thing our city offered. Indeed, the only beautiful thing.

He ruffled my hair and went back to the TV as my mom resumed cooking.

- - -

The next day during break I left my usual schoolyard games and walked over to a bench under the large span of an oak, the only tree in the playground,

We were dissuaded from lying – encouraged to write and speak only the truth – so I kept what I was working on tight against my chest so that no one would see it. I wrote

the lie about a girl who grew up to be an astronaut philosopher who explored the ocean in her spare time.

“What ya doing?” a golden haired girl named Shea asked, walking up to me.

I tucked the notebook tighter against my chest. “Nothing.”

“Come on, Kaylyn,” she said as she placed two fingers over the page and pulled it down an inch. “I don’t care what it is. If it’s bad I won’t even tell you.” She smiled at me, gap toothed.

Though I wasn’t sure I completely trusted her, I liked Shea. More than that, it felt as though it would make my dreams more real if I shared them with someone.

Wordlessly, I handed her the pad of paper.

I stood and paced the light-spotted ground by the bench as she read. When she’d finished, she looked up, grinning.

“You’ve got a great imagination,” she said, passing the story back. She played with her hair for a moment, not looking at me. “Can you keep a secret?”

“Sure. What is it?” I answered.

“Shh!” I can’t tell you here. Meet me at the top of Linger Street at seven tonight.”

“But why?”

“Because it’s a big secret, silly, and I’m not going to tell it to you here.”

“Alright,” I said, and I nodded.

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That night it was an easy matter to get out of the house. I told my parents I was taking Tula for a walk and over to Jimmy’s house. He had been asking seemingly forever to see my dog (we were one of the few families in the city who owned one). Jimmy’s parents and mine knew each other, and so they happily consented for me to visit them. Fortunately, he also lived by Linger Street.

I walked the half-mile there with Tula trotting in front of me and my shadow stretching out to my side. Shea was lurking nervously in the bushes under a lamppost.

“What took you so long?” she asked, coming out to meet me. “And what is that ugly little beast?”

“Shea this is Tula.” I gestured at the little dog sniffing around her feet.

“My mother says dogs are distasteful.”

I glanced down at Tula. I knew it was unusual that we had a pet, but I didn’t think she was distasteful.

“So is having secrets,” I replied levelly.

Shea’s mouth clamped shut.

“So are you going to tell me what it is or not?”

She frowned and gestured for me to follow her down the hushed street. That night, the quiet seemed to hang oppressively over the city. Perhaps it was Shea’s secret, or my feeling of freedom that did it.

We walked down the street, which opened up into the factory part of the city. We slid into an alleyway between two buildings where the lamplight didn’t reach. She pulled something out of her pocket and held it as she took a deep breath to speak.

“A long time ago I found this in the attic,” she said, showing me the pink ribbon clasped between her fingers. “It used to belong to my grandmother, who was a famous dancer.” For a second she hesitated before looking me squarely in the eye. She continued, “Reading your story reminded me how much I wanted to be a dancer. But we don’t have dancers anymore, not since the Revolution.”

I wasn’t sure what to say. I certainly wasn’t going to be like my parents. If she wanted it as much as I ached for the things that I wanted, then I couldn’t try and discourage her. “I think that’s a very good goal,” I said.

“Oh Kay, you’re the best,” she said, hugging me quickly. “But *why* don’t we have dancers anymore?”

I started to say that I didn’t know, but Tula’s sudden and fervent barking interrupted me. She tugged at her leash, yapping at one of the buildings. Quickly, Shea stuffed the ribbon back into her pocket.

“Who’s there?” she hissed.

A miserable Jimmy Shoeman poked his head around the corner. “Hey girls,” he said unhappily.

“What are you doing?” Shea asked, “Following us around in the middle of the night! I could have you arrested.”

I almost pointed out that it was barely dark out and that people hardly got arrested for this kind of thing, but I stopped myself.

Wretchedly, Jimmy wiped his perpetually runny nose. No amount of the city’s medicine seemed to be able to cure it. “I’m sorry. It’s just, well, you passed right in front of my house as I was about to... go for a walk and I happened to hear you talking about...”

“Secrets!” Shea spat. “Which have nothing to do with you.”

“I’m sorry,” he repeated. “I have one too, you know. A secret, I mean.” His voice was barely above a whisper.

“Well, out with it,” Shea said.

Jimmy hesitated.

“You heard mine. You’ve got to tell us one to make it fair.” Shea had been promised information, and she wasn’t giving up easily.

Finally, he spoke. “I want to be an animal trainer,” he said in the tiniest voice I had ever heard.

Shea and I looked at each other. She burst out laughing.

“An animal trainer? You?”

It was a valid point, but I elbowed her so she’d stop.

“What kind of animals?” I asked.

“Big ones. Lions, tigers, dogs. Especially dogs.” He looked fondly at Tula and I imagined him encouraging her to growl and look fearsome. It was difficult to restrain a laugh.

“No one but me likes animals,” Jimmy continued sadly. “My parents won’t even let me get a puppy.”

“That’s not true,” I said at the same time Shea made a face. “I mean, I like dogs.”

Jimmy sighed.

“Cheer up,” I said encouragingly. “I’m sure that you can convince lots of people to like dogs. There’s probably tons of people in the city who would like them if they gave them a chance.”

He mopped his nose but looked a little more hopeful.

“How long have you wanted to be an animal trainer?”

“Since we talked about them in class. But I’d always wanted a dog before that. When I heard about the animal trainers it just felt like it was the thing I was meant for.”

Thus the evening passed, each of us discussing our forbidden aspirations. Looking back on it, I think we all would have forgotten about our dreams if we hadn’t had each other to talk to about them. It made me wonder if all the people who were shopkeepers now, or sanitation workers, or any other boring job in the city, had wanted to be something different when they were our age. I wondered why they had forgotten.

Even the gardeners I could not understand. Their creations were beautiful, it was undeniable, yet also missing something intangible. The rows and rows of flowering bushes, in their pretty color schemes, neatly clipped back and bordered, were as orderly and uniform as the city itself. With each plant engineered for mathematical perfection, the garden lacked a quality of wildness. Without this it seemed to me only a shadow of what it could have been. I felt that a garden should represent freedom from perfection, not be a manifestation of it.

When the sky had grown dark, Jimmy, Shea and I each walked back to our respective houses. The walk home didn’t feel as long, and for the first time since I was little, I looked up and noticed the stars. They shone faintly, as though smothered by the lights below, the glow of lamps in gardens and along the road, of lights in the house windows, of skyscrapers in the heart of the city. But the stars were there nonetheless.

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The next time I talked to Shea or Jimmy about that night was a few days later, during lunch. Jimmy slid into the seat beside me as my table stood up to put their trays away.

“Just a second, Kaylyn,” he said.

I sat back down and set my tray onto the table. With weary eyes, Jimmy scanned the lunchroom. No one was taking any notice of us except for Shea, who was standing in line for dessert.

“I think we should have a meeting again. Tonight.”

“A meeting,” I laughed. “Okay, sure. I’ll talk to Shea. But why?”

Jimmy shrugged. “So I’ll see you tonight?”

“Tonight,” I confirmed, and he stood up and rejoined his table.

After school, I told Shea about what he’d said.

“What does he think this is? A secret club?” she scoffed, though I could tell she was excited by the proposition.

“Are you coming?”

“Yeah, yeah. I’ll be there.”

“Wait, Shea.” I hesitated, unsure. “Have you noticed... people whispering at you?”

She turned back around. “N-no. Why?”

“Because they’ve been whispering at me. Do you happen to know anything about that?”

Shea’s eyes slid away from my face. “Well, I may have mentioned something to a couple of my friends.”

“Something about what?” I said, aghast. “Really, Shea I could get in trouble.”

“For what? There aren’t any rules against talking to people.”

“I know,” I replied, but I couldn’t shake my unease.

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It was nearly dark by the time I got out of the house. I felt bad about deceiving my parents, but there was nothing else for it.

I met up with Jimmy at the end of his street.

“Hey. How...” I trailed off, noticing that his little sister Christiana was at his side. “Hello. What are you doing here? Sweetheart.” I added on the extra word so as to not sound too rude. Apparently it didn’t work; Jimmy was as nervous as I’d ever seen him.

“I’m sorry, Kaylyn,” he said. “I had to bring her.”

“Please quit apologizing. Its fine,” I said with a tense laugh.

I knelt down to Christiana's level. She was barely six and I had no idea how to deal with little kids. Ironically, they made me, a tall twelve-year-old, nervous. "Did your brother tell you what we talked about last time?" I asked her.

She shook her head.

"She told our parents she wanted to be an artist. They acted like they hadn't heard her." There was something like pleading Jimmy's expression.

I stood up. "Jimmy..." I said quietly. "I don't really know what to say. I can't tell her..." What? The truth? Who really knew what that was?

Sighing, I squatted. "Christiana, I promise you, you can be whatever you want to be. I'll help you."

"She has a painting set, but no more canvases," Jimmy said helpfully.

"Well, we'll find something for you to paint on."

The little girl nodded and smiled at me.

"Thanks for doing this," said Jimmy. "She really is a wonderful artist."

"I'm sure she is," I said with a smile at his little sister.

After a few minutes, Shea arrived from another street, followed by three girls from our class.

Jimmy and I exchanged a glance, and I felt bad for ever giving him a hard time.

"Sorry, Kay. They insisted on coming," said Shea, sliding into the alley. She wore her hair twisted up into a bun and tied in place with her grandmother's ribbon.

"We heard about your story," said Maura, one of Shea's friends.

Privately, I narrowed my eyes at Shea, who merely shrugged.

"It was just a story."

Jimmy was looking at me with interest. "What story?" he asked.

And so I recounted the tale for everyone. Telling it was much easier than it had been to wait while Shea was reading it. When I'd finished, we spent a while talking, imagining what our grown up lives would be like. Maura wanted to be an actress, Danae an astrologer, Peri wanted to have more than two kids.

Over the course of subsequent "meetings" I saw their dreams change to other things, but the desire to have a different life than the one being handed to us remained. More kids from our school started coming, most of them in my grade, including the cool

kid Brandon, who I had long had a crush on. We met later and later at night and on different days, but always in the industrial section of town near Lingner Street. I would rather have met in one of my father's gardens, but unlike the gardens the factory streets were always deserted from eight in the morning until six, when the last shift ended. The buildings were all tightly locked up, and there was no reason for anyone to be there.

Aside from us, I'd never heard of any groups meeting in the city. I told my parents I was at the school, receiving special lessons, which was not outside the realm of possibility. I felt horrible to deceive them and I knew this went beyond lying in a story on paper. And whether through ignorance or a desire to trust me, my parents had no doubt that what I said was true.

We ravaged through trashcans, searching for things for Christiana to paint on. We made up stories about kids like us who sang through the streets or played in bands so loud adults had to cover their ears as they passed. We pretended we were already grown up and talked about what we would change. It still frustrated me that nothing – nothing besides our occasionally evenings spent in collusion – actually did.

But we *were* growing up.

This meant harder schoolwork and less free time spent in games and walks in the gardens. Ninth grade year we began a series of essays called rationales, in which we were given an aspect of our city or the Revolution and asked to explain why it was and how it had come to be. Mind blank, I stared at the paper as my classmates scribbled fervently around me. It was the first school assignment I ever received bad marks on.

When I confessed this to my friends, they cajoled me. "Come on Kaylyn, these are so easy," Brandon said with a roll of his gorgeous green eyes. The other kids nodded.

"But they don't make any sense!" I protested. "Since when is the restriction of music within New Aiden a good thing? Or the ban on family-owned gardens? Or the mandatory Civilization and Culturization assemblies on Sundays?"

My friends looked back at me in shock. No one had ever dared to criticize the assemblies.

"I actually enjoy those," Peri said quietly.

"But that's where all of these things come from, you understand that right?" As I said this, I realize I had known it, at least subconsciously, ever since I was little. "The

elimination of excess forms of expression makes us more culturally sound; the sacrifice of our personal freedoms makes us more civilized, but it leaves us with nothing. That's what this is all about."

The others gazed back at me cautiously. I folded my arms. "You all don't really care about changing things do you?"

The only sound was Jimmy Shoeman rubbing at his runny nose.

"I'll be happy if we can get Mrs. Huber to change her dentures," Brandon muttered, and few kids laughed. Shortly afterwards, the gathering was disbanded for the night.

Our next meeting saw only half the people of last week. I blamed myself and my stupid outburst for their disappearance and wished I could take it back. Around the same time, Mrs. Huber called me over to her desk after class. Apparently, she was concerned that I had done so poorly on my essay and was giving me chance to make it up. When I failed that one as well, she suggested (by which I mean mandated) that I attend extra Civ and Culture sessions at 5:30 three times a week. Now I really did have a reason to stay after school, which only made my parents more confused, as they thought I was already taking additional classes.

With the tutoring and the sharp increase of work of this year from last, I had even less time for my friends and our meetings, yet I couldn't sacrifice the only hours of sanity left in my week. Not everyone felt the same.

One by one my friends drifted away. At first I thought it was my criticism that had caused them to stop coming, but gradually I came to understand that our tiny, communal experience of pseudo-freedom could not save them from the lure of their set roles in society, their futures as accountants, seamstresses, and doctors. Not if they wanted to go back. I knew this, but I couldn't understand.

Jimmy moved away to another part of the city to be the apprentice for a clock maker. There even came a day when Shea showed up with her hair hanging limply across her shoulders.

"Sorry, Kay," she said, "but I can't keep coming. I'm too busy now with test prep courses in the evenings." Her voice grew quieter as she continued, "my father wants me

to be a secretary for his firm. I've got to start taking more advanced classes if I'm going to get a job soon. I'll see you at school tomorrow.”

And she dropped her ribbon at my feet and walked away.

I felt more alone then I had ever had before, including that day I had shown my parents the list. Weeks passed. I did see Shea, but not the Shea I had come to know. This girl was quiet, obedient, and studious. She was no longer my friend, not that this was a concept that was even recognized at school. We were all students, people with random, briefly intersecting lives, completely alone but unified. The other kids even avoided me at school, dropping my gaze when my eyes met theirs, trying to comprehend why they would give up the futures they had dreamed of. I was older than I had been when I had asked this question the first time, yet the only conclusion I could reach was this: perhaps people forgot their aspirations not because of the difficulties of achieving what they most wanted, but because it was easier to believe that all that was impossible.

So, I looked into leaving. After all, New Aiden was a city, not a prison. Not in the usual sense anyway. One afternoon when my house was empty I packed a bag halfway full, mostly with food from our kitchen, and I walked to the very edge of town. But I didn't leave then. I stood silently for a long time on the vibrantly green grass of the border garden, facing the emptiness that surround the city for what seemed like miles in every direction. I knew there was a road out there; I'd seen supply trucks come in on it. And supply trucks had to come from somewhere, somewhere, I hoped, with rockets and telescopes and possibly some of the gardens like we had here.

That day I walked home, but I was back a few days later, bag and chest full, one with food, the other imaginings swelling inside me.

It was dusk as I walked away. As I left I wrote another rationale in my head, one that I would never put down on paper until this day. The question was this: ‘what are the benefits of learning one's place in society?’

My answer: *When I was twelve, I had wanted to be an astronaut or a deep sea diver or a philosopher. I was told the first two were too dangerous. And the third, well, it was dangerous too, I just didn't realize it at the time. Philosophy makes people think, and thinking is dangerous. It could make people wonder why they cannot be free, it makes them wonder if their limited existence is really a good tradeoff for so-called-*

*civilization and so-called-culture. I suppose I should be thankful I was forced to write countless numbers of these things; they made me realize the truth. Thank you.*

*The truth is, people like me don't have a place in Eden. We will always question order, we will always desire the forbidden fruit, we will always maintain that the creativity and freedom should not have limits. We cannot belong, not until society itself changes. That is my Revolution.*

It was dusk as I walked away from Eden.