



MERCER COUNTY



2008
**Teen
Arts
Festival**

A Celebration of the Arts

Literary Anthology



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Through the Woods

By Chris Maclean

Walking through the woods one day
I looked around, to take in
The beauty all around me.

The wind howled
Like a wolf on a pitch-black night
Whipping my face with a belligerent fury.

The leaves swirled and the trees rustled,
Oak, Ash, Pine, all singing together
In the song the only trees can sing.

I found myself sitting on a bench near a stream
That trickled along rocks and pebbles, all of them different,
All of them humming a different octave.

As I walked along, I heard the dry leaves,
Crackling under my ever-pacing feet:
A warning to the forest that there was an intruder.

I slowly tiptoed across a massive tree trunk
Which fell long ago fell from its perch amidst the sky
To make a bridge for me.

I spotted a deer
Bounding away from me
As though I sought to harm it, as so many others had.

And as I swept through the thickening groves
I wondered if I, or any other,
Would ever be able to count the number of leaves on the ground.

Of all the things I've seen,
This was the most beautiful
But in many more ways than the eye can see.

The beauty does not lie within the wood itself
Nor in the sight
But in its ability to take you back to the earliest of times.

And where was I, you ask?
Where was I when this was happening?
...I was there to see it all.



The Way of Today or Tomorrow?

Anna Greff

What is the way of the future compared to a day in the present? Would you prefer the zap of a ten-second-cooking beam or a one-minute-microwave to cook your dinner? Personally, I would prefer using an oven, stove, or microwave, like we have now. However that doesn't mean I would mind having them pumped up with some crazy, high technology systems. The future holds many experiences we don't have, but they come at a great sacrifice. That sacrifice seems too big for me to take, which is why I feel more comfortable keeping things mostly how they are in the present. I still like smelling the fresh, burning wood in roaring fireplace, black with ash. Although, an automated hot chocolate maker could just about make my day, after sledding in a winter wonderland in a cold January. Some technology systems are extremely helpful, as long as they can be monitored, and their power can be kept to a minimum. "There is nothing like the present," is my motto.

Imagine a balance beam. On one end of the balance beam is the future. On the other end is the present. The rest of the beam is everything in between. My life would be towards the end with the present. In the life I live today we have some technology, but we are not completely dependent on it. In the story, "Good Old Days," they have robots that clean for you. We have robots that clean for us, like programmable vacuums. However, they aren't so advanced that they can tell what is what, nor have numerous devices built in for particular messes. A robot like that wouldn't bother me the much, because cleaning doesn't appeal to me, and most people, as a luxury. For example, I wouldn't like a reading machine. Reading is a luxury to most people, and having a robot read it to you would take away from the experience. In addition, the human race would take a step backwards. It took a very long time to develop written languages, and if something were to go wrong with technology, nobody would know how to communicate with writing and reading. The present gives us a feeling of self-sufficiency that we can be proud of.

When I wake up in the morning I don't want some automated piece of metal trying to pull a shirt over my head, like there might be in an advanced-technological time. I like having the freedom to make my own decisions. That way I can learn from them and become smarter. If robots and machines made all the decisions, humans would just become bodies roaming the earth. Although, if a robot were to show me which clothes I have match with one another, that would be quite useful. Also, a robot that picked up clothes from my floor and put them away would be helpful as well. For anything that isn't considered a luxury, a robot could surely fill in. Small electronic devices like coffee makers, cell phones, microwaves, and televisions, are the right amount of technology in my opinion. They're the right amount because they wouldn't work without a human to operate them. This is important because we still have to contribute, even though we're taking a shortcut.

Humans need to take part in their activities to give them a sense of purpose and pride.

A human, is a human, not a useless zombie. Unfortunately, if we're not careful about how far technology advances, that's exactly what we could become. I feel the ways of the present are better than they could be, compared to the high-technological life, like in "Good Old Days." The people in that family felt tired just from watching people play sports. I would feel pretty pathetic if that were me. I'd much rather get some good old fashioned exercise, like we do in the present. In addition, if technology did everything for us, we'd never have to lift a finger. That would be bad because robots would end up running the world. We're the dominant species, and we shouldn't create something that could overthrow us. That would just be flat out dumb. When we do chores and activities for ourselves, we feel purposeful, proud, and full of pride. Humans and especially I would be bored constantly if I had everything done for me. I enjoy the present and all of its chores, much more than little bit of the high-technological future that I could appreciate.



Music Is My Life

Deja Register

Music is my life
Music is like the air that I breathe
Music is like the blood running through my veins
It keeps me going day by day.
Music is my friend, music is my sibling
When I feel helpless and sick
Music is like the I - V's running through my veins
To make everything better.
Music is my anti - drug.
I go to sleep listening to music
I wake up listening to music
I take a shower listening to music
Music motivates me to keep going
Music is like a best friend that is always there for you.
When you feel like you have nobody else,
Singing every lyric of every emotion that I feel
Singing my happiness
Singing my past
And singing my future
Music is my life.

So Why Can't U Luv Me?

Ashley Moore

Every morning I wake up
Make breakfast 4 u
I even watch ya kid's 4 u
So why?
Why can't u luv me?
I go 2 work
Bring the money home 2 u
So u can do what u wanna do.
So why?
Why can't u luv me?
I even give u my car when u want me 2
I even stopped keeping in contact with my family 4 u
So why?
Why can't you luv me?



Lil's Story

Harley Schwing

I have been looking for someone to listen to my story for years. Thank goodness I found you. My name is Lily but everyone calls me Lil so you might as well, too. I guess I should start when I was happy. That was when I was thirty-eight. I taught 7th grade math. I had a five year old son named Frank and a husband named Cameron. It was February 17th 1997 and I had to go back to work after a four-day weekend. My husband and I dreaded going back to work but Frank was excited. Don't get me wrong, I love my job, but everybody loves a never-ending break.

When I got to work it was 6:30 in the morning. Only an hour and twenty minutes until my first block class. First block was Middle School Math. Yes, I know that that is the lowest level but a sweeter bunch of kids you couldn't find. I had a lesson planned that I thought was fun. We were going to use the new laptops to make graphs, but first they got to use the time they needed to survey each class on anything from shoes and shopping to foods and friends. Lucky for me my first block students thought the project was fun, too.

Second block was Algebra I. These were the super smart ones. I think some were smarter than me. Their project was to research famous mathematicians. You know people such as Blaise Pascal. I admit this might be boring but I wanted my

students to learn.

Third block was Pre-Algebra. The project in this class was to make a blueprint. They also had ten questions to answer about measurement. These students were very smart just not smart enough to be in Algebra I. They were a nice class. I loved all my classes.

Next period was lunch then the "cycle" would start over again - Middle School Math, Algebra I, and then Pre-Algebra. On my way home I would pick up my son. He gets out only about 15 minutes after me. Other teachers usually stay later but not me, Frank is more important. He went to Slackwood School. After I got him we would go home. At home I would make him a snack to eat then he would do his homework. At this age it was usually coloring. Then we would watch Blue's Clues. Cameron would get home about now. I would make dinner and after we ate Frank would go to sleep. Then Cameron and I would watch TV and go to sleep.

I continued this routine for about four months. Then one day I simply felt too ill to go to work. I went to the doctor and he immediately sent me to the hospital. There they told me to go home. They said they had taken some tests and would call me if there was anything to worry about. I figured I wouldn't worry. At the moment I just wanted to sleep. And so I did.



The Journey

Gavin Gronenthal

I fall upon the road of life
I almost give up this time
But those who see me through the strife
Will help me continue to climb

My friends who help me stand
Whenever they know I must
Always give me a helping hand
And for that they have my trust.

My family who keeps me on my feet
In any way they can
Know the goals that I must meet
For they were there when I began

But what makes the journey continue for me
Is none other than she.

Hope

Gravin Gronenthal

Does no one understand?
The world is a cold place.
Dark, filled with shadows
That haunt even the bravest man
But there is always hope.

Does anyone realize?
The world is a cruel place.
Evil, controlled by demons
That have hold of even the strongest man
But there is always hope.

Hope is what unites people
And allows them to stand up
Against oppression.
The one man with hope
The ones who believe
Will always triumph over
The bravest and the strongest.
Because there is always hope.

The Music Man

Gravin Gronenthal

Born in a working town
He grew up strong
He had no idea
What would come along
He would be on top of the world
Nothing would bring him down
And not even death
Would take his crown

He and his friends
Wrote songs for the world to sing
And as they left each other
He was still the king

He is on top of the world
Nothing can bring him down

And not even death
Can take his crown
He went home one night
To find death itself
He was killed in cold blood
Never finished proving himself
But he is still on top of the world
Nothing will bring him down
Because not even death
Will take his crown



A Break for Family

Jeanette Cibelli

The school bell sounded at exactly 2:30 pm, signaling to everyone that school was over for the day. There was normally a stampede for the door and at least one kid was pushed down the stairs. It was different today. Don't get me wrong, there was the normal stampede and toppling of innocent children, but today, it was six times worse. The second we stepped out of the school's front doors, we were on spring break, and naturally, everyone wanted to be first.

Today, it was my turn to be pushed down the stairs. My books went flying everywhere and three of my pens were crushed. What a wonderful way to start spring break. Now, I may be beginning to sound like an extremely negative person that hates all things that make people happy. But I'm not. I'm just not excited for the coming week. Finally, I managed to pick up all my books and got out of that school before I was run over again.

The reason I'm sure my spring break will be a bust is because I am spending the week with the closest thing to a pack of wild animals, my family, which consists mostly of cousins. But I won't be with only my cousins, oh no, but also with multiple aunts, uncles, grandparents, brothers, and parents, too. That's right. I'm going to a family reunion.

"You're overreacting," my friend, Miranda, told me when I complained. "I would love to have that many relatives!"

"Easy for you to say," I said. "You don't."

Fifteen hours into spring break, my family parked our car in front of a big white house, where there were already at least ten cars parked. I groaned internally. My groan must have been louder than I expected, because Mom turned around in her seat and gave me the "Now remember, Mamie, these people are your

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family," lecture. I immediately launched into my recollection of the last family reunion when I practically took a shower in chocolate pudding, thanks to my cousins. It's a long story, don't ask.

Dad honked the car horn three times and suddenly a wave of people rushed out of the house and at our car. My mom, dad, five brothers, and I were pulled out of the car and thoroughly embraced by everyone. I was kissed on the cheek by Aunt Kelly, Aunt Leah, Uncle Pete, my grandma, and my great-aunt Bertha. I smiled for everyone even though I did not want to be there. I politely answered any questions thrown at me.

Just as everyone was calming down, a second wave of people ran out of the house. This time, they were screaming. Here come the cousins. When they reached us, I was ran at and picked up football style by Shawn, my seventeen-year-old cousin, with my stomach right on his shoulder. I screamed and kicked and finally I was put down. I was then attacked by every other one of my cousins, ranging from age four to twenty-three. Have I ever mentioned I hate my family?

Three days later, I was in one of the guest rooms sitting on the bed reading while all my cousins were outside playing two-hand touch football. Someone knocked on my door and came in without my approval. Christina, my oldest cousin, came in. I smiled and tossed my book on the floor. Christina was my only cousin I could tolerate, because she was beyond pulling all of the bristles out of my hairbrush. She sat down on the bed next to me.

"Hey, kiddo," she said smiling. "I came to say bye. I've got to drive back to college tonight so I can make my calculus exam."

"No! What am I going to do with you gone? Everyone else hates me and play practical jokes on me every waking moment!" Christina laughed.

"They don't hate you. But maybe if you got involved with football or whatever other games they play, you might find someone else waking up in the tree house." She said bye again, kissed my forehead, and left. As much as I hated it, she made sense. I was always the one that sat in the corner and read instead of being with everyone else. No wonder I was the target. I put my book down and walked outside.

I went up to all my cousins, all laughing and purposely missing passes to make their siblings mad, and said, "Can I play?"

They looked at each other and finally, Shawn smiled and said, "Come here and I'll show you how to throw a spiral." I smiled and ran over to him.

For the next few days, I played football, wrestled, started food fights, and I even once helped pull a prank on one of my brothers. Christina had been right. It felt good to be included, and it felt even better to wake up to the sound of Shawn screaming in the tree house.



Free Verse

Claudia Abebe

I'll love you forever

I've have a secret for you and me.
About you and me.
Even though we're apart,
I know we are meant to be.
I'll love you forever.
Even when I'm old and gray
Even when I'm taken.
I'll love you every day.

I'll find my way.

I don't understand why they put me down.
Why they tell me that I won't get anywhere in life.
But I always and forever will know that
I'll find my way.

I don't understand why they beat me to a pulp.
Then call me "sweetie" the next second.
Why they tell me they hate me.
But I always and forever will know that
I'll find my way.

I don't understand why they treat me different from all of the rest.
Why they get fancy things, and I get zip.
But I always and forever will know that
I'll find my way.

(no title) Dedicated to my friends (Mikel, Yasmin)

We have had some good times
And we had some bad times
But you have always been there with me
When times would get rough.

Friends come and go
Some may even stay
You guys will be my friends forever.
No matter what obstacles we face.

A true friend will be there no matter what
No matter what you do or how you act
And you guys have treated me well
I love you guys always and forever.

Always know that
Whatever you face
I'll be a true friend to you
Until God calls me home.

Tell me why.

Tell me why I love you with all of my heart.
But you don't love me
Tell me why I think about you.
But you don't think about me.
Tell me why.
Why I want to hug you.
But you never want to hug me.
Why I want to kiss you.
But you never want to kiss me.
Tell me why I want to spend time with you.
But you don't want to spend time with me.
Tell me why I adore you.
But you don't adore me.
Why I am I always getting my heart broken.
Why I'm always full of resentment.
Somebody, Anybody, please
Tell me why.



Unimaginable Friends Forged by War

Chris Lin

September 7: Today was my first day of school in America. A few months ago, Father saved a group of American soldiers from an ambush on the road to Aghche-Kands. Al 'Queda found out what he did, but somehow, we were sent to America so we wouldn't get killed. We live in Baltimore now, and I go to Oakland High School. The teachers told my classmates I was from Iraq, and they stared at me. There was especially one boy in my science class who kept staring at me as if he wanted to hit me. As usual, Mother and I ate dinner alone since Father was working at night as a ShopRite clerk. During the day, he works as a custodian in our apartment building. Life is different now. I must help, too.

September 7: The first day of school didn't go too badly! Even though the high school is really big, I wasn't late for any of my classes. There was also a new guy, Omar Beker who's in my Honors Biology class. He's Iraqi, and kids are making fun of him already. I dislike him as well because my brother, David, got killed

fighting in Iraq a year ago. Mark, my other brother, is in Iraq right now, and I miss him, too. I had dinner alone again; Dad's away on a business trip, and Mom has the night shift at Johns Hopkins Hospital. Oh yeah, Mr. Banker, my science teacher, told us we would have to do a special project. Hope my partner's Joe; he's really smart.

October 27: Today was horrible! Mr. Banker paired me with John, the kid who kept staring at me the first day of school! He wouldn't even talk to me. Then, at home, Mother wanted to go back to Iraq where Father taught literature at University of Dohuk, but he refused. He said it would be too dangerous because Al 'Queda knew what we did. My parents argued all night, and now I'm starting to wonder whether coming to the U.S. was such a good idea after all.

October 27: What a lousy, stinky day! Omar's my science partner. Oh well, I can't worry about that now because of tomorrow's basketball game. I play shooting guard, and we Scorpions are going to cream the Bobcats! Mark's also coming home from Iraq tomorrow! It's going to be an awesome day!

October 28: My family is invited to someone's home for dinner next week I wonder who since we don't know anyone.

October 28: Today was the best day of my life! When the basketball game started, we were losing by twenty points, but at the end, we won, 105-98. The crowd went wild! This wasn't the only great thing about today because Mark watched me play! I was so glad to see him! He said some special people will come over for dinner next week. I wonder who they are and why they're special.

November 4: Today is the worst day of my life! At the Chinese restaurant where I work, I was putting away the dishes when John and his entire basketball team came in for lunch. I was embarrassed that they would see me so I quickly went inside the kitchen. I helped wash the dishes and didn't come out until they left. I think Mr. Woo understood.

November 4: Today was so weird. During the victory lunch at China Buffet, I saw Omar; he was a busboy there! We all kind of made fun of him. We had guests over for dinner. Mark said this was the family who saved his life in Iraq! I felt awkward. I hate the Iraqis because David got killed there. Now, I feel grateful to this Iraqi family for saving Mark. The father, Mr. Beker, was very polite and said he was glad to meet me, and even asked if I knew his son, Omar! Great, just great. This is the guy I dislike the most, and his family saved my brother's life! I feel lousy as I thought of the times I made fun of him, but I don't know if I can change. I still hate the Iraqis for what happened to David.

November 6: At school, people stared at me and whispered behind my back. I heard the word "busboy" a couple of times. I was walking past a couple of guys, and they shoved me around. I was about to cry when John appeared and told them to stop. I was surprised! Someone was helping me, and it was the guy who hated

me. They looked shocked, but left after calling John an "Iraqi lover." During lunch, he sat with me, and we went over our science project. I felt good for the first time in school. Maybe John and I can even become friends.

November 6: I don't know what came over me today. When a bunch of guys started to pick on Omar, I just couldn't stand it so I made them leave him alone. I had lunch with Omar, and we talked about our science project. During basketball practice, some of my teammates ignored me. I know why, but it doesn't matter to me. Omar's not a bad guy once you get to know him. Who knows? We might even become friends.



SUFFOCATE

Kennith Aaron

Whenever we're up in this bed
And my fingers fall in your hair
I wonder if you feel me watching you
Cuz I can't go a night without your lovin'
Got me looking at this phone
Every time it rings I hope it's you girl.
You got me bracing for your love
And I've fallen for you I can't lie
I just wanna be with you
And yes she got me. There I said it.
Somebody call the paramedics.
Tell 'em to hurry up and come through
Cuz I can't breathe when you talk to me.
I can't breathe when you're
Touching me.
I suffocate when you're away from me
So much love you take from me.
I'm going outta my mind, (I'm going outta my mind)
I can't breathe when you talk to me
I can't breathe when you're touching me.
I suffocate when you're away from me
So much love you take from me
I'm going outta my mind.



Seasons: Written in Winter

Mackenzie Crow

Dear my children, come around
Hear my faithful, mournful sound
About the seasons, come and past
And how much longer they will last
In my story, I will start
With he who brings the world apart
His name is Winter, brother of snow
And as you all hopefully know
He is cruel, self-hearted and mean
Despising all who adore green
But there is a weakness to his touch
A faithful sister who knows much
Her name is Spring, and she will be
A faithful heart in destiny
When she comes, the clouds will break
And then the flowers, shall all awake
The sun will rise, the moon then fall
And all the birds sing, their morning call
And when her beauty, exotically colored
And all the butterflies, gracefully fluttered
Her brother will rise from his den
And start his work, yet again
His name is Summer, and after rain
Assists all fanners, with their grain
All the children, even you and me
Will run outside, and let him see
The happiness he has brought to us
And for three months, we shall play
In the light of the day
But soon he shall, go to rest
And give the birds, back their nest
Then give his power to another
His oldest sister, a single mother
Who has her children, born on trees
The words we know, we call them leaves
The mother's name, known as Fall
Or Autumn, we know them all

She rides the winds, through the day
And tells us stories, that will stay
And in the night, she will prance
With her children, they shall dance
But in time, when days grow short
We will see, shapes of sort
These shapes are white, dead and cold
But their beauty, truth behold
Will be a sign, to our mother
To resign her power, to another
Her brother Winter, cold, but not dead
An icy crown, upon his head
But for now wait, for Sister Spring.
And hope for the happiness, she will bring



The Remembrance

Shannon Moore

It's been a month now since my mom has smiled, since my dad has laughed, and since my brother got into a fatal car accident and passed away. I remember that night quite well. It was a stormy October's evening as the entire student body of Jefferson High School gathered to support the Boy's Varsity Soccer team in the championship game. It was pouring as I stood in the stands with my mom, dad, two younger brothers, and little sister. We watched as my older brother Jake, who was captain of the soccer team, storm down the field with the ball. One by one he beat each defender down the sideline. Slowly approaching the sweeper he made a simple cut around him and drilled the ball past the goaltender and into the right hand corner of the net. The crowd went wild. The score was now tied 2-2 in over time with 25 seconds left on the clock. Then, Jake was fouled, in the eighteen. It was a penalty kick; if he made this goal then his team would win the championship. A sudden rush of anxiousness came over the crowd as we all watched Jake prepare for the deciding goal. The ref blew his whistle and Jake hit the ball low and hard into the left corner of the net. The crowd was on their feet chanting and cheering Jake's name. Teammates rushed to congratulate him as they all celebrated their big win. But, what my family didn't know was what we thought would be a tremendous night, would soon turn into the absolute worst. Jake along with a few of his buddies from the soccer team went out after the game to celebrate, they were all drinking and Jake then got into one of his friend's cars. At about 1:54 in the morning our doorbell rang, and it was a police officer. He told my parents that there had been an accident and Jake was found dead at the scene.

I remember laying in bed hearing my mom hysterically crying, and my dad as well. Tears quickly filled within my-eyes and they slowly began to run down my cheeks for I knew my older brother was not returning home that night. As I sat in bed hoping and praying that what I had over heard wasn't true, Mikey, Chris, and Reily all walked into my room, petrified.

"Katie, why's mommy crying?" My four-year-old sister Reily asked. I quickly wiped my tears, and said, "Come here you guys."

They all sat on my bed with the most innocent and adorable faces, I was debating whether or not to tell them the truth about their brother, but I decided I would tell them in the most honest and pure hearted way.

I smiled then took a deep breath saying, "Mommy's crying because she's really upset. Tonight, Jake got into an accident and he was sent to where grandma is; heaven. He thought that she may be lonely having no one there with her, so he decided that he would go see her."

"Will Jake ever come back?" Mikey asked.

"No." I responded hesitantly.

Tears began streaming down all four of our faces; we all then tried to go to bed, but all we heard was both of my parents sobbing downstairs.

The next morning was the hardest for everyone. My mom sat looking out the window; silent, and my dad sat on the couch drinking a beer, also silent.

"Mommy! Mommy! Come play chalk with me." Reily asked while tugging my mom's pants.

"Not now Reily." She said without looking at her.

"But, please mommy!" She asked.

"REILY, NOT NOW! Didn't you hear me before?" She snapped at her, gripping her arms tightly.

Reily then burst into tears and ran away. I followed after her and as I looked back at my mom I noticed she was staring out the window like before, as if she hadn't done anything to her 4-year-old.

Mikey and Chris, twins, and in the second grade, loved to play soccer. Jake used to play friendly games with the two in our backyard, but since his death they have played by themselves. The boys walked into the family room where my dad was sitting and asked him to come play soccer with them in the backyard, but my dad made no movement.

"Dad?" Mikey said, "Soccer?" Putting the ball in front of his face. "Hello? Dad? YO JOHN!"

My dad suddenly grabbed the soccer bailout of Mike's hands and threw it with such force at the fireplace that everything was knocked off the mantle.

"THAT WAS JAKE'S SPORT, NOT YOURS." My dad screamed at them and then walked away.

Hero

Rachel Friedman

A hero is someone who puts up a fight,
Who'll take a stand for a life, thing, or fight.
This hero does not need to be someone old,
That you find in a history book forgotten and cold.
Heroes come in all shapes and sizes,
They don't even need to have won noble prizes.
To prove this fact to you I will say,
A hero is someone you meet everyday.
In fact, you're my hero because you play the part,
To fight and defend each living heart
Of American people, the good, bad and wise,
And I believe that is the noblest prize.

The beach - my heart

Rachel Friedman

Water crashing
Waves are bashing,
Sand is heating
People fleeting.
So I sit here,
All alone
Thinking thoughts
That no one's known.
I turn to see my conscience there
Upon my shoulder without a care.
It's dazed expression,
My deep depression,
Fit smoothly together,
In the pit of my heart.

Cover

Rachel Friedman

When no one understands
When no one comprehends
How do you explain to them
What you can't explain to yourself?

Why you laugh,
Why you cry,
Why you smile
Even when you're not happy.

Why you hide,
Why you scream,
Why you talk to empty spaces
Just to fill the void.

Everyone cries and smiles,
Everyone screams and laughs,
But if you knew the reason behind the emotion
You may not respond the same.

So when I laugh,
When I cry,
When I scream,
When I smile,
It may not be exactly what it seems.

Look beyond what you see,
But only if your willing to deal with what you find.



A Short Lived Beauty

Kaitlyn Quis

'Sit here Marie,' says my father. I squeeze through a small crowd of standing people on an old New Jersey train. And what do you know; a boy about 17 years of age is sitting right across from me. He quietly watches me as I take a seat right across from him, I take a peak at him from my seat, he notices immediately but it scares us both, so we look away and pretend it never happened. I started to read a book while he was sitting there staring into space, his astounding green eyes boring right through mine. At that moment all I wanted to do was say, hi, but being the coward I am, I ignored him and pretended to enjoy reading my book. 'Next stop Princeton Junction!' the train conductor announced. The boy sitting across from me started to get up and leave; I winced at the sight of having to let him slip through my fingers, it feels as if I've known that boy all my life. He gave me one last look and was gone.

Warm rays of light are kissing my pale white body; I lay there, blood is oozing down the parking lot by my head. At around six in the morning I try to lift my frail body up to see where exactly the injury or injuries are located, but I almost

black out in the process. The recollection of what has happened is coming to me in waves of shock. I double over. Fights, blood, love, pain, and grief surround me and I drop into a vortex of darkness.

This time the little rays of light are coming from a very peculiar looking ceiling, and I notice that tubes are reeling out of my nostrils, and nurses are poking and prodding me all over. I have never felt so analyzed and uncomfortable in my life. A doctor whose name was Dr. Rubinstein came in and told me I had broken a couple of ribs, and had a slight concussion from a rather large cut on my head. He then asked me if I remembered what happened; I lied and said that I was mugged. One of the nurses told me I could get out of the hospital in a couple of weeks. The doctor also wondered if I had parents who could pay the bill. I told him no and he then left thinking that my concussion was getting in the way of correctly answering his questions. All the nurses left too, they told me to get some rest, and that they'd be back later with some 'delicious' broccoli soup.

I decided this was my only chance to run for it. I figured that I could take some of the money I had left in my jacket pocket and buy one train ticket to get away from the hospital, my home, my family. .. my life. I needed to start fresh, rise above my problems, straighten out everything that happened that dark day, (God, was it really only one day? It felt like an eternity), and mend all of the trauma and grief I am feeling at this very moment. I hopped off of the train in Queens, New York. Then, I stealthily walked down a small crooked alleyway, where I decide to sleep underneath a large highway bridge. Although, I couldn't fall asleep, for the memories logged inside my head were screaming for some vicious escape.

It was a chilly Friday morning on March 25, 1928 that I saw the love of my life looking as if the world had dropped onto his shoulders. The look he tried to conceal beneath a grin scared me half to death. As if, if he dropped the world it would shatter into a billion tiny pieces of sharp rocks, then they would enter his body like pins, and hence end his short life. Shivers ran up and down my spine. Ever since I had met Jack, he's shown me what he's known as: a hoodlum, a street rat, a no good juvenile kid. He's also shown me the way he survived: selling fake license plates 'under the table.' I admit that I was afraid, but decided that I could live even with his darker side, as long as it was necessary. Now that's not the Jack I came to know and love, that was his 'on the side job.' The Jack I found was playing guitar at a New Jersey bar where all the gangs hung out. Jack was a very artistic boy; he also drew pictures and took pictures as well. Capturing the short lived beauty of life was all he ever wanted to do; whether it was through songs, pictures, or any type of art form for that matter.

At that time I was only 15 years old and foolish to have gotten involved with such a messed up boy. The practicality and reasoning in my head flew out as soon

as I met Jack. But I couldn't help it, for as they say love makes us do crazy things, and I was drowning in it. Later that year Jack started trading license plates with a new gang and they paid well, but were cruel and demanding. Jack spent hours a day now locked up in his room smoking cigarettes, and spray painting fake numbers onto large pieces of metal. One day I confronted Jack and told him to quit this illegal nonsense and run away with me. I'd leave school when I turned 16 and we could just live together in peace, forever. Jack and I fought for a couple hours on the subject and eventually we both just broke down crying. Jack wished he could do that, but said that the gang would kill him if he stopped, and that he didn't want me to drop out of school to become a 'nobody' like he was. I devised a plan anyway, (Like I said I'm not rational at all), and after hours of persuading Jack agreed to it.

A year later, on that morning that brought chills down my back Jack and I put the plan into action. I packed all of my things from my house and told my family that I was going to my friend Emma's house for a family camping trip, and wouldn't be back for a couple of days. As soon as I closed the door I took off in a rush, the wind in my hair, the warm, inviting sun caressing my every move. A feeling of pure joy overtook my insides until I saw Jack's face that morning. He was already packed and was waiting to drop off a pound of fake license plates to the gang at 7:00 PM that night; until that time we were to pack a weeks supply of food and water for ourselves.

Finally, we hopped onto a train and jumped off around where Jack always trades off the plates. They questioned why I was with Jack. All of the sudden they caught on to us, and all too quickly one of the gang members pulled out a small razor sharp knife. And all too quickly did he charged at Jack and heaved the knife into Jack's finely built body. And all too soon was the last breathe of my lover taken away, as he fell to the ground under the street light lamps that flooded the parking lot. 'JACK!' I cried. Then, the gang turned to me, I tried to sprint out of the parking lot, but I just wasn't fast enough. Around a corner and across a street the men trapped me and beat me silly until I was knocked unconscious.

So that's what happened...the next morning I took a train back to New Jersey after I was found, and screamed at by my worried father for lying to him. The boy I saw on the train was someone I knew, he was Jack...the Jack whose innocent body is not going to be buried, but thrown into some unnamed pit, forever to rot there without me. I saw him on the train for I was blinded by the pain and grief that was left in my bear flesh. A ghost if you will, which will always remain with me...he will haunt me for eternity and remind me of the days when I had drowned in love.



Winter Snow

Shannon DeFillipo

The sights of winter are in the air,
Watch as the snow floats everywhere,
It drifts and swirls down to the ground,
It dances its own beat to the winter sound.

Life itself will be put on hold,
Watching the first winter snow unfold,
Children run outside to watch in awe,
Telling their parents of what they saw.
Playing and laughing with friends from the town,
Sharing the joy that they had found,
Making snow people and friends of their own,
Waiting for more winter snow to be blown.

A snowball here and a snowman there,
Making for laughs to sound everywhere,
An attack from behind brings a giggle from above,
Then a whack of snow giving the target a good shove.

After the cold and the day is done,
They come inside for warm winter fun,
Hot chocolate and cookies waiting indoors,
Tracking their footprints allover the floors.

Sipping and munching in front of the fire,
Looking out the windows as the snow piles higher,
Parents saying, "You can wait 'till tomorrow!"
As the children sigh in their grief and sorrow.

Snuggled up warm on the couch gathered tight,
Thinking of strategies for the next snowball fight,
Wishing they were cold from the snow,
Instead of warm from the night-fire's glow.

Time for bed in the houses all around,
Weeping slowly to their beds where they're bound,
Tired from all the fun that they had,
Dreaming of tomorrow keeping them glad.

Throughout the night they sleep sound,
Hoping of more snow to fall around,
Wishing in their warm fluffy bed,
That they will ride down the hill in their new sled.

Waking in the morning to another white backdrop,
Listening to the noise of the snows plop,
Gulping down breakfast of eggs and cereal,
Thinking of only the white fluffy material.

Running through the house gathering their gear,
Hoping what they seek will appear,
Rushing to be first out the door,
Slipping across the wet winter floor.

Looking outside to see in surprise,
Watching the delight fill their eyes,
The snow was still there sparkling in the sun,
And now the children are ready for their winter fun.



Untitled

Jennifer Eng

To whomever else this locket chooses,

This is my, Lady Elizabeth of Ariaceble's, account of what happened on July 15, 1680- my sixteenth birthday- and the result of that day.

The soft pitter-patter of rain sounded musical against the roof of my suite. Spreading my curtains, I watched the raindrops fall. It was a glorious summer day, even with the forlorn rain and the approaching lightning. I would have loved dearly to fling myself outside the castle's confining walls and run about singing and dancing- but alas, I could not. My mother would have had a stroke if I ruined my gowns or mucked about in the mud. So, I was limited to entertaining myself within the walls of the castle.

I decided I would go scavenging through some of the castle's old rooms, where my ancestors used to reside. I looked for hidden treasure, lost heirlooms, and beautiful pieces of jewelry; I was most pleased when the novelties that I found were all three. That day I resolved to pick apart my trice great-grandmother's quarters.

That room, like all of the others, had not been touched by anyone since the day the tenant died. Upon entering I tied a clean handkerchief across my nose and mouth. The dust had settled long ago, and I did not wish to disturb it by breathing it in.

I started in the northern most corner, the top left. My search of that room was fruitless, but there was an adjoining door. The other rooms I had searched had an attached room as well, but theirs were on the right, not the left. When I opened the door it was not her personal room, nor the one she shared with her husband, but a

spiral stone staircase. Cautiously, I went up, for I did not know what I would find, or if the whole establishment would collapse beneath me. When I reached the top, I realized that I was in a tower. The walls were made of an incredibly hard stone—a stone that glistened and shone with magnificence that could rival the sun.

I spun around the room, laughing merrily, for I had the intoxicating feeling of joy up in that tower. Suddenly I stopped. It was so sudden that I almost toppled to the floor. The reason for my stop was a recently discovered longing for something, a need to find whatever it was. It felt as though someone had tied a string around my heart and was tugging at it. I had merely followed it obediently— to my great-great-grandmother's rooms, up the stairs, and into the tower. It had only just become more and more insistent with— each passing moment. That same invisible string pulled me until I ended at a long table. My hand reached for something on the wooden table, involuntarily grasping something. Suddenly the need, the pulling at my heart stopped.

I opened my clenched fist. In my hand was the loveliest piece of jewelry I had ever seen. It was a diamond locket with fantastic detail engraved in it. Making several attempts to open the locket, I merely made a fool of myself. The locket refused to open. Slipped the long white gold chain around my neck I clasped it. I glanced at the piles and piles of books in the room, and resolved to go back another time.

Racing down the stairs and closed the door. I then slipped silently from the room and headed from my own suite. Upon entering, I found I had an unexpected visitor. This visitor was one that I had never seen the likes of before.

He had hair the color of onyx, eyes so very startling. They seemed to penetrate me, as if looking into my soul. His eyes looked like mirrors, yet it was not my face that I saw reflected in them, but something else. I could not place it. His skin was translucent; I could see every one of his very blue veins. The very tips of his fangs showed themselves to me. I wanted to scream, but could not. Everything became clearer, my vision, my thoughts, everything. I noticed the air about him shimmered, and the intensity of his gaze, I remembered my flimsy nightgown and how I was still frozen in place. Then he moved. It was not until that moment that I realized that he had not moved either.

He moved with slow deliberation and such grace. The male who stood before me as not human, I knew that much. He closed the remaining gap between us. Bending his head down, he placed his lips in the hollow of my neck. There he extended his fangs and pierced my skin, but it did not hurt. There was a change somewhere inside of me and I knew I could move again, but I did not. Only after I had decided to allow him to stay, did he drink my blood. As he did, a pleasant sensation washed over me. Then suddenly, darkness swallowed me.

When I awoke, it was just as dawn began to fill the morning sky. I thought it

all a dream until I found two punctures on the side of my neck. Looking in the mirror, found myself looking healthier than I had ever been in my life. I could hardly see the wounds. I also found my locket open. Even more strange was the fact that inside of it, a picture of me, in the arms of whoever he was, rested. From the time I awoke to the time I was bid to dress and attend breakfast, I came to several revelations. They were as follows:

1. Whoever was I my room the night of my sixteenth birthday was a vampire.
2. I needed to find out who the said vampire was.

And lastly: The locket that was once in my possession, and is now in yours, was a beacon to the vampire.



Memories Due to Slavery

Phillip Williams

Though I was never part of the slave act,
I can still close my eyes and envision me way back in the days
When humans were called Negros because they were born black.
But luckily we had heroes that stood up for all people who got treated
unequalled,

Tortured and made to work in the corn fields,
Pick cotton until the boss felt like work for the day was fulfilled.

Some of them were lucky to get about one meal,
And even if they heard how you would feel,
Still living in peace was no deal.

Freedom was no option,
Instead they got warped with a rotten limb,
In other words they got beat with a stick.
Understand that if you'd try to escape and got caught,
You'd be left lying on the ground,
Like the belly of a snake.

Chained up or hung,
Murder was no case.
Jail was no place for those who killed slaves.
Which means murdering Blacks was okay,
But the slaves kept praying and praying that
One day things would change, and it did,
Now, we are ranged the same.



S.O.S

Elizabeth Marsh

I traveled to America in 2099
The sun was shining brightly and everything seemed fine
Little did I know, I was part of a sinister plan
I was kidnapped in America by a strange, old man
The next thing I knew, my head was shaved clean
I looked around a bit and noticed everyone wore green
I was given a rifle and told to get in line
I came to America at just the wrong time
It is 2102 and I fight everyday
I was kidnapped by the US Army
They knew I'd be one less person to pay
The war with Iraq has gone on a while
It has been a long time I've seen anyone smile
I am only nineteen and I've seen so many die
Life is a nightmare; my eyes are never dry
I wish the war would end now
But out here wishes don't come true
If they did I would have had a real meal or two
When things finally look bright
It turns out to be another false light
But I'll keep hoping for that one special day to come
The entire world will be peaceful and I'll be back with my mum
I am not giving up
I am staying strong
I am going to survive
I will not be sad for long



Untitled

Lauren Cruz

Scene 1

As the sirens wailed in the distance, Detective Roland Doyle, a former detective at the world famous Scotland Yard, investigated the GenCorp company lab which had been the scene of a brutal murder. The detective took mental notes: Caucasian male, approximately late-forty to mid-fifty years of age, two bullets in

the chest and several stab wounds. The victim was fifty-six year-old Brent Leary, a chief geneticist on the verge of a medical breakthrough to find the cure for several ailments.

Once the police officers left, Detective Roland reviewed the evidence once again. The body had lying undiscovered for some time, because the blood around the body had already dried. There were only two suspects; the doctor's assistant and his daughter, neither of whom were at the crime scene when the body was discovered. Roland's partner, Tom Lennox, was a tall, lean but well muscled man in his late twenties with fair skin and bleached blonde hair which he wore neatly tousled. Tom was busy questioning the suspects as well as employees of GenCorp.

After finishing his interrogations, Tom approached Roland. "Uh, sir can I speak with you?" Tom inquired.

"Why of course," Roland said with a thick British accent as the two walked out of earshot.

"Sir, there is no sign of a murder weapon anywhere at the scene. The security guard didn't let anyone except Brent and his daughter, Hannah," Tom said in an excitable tone.

"Tom, calm down first," Roland replied, placing his hand on Tom's shoulder. "Now, what else can we gather?"

Tom answered, "Come see for you." He led Roland down a corridor to a small windowless room where a young, brunette, lady of medium height sat rather impatiently. "Detective Roland, this is Fallon Balfour." Tom introduced the two with no sign of nervousness.

As Fallon stood and shook hands with the detective, Tom pulled another chair to the corner of the room and sat quietly.

"We're sorry to make you wait, Ms. Balfour," the detective said apologetically.

"No problem," replied Fallon. She was edgy and kept glancing at the door.

"Ok, let's get un with the questions," said Roland....

Scene 2

"I understand that you were the one to call the police. Can you tell me the events leading your call last night?" Instead of the brunette Fallon sitting in front of Roland, the young, very pretty, light headed Hannah Leary was sitting there with red puffy eyes; she was about twenty-six, and fresh out of graduate school.

"Yes, I was at the lab working. I don't know if any security cameras caught me on tape. Anyway, I was working with my dad, when I left for a few minutes to bring a few more lab animals. When I returned, I saw Fallon running out of the room and I saw my dad on the..." Hannah stopped speaking and began sobbing. Tom brought her a cup of coffee and handed her some tissues. She took a sip of cof-

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fee and continued. "I got scared and ran. Only a few hours later did I call the police."

"Why did you run if you are innocent," this time it was Tom who asked.

"I was afraid Fallon would come back and if I tried to call the police, she'd kill me too." Hannah was becoming hysterical.

Tom quickly went over quickly and put his arm around her shoulder to comfort her and reassure her, "It's alright, your fine. Just sip some more coffee and take a few deep breaths," Tom instructed her and Hannah did as she was told.

"One more question?" Roland asked.

"Okay."

"There were many reports of you acting strangely around your father, why do you think that is?" asked Doyle.

Hannah began, "My boyfriend had proposed to me and I was a little afraid of telling my dad that I was getting married. I kept procrastinating but then finally I told him last night. He was happy for me and now he won't be able to walk me down the aisle." Suddenly she began to sob again.

Once again Tom went to her side. He gestured toward the door and said "That's all thank you."

Scene 3

Well, I must congratulate you on a great search though I already knew. Please bring Ms. Fallon Balfour back in." Tom had a quizzical look on his face. Doyle continued, "My dear boy, you must learn to pay closer attention during questioning. Did you not notice that Ms. Balfour said she hadn't been to this lab at all last night or seen the body and later contradicted herself by saying she had witnessed poor Miss Leary kill her own father? It appears she may have been in two places at one time so please do bring Ms. Balfour back."

"You think she's the murderer?" asked Tom.

"Maybe," replied Doyle obtusely.

Tom furrowed his brow, gave a shrug and set out to Fallon's house taking a police officer with him.

As they neared the Fallon's house, Tom could see that her car was parked in the tree-lined driveway leading up to a white house. Tom parked in front of her neighbor's house and quietly instructed the police officer, "Okay, wait here. I'll signal if I need you."

Fallon was seated at her table going through data gathered from the latest experiment when a sudden rapping sound at the door startled her. She looked out the window to see who it was. "Shoot, it's that blonde kid from the crime scene," she thought to herself. She slowly opened the door and asked rather nervously, "Yes?"

"Ms. Balfour I need to ask you to accompany us back to the lab," Tom said

firmly.

"No," answered Fallon.

"Ms. Balfour this is not a request." Tom had an icy calm that scared Fallon. She nervously replied, "B-but I thought you, said I was done."

Tom took her by the elbow and said, "New evidence has suggested a different conclusion.

As they approached the car the assisting officer took Fallon and was helping her into the back seat of the car when suddenly, out of nowhere a large object slammed into Tom's back sending him flying. Slightly dazed, Tom tried to get up but his legs were still wobbly. As he stumbled toward the car, he asked, "What in the world was that?"

The officer gasped, "I-I uh, sir turn around and you'll see."

Tom turned around, "What the...how?" He was clearly disoriented because he was facing Fallon. It took Tom a few seconds to understand.



HIDDEN

Samantha Rivera

I hide all of my feelings
Sadness overcomes the colors in my heart that spread wings
And make my spirit soar like cheerful colors
It has made my dove that's pure and white into a black rain
My heart is torn in two by the gray clouds of the stars
My smile is fake; it carries black wings
People try to make my rainbow pure again
But it only digs deeper into hopelessness and hate
All I seem to do is bury my heart deeper into my moon of hatred
I feel like nobody will ever see the tear within the sunshine
All I do is express my thoughts to the wolfs breath
Just so the petals of fire will not cast upon my enemies
You may think you understand my harsh scar of love
But you don't see the truth of the wolfs howl
Nobody but the one precious raindrop will ever get it
All I seem to do is bury my soul within the air
And try to make the seeing that's blinded see again



Ordinary Day

Lauren Stout

Every story always beginnings with the narrator or main character introducing themselves and maybe even telling the reader about their friendships or good relationships, but this story is different. My name is Cady Martin and no matter how many times I have tried writing about the good things in my life they always spiral around and end up centering on the negative things. I'm an aspiring writer, but people at my school just call me a wannabe because I'm not part of any clique. I have my own style, way of living, and barely any friends. My one and only best friend is the new girl in school. She isn't officially the newest girl to our school anymore, but most people don't know her name, so I guess it just became kind of a nickname. Anyway her real name is Marisol and just like me she has own way of dressing and such. She's from Mexico and wears billowy skirts and peasant blouses to school almost everyday. Marisol was wearing that exact outfit in the photo I received in the mail just an hour ago. I miss her so much and I wish Spring Break would just be over already, so she could come back from Mexico even if it did mean that I would be returning to school. I just don't understand why anyway would want to vacation in the part of Mexico that was once a home to Marisol. The photos on her nightstand (if I remember correctly,) show that she barely bathed as a child because her face was caked with dirt and her faded clothes were covered with holes.

"Caddyyyy, dinner," my Mom shouted. "I'm not hungry!" I shouted back to my Mom. The horrible truth was that I seriously wasn't hungry. Every since break started all I have felt like eating is a bowl of ice cream or a bag of potato chips. My Mom is convinced that there is something seriously wrong with me like an eating disorder, but I have assured her multiple times that I don't have any kind of disorder concerning food. Just as I pressed the "power" button on my laptop my Mom appeared at the door. "Honey, what's going on? Are you feeling alright?" she asked as she put her arm to my forehead. "Mom, I'm fine for the billionth time." Obviously not convinced with my attempt at persuasion my Mom said "Well, I took the day off tomorrow and I have planned a relaxing day at the salon." "Oh, great," I said giving her my biggest fake smile. "Maybe a manicure will help soothe your troubled thoughts," my Mom stated. "Mmmm, well I'm going to hit the sheets early tonight." I mumbled trying to hide my laptop at the same time. "Good night," she whispered quietly shutting the door.

I promised Marisol I would be online at seven and it was already five minutes past. Grunting and all the more making myself feel guilty I signed on to AOL Instant Messenger, otherwise known as AIM. "Damn!" I whisper shouted. Marisol's screen name was listed under offline. I persuaded myself to stay awake for a little

while longer because Marisol never breaks her promises and sure enough in about eight minutes her screen name moved to the online section on my buddy list. She greeted me and apologized for the wait. Apparently her twin younger brothers weren't up for a trip to the library, so she had to walk them to her Grandma's house. We talked for about half an hour before she informed me that her session was up on the computer. I halfheartedly said goodbye and signed off.

The next thing I knew it was morning. The curtains were already drawn in my room and that meant that my Mom was awake. I was very used to the smell of coffee in the morning, but suspiciously no such smell lingered in the house today. After the long walk to the kitchen I found a note next to the fridge that she had already left the salon because she made an appointment. It also said to grab myself a bowl of cereal and take the closest bus to the street where the salon was located. Quickly, coming back to reality I realized that in all of my life spent in LA I have never been on a bus alone. I thought about calling my Mom and telling her that I was sick, but I knew how disappointed she would be. Plus, she would definitely be convinced that something was wrong and take me to the doctor's.

I didn't feel like going through all the trouble of getting up on the counter and sorting through the cabinets to find the cereals I wanted, so I just grabbed a pop-tart and headed for the shower. After, my shower that lasted for only a few short minutes because the hot water seemed to have evaporated out of the faucet I went into my room to look for my favorite shirt. Of course it was in the huge pile of clothes that had somehow missed my hamper entirely. Taking one whiff of the shirt I knew that I would not be wearing that shirt today. Instead I opted for a pair of my most comfortable jeans, a sweatshirt from Berkley University, and my black converse. Walking past my Mom's room I saw her Coco Chanel perfume laying her bureau and figuring I didn't smell like roses I sprayed the heavy perfume quite a few times on my neck and arms. With a quick glance at the clock on my Mom's nightstand I knew that I had to boogie to make the next bus.

I made it to the bus stop just in time to see the bus pull away. Shoot, I knew I was walking too slowly. Checking the bus schedule I realized that the next bus wouldn't be coming for another two hours because the bus drivers had a break. Just as I thought that there wasn't anything that could possibly happen to make my day worse I stepped in one of the biggest puddles I have ever seen. The brown mud that was apparently absorbed in the water throughout the puddle splashed all over my clothes. I heard someone snicker and turned around to see a girl that looked to be about my age (15) quickly look away.



Change

Shelly Sharma

The seasons change all the time
But when seasons change we know that it will happen
When you change how am I suppose to tell
I know you better than everyone, but even I am not a mind reader
To stay together we have to live in the same time
And we will change at the same time
Just say it and I will change with you
Together we will live with the change
We will be great story for the world
As for you and me why should we change, if we fell in love with each other just
the way we were
And the love that exists between us will never change



A Beary Adventure

Sara Byrd

Once upon a time, in the depths of the forest, there lived a family of bears. In the family lived a mommy, daddy, and two cubs. One cub's name was Joey and the other Cody. Cody and Joey were twins and had the same kind of fur. Their fur was midnight black with one honey colored spot on their stomachs. It was very difficult for Mama and Papa Bear to tell them apart. So, Mama gave Cody a blue collar and Joey a green collar, that they never take off.

As cubs, Joey and Cody were complete opposites. Unlike Joey, Cody loved to peacefully read with the butterflies in the meadow. Brutus and Joey started chasing Cody around and eating the butterflies. Brutus then jumped on Cody knocking him to the ground. After he started to scratch and claw at Cody's arms. As Cody escaped from Brutus's vise of a grip he started running home. Crying Cody got to his home and jumped in his mother's arms.

"What happened to you sweet heart?" Mother asked in a concerned tone.

"Brutus and Joey where mean to me because of my secret!" Cody answered crying.

"Wait! What secret?" Mother said.

"That I am... that I am... that I am... a vegetarian!!" Cody screamed.

Just as Cody revealed the largest secret of his life, his father walked into the room. Papa Bear stopped dead in his tracks, with a look on his face that Cody had never seen. Papa looked as though a bus had hit him. Seeing this expression on his

father's face sent Cody hysterically crying out of the room to sob in peace.

"Cody, everyone was laughing with you!" Joey stated as he walked in the room.

"If that was true I would think it was funny, and this is all your fault!" Cody scream.

"This your fault," Joey replied, "You do not fit in here, so leave!!"

That night after dinner Cody packed up his favorite possessions for his life trip to the wilderness. Soon after packing was done, Cody wrote a letter to his mother explaining his difficult decision. He poured his heart and soul into the letter so that his mom would not have any questions. After placing his letter on the kitchen table next to his school picture, Cody left the house. Walking slowly to the end of the driveway, Cody hesitated, but ran off of the driveway. While running Cody realized that he was lost in the woods and began to cry. Then he heard something rustling in the trees

"Hello," Cody asked to the bushes, "Is anyone there?"

"Hello I am Prarthi and I am a panda. Get out of here right now!" the mysterious girl answered.

"I am Cody. I just ran away from home, so can I just stay" Cody asked Prarthi.

"Oh, sorry. You should stay with my family then," Prarthi replied.

Prarthi then started to walk away. Cody thought she wanted him to follow so he grabbed his things and started to walk away. She led them into a different forest. This forest was more like a jungle. Cody liked this about the forest. Out of nowhere, Prarthi stopped walking.

"Are we there?" Cody asked.

Prarthi did not answer Cody's question she just looked up. So, Cody also looked up. Above their heads was a beautiful house that was woven out of bamboo. On the outside of the house were many paintings in all different colors. When Cody finally reached the home a delicious aroma filled his nostrils. He walked into deeper into the bamboo home and saw a family sitting around the dinner table.

"Who is your friend Prarthi?" the panda asked at the end of the table.

"This is Cody, my new friend," Prarthi answered, "This is Sammie, my mom."

"I am Shehara, Prarthi's twin sister," the other girl sitting at the table answered.

"Hey, Shehara I am Cody," Cody replied.

"Funny name, do you have a twin brother? You are kinda cute." Shehara said.

"Actually I do have a twin, but he is extremely annoying," Cody told her.

Once Cody's interesting encounter was over he sat down at the table. Laid out for them to eat was a delicious buffet. All of the food was either steaming or extremely cool. After everyone got their food they sat down and started to stuff their faces. While eating the delicious buffet set out for them Sammie wanted to now

why I ran away from home.

Cody did not know where to begin. He decided to start at when Brutus and Joey chased and made fun of him in the meadow. After thinking about his experience in the woods Cody decided to go back home. So, the next day Prarthi, Sammie, and Shehara walked with Cody to help him find his way home. Out of the corner of Cody's eye he saw his home. A quick rush of energy came to Cody as he sprinted to his home.

Sitting in his chair Papa Bear heard something from the window. Papa looked out the window and saw Cody. He ran out of the house to meet Cody. As Cody jumped into his father's loving arms he began to cry thinking of everything that had happened. Mama also looked out the window and saw Cody, so she ran outside to meet and join their large bear hug. Even Joey, the annoying brother who made Cody run away, came out to join the hug.

In the end, Cody's family learned to accept Cody for who he really is. Prarthi and her family moved their lovely home next to Cody's house. Shehara and Joey started to hang out much more together. As for Cody and Prarthi they spent a lot of time together everyday in the beautiful meadow. They are practically inseparable. This is the wonderful adventure of a young bear, which ended up changing two families life by only one huge decision.



Beach

Marta Truzzkowski

Clear blue water
Sand in feet
Sun going down
O how I wish it would never end
Seagulls flying overhead
Colors in the sky light the whole beach
Shells getting washed away by the roaring wave
Waves subside and then start going again
Surfer riding waves
Egotistically yelling to watch them
People still trying to get a tan
People playing with their friends
Hitting a ball that flies everywhere
Nothing to stop them
Except the falling sun
Running and trying to get the ball
They see the falling sun and decide it's time to go
But the day isn't over yet
Still there's more
Fireworks blazing the sky
Filling it with colors
What a beautiful sight
Too bad it's over tonight!



Preface to: Cereza and Koroshiya

Maria Milstus

I press the knife lightly against his neck. I have never killed before; what if I lose myself, my kind nature? What if my rough and tough exterior becomes my interior? I try to hold back the tears, but one escapes; a liquid diamond on a smooth, tan plain. I can feel his onyx eyes on me, not pitying, not angry, not afraid, but loving. I start hyperventilating when his calloused hand touches mine.

"Don't!" I cry out, jerking my hand away and pressing the knife in harder. A drop of glistening, red blood appears on his neck, and I choke back a sob at the pain it causes me. "Don't..."

I look up to see his caring smile and I grow angry and even more upset at his nonchalant attitude.

"Why aren't you afraid?" I ask angrily, my voice high with anxiety.

"You have never killed before," he whispers quietly. "and you never will. You may beat people to the brink of death, but *nankuranaisa* for them."

My eyebrows furrow in question as the strange, Japanese word rolls off his tongue like a cloud rolls across the sky.

"It means 'Everything will work out' or 'It will all be alright'", he murmurs silkily before reaching out and holding my face in his hand. He brushes away the still-hanging tear, then caresses my chapped lips with his thumb. I speak under his gentle fingers.

"You'll kill more of my familia if I don't kill you now," I whisper, dreaded torture and agony heard clearly in my voice; his face hardens lightly in hurt and understanding. "I must protect my own."

His jet-black eyes meet mine in a split second of hell.



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