orthogenique

A literary magazine
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the Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School

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SPECIAL NOTICE
TO STUDENTS

The next issue is scheduled for a January release. Any student who wishes to contribute artwork or a writing piece to Orthogenique can do so by giving the piece to Michelle Z. or Michelle P. A special section will be made in the back of the magazine to showcase the artistic or writing talents of the contributors.
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foreword

As I was pondering what I wanted to teach during summer school, an idea that has popped up before resurfaced. I wanted to teach creative writing, but I wanted to do so in a way that resulted in a product – an Orthogenic School literary magazine. The students at the Orthogenic School are some of the most creative individuals you will ever meet. Therefore, the creation of an Orthogenic School literary magazine was one that seemed quite logical.

Once I was decided, I approached Michelle Z. to see if there was a way to get art to add to the presentation. She quickly jumped on board and decided that she wanted her summer art class to learn about illustration as a form of art. There it was; the moment of creation. I don’t know if the students knew what they were signing on for, but it has been a creative ride that has left me, once more, overwhelmingly proud of our students. They have started a new tradition that I hope continues for many years to come.

- Michelle Pegram
The Missile - Ryan/Jerry
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Anti-Social Social - Kelsey/Lizzy
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Generic Horror Poem #451 - Asher/Jeff
The Drop Of A Lifetime - Jack/Kaitlin
The Laundry - Shawna/Jillian
Color Change - Michelle P./Michelle Z.
When the first nuclear missile was fired, no one expected it would come. The world was in an age of unforeseen peace and trade. All wars had been resolved, all oppressions ended. No one could have guessed the division underneath the unity.

In their country, the Exiles watched their missiles streak across the sky, leaving a flaming trail of smoke. The entire country sat on their porches and looked out their windows, watching the bright trails the missiles left. They were splitting the clouded sky and lighting the mountains in red and yellow. They felt the heat wave they left, a sudden burst of warmth that swept through the streets as people crowded in them, looking to the heavens. They waited for it to strike its target. The years of preparation were finally over. They would finally deliver their revenge to the so-called Utopia.

On the opposite side of the world, it was night. No one could have predicted it was coming. All continued their peaceful slumber. All except for James Harrison. The local oddball and conspiracy expert, James had known about it for months.

“A nuclear war will kill us all!” he would wail in the town square.
“You’re crazy,” his ex-friends would respond. “Go back to the aliens, they’re much more believable.”

“You know about the Exiles. You know how they hated the Utopia. And now they’re coming back and we’re doomed!”
“Shut up.”

This was how most days were for James. He knew that the Exiles, in their country, were going to destroy the world. Sent out from the Utopia years ago, they sat – and waited. Waited for the perfect time to take their revenge.

Everyone else thought they were a myth. Why would anyone on the planet not like the Utopia?

The night the world was destroyed, James was awake. He was reading a book by the windowsill. The only sounds he could hear were the crickets singing in the brush outside, and the river nearby gently sweeping water downstream. James looked up and saw the stars outside the open window. The breeze blew back his hair and he smiled. Such a peaceful night, he thought. What a pity this all will die soon.

Off in the distance, a single fiery light, tiny and glimmering, shone brightly. James looked at it and wondered. He didn’t remember that star there before. None of the ones he remembered were so red. Then, another appeared, a short distance away from the first. It too was a fiery red, seeming to burn the night sky. The hairs on the back of James’ neck stood up. He now knew exactly what they were. As a third red light appeared on the horizon, he dropped the book and ran downstairs, screaming, “They’re attacking! The Exiles have come to kill us all!”
In another section of the home, someone grumbled, “You said that last week. Let everyone sleep.”

But James wasn’t listening. He ran down the street screaming that the Exiles had attacked. No one listened. A fourth dot appeared in the sky. The first dot was larger now, a fiery dart sweeping towards the sleeping town.

“Look up in the sky and see for yourself! A missile is coming! We’re going to die!”

James could not see that no one was listening. He was too afraid and panicked to notice. He continued to scream to the world, running down the empty street, attempting to wake the citizens of the Utopia and let them know their doom was near. The citizens turned on their sides and put pillows over their heads.

A fifth fiery dot appeared. James ran down the street, into the central plaza of the town. Pitch black except for the occasional lamp, it was decorated with exotic flower beds and the occasional willow tree. He ran to a bench and sat down. Get a grip on yourself, he thought. Maybe there’s some way to stop it.

As he was looking, he noticed something sitting on the pavement in the center of the plaza. It was a small electronic device with a single red light, which was blinking slowly. The red dot in the sky grew larger still. A sixth dot appeared.

James walked over to the device. He thought he knew what it was. Some homing beacon, probably. He attempted to smash it with his foot. It didn’t give. The red light continued to blink ominously. James picked it up and threw it as far as he could. In the darkness, it clinked against the pavement. The red light could still be seen, penetrating the black of night. James ran away from it and down the street.

He continued to run. He began to notice little red lights everywhere, blinking on rooftops and balconies, in flowerpots and sewers. A lump of fiery dots appeared. James ran into his home, into his room and jumped into bed. He knew there was no escape now.

From under his covers, he could hear the first swooshes of the rockets overhead. There was probably one landing near his house. I’m going to die, he thought. I’m going to die soon. They continued to fly overhead.

Then, the first explosion off in the distance. An intense flash of light penetrated his covers and nearly blinded him. He felt a wave of heat pass over the covers. Screams could be heard from down the street.

Another explosion, another flash, another wave of heat. I’m going to die, he thought again. He covered his body in some ineffective attempt for protection and cringed, waiting to die.

Suddenly, it was silent. He continued to cringe. The crickets began to chirp outside his window singing a song of midsummer calm. James looked at the ceiling, intact, the mosquito net still around his bed. I must have been dreaming, he thought slowly.

He wiped the sweat off of his forehead and slowly got up. He looked out the window as a mushroom cloud in the distance expanded, the shockwave enveloping his home...
The Turning  
By Keith  
Artwork By Alice

Here they come again.

They eat ______.

Noun

Where they get them, I do not know.

They are ______.

Verb

It is ______.

Adj

Need to ______.

Verb

Can’t.

I am their_____.

Noun

They start to_____.

Verb

First, they rip off the_____.

Noun

Then the______ begins.

Verb

They ripped the______ apart.

Noun

______ all over.

Noun

The whole scene is______

Adj

They start to ______ themselves with it.

Verb

Then they______.

Verb

All while they make me look.

I’m paralyzed.

They_____ another one,

Verb

However, this one they do not______.

Verb

I do.

The______ is tender.

Noun

Its taste is______.

Adj

I want more but they_____ me.

Verb

I am one of them.

I am no longer their______.

Noun

I am one of them.

I like it.
Since I was 13 years old, I have dealt with anxiety, depression and what we thought was ADD. We found out 4 years later, when I was 17, that I actually have OCD. Dealing with all of these disorders has made my life a lot harder than it should have to be, but it has ultimately made me a stronger person.

Two years ago, I fell into the worst state I had ever been in. I had millions of thoughts in my head racing all at once so that I couldn’t understand what was going on in my own head. This made it very hard for me to communicate with people about how I was feeling, which made it hard for people to understand and help me. A lot of these thoughts were negative as well, so the thoughts that I could understand were telling me things like, “You’re never going to get better,” “You’re stupid, and a piece of crap,” “You should just end this” and “No one cares about you.”

On top of that, I was dealing with flashbacks of some pretty traumatic experiences, which made things even worse. My family and I were not getting along well at all, which definitely contributed to me not being OK as well, because my family means a lot to me. I was falling apart. I was hardly able to function at all. I probably scared a lot of people and I didn’t seem like I would ever get better. As much as I scared other people though, I can say assuredly that I was the most scared of all. My life was turning out in a way that I had never wanted it to.

Even though I probably seemed like I didn’t care that I wasn’t doing well, I really did. I actually was trying to get better but there was something going on inside of me that wouldn’t allow me to. My mind was just not working for me, or to my advantage, so it made it very hard for me to do the things I wanted to do. I wasn’t on the right meds and I didn’t even have a completely accurate diagnosis. I was the most scared that I have ever been in my entire life.

I definitely felt like giving up. It wasn’t fair that I had to deal with these things and that they were getting in the way of me being the person I wanted to be. Life is sometimes really tricky that way. Things usually go a lot different than you planned or imagined they would. I have become a firm believer though, in the message that everything happens for a reason. This helps to ease the pain that I experience when things happen in ways I don’t want.

My life was the exact opposite of what I had wanted it to be and actually even worse than the exact opposite. Since I was little, I had always dreamed about going to a regular high school and being involved in all these extra curricular activities, hanging out with friends, and doing well in school. I imagined being able to live at home until I went off to college. I imagined all of this, but then I started becoming depressed, anxious and obsessive compulsive. All of those disorders started taking over me slowly. When they first started kicking in, they weren’t as bad. I was in Middle School though, which is a hard time anyway, so that made being a depressed and anxious person a lot harder than normal.

I became so depressed that I started skipping school sometimes. I just couldn’t handle all of the drama at school. There was too much pressure to look gorgeous everyday and I was too depressed to care as much. I was also more hyper sensitive because not only was I going through puberty, but I was also dealing with extra problems, so if a kid
The Path From Fear to Hope

was mean to me, it really affected me. I was having a hard time keeping good grades up because I was having problems with organization and paying attention in class. This led to the diagnosis of my disorders at the end of 8th grade.

I started high school doing really well. I did well in school and I had made a ton of new friends, even a pretty serious boyfriend who I’d met at my youth group that summer. I was involved in Drama, Student Council, Choir, Women’s Show Choir and I sold Box Office tickets. I later realized that I shouldn’t have tried to do so much and should have just focused on school and maybe one extra curricular.

I became really anxious, depressed and overwhelmed. I then stopped going to school. So, that showed that I obviously needed some medications to help me with my disorders. I was pretty perturbed that my Doctor thought I needed to wait longer to see if I needed medications because I knew from the beginning that I needed them. I think my parents knew as well but we just went along with what the Doctor said. We got a new Physician for me after that.

My parents decided that I needed to go to another school that had therapists and could help me with my problems. The first school I went to helped to diagnose my problems, but didn’t have room for me as a student. The second school that I went to didn’t specialize in dealing with the problems that I face. The third school that I went to was too heavily therapeutic and left me feeling worse every day.

I was sick of the fact that the two schools I was able to get into weren’t helping me and the one that did help me didn’t have any room for me. I missed my friends back at my home school. I still saw them, but it wasn’t the same because we weren’t at the same school together. I went to the hospital because I was feeling pretty hopeless and suicidal.
There was a lady who came to the hospital and told me about the Orthogenic School. She said that her brother went there and that it really helped him. Later on, my parents told me I was going there. When I found out, I cried. I didn’t want to leave my home, family and friends. I was extremely scared to go because it was a completely foreign place to me and it was so far away from my home in Grayslake.

I knew though, that it might actually help me to get better, so I decided that I wanted to go. The O-School was very helpful to me from the beginning. There were counselors that were there for me to talk to when I needed someone to talk to. There was also a therapist, Doctors and teachers that were very helpful. The students here have helped me learn a great deal about life by giving me good peer feedback and just being there for me by listening to me and giving me good advice. The O-School has helped me tremendously in my path to hope.

Before, I felt anxious all the time. I felt like I was trapped inside this monster that wouldn’t let the real me shine through. Going through that made me have the worst feelings that I have ever experienced in my whole life, and I’ve experienced many different feelings for one of such a young age. I felt like a hopeless wreck. I was crying and craving to know, “When would all of this misery end?”

Then one day, when I was at the hospital where they were changing my meds, I actually started feeling better. I didn’t feel so anxious and depressed and my thoughts were clearer. I was finally on meds that were actually truly helping me.

That was a year and a half ago and I have been getting better ever since. I have done really well my last year of high school and I will continue doing well in the future. I am in a Transitional Living Center, and I am volunteering at a Women’s Substance Abuse Shelter, taking care of their children. I am taking a college course this summer on Human Development at Roosevelt, and have met all of my high school requirements. I have participated in Community Service, which has been extremely rewarding, and Journalism, which has helped me develop better writing skills. My thoughts are clear now and I am a lot better at communicating. I am just doing so much better than I was before. I plan on going to college and becoming a teacher, social worker, or musician.

If there’s one thing to learn from my experience, it is to never forget that there is always hope. Even if I hadn’t gotten better when I did, I would still say that there is always hope because there’s proof of it everywhere in this world. There is a lot of hopelessness on the news so people start thinking that there is no hope, but there is. I am a very good example of that.

Other examples are all around you, but you just have to look for them and you’ll see them. You might see someone helping someone by giving them directions when they are lost or even holding the door open for them as they enter or exit a building. Those are small yet significant examples of hope.

One really good example of hope is about two World War II veterans. They were in battle and one of the soldiers, George Serkedakis got hurt. The sergeant told the rest of the platoon to leave George behind but Ken Myers refused to do so. He stayed back with his fellow troop member, and brought him to safety. That is a great example of hope in this seemingly hopeless world. I urge all of you who feel hopeless about things to not lose hope because no matter how doomed things seem, there really is always hope. Hope makes the world less scary.
What could be more terrifying than a vampire clenching his razor sharp teeth against your soft peachy skin? A werewolf ripping at your flesh and forcing you to convert to their dark mysterious way of life? Perhaps being followed by a tall dark stranger while walking home from your graveyard shift. No, nothing beats high school prom.

As an antisocial xenophobe, the transition to high school was enough to make me want to jump off a building. I mean come on, I’m the kind of kid that can hardly handle Friday nights, which in the high school world are crucial. Here at Sunnyside High, the name says it all, Prom is bigger than the end of the universe. Everyone runs around like chickens with their heads cut off trying to find the perfect dress for that magical night. Honestly, who’s going to care what piece of fabric, covered, hardly, your body 20 years from now? Oh yeah, everyone but me.

There are many types of dresses. The swamp monster dress, huge, frilly, and puffier than a babies eyes after crying for an hour; the vampire dress that’s so tight that you actually have to question if the girl just dyed her skin another color; and of course the killer clown dress, which has more colors and patterns than a coloring book designed by a preschooler with A.D.D.

The dress is almost as important as the date. When you’re not dating the captain of the football team, problems begin to arise. Going with a friend? You won’t be just friends by the end of the night. Alone? What a joke. Trying to find someone to go with is like looking for a needle in a haystack. You know they’re there, but you don’t know where to find them.

Then there’s the hair and makeup. Don’t even get me started. Half of the girls come looking like they walked straight out of a sci-fi movie, glowing eyelids, blood red lips, sparkles that look like scales covering their bodies, and hair so big that it looks as though they have a second head. Now that you have your monster dress, Ken doll date, and science fiction makeup, all you have to do is get there.

Apart from looking cool while you’re there, you have to look good in the car you get there in. White limos? Forget about it. Now it’s all about the black stretch Hummers. Who wants to walk a block to the school when daddy is willing to bust out the bucks for the ride?

Well, it looks like its time for the dance. Walking in, you would think we’re still in preschool. Colorful streamers are hanging from the walls, balloons are floating from the chairs; anything to make the good old gym look like anything other than what it really is. Over in the corner you have Suzie Q and Sally Sue fighting about not only having the same dress, but the same date, too!

You would think that the point of the prom would be to dance, but of course nothing is what it seems. No one dances, they all just stand in the corners looking like zombies that are too withdrawn to pounce on their victims. Basically, the “cool” thing to do is stand around until the night is over.

Now that the dance is over, you have a few options, bed or after parties. The normal teenager would choose the after party where all the “real fun” takes place. What’s next for me? Bed.
Prom Queen by Lizzy
Ed hates school. The only reason that he goes is to see his friends. He is a straight-A student, and bored in all of his classes. The teachers love him, and they have no idea that he hates school. Ed wishes that he could tell the truth, but he feels like he has to make everyone else happy.

Ed doesn’t want to wake up every morning, he doesn’t want to clean his room, and he definitely doesn’t want to eat a healthy breakfast each day.

Ed doesn’t want to go to school on Monday mornings, he doesn’t want to do his homework, and he definitely doesn’t want to help his parents take out the trash every night.

Ed does all of this anyway.

One Monday morning, Ed heard, “Honey time to wake up.”

“I get up, I make my bed, and clean my room even if I don’t want to. I mean what type of kid wants to wake up on a Monday morning to go to school. Not me.”

“I sit on my bed and put on my shoes, then I need to fix my hair so I do that,” he muttered to himself.

“Honey, come upstairs. You need to eat something.”

Ed continued to do everything he was supposed to do, but he also continued to
think about how much he hated his life.

Once Ed got to school, he asked his teacher if he could use the bathroom. While washing his hands, Ed saw something in the mirror. He turned around and then spun to look in the mirror again. He had to figure out what he saw.

Each time he looked, he would see himself and then it would disappear. He walked back to his classroom, and on the way, he saw his other self going into his classroom.

Knowing that now he couldn’t get back into his class, Ed went and stood by the door, peeking in to see what was happening. He saw himself sitting at his desk, refusing to do anything the teacher asked. He was also ripping his book up and throwing the pages around.

Ed’s teacher told the other Ed to go to the principal’s office. Right as his other self walked out of the room, the bell rang and it was time for lunch. Ed’s other self faded away.

During lunch, some kids came up to Ed and asked, “Yo Ed, do you want to come to the party that Jordan and his little sister are having?”

Jordan is one of Ed’s best friends by the way.

Ed went to the party worried that his other self would be there too. When he got to the party, his other self was already there. He followed his other self again, and watched as he went to talk to Jordan.

“Hey, here comes Mr. Perfect,” Jordan said nicely.

Ed watched his other self ball up his fists, while his face turned red. “I’m not perfect! I don’t want to be perfect!” his other self yelled at Jordan.

Everyone stopped and stared at Ed’s other self. Jordan started to look angry for being yelled at. Ed watched, scared of what was happening. Then he realized that it was his own anger in his other self. He had created this person.

Ed walked up and was very brave. He stood face to face with his other self. As soon as he did that, the other Ed disappeared. Jordan didn’t look angry anymore. Everyone in the room just look terrified, and they all sat down to talk about what happened.

Ed realized that it was too scary to keep his anger bottled up inside.
I woke up as if it were any other day. My stomach was growling something fierce, and 101.1 fizzes out of my radio surging the power of some good old Alternative rock through my head. I was about to slip on my work suit, fasten my tie and hop into my car to speed through the freeway all the way to the office, but then my brain slowly snapped into perspective, realizing that it was 8 AM on a Saturday morning.

This was my day off, a day to relax and forget the everyday struggles of life. A day to pop the footrest out from under the lazy boy, snatch a bag of ruffles and a six pack of coke, and scoop the remote off the coffee table as I gracefully flop onto the seat where my bottom would rest for the next few hours.

This house was mine today, I still couldn’t thank my Grandmother enough for dying off and leaving this incredible mansion all to myself. Sometimes I wondered if I really deserved it... but that thought was immediately snipped out of existence via common sense slapping me in the back of the head, “Snap out of it Rod!” I could hear my thoughts racing to my realization, reassuring me that I fully and completely deserved this gift, and I believed it!

At about 1 PM, I fell into a state of unconsciousness, drooling off the edge of the LazyBoy, onto the shag carpeting. Boredom had taken it’s toll at this point. Sleep had wrapped it’s wise fingers around me, dragging me off into la la land, but my excitement didn’t stop with unconsciousness. Over my nap, I was restless. I experienced a disturbing dream. My grandmother... She stood in the hall, across from me. The hall twisted around her, her figure approaching closer. The closer she stepped, the music grew very apparently louder. She sifted closer yet, but the serenity of the scene was interrupted as her arms shot from her ghostly image, grabbing my shoulders. The music was terrifyingly epic at this point, so loud someone outside of my unconscious dreaming mind may have heard it pulsating through my slumber. That familiar rusty creaking sound when her jaw would slowly open surrounded me. My mind was at its boiling point; I involuntarily snapped out of the confusing vision, back into reality.

I blinked my eyes a few times, double-taking around the entire room making carefully sure that I was safe. I was once again, comfortable, sitting on my LazyBoy, but something was amiss... the television was off. Did I set the sleep timer? No, I was watching a football game, why would I have done that? I was losing my mind at this point. I looked around hoping the emptiness of the room would generate answers. I finally came to the most re-assuring conclusion; must’ve been a brown out.

I slowly pulled myself out of the chair, the dream still lingering in the front of my thoughts. As I removed my achy behind from the chair, I felt a strange surge of energy run through my head. It was a dizzy feeling; the entire room took on a blue hue for a few seconds afterward. I convinced myself it was nothing, but this dream... what in the hell could it have meant. There had to be some reason that dream happened, not to mention it was related to my Grandmama right after I was speaking of her. No, no, I thought to myself, just a common coincidence. “I’ve got it!” I shouted to the sky, “It must be me feeling sorry for her. Yeah, that’s it...” I drifted deeply into thought.

I was startled out of my almost meditative thought, when the phone rang. I jumped immediately, and ran towards the receiver, practically tearing the phone out of the wall. I bobbled it 4 or 5 times, finally catching it before it slipped from my hands completely. I paused... “Hello? Anyone there?” My voice shivered through the phone lines. White noise sounded off through the phone. I dropped the phone and jumped back.

“What is this? Some kind of sick joke!” I raised my fist to the heavens, calling for an answer. My fist tightened, I felt an eerie energy wrapping around my arm. I immediately dropped it. Names of my friends and co-workers rushed through my head, “Tom? Dan? Is that you?! Someone answer, please!” I pleaded for some company.

At this point I felt clueless, and utterly terrified. I ran to the basement to comfort myself. I figured maybe playing a little bit of World of Warcraft would settle my thoughts and clear my mind. I almost tripped down the stairs attempting to reach my computer, but I couldn’t help but notice... the closet door was cracked open. Someone must have broken in. I never go in that closet. I picked up a loose board of wood and bulleted toward the door, flinging it open to find nothing but some old records and a record player lying there in rest.

I let out a sigh of relief. Wait, these were Grandmother’s old records! A thought crossed my mind. I pulled one of the dusty records out of the sleeve. I looked at it; the little had faded from old age. I popped it
on top of the record player. The music began to play. But how? The record player had no electricity running through it. I froze in my place, my fine motor skills wrecked from fear.

A chill fell over my entire body. That was the music from my dreams... Grandmother’s favorite track. I flung the door back open to find a ghostly figure standing 10 feet away. I was petrified. Attempting to find some way out, I took a step, and the figures head snapped in my direction. “Grand...Mother?” I whispered softly. The figure’s head immediately stretched to my face. Eyeing me closely, it’s mouth opened, the sound of my grandmothers dentures clicking against each other flooded all around my face.

The figure moaned mournfully, stretching it’s mouth wide beyond any human’s. It was her... It was Grandmother. I jetted off towards the stairs. The pictures on the walls all morphed into the face of my deceased grandmother as I passed them. I tripped up the steps, cutting myself on a rusty nail, trailing blood behind me, but the adrenaline was flowing; I couldn’t stop now. I kept running. I got up the stairs, and turned to my right. I jumped back at the sight I saw. Grandmother was standing there with an inquisitive stare.

“Grandmother, please, leave me be!” She screamed like a banshee, sending shivers down my spine. I took off running down the hall, tripping, my senses shaken by her banshee wail. I tripped down the hall, finally reaching the door... but there was no door. I was at a dead end. I stood my ground, hoping she would forgive me for taking her for granted. She was here to take her toll on me, for taking her for granted all these years.

She approached slowly, the halls twisting around her... This was it, this was my dream, but how does it end? She inched closer to me, her mouth opening wide with her banshee wail. Her arms waved out to the side... this was it. This was when she launched her arms towards me as I slipped back, knocking my head onto where there once was a door, but is now a concrete wall. I felt the blood oozing from my wound, my end was near. In my last period of vision, as my hearing faded, she inched closer, wrapping her ghostly arms around my back, and pulling herself gently close... It was a hug. She wasn’t after my life... She just wanted one last goodbye hug from her grandson.

With that, she disappeared, as I was left to die, with these new discoveries in mind, and her music running through my ruined ears. I died in vain.

By David
A group of four teenage friends are walking towards the abandoned Perkin’s Mansion in a thunderstorm. The thunder and lightning cast strange shadows along the walkway to the double oak doors. Standing at the doorway, hesitation and doubt runs rampant as they think about entering. Finally, the two boys of the group open the door and decide to walk in. Scared to be alone, the girls follow suit. While searching for the boys they hear strange noises: croaks, screams, and groans. As they enter the dining room they hear the boys scream. Panicking, they run to escape the mansion. They hurry through room after room: kitchens, dining rooms, and living rooms. They arrive at the door to tug it open for freedom, and the door has somehow locked. They look around for another way to escape, and they hear a soft padding of feet. Scared to death, they collapse on the ground, fear stopping them from moving. The footsteps get closer, and a slimy, green, webbed hand reaches around the foyer entrance. Standing before them is the evil and sinister, Kermit the Frog!

Very similar to the heart-stopping story above, horror movies are getting worse and worse as the genre continues. The cheesy storylines, poor character development, and bad acting aren’t donating much either to what, in my opinion, should be a dead wing of cinema. One would assume with all the mind-blowing special effects and most visuals done by computers, that, if nothing else, the horror movies could look real. From more recent examples of horror movies, most have just turned themselves into comedies.

Despite my Nightmare on Elm St. hate fest, I was once afraid of horrors, and they were quite believable in my Sesame Street days. The rubber masks and ketchup blood pools gave my 7 year old head a plethora of nightmares. Now that I’ve grown older and gained the infinite power of logic, I’m much more able to see through Hollywood’s smoke and mirrors. I’ve also started looking at the quality of the film instead of the monsters and gore and when you look for character development, acting, and storyline, horrors are usually a triple threat of disappointment.

I recently saw the movie Hostel 2, and it was one of the better comedies I had seen in a while. It was boring and the dialogue was awful. The cheesy gore and suspense was an hour and a half of boredom. It gave a few laughs, which is the only reason I watched it all the way through. In terms of horror, it had nothing to show but lame villains, excess amounts of blood, and a few gross-out factors. Also, there was no pause to the gore, not even at the end of the movie.

I would never claim to be able to make a better horror film than the professionals, but you can’t help but wonder how they mess up on certain aspects. A good horror film should be suspenseful, gross, but not excessively, and have good characters that give you nightmares afterwards. Horror movie creators need to learn to effectively hybrid the different divisions of horrors. Combine slashers, thrillers, suspense, and the plain weird into a super movie. I could see how it could be difficult, but it doesn’t seem inconceivable and I’m positive that Hollywood is more than capable.

The one true scary thing about horror movies today is how many there are. There’s always one in the theaters and very few reviews that make me want to spend money. I’m also pretty sure the almighty thumbs of Ebert and Roper won’t convince me either. Remember the days of Texas Chainsaw and all the other classics? Those movies were great in their time, and even now give the modern horror films a run for their money. Hollywood needs to go back to the spirit of the classics and mix in their special effects so that horror films can contend with all their comedy and action cousins.
Nightmare on Lame Street

By Julie
Fear is the thing that slithers in dark unseen but known.

Fear is the nightmare that you wake up from realizing how synchronized it is to your existence.

Fear is the thing of shadow that stalks the corners of your mind.

Fear is the state of mind that burdens and weighs you down making you unable to complete your task.

Fear is the beast that makes all objectives to be completed seem larger and more omnipotent.

Fear is the power behind creating obstinate psychological obstacles.

But as one great man said:  

“The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” –FDR
Generic Horror Poem #451

By Jeff
The Drop of a Lifetime

By Jack

Artwork by Kaitlin

As a child, my family had an annual vacation to Disney World in Florida. We would have such a blast; we almost wished we could stay forever. Since my parent’s divorce, I haven’t gone as often as I would’ve liked. One of the rides at Disney that scared me terribly was *The Twilight Zone Tower of Terror*. You basically experience a freefall on this ride. One year, I decided to ride it and to face my fear.

So I started by entering the waiting line, which is usually three miles long, and I decided to pass the time by examining the exterior. It was a tall building with gothic architecture as a theme. The brick was a strange red-orange color. The neon sign which advertised “The Hollywood Tower Hotel” shined brightly, except some of the letters were out.

We started by going through the gardens where the plants have grown out of control. Soon we arrived at the lobby, which is decorated with many things from burgundy drapes, to a chandelier full of cobwebs. A man, who appeared to be a bellhop, guides us into the library. He then closed the door with a grin that looks to have had two meanings behind it.

After a while, the lights went off, and a TV set in the corner turned on by itself. An episode of *The Twilight Zone* is played, which showed us how the hotel fell from its throne as the best hotel in Hollywood. Apparently, an elevator car was struck by a bolt of lightning causing it to fall, killing the five passengers inside. The television soon turned off and a secret passageway opened in the back of the room. We then found ourselves in the hotel boiler room. After winding our way through the queue, we arrived at a service elevator door. We were told our seating position and scrambled in. After we were buckled down, the doors closed and the elevator began to rise.

The doors opened to a long hallway which appeared to be having some electrical problems. Suddenly, the ghosts from the elevator accident appeared and fell again. The lights then went out and the hallway became a star field, with a window in the back crashing *ala The Twilight Zone*. We continued upward.

We came upon a shaft which then appeared to be somewhere in the upper levels of the tower. All of a sudden, the elevator started to move horizontally. I was in the front row, scared for my life. I had no idea what was going to happen. We continued on until a point in which the stars formed a line which looked like an elevator door opening. I decided to close my eyes and wait for the tension filling every corner of the car to be over with.

Next thing I knew the elevator was being pushed up and down like a yo-yo in the shaft. I waited until the car stopped momentarily to open my eyes. I got a general view of the area but soon we were plummeting once more. It finally ended and we were able to get off. The whole time we were leaving the park, I was just talking about how that was one of the most frightening and fun rides ever.

So I challenged my fear that day and won. I’ve felt pretty good about it since then. Facing your fears is one of the bravest things a person can do. You step up to a challenge and you try to win. Everyone should try it once in their lifetime, and it doesn’t matter if you still don’t like your fears after that; I still have to be really brave to go on that ride again. So good luck!
The Drop of a Lifetime

By Kaitlin
It was just laundry. Washing dirty clothes shouldn’t be scary. So why, in the hallway, with the flickering fluorescent light above me, were my hands profusely sweating? Of course, they were sweating because that’s what my hands do. There was another reason the pearls of sweat were dripping down my wrists and settling on the sandy carpet below. He is nameless to me. I pondered looking up the newspaper story in the Oak Lawn library archives. Did I really want to know in what room he killed himself?

How I came to learn of his suicide was indeed random. That quirky neighbor; late 50s, blonde one week, red-headed the next. She’s engaged to a man in his early 70s who resides in California. It was in passing in the hallway, “You know, the original owner killed himself in your unit.” I had lived there almost two months…why tell me now! His shadows were visible often as a reflection in the mirror when I was brushing my teeth at night. Doors to rooms would shut all by themselves. I just kept thinking as my neighbor spoke, “I knew there was someone else here with me.” Doing laundry was the worst. I would see someone standing over my shoulder, turn to look, and the person was gone.

At 9:00 p.m., I called my mom.

“Mom, the neighbor lady says the original owner killed himself in the house.”

“So…people kill themselves all the time, it’s just not something required in the condo disclosures at the closing.”

“Thanks, mom. Not making me feel any better.”

Second try at making myself feel better. 9:10 p.m., I called my best friend.

“Natalie, the dude who lived here killed himself.”

“That sucks. A guy hung himself in our attic. That’s why my parents converted the attic to their bedroom…so we wouldn’t play in the room where the dead guy had been. Shawna, seriously, people die all the time.”

“Nat, that’s the same thing my mom said. I called you to make myself feel better before I went to sleep.”

“Sorry, babe, goodnight.”

My mind was racing as I lay with the sheets pulled up to my chin. The door opened a few inches and he whispered in, “Relax, I like you living here. I enjoy the company.” The door closed shut again. I think I need to call Donna the real estate agent in the morning. I never liked the idea of living alone, but I hate the idea of having a permanent roommate.
Laundry

By Jillian
Shelly just sat there, staring. The sun fell through the window and bounced over her dark curls, the light glistening in her deep brown eyes. The room was full of people, talking, some in whispers, others, it seemed, in shouts. There was laughter…. laughter. How could there be laughter? Everything seemed out of focus. She felt as though she was looking at the world through the bottom of a glass. Things were small. Things were far away. Things weren’t right.

Just five days before, her sister, Leslie, had practically flown out of the house into her raggedy yellow Pinto, flush with excitement about her new job. She tossed the last of her luggage into the back seat causing an avalanche of bags that ended with her purse tipping, spewing its belongings across the floor of the car.

“Can you believe that I am going to manage my own restaurant?” She had asked breathlessly, her blue eyes dancing with excitement. “I mean, I know that I have to complete the training program, and even then I will have to assist first, but really, can you believe I’m going to be in charge?”

Leslie screeched out of the driveway, sending gravel flying, her long hair darting in and out of the open window, and the plaintive sounds of Guns ‘N Roses wafting through the air.

That should have been the last image that Shelly had of her sister. Should have been. Shelly nearly fell out of bed that early morning when the police came to the door. The old house rattled in protest as they pounded, trying to wake its sleeping inhabitants. As she reached the bottom of the stairs and saw her mother crumpled on the floor and her father stoically shaking the officers’ hands, she felt cold. She could see their lips moving but was unable to hear anything that they were saying. She could see her mother’s back heaving with the sobs, but could hear no crying. Her world had spun out of control.

For the next day or two, sound would continue to leave her, select words making their way into her consciousness.

“Accident.”
“Instantaneous.”
“Closed casket.”

She moved through her home feeling a stranger, trying to piece things together. Her parents seemed to have forgotten her. This wasn’t unusual, though. Leslie had always been the star. Again certain phrases penetrated her confusion.

“Family gone.”
“Why her?”

The night after the police had been at the door, the dreams started. Shelly would be driving along a dark, country two lane. The cool night breeze washed over her face as she serenaded, along with the radio, the seemingly empty fields she passed. Looking through the windshield, she could see the moonlight reflect off of the yellow hood of the car, and the headlights bounce off the road signs along the shoulder.

Stop Ahead.
Stop.

Metal screeched, windows popped, and Shelly would see the world spin before being thrown forward into darkness.
She would wake from each dream, exhausted and unsure of where she was. The dreams were beyond vivid, and as they continued from night to night, she noticed that her hands and arms were scratched, and her face was bruised. It got so that she didn’t want to go to sleep at all.

Each dream gave her more of the story. Piece by piece, she put the images together and knew, no, experienced, the truth.

At the funeral, Shelly felt as though she were in a trance; as though she were moving through water. She sat, near the window to feel the sun on her face, only vaguely aware of what was happening around her. She could hear talking, but it all sounded garbled, until one question penetrated the haze. “How did it happen?”

She wasn’t even aware that she had started speaking until she heard her own voice. “The road was empty. I had been driving for several hours, but I hardly noticed because it was a perfect night. The stars were amazing, and the crickets were almost drowning out my music. I only had about 15 miles to go as I came up to a stop sign. It was a four way intersection, and I stopped before slowly moving forward. It was too late when I turned and saw the semi coming towards me. The driver must have been asleep, because he didn’t even hit the brakes.”

The room was silent. Everyone was staring at Shelly. Everything had stopped. Shelly looked around, confused and suddenly grabbed her head shrieking in pain. No one moved towards her; no one breathed. Not until Shelly raised her head and looked out around the room. Everyone gasped.

Her eyes were blue.
What Is It? - Jack/Kaitlin
Attack Of The Killer Furbies - Ryan/Sarah
Destiny - Sharon/Jerry
Untitled - Kelsey/Ashley
Time Ninjas: The Most Ridiculous Short Story Ever Made - Raleigh and Casey/David
Mission: Urination - Keith/Jeff
The Train - Asher/Julie
A Sonnet for the Memory of Me - Shawna/Jillian
Mushroom Playground - Casey/Lizzy
The Voice In My Head - Summer/Alice
Blurred At The Edges - Michelle/Michelle
What is that?
That thing on the wall,
Tis’ quite intriguing,
up there, really small.

It looks to be a circle
strung up on a string.
Also looks very shiny,
what is that thing?

I move to it,
trying to see how it looks.
It’s a little too high,
so I’ll stand on some books.

Now I see it,
very clear indeed.
It’s strange and weird;
too complex to read.

Strange markings along the sides.
“How peculiar,” I say.
“If it is impossible to read,
what is its purpose, this thing I’ve found today?”

Three arms are on it,
they go round and round.
Two move slow and silent,
the third with a loud sound.

Footsteps close in,
I’m picked up from the rear.
“What are you doing” my mommy screams,
“standing on these books over here?”

Alas, my investigation is stopped,
I can no longer stay.
Maybe mommy will tell me,
About that circle someday.
I grew up a 90’s child. This was the time of my childhood, and I remember most of it well. It all feels so long ago. Sometimes time passes faster than it feels like it does. Maybe I was just having too much fun.

Mistakes I made then made an impact on my life and effect my decisions now. Part of the earlier times of your life is learning from your mistakes and not making those mistakes again; like putting insects in the Easy-Bake Oven. Bad idea! Don’t try this at home, kids. Or, like stealing a book from a local store. This was probably the biggest blooper of my childhood; but, the 90’s was my childhood era.

I knew the Macarena. I still dance to it sometimes. I collected hundreds of Beanie Babies, which I’m now trying desperately to sell off. I had a Tickle-Me Elmo, which I later, in a fit of rage, ripped the head off as it was saying, “Ha ha ha, that tickles!” I kept the talking headless Elmo just for kicks. Then, it stopping being ticklish, and I had to throw it out. I also had two of those lovable, annoying furry monsters, Furbies.

No one can forget the Furby. Everybody had one. They flew off the shelves around Christmas of ‘98 and then for six solid months, were always out of stock. Around my 7th birthday my mom managed, with a few hundred dollars and about three tanks of gas, to find me two of them. Not one, but two. I was ecstatic! Those lovable things were so awesome! You had to feed them, and pet them. They were pets without the hair loss and smelly messes all over your kitchen floor, things I learned about years later. I nearly cried with joy when I got my Furbies. Little did I know that around four months later I would hate them.

As soon as I put the batteries in them, they sprang to life and began chattering in their native language. They both had different voices, and before I knew it they had begun chattering with each other and singing “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star.” Later those would be the sounds emanating from the mouths of the monsters in my nightmares, but for now I was so proud of my Furbies! I fed them both and hugged them while they still talked to each other, practically ignoring me.

So, I kept them for a few months. To keep them from waking each other up and talking at night, I put them in my closet, each facing an opposite wall. They would eventually stop talking, knowing I was ignoring them, and go to sleep with their fake snoring. I still remember how they snored. It was so loud and obnoxious. One night, around June, I forgot to put them facing the wall and they were sitting, looking at each other. Miraculously they were both fast asleep and I closed my closet door, got in my bed and fell fast asleep myself.

Around 2 in the morning I was awoken by an odd sound. I could hear a ghostly duet emanating from my closet. They were singing a song, “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star.” Obviously the voices were my lovable mechanical pets but I was too tired and groggy to figure it out, much less notice I was in my room.

I curled up in the corner of my bed. There was nothing but silence for a brief moment. It felt like forever. Then, I heard the nightmarish voices again.

“Me wuv you!”
“You wuv me?”

Something was talking! Something was in my closet! I freaked out and screamed. My mom came running into the room. I said in very broken voice, “S-s-something’s – in – m-m-my – cl-cl-closet!”

Then, the voices started again.

“Me hungwy.”
“Me hungwy tooooo.”
“Me tooooo.”

My mom froze too. I could tell she was a little scared. She slowly walked over to the closet. The clocks froze. I was watching from the bed. The duet started again, coming from the closet like a song from an Alfred
Hitchcock movie.

“La la la la la laaaa... la la la la la laaaa. Yaaaay!”

She was petrified but kept her cool. She put her shaking hand on the door and opened it. It was pitch black in the closet. Time was at a crawl. Trembling, she reached for the light’s cord and pulled it. The light turned on to reveal – FURBIES!

A wave of relief passed over me. The clocks in the house started ticking again. Then, I started laughing. My mom did too. It was a nervous, “God, am I an idiot” sort of laugh. We put them in opposite corners of the closet, facing towards the wall. They both talked to the wall for a moment, but quickly fell asleep. My mom, still snickering a little with me, wished me goodnight and turned off the light.

The next day, I brought them out again. They were just as cheery as ever, chattering with each other. It felt different, though. The time I had previously spent them was different than now. They had scared me, and I didn’t like them anymore. So, with a heavy heart, I fed them one last time, removed their batteries, and put them in my closet. They sit there to this day, their eyes open. They stare at me whenever I get clothes, almost threatening to sing at night again. Maybe they still do when I’m not there.
Time is one of the few things in life that is always constant and sticks with a person from the
day they are born until the day that they die. One can always count on time to be what it is, and
nothing but. Yet, time can be your best friend or your worst enemy.

To Megan Prompt, time was her worst enemy. Despite her name, she was anything but
prompt. She had major problems with keeping track of time and being on time to places.

It’s as if Megan had been cursed since the day she left her Mother’s womb. She was born
on Friday the 13th, 1987 at 7:07. The 7:07 may seem lucky but if traced back and continued from
6:59, the time is actually 6:66.

Megan was always late for everything growing up. She was always late for school and play
dates with friends. She was always late for volleyball practice in the mornings, which eventually
got her kicked off of the team.

One way she used to cope was to post reminders all around the house. One odd thing that
kept happening was that, a lot of the time, the post-its would just disappear. Megan asked her
mother and brother if they took them down and they said that they hadn’t. They appeared to be
honest. Not knowing how the post-its were disappearing made Megan rather uneasy.

Megan’s mother decided to take Megan to see a Psychiatrist and a therapist to see if she
had ADD and to help figure out why she had so much trouble remembering things and how to
cope with it better.

The Psychiatrist said that she might have ADD, but that he actually wasn’t sure and that she
possibly just had an active imagination.

“That doesn’t help at all,” thought Megan.

Megan’s therapist, Jill, was a lot more helpful, though. While talking about her problems
with Jill, she was reminded of dreams that she’d been having ever since she was a little girl.

She decided to tell her therapist about the dreams. “In these dreams, I start off in my
bedroom and then all of a sudden, a little elf-like creature comes out of the clock that I’ve had
since I was a baby and tells me that it’s finally time for me to meet the Father.”

“We’ve been waiting a long time for you to come. We know how hard these past years
have been for you. We’ll make everything better, though. You’ll see,” says the elf.

Then he grabs my hand and touches my clock and we are transported to a really unique
place. There are clocks and little elves everywhere. The elves seem to be making clocks. This
always makes me wonder if I was possibly in a clock making section of the North Pole, if that even
exists. Then, in the distance, I’d see an old man with a long white beard. At first glance, I thought
he might be Santa, but then I saw that he looked very worn out, thin and tired. He seemed like he
was headed towards me. After that the dream ends,” said Megan.

“Wow. That’s a really interesting dream. Not only because it has to do with time, but that
you’ve been having these dreams since you were a little girl,” said Jill. “Maybe there’s more to
these dreams than you might realize. A lot of the time, dreams that you have over and over again
are trying to tell you something about your inner self and about your life. I don’t know exactly
what they mean, but next time you have the dream, look for any more details and report back to
me.”

Then, a few months later, on Megan’s 20th birthday, at the exact minute Megan was born,
she was in her room and what happened in her dream happened again. An elf popped out of
her clock and told her it was time to meet the Father.

Megan thought, “This can’t be happening. I must be asleep.” She pinched herself many
times and didn’t wake up, so she knew it must not be a dream. The elf grabbed her hand and they
were transported to the clock world she had gone to in her dreams. There were elves everywhere
busy making clocks and then she saw the old, thin white bearded man in the distance slowly
walking towards her.

He was rather thin and very tired looking. After he reached her, he extended his hand. Megan took his hand.

"Welcome to Hourglass city. We have been waiting for this day for so long! We had you come here for a very important reason. I've been ruler of time for far too long, as Father Time."

"You're Father Time? How come you made my life with time so miserable?" asked Megan.

"That's what I'm getting at," said Father Time.

"I'm old and gray and I've been doing this job for far too long. I wanted to find someone who could take my place. We found you when you were born as a baby who was very unlucky time wise. We felt pity on you and knew that you would have a very rough time on earth, but we knew that if you were up in Hourglass city, the unlucky time curse wouldn't affect you. So, we picked you to be our new Mother of Time. We decided that you would come see us on your 20th birthday so that you would be old enough to make a decision like this, but also so we didn't have to wait too long. Although, I'll have to admit, I can make time go faster, so there were times when I'd speed up the time a bit."

"So, if you become Mother Time for a while, you will have no problems with time and have fun with my elves and being able to control time which I know is something you've wanted to do since you were a little girl. Also, you get to go back to earth at the same time you left it, but as a person who can manage time well. What would you like to do?"

Megan thought about it for a bit and then said the obvious answer of, "Yes!"

So, Megan took over the job of Mother Time and enjoyed it for about 10 years, and then Father Time came back. One plus of being Mother Time that Father Time didn’t mention, is that once you become ruler of time, you never die.

"Eventually your self down on earth dies, but you get to stay up in Hourglass city forever with me and the elves," said Father Time excitedly.

Megan loved the sound of that. Megan was so happy. It was rather odd and quite funny that time went from being Megan's worst enemy to being her very best friend.
I don’t know when it hit me,  
It sort of just passed by,  
But when you have a paper due  
The deadline makes you cry.  
Drawing blanks and spaces,  
Not knowing what to say,  
Needing to get your poem done  
By the end of the day.  
Coming sooner and sooner,  
This rhyming must get done,  
Or else I’ll get an “F”,  
And that will be no fun.  
I don’t know when to end it,  
Or what else there is to say,  
But as long as it gets finished,  
It will all be okay.  
I think this should be longer,  
But I don’t really know.  
I just hope my teacher’s happy  
That I have some work to show.
I don't know when it hit me, it sort of just passed by, but when you have a paper due, the deadline makes you cry. Drawing blankets and songs, not knowing what to say, needing to get your room done, by the end of the day, coming sooner and sooner, this thing must get done, or else I'll get #*! and that will not be fun. I don't know when to end it, or what else there is to say. But as long as it gets finished, it will all be okay. I think this should be longer but I don't really know. I just have my teachers to show that I made some work to show.

By Ashley
Prelude by: Raleigh Kathman

It was a brisk October day on the last day of exams at the dojo in Wok 'n Roll village. The light poured through the bamboo roofing, shining off the metallic items scattered about the room. Jesus opened his eyes and rubbed them, the crust falling to the floor. He looked at the mirror above his bed and saw his reflection. He studied himself in the mirror, and wondered if he looked any different today. It was the day of his graduation from the dojo and he was an hour away from becoming a full-fledged ninja. He was most eager to start work with his peer, rival, and best friend Casey. They had made plans to become the most powerful ninjas in all of Japan.

He got out of his bed and did his daily hygiene, taking extra notice of himself today while he completed his personal tasks. He donned his equipment and opened the door to his hut and looked at the sky. Half of the sky was beautiful; the sun was shining, not a single cloud. The rays glanced off his house and warmed his soul. The other half was much different… clouds and darkness dominated the sky as flashes of lightning lit up in the distance. Jesus wondered if this was symbolic. He started thinking of his past and experiences he had all leading up to this milestone in his life.

He started heading towards the Dojo. On the way there he saw a back blur jumping from tree to tree behind him. He grinned and grabbed his katana jumping out of sight behind a building. The black blur stopped in front of him. Jumping out from his hiding place, he lunged towards his mysterious stalker and tackled him to the ground. Laughing, he got up and extended his hand to his best friend.

“Fine morning, Casey.”

Casey laughed, “That it is, Jesus.”
They both started towards the Dojo talking about their childhood and training.

Suddenly Casey interrupted Jesus.

“I need your help.” Casey said grimly.
Jesus stopped for a moment, puzzled, but then returned to his jovial mood.

“Anything you need, my friend.” He replied.

Casey looked up into the dark clouds steadily approaching, and said, “I want to steal the sacred swords in the Dojo.”

Jesus stopped as if he had been hit by a train. The sacred swords were the most important thing in all of Wok n’ roll Village.

“Casey, that is blasphemous. The sacred swords are… well sacred! We would exiled.”
Casey nodded, “I realize the magnitude of this act, but I have made up my mind and am going through with this plan.”

Jesus looked at the ground befuddled, “But even if we managed to steal them, we are not yet strong enough to fend off anyone who would want to take them back.”
Casey smiled, “That’s why I have this.”
He pulled out a scroll with a dancing panda wearing a pink and green party hat on it.

Jesus gasped and grabbed the scroll from his friend rolling it over in his hands and exclaimed, “How did you capture the time scroll you jive sucka?”

“Ah, I see you’ve been brushing up on your pop-culture,” Casey laughed. “I stole
it while the dojo had their Cancun Spring Break vacation. The master left pitiful guards, which I easily persuaded to let me in the dojo. My plan is to steal the sacred blades and then we can escape into the future using the time scroll of 2,607 years to where no one can follow us.”

Jesus was more torn in what to do than he had ever been before. This was even more difficult than picking soup or salad at Grape Garden. On the one hand, he could escape to the future with one of the blades and become one of the most powerful ninja, just as he had planned. On the other hand, he would be leaving his homeland, friends, and family, and by disgracing Wok ’n roll Village. He knew he had to do what was right. He opened his eyes and looked right at Casey. Casey’s dark eyes penetrated his mind. He wondered if his bright, blue eyes did anything like that to Casey.

He stopped walking and told Casey, “This is wrong, my friend, we must do what is right. We cannot shame this village and everyone we know.”

Casey sighed, “I’m sorry you won’t be joining me, Jesus. I will follow through with my plan though.”

Jesus glared at him angrily and lost his temper, “Then I will stop you!”

Casey laughed, unexpectedly threw Jesus to the ground, and darted off towards the Dojo as fast as he could. Jesus pounded the ground as tears rolled down his cheek. This was supposed to be a good day. He cursed the sky and the misfortune that brought him this ultimatum. He got up, grabbed his katana and flew towards the Dojo. After an hour of jumping from tree to tree he saw the dojo. It was silent and eerie.

Jesus had always loved to come here to meditate and reflect on the past, present and future. He scouted out the dark, dormant building looking for Casey. He saw a dark figure climbing the roof and knew it must be him.

He flung himself from his perch, a dark oak near the Dojo. As he traveled through the air, he noticed that the dark clouds had totally penetrated his much beloved sunshine. He entered the double screen doors of the Dojo.

He looked down at the training areas and saw the sacred swords. They were masterful works.

Ownage stood glowing, sharp and short, masterful designs all along the blade. It was styled after a katana but it was so much more, especially in the right, or wrong, hands. Pwnage was a beautiful great-sword, huge and magnificent. It’s length measured at least five feet, it’s width one and a half.

Ownage was made of the finest, brightest metals, but Pwnage was made of the blackest materials. Ownage glowed with intensity and what some might perceive as bloodlust. Pwnage sat silent, looking sad and desolate, as if it had led a hard life.

Jesus admired the blades. While he stared, he saw Casey drop right in front of them from the roof above. Casey glanced around but did not see Jesus as he had rolled to the left to stay covered in the shadows of the building.

Casey opened the case of the Sacred Swords and a huge burst of black and white light shot out from the swords. He put his hand above each and instantly Ownage flew into his hands. Surprised but satisfied, Casey grinned, a certain evil in his eye.

He reached for the scroll of 2,607 years and prepared to open the time portal that would put him in his new domain.

Jesus lunged out from his hiding spot confronting Casey. “You cannot leave with the sword, Casey!”
Casey turned around surprised but then regained his composure and cackled. “Fool, nothing here in this town can stop me. I have the sword and the scroll so I am invincible at the moment.”

He laughed as he shot a burst of energy from Ownage at Jesus. Jesus flew to the ground, stunned and wildly confused by his own emotions.

“Maybe we’ll meet again, my friend,” Casey nodded and activated the scroll.

The blue and purple portal stood before him, shooting out bursts of energy from time to time. He took a deep breath and jumped through. Jesus got up and ran to the portal. He looked in and everything stood before him for an eternity. He looked back, grabbed Pwnage and jumped through the portal, vowing to destroy Casey and all the evil he would find in his new world.

ACT 1: Raleigh

Casey shrugged his shoulders as the violent red light flashed outside of the windows. He saw the flare and instantly got to work. His ninja sword flashing in the light, he flipped out the stained glass windows of the cathedral and brought his foot crashing into the neck of a guard, instantly paralyzing him. He had moments to think about his next course of action as bullets started raining down on him, their pangs echoing noisily through the church.

He grabbed a cluster of ninja stars and threw them, without looking, perfectly into three gunmen hearts. He drew his deadly blade, Ownage, and flew through the night jumping from rooftop to rooftop taking out soldier after soldier.

After traveling through Penguin’s City for what seemed hours Casey stopped on a rooftop to meditate and regain his energy. While he was thinking and analyzing the night’s events, he saw a white blur hopping from one point to the next. He continued to meditate, preparing for battle as the white blur was getting closer and closer.

He felt a presence and opened his eyes; in front of him stood a white ninja. He was bearing the infamous blade, Pwnage. Casey rose slowly bowing before his assumed enemy, honoring the traditions of the Dojo he had trained at.

The white ninja drew his monstrous blade and spoke two words before rushing Casey with the strength of 20 gorillas in heat.

“What’s up?”

Instantly, Casey stood up and used a shadow teleport to escape the blow, he drew Ownage and charged his enemy. The White Ninja waited for the hit, preparing a counter. Jumping back, he threw a bombardment of shuriken at Casey, which gave him the distraction to formulate his own offensive.

As he leapt over Casey, a flash of light erupted out of the White Ninja’s sword and arced towards Casey. Casey lifted up Ownage just in time to absorb the blow. They both stood there for a moment eyeing each other. Casey stuck his sword in the ground so he could talk to this mysterious white attacker.

He pulled off his ninja mask and asked, “Who are you?”

“I am here to destroy you, wielder of the great Ownage.”

Casey eyed him and asked, “May I have a name or who sent you?”

The White Ninja laughed, “You have many bounties on your head, rogue. My name is unimportant. Besides, you already know it.”
Intermission

Act 2: Casey

Casey scoffed and leapt away, making obscene gestures at the White Ninja as he hopped from rooftop to rooftop. Casey stopped when he felt that the Ninja had left his vision. Wiping sweat from his brow, he began walking towards the window of his hideout. He began recollecting the past... the very far back past; times with his ninja friends back in Japan, 600 BC. He grew sad, and began to weep. The room filled with his tears, but he regained his dignity. He decided that he should meditate to regain himself.

He once again noticed the white flash. He sensed it coming straight at him. He knew now that the ninja was pissed. He shouldn't have run so quickly. He slowly rose, meeting the White Ninja's blade with his.

“You won’t get away, so easily, fool!” The White Ninja hollered.

“Oh, so you’ve been brushing up on your pop-culture, I see,” Casey noted sarcastically.

“Die fetcher!” The white Ninja screamed.

Casey jumped back and drew his blade, Ownage. Pwnage, punish this fool!” yelled the White Ninja, as he ran headfirst into Casey’s blade.

Casey blocked his attack swiftly and sent him flying back. “You still have much to learn, young padawan.”

He sheathed his sword. “You must not fight with anger, but with love and passion. Only then will you be able to beat me.”

The White Ninja nodded scornfully, but respectfully, taking off through the window.

Casey sighed, sad and alone. He went to the window and looked out. Thinking of the past, he said three words before grabbing Ownage and jumping out into the night.

“Go well, Jesus.”
Time is something that seems to have a mind of its own. It seems like it can move of its own free will. If it wants to slow down it can. If it wants to speed up it can, or at least make us think it did. If time really does do this, it is one sadistic butt face that must hate me with a deadly passion. Here is just one of the many times it has antagonized me into crisis.

One time I was sitting in my 6th grade French class. While I was learning pointless words of the French language, I felt a tingly feeling somewhere. Crap. I really had to go to the bathroom… Now this French teacher was one of the snobbiest teachers I have ever known. She thought she was better than every other teacher and had this really bad accent. She never taught me anything; in fact the only thing that kept me from screaming my lungs out at her was the occasional candy she brought in from her “extended” sick days. No way she was going to let me go pee.

What did I do you ask? I asked her. I remember specifically what we she said. She looked at me for about 6 seconds that seemed like an eternity and she said…No! By then my legs were tightly cramped together and I think the rest of the class had seen it. I kept looking at the clock waiting for the class to be over. 10 minutes. Not bad, not bad at all… I thought.

All of the sudden the clock started moving slowly. It seemed as if it were making fun of me. The whole time I was thinking about this, the “tingling” sensation started to get more “tingly.” I started to panic.

I was in 6th grade! I was not going to pee my pants. It was different in kindergarten. No one cared about embarrassing things there. For instance, these two twins, a brother and a sister kissed daily. Sick, right? Well no one cared. No, this was not kindergarten. People would mentally rip your self-esteem apart like the baby eating monsters!

To add on to that, my crush was in my class, and even though I never got to “date” her, and she thought I was a creepy “freakazoid,” I still thought that I had a chance back then.

While the teacher was blabbing on, the clock moved slower. Yeah, it definitely had a mind of it’s own. This was it. I had to make a choice right then and there. I could pee my pants and get harassed until the end of my senior year, or I could run out of the classroom like a maniac running to the bathroom. I chose option 2.

Now I was always a fast runner, but this running, God only knows how fast I was going. If a hall monitor saw me, they would probably die of shock. If you put a freaking cheetah next to me running to the bathroom, I would not beat it, but still, I was going really, really fast. While I was running, I must have not realized that the bell had rung, and to my luck, standing right in front of the bathroom were those freaking 4th graders. God did I hate those little kids! I was a 4th grader before and I got picked on, so now it was my turn to pick on them I thought. They cannot just take up the whole bathroom!

You know what I did? I ran right through them like a level 70 warlock running through the dead mines in World of Warcraft. That is basically the equivalent of a freight train running through a bunch of squirrels, and boy when I got to that urinal it was like water to someone who’s been stranded in the desert for 3 days. Except I was trying to get rid of liquid, not store it.

Well, after my long waste management session our nice Principle Ms. Glute greeted me. I got a nice walk to her office where a crowd of loving teachers that gave me candy greeted me…. NOT! I got yelled at, and a week of detention, but while I was sitting in the detention for 5 days, I realized that if I asked to go to the bathroom, I could.
By Jeff
“Grandpa where are we going?” Asked the young boy.
“A vacation.” The man replied. Knowing how far from the reality he was, but wanting to safeguard the child as long as possible. He knew that he would have to lie; He also couldn’t actually protect the child knowing where the train was headed.
The man peered outside the crack of the wooden freight train. From what he could tell it was cold and the ground was blanketed by a soft sheet of snow.

Sometimes the man would wonder what kind of people would let children be slaughtered in such an inhumane manner.

“Where are we grandpa? Where are we? I want to see!” The child said excitedly.
“You probably wouldn’t be interested, It’s just farmland.” The grandfather lied.
“How come you never let me see anything granddad.” The boy said sighing. “I just want to peek.”

“No, you should just sit down, just please sit down.”
The boy relinquished any thought of further resistance and sat down on a sack of hay towards the corner. The grandfather sighed, knowing the boy was upset and wouldn’t talk to him for at least half an hour or so. The grandfather had no idea what time it was when the people took him and his grandson, so for all he knew it could have been days or weeks since they had been put into the train. The only source of outside intelligence came from the small crack on the floor.

“Humph.” The man sighed. Then the train made a harsh piercing sound that echoed inside of the car that the boy and grandfather were in. “We must be at the destination.” The man whispered to himself. But his thoughts were not to last when gunfire started to erupt from both sides of the train.

“Grandpa, Grandpa!” The boy was screaming.
The man didn’t know where the boy was or where he was either. The grandfather tried moving but a strange hidden force was holding him tight and restricting his movements. He tried opening his eyes but a bright light blinded him immediately.

Then the man tried to shout but the invisible weight crushed the man’s ribs and legs as he tried to breathe. He tried to hear, but no sound came to him. He tried to talk, but no sound came out of him. He tried to see, but all was too bright. All he could do was feel the cold blanket of snow beneath him and the heavy weight crushing him.

The room he woke up in was tiled and small and the only source of warmth was coming from the man’s side. He tried rolling over but a large wooly animal that appeared to be a dog held him in place. He tried looking up but a small bright florescent light quickly blinded him.

The man then saw a small shape lying on him; it was the little boy. He tried moving his arm, but also noted that there was small ring around his arm, a certificate. He noted that he seemed to be in hospital garb. The man then looked out the window and saw a light sheet of snow outside.

“Grandpa?” the child yawned.
The man sighed.
Gazing out the two-way mirror, the flag
  Flutters as Miss America tries sing
  -ing on television. A metal tag
attracts old cops like flies to garbage, ring
  -ing incessantly. Dropping down slowly
  on their knees, Hunter and McCall not speak
  -ing, but extending their clasped hands, lowly
  praising Allah. Running wildly to seek
  the escape car to drive to the great state
  of Delaware, my stolen pink bras drip
  indigo dye, leaking on my late, great
  old grandmother’s velvet underwear slip.
Barbie dreams and Prince Charming’s kisses melt
  -ing away like white ice cream on black felt.
A Sonnet For The Memory Of Me

By Jillian
The rise and fall
is in our grasp.
The nukes are tall,
Bustin’ Caps
The desert churns,
the bullets burn.

Tiny eyes.
Big ambition.
Blind to see,
their true suspicion.
Bustin’ Caps

Rednecks rise,
fists to the sky.
Showing praise,
to the phase.
Bustin’ Caps
Mushroom craze.

8 Years of stupidity,
8 years lost integrity,
of the nation.
Bustin’ Caps
Sometime soon,
we will swoon,
over our war-torn nation.

Watch the skies,
here we die.
Bustin’ Caps
The end is nigh.
Watch it go,
as it explodes.
The mushroom reigns,
beginning the end.
Mushroom Playground

By Lizzy
The Voice in My Head
By Summer
Artwork by Alice

All I can feel is sadness
I can’t feel happy,
not even mad.

All I can think about is the voice in my head.
The voice in my head telling me that it can’t make the time go any faster.

I want time to go faster
As I roll up into a ball wishing, hoping, that I might just go to the future
I need it to, no, I want it to, but still, I’m rolled up into a ball wishing, hoping that
time might just go faster.
I’ll just feel better in the future.
I won’t have to deal with life.
I won’t need to deal with all the drama.

All I can think about is the voice in my head.
The voice in my head telling me that it can’t make the time go any faster.

I just think as the days go past,
about how I just wish someone is out there
understanding what I’m dealing with.
While I’m just crying,
sitting on my bed having bad thoughts.

All I can think about is the voice in my head.
The voice in my head telling me that it can’t make time go any faster.

I just want time to go faster.
I want to feel better.
I just want to have good experiences,
with life.
I just want to feel.

All I can think about is the voice in my head.
The voice in my head telling me that it can’t make time go faster.
The Voice in My Head

By Alice
I have always been amazed by people who write their autobiography and remember life events in great vivid detail including the colors of clothing, the décor of houses and all of the people involved. My memories don’t work that way. While equally vivid, they focus on the feelings as opposed to the details. The images I conjure all seem to be viewed through a fog, seem to be blurred at the edges, but the emotions are sharp and oddly tangible. I can have a sudden rush of embarrassment just hearing a song connected to one of those horrible junior high dances that leave us scarred for life. I can fight back anger remembering the second grade teacher who made me re-do a math assignment just because I put curlicues on my twos. I can’t, however, remember any of the boys that I would have died to dance with, or the appearance and name of that evil teacher. Even without vivid images, though, I know these things, know them in a way that makes them a part of who I am and who I will be. Time may erode the images, but it can’t touch the experience.

I know that as a baby, I slept so little that my parents finally attached a screen door to the top of my crib to keep me from crawling our and wandering the house at night. I know that I was not a social baby. In fact, there were times when I would roll under a piece of furniture and stay there, content, until my mother would find my nest. I know these things because of stories told over and over again. The stories became a part of me and a part of the family lore.

The fact that I lost all of my hair at the age of two because of allergies, that my older brother got his head stuck under his bed and my mom pulled him out in a panic, leading to several stitches, that my younger brother always knew when it was Sunday night, being sure to go downstairs to watch Dad’s show – Monty Python’s Flying Circus; all stories that I can tell with authority even though I may not clearly remember the actual events. These volumes of stories are what families are made of. They define us in ways that genetics never can. When family members die, the stories are the spirit that we are able to keep. Genetics are soon forgotten, and while I may not remember what color my Grandpa’s eyes were, I remember the stories he told. The stories are always there.

Until I was ten, my family lived in LaSalle, Illinois, a small factory town on the bend of the Illinois River. We were an hour and a half away from my grandparents, Ralph and Louise Ball, who lived in DeKalb, a college town in Northern Illinois. Weekend trips were fairly common, and my brothers and I would sometimes spend the weekend, which gave my parents some much needed respite.

Bedtime was strictly upheld by Grandma, despite our protests that we were on vacation and should have special rules. Grandma played bridge, however, leaving us from time to time under the supervision of Grandpa. The plan was set, and we rehearsed our strategy several times at the beginning of the evening, so that the margin of error would be lessened. As we sat and watched T.V., probably The Partridge Family or some equally sappy 70’s show, we had to be sure that we were not in the line of sight of the front window. When headlights flashed through the room signaling my Grandma’s return, we grabbed our stuff and ran as fast as we could to our beds, threw the covers over our heads, curled up and did our best to breathe slowly and deeply. To
the best of my knowledge, we were never found out.

Mornings found Grandpa and I as early risers, and were filled with one of my favorite rituals – watching Grandpa get ready for his day. Sitting on the toilet, lid down of course, I would watch as he shaved, standing in his undershirt, his pants held up by suspenders. He was always whistling, usually some song that would likely be heard on Lawrence Welk, a show he and Grandma never missed. These mornings were the only time I saw his hair move. It was already graying and thin, and before I knew it, some hair grease of unknown origin had flattened it to his head leaving it looking wet for the rest of the day. After combing it back, and slightly to the left, he dabbed on some after shave and was ready to go. He never left the house without donning a shirt, tie, and jacket, a part of his youth he held onto for life.

Grandpa was a true believer in the rule that grandparents get to spoil the grandkids, not raise them. There was some part of him that never grew up and was always looking for some fun. Money, amazing quarters, would magically find its way into my hand, and a subtle hint about some play or movie I wanted to see invariably resulted in a trip with Grandma and Grandpa. Even work, like mowing the lawn, became fun because there was always a treat, as well as ample reward, waiting at the end. My older brother, Mike, and I had different philosophies regarding this chore. He would take several little breaks while mowing in order to milk the attention and the treat for all it was worth. I preferred to finish as quickly as possible, my fastest time was fifteen minutes, so that I could relax and soak up the pampering until I was taken home.

Our move to DeKalb when I was ten, resulted in both my mom and dad working at Malone’s, a department store founded by my great grandfather in the late 1800’s. The store, which had always been a favorite place, became a second home. My friends and I would often stop by after school or on weekends to chat with the ladies who worked there, check in with my Mom and Dad, and, of course, visit Grandpa. When I came alone, a break would often be in order, and he and I would walk the short block and a half to Ebbie’s Soda Parlor. Ebbie’s was truly a link to Grandpa’s youth that he was able to share with me. The bar, a shining, shimmering stainless steel, ran the length of the small rectangular shop, and seemed impassably high, even after I had climbed onto one of the stools and waited to order. Ebby, a man who seemed unbelievably old, with a face almost hidden by wrinkles and lumps that seemed like a mask until he smiled, would come over to take our order. I don’t remember what I would have, but I remember how warm and wonderful it felt to be there on a work break with Grandpa. The huge gallon containers of ice cream, along with the syrup dispensers sitting next to the seltzer spray, made me feel like I was paying a visit to George Bailey at Mr. Gower’s. I remember learning the do’s and don’ts of drinking coffee while at Ebbie’s. “You have to learn to drink it black. None of that cream and sugar – just try it, you’ll adjust.” I never did.

Food was a common subject of Grandpa’s wisdom. He had a three egg omelet everyday and never had a cholesterol problem. Mushrooms took more effort to chew than they had flavor or value, and pudding was a wasted dessert. If you were going to eat sweets, then for God’s sake you had better go for broke. Eating out was a favorite pastime, and during his retirement he and Grandma ate out every night of the week. Monday would find them at McDuffy’s, a twenty-four hour diner, and Tuesday’s were spent at Eduardo’s, a local Mexican restaurant. Wednesday meant standing in line at the all-
you-can-eat salad bar at Ponderosa, while Thursday’s were spent with old friends at the Barb City Diner. Friday’s belonged to Kentucky Fried Chicken. No matter where they ate, though, the routine was the same. As soon as they walked in, a server would put their usual order in—}
upcoming years without a formal celebration. My family always found a unique way to celebrate. At my Great Uncle’s 86th birthday, my aunt had the ingenious idea of releasing 86 balloons into the air. She simply forgot one important element – helium. This story quickly found its way into family lore as my uncle carried the balloons to the second floor balcony, dropping them off only to see them fall into the bushes below. Those that didn’t pop on impact were attacked by those of us who could catch our breath between the laughter.

Grandpa won’t be celebrating his birthday anymore, but that doesn’t mean he won’t be there at family gatherings. The stories will appear, and with them his spirit. There will be the inevitable discussion as to whether the boys had a dog when they were children, Grandpa always said yes, Uncle Bob, no. There will be the effort to remember the names of old friends who may or may not have been a part of a wedding party. Events that were remembered differently by each participant will be debated, all the while creating new memories that will blur unless retold. We choose those stories that best define us to tell over and over again. Immortality is not reached through genetic code, but, rather, through the stories that become a part of our identity. Time often makes them stronger by the telling.
childhood

A Boy and His Dawgz - Casey/Jerry
NO! - Ryan/Sarah
Accidents & Parents - Jack/David
Children In Art - Asher/Kaitlin
Jump Rope - Raleigh/Lizzy
The Good Old Days - Sharon/Julie
I Remember the Day - Keith/Alice
Pop - Kelsey/Julie
Toilet Terror - Summer/Jeff
Cushions - Shawna/Jillian
Where Will I Go? - Michelle P./Michelle Z.
Dr. Craig - Lizzy/Lizzy
When you’re a child, what’s more exciting than adopting a new puppy? Well, besides annexing a new video game into your collection or taking rights over a brand new Lego set, or, or… Well, I could go on forever, but let’s focus on puppies.

When I was young, I had the coolest dog one could ever know. She wasn’t the prettiest thing in the world, but she was soft. I could’ve sworn she was made of velvet. She was so calm, she could’ve been used as a therapy dog for juveniles on death row with four charges of murder and armed with a deadly weapon. My sister and I used to pull her hair until it ripped right off; all the while she would just sit there dozing off.

One day, a car hit her when she was outside by herself, and took some bones with it. Her leg was broken, and she could hardly walk. Needless to say, it was hard for my family and me to watch our beloved dog cringe in pain with every movement she would make. She got better eventually, but by then, she was old. She became crippled by her own means, and there wasn’t a thing we could’ve done for her. She was so tired and weak that she would wallow in her own puddles of urine, day in and day out, waiting for death’s cold hands to take her.

As a four year old child, this was not an easy thing for me to watch. I definitely felt the connection between pet and owner with her. I could tell that she was in pain, and it was killing me to see it so plainly. Something had to be done to ease the pain, but as a child, I had no clue what that might be.

It wasn’t much longer before my mother came home with a painfully large frown across her face. She told me the news… Buffy had been put to sleep. I was devastated. Mind you most of the stuff I’m providing is from broken memories and what I think I would’ve felt, though I’m sure I was.

It wasn’t long before my family was on a search for a new dog to fill the empty place in our hearts where Buffy’s image stood. We pulled up to the pet store, hopped out of the car and went inside. We looked around a good long while, finding nothing that seemed right. Then we found her.

She was the cutest little thing you could ever know. A Chihuahua, puppy style; short-haired with radiant brown fur, and the cutest little beady eyes. She looked at us and we instantly fell in love. My sister pointed her out, and my mother, without hesitation, agreed. We took her out of her cage, purchased the necessary care ingredients, and off we went.

I’m not sure how exactly we came to the name “Annabell Elizabeth,” but it was cute, especially when you shortened it to Annie. The last name was obvious. It was simply the name of my oldest sister. But to us, she was Annie.

I noticed right from the start she wasn’t a playful dog, but a relaxed lap dog. She would play fight every now and then, but for her entire life, she’s been a lap dog. We made a big mistake raising her thought, we never walked her. She became a little bitter and paranoid of humans. She wasn’t cultured in the area, so people scared her, and she was very overly protective.

As a child, she was my best friend. I could tell her anything, and she would listen. She would cuddle in my lap and listen as long as I wanted her too. And when I needed someone to sit with, just for comfort, she was always available. Her companionship was unmatched. We could sit for hours and hours, cuddling, with me talking at her wise listening ears.

There was no need to walk her, she was litter box trained, and rightly so. She acted like a cat. When she yawned, she meowed, when she barked, she was high pitched and hissy. Why shouldn’t she use cat facilities then? So we litter box trained our Chihuahua, which we always have gotten praise for by other people. Even though she’s 13 and still hasn’t quite mastered it, they were always impressed that we could litter box train such a hyper dog.

And indeed, she is a regular spaz of a dog. Paranoid and psychotic, but we still loved and do love her. After all… she is our dog. No matter what she did, whether it was biting through my sister’s lip, or
ruining carpets with the stench of her urine, we always forgave her. After all, she is our dog.

I spent much time with her, stroking her fur and feeding her treats, though she didn’t do any tricks, that didn’t matter. We had a bond, a strange connection. I felt that although she and Buffy were completely different dogs, the same connection existed. I love her, and she returns the favor with a good cuddle.

Even though we purchased a new dog this year, spunky and obnoxious, I still love her. I can sense that she is growing old and tired, and a little depressed and angry about this new endeavor. I am trying to spend as much of my time as possible with Annie, hoping to make her older years good years.

Even with the presence of the new puppy, who I am growing fond of, Annie still fills that place in my heart. Even though she is growing old, her jaw malfunctioning, and growing closer to death, just like Buffy once was, she is my dog to love eternally. They both are.
No is a word that means a denial
The result of a childhood argument lost
A negative end of a back-and-forth trial
The answer to a question with negative cost

No is the word of final negation
A word that most people would not like to hear
This is the phrase that creates much frustration
This is the phrase that fills others with fear

No is a word that means a denial
The result of a childhood argument lost
The ultimate ending of a living-room trial
A final decision of remarkable cost

It has only one meaning, no only means no
No other word could even describe it
Being in use since ages ago
Expressing refusal to ever submit

No is a word that all parents use
For their children’s whims that may have gone wrong
No is the word that shows they accuse
That their children’s decisions were far from strong

No is a word that means a denial
There is a chance that it changes, though
Sometimes a new ending comes forth from the trial
And the word no may not always be so
In a quiet, little cul-de-sac in the suburbs, there lived a little boy and his mom. His name was Barry, and he was 10 years old. His mother was a homemaker and nurse for 17 years. Her husband had passed away, so she had to make ends meet for her and Barry. Because of her full schedule, she’d developed a rather short temper over the years after dealing with work and Barry being a mischief-maker most of the time.

One day, Barry’s mom had a rough day, so she asked Barry for some alone time. Barry decided to go outside and invite some friends over for some baseball. When he’d gotten all his friends, he went in his garage for the bats and a ball.

When he came out, one of his friend’s shouted, “Hey Barry, I’m tired of playing whiffle ball. Let’s play with this ball instead.”

He held up a real major league baseball with the signatures of the New York Yankees. Barry and his friends were so overwhelmed that they decided they just had to play with that ball.

"Kay, but I get to hit first," said Barry with his eyes full of anticipation as he stepped up to the plate.

Barry gripped the bat tight as the pitch came right down the plate. He took a swing with his eyes closed, and felt the vibrations from the ball hitting the bat going into his body. The ball soared through the air as Barry ran to first. Just as he was about to touch first base, a loud sound broke the silence, and Barry’s joy.

CCCCCRRRRRAAAAASSSSSHHHH!

Barry looked with horror at what had just happened. The would-be home run had crashed right through the front window of his house. While he was in his dazed and confused state, all his friends got out of there, leaving only Barry to face his mom.

As Barry entered the house, he saw the baseball on the floor, pieces of glass around it, and an orange sized hole in the corner of the window.

“What did you do?!” came an almost inhuman shriek from a figure that had just entered the room.

It was tall, black, and had blood red slits for eyes. Its mouth was disproportionate to its head and instead of feet, the blackness went down to the floor in spikes. The odd thing about this creature was that it was wearing an apron.

“I was in the kitchen, making supper when I heard a crash. Now what did you do!”

The terrified Barry could only respond with “ ….baseball…in the….street….didn’t mean….won’t happen....” He was about to continue when the monster interrupted.

“Ah, I’ve had it with you. All you do is cause me strife and misery. I sometimes wonder why I gave birth to you!”

These words rang with a frequency that made Barry start to silently cry. When the monster saw this, its expression softened to a look of concern.

“Oh, honey, I didn’t mean that please don’t cry.”

The monster extended its arms toward Barry who closed his eyes, afraid that this was a trick. He felt himself being hugged and the monster apologizing and reassuring him that things were said in the heat of the
moment.

Barry soon calmed down when he realized the monster’s voice became more familiar to him. He opened his eyes to find that it was his mother embracing him.

“Please mom, I don’t want to make you angry.”

“I know that dear, I’m just not having a good day. I took out all my anger on you, and that was wrong of me. Please forgive me,” his mother said with tears in her eyes.

“Okay,” said Barry, “but only if you forgive me.”

His mother looked him square in the eyes and said, “I forgive you.”
Do you ever wish that you were a child, a child that is unbound to any responsibilities? Well you aren’t alone in this thought of fancy. Recently I was able to view an image of art that was produced by one of my fellow peers. I would like to thank the fellow peer who made the art piece an enjoyable experience for me.

The artwork was created quite recently, and features basic images of child play such as tossing a ball, and playing on the swing set. But why do artists seem to focus on children, and what effect does the artwork have on us?

My guess is that when an artist creates an artwork featuring children, the point is to manipulate our feelings to create or dredge up images and emotions of our own childhood; to create emotions whether they are good or bad; to express the artist’s point of view.

The effect it has on me is that it makes me recall all the good and the few bad times of childhood. Times like the first time I played soccer, or the time I had spent a great afternoon with friends playing and goofing around just like every other ordinary child, which bring a positive frame of mind to me.

The art can also bring back memories that can be haunting or daunting in their own way. Times like when you made a small mistake and you ended up in trouble which isn’t a good feeling for most. But, then you often remember that even if you screwed up a bit, you learned a valuable lesson from the experience.

So this is what I believe. Childhood is about learning from your experiences and also just screwing around a bit as the rascal that you are. So, pretty much that’s what childhood is about. Experimenting.
The rope is swinging
Jump rope resembles a child
   Innocent and free

Summer has begun
Children play after dinner
   Another great day

Childhood is short
Enjoy it to the fullest
   Try not to forget
Being a kid was so simple and life was just pure fun.  
When we heard the ice cream truck coming, we’d hurriedly run.  
As a kid, the one place I wanted to visit more than any other,  
Was Disney World with my little brother.  
My favorite past time was watching Power Rangers.  
My friends and I made best burping wagers.  

My role models were Ariel and Princess Jasmine.  
I’d pretend I was Ariel in the lake by my cabin.  
Hot dogs were a special treat,  
For a time, it was the only meat I’d eat.  
I always enjoyed going to the bank with my mother,  
because each time I went, they gave me a sucker.  

I loved sidewalk chalk and I’d always draw hearts.  
My favorite kind of breakfast was two pop-tarts.  
I loved watching the show “The Magic School Bus.”  
My life’s ambition was to work at Toys R’ Us.  
My dog Dusty was my very best friend,  
he licked my cuts and scratches to help them mend.  

After climbing up the trees,  
and playing with my Barbies,  
my mom would tell me it was time to go to bed.  
This made me very angry so my face would turn all red.  
As I brushed my teeth, I’d think, “Gosh! This really bites!”  
Then I’d get into bed and put on my Barbie night lights.  

To dreamland I’d go, to the Toys R’ Us store.  
There were live Barbies there, and Polly Pocket’s galore!  
In my dream, I sighed happily and sang,  

“I don’t want to grow up.  
I’m a Toys R’ Us kid.  
There’s a million toys at Toys R’ Us that I can play with.  
From bikes to trains to video games, it’s the best toy store there is!  
I don’t want to grow up, but even if I did,  
I’d want be a Toys R’ Us kid!”  

Those were the good old days.
The good Old Days

By Julie
I remember the day clearly. It was a beautiful day. The night before was the first snowfall, and boy it was a lot of snow. My sister and I wanted to go sledding at this local hill famous for it's sledding at winters. Our mother was in a cheery mood, so it did not take much convincing to get her to come. We all had a sled of our own. They were the wooden kind with the red blades on the bottom.

When we got there, it was still snowing. I bent down to feel the snow. It was perfect. It was the kind of snow you could pack. It wasn’t the soft boring kind, but it wasn’t ice either. This was going to be a great day. There were a lot of people sledding. It was all right, though, there was still plenty of space.

We went down a few times. The climb back up was the worst part, dragging the sleds all the way up the hill, sometimes slipping and bruising your knee, but it was worth it.

With it getting dark out, mom told us only a few more times. There were a lot less people, and the ones left were getting ready to go too. My sister and I went down on the same sled, while my mother went down on one alone.

We made it down first. I got up and was looking for my mom. She was coming down now. She got off balance and her sled was going down awkwardly. Suddenly, she hit an icy bump in the hill, and it sent her going to the side. She curved off towards the lake.

I was already running. I saw a break in the ice and my mom, having fallen in, erratically swinging her arms. I jumped in. I knew how to swim, but the ice-cold water put me into shock. I quickly woke myself when I realized that I needed to save my mom.

I swam upwards pushing my mom’s feet up as I went. It was a lot easier to move her in the water. My sister was at the edge of the ice trying to grab my mom. She got a hold of her, and some other man that was sledding was helping her. As my mom was being pulled out of the water, I started to sink below. The freezing temperatures had knocked me out faster than my mother since I was a lot younger and smaller.

I saved my mom, but in return I was not saved. I was 10 years old when I died. They put me on the front page of the newspaper for a day, I had a memorial service, and then the drama died down.

My sister and mother mourned for a long time. It hurt me when I saw them at first. I tried to make them see me, but eventually I figured out it was useless. They visited my grave once a week. Eventually they started to visit once a month; now they come around once a year.

My mother is in a retirement home now. She is not terribly old, but old enough. My sister is married now, with a child of her own; she named him after me. He is in high school now. She brings him with her to my grave sometimes.

The flowers and cross at the lake where I died are now gone. People tell stories of my ghost haunting the hill. They are all silly stories, though.

It is not fun here, but it is also not torture. Time goes faster here. I still retain my child body, but my mind is an adult. I hope we will be a family again just like when I was a child.
The good Old Days

By Alice
When Bobbi was young, she always looked forward to the Saturday afternoons she spent in the park with her grandfather. They would draw pictures in the sandbox, sit and eat ice cream, and, her favorite, blow bubbles. She and her grandfather would take turns blowing and chasing bubbles.

Surprisingly, Grandpa’s favorite part was the chasing; something he never seemed to grow out of. The bubbles reminded him of being a child, a memory he never wanted to fade. To him, the bubbles represented childhood; floating around carefree, just existing, and then all of a sudden, POP! It’s gone. If you chase the bubbles, though, you can at least protect them for a little while.

As time went by, Grandpa got slower and was no longer able to take Bobbi to the park. Instead, they would spend their Saturday afternoons at the nursing home where Bobbi would help take care of him. They would try to get away with blowing bubbles in his room, but the nurses would somehow always know.

On November 28th, Grandpa’s 84th birthday, Bobbi’s mother got a call from Grandpa’s nurse. Almost instantly after she had picked up the phone, tears started to run down her face. Bobbi was eager to find out what was going on. Her mother hung up the phone and ran to her room. Bobbi knew.

Bobbi didn’t waste any time being miserable. Of course she was sad, but that didn’t keep her from doing all the things that she had done and still wanted to do. Instead of sitting in her room crying, she would lay in her garden and blow bubbles to the sky. She knew that even though she couldn’t see him, Grandpa was still chasing every one that she blew.
There was this one guy, who knew this other guy, who knew this one woman, who is friends with this girl who has a really big fear of the toilet.

What I’ve heard is that she can’t go to the bathroom without holding her mom’s hand. If you ask me, I feel sort of badly for her.

One night, the girl was drinking a glass of water, and then she really needed to use the bathroom. She was telling herself that her mother wasn’t home yet, and the only ones in her house were her dad and her little puppy.

So, she got her dog and ran to the bathroom and locked the door. The girl still really needed to use the bathroom, but she just stood there and stared at the toilet.

She tried to use the bathroom. She held the dog close to her, but she didn’t feel any safer. Then she thought that it would be better if she got her dad too, so she did.

Her dad held her hand as she used the bathroom. Then he told her that it was going to be the last time he did that.

When her mom came through the door, the girl’s dad thought that it would be a good idea to talk to her. So they did. They told her that she needed to get over her fear, and face the bathroom alone. She said that she would try to do her best and not be scared.

The girl took what her mom and dad said literally, and the next day she really needed to use the bathroom. So she stood up straight, and walked into the bathroom with a hammer in her hand.

She destroyed the toilet.

The girl came out and told her mom and her dad what she had done. While her parents looked at the damage that their little girl had done, she was by the door laughing. She wasn’t scared of the toilet anymore.
There is something about being the oldest child, of two boys and one girl to be precise. Our household was a family of five. The house was small. So small, in fact, that only four of us could eat at the dinner table at once. My mom would stand at the kitchen counter and pick at her food. She was very pregnant. Historically, the oldest child feels a responsibility to be a positive role model for the younger siblings. I was 8 years old and in the third grade when my youngest brother was born. I cried the morning my grandmother woke me up and told me that my mother had given birth to a “ten pound baby boy.” I had wanted a sister terribly. I was so scared about the baby coming and my parents basically forgetting about me and having me take care of the middle brother.

The couch in the living room was covered in tired and sad beige corduroy. My mother was an interior decorating major in college, so the couch just didn’t fit in with the colorful art on the walls, or the throw pillows on the pink LazyBoy. It was a three-seater couch, and absolutely not part of a sectional. The living room’s best feature was the picture window. The television was perched on a microwave cart that had a broken front door. My plan was simple. Protest this baby and protest him coming into the house. Middle brother was jumping around all excited. I just wanted to squeeze him and tell him, “Don’t be happy. This is not good for us.”
We had no cats, dogs, hamsters, or any animals in the house, and eating was absolutely not allowed on the couch unless my dad had a tray. Therefore, the couch was very clean. There were no crumbs, hair, or mystery boogers hidden beneath the cushions. My brother wiped his mystery boogers on the wall behind the couch, so I was not afraid of finding any snots on the couch. There was a very real fear of the dreaded million-legger that loved to crawl across the wall behind the couch during the 10 p.m. news. Once my angst over the bug diminished, the realization that I needed a defense against this baby occurred. I was ready for construction of a cushion fort.

The base of the fort was Grandma Elsie’s handmade afghans. One was blue with large holes and one was cream with smaller holes. I folded the blankets into fourths and laid them on top of each other at the base of the couch. The blankets were strategically placed to protect the hardwood floors while I was camping out. Next, I removed the back cushions and piled them at an angle against the seat of the couch. The Klutz book of friendship bracelet making was my companion, as well as a Hi-C orange juice box and the latest Babysitters Club series book. I laid in semi-hiding with a small hole to peer out of.

This fort did not seem fortified enough, so I decided on one last defense mechanism. An entire day of lying on the floor was getting annoying. I didn’t have scary pictures or fake blood to attach to the sign, so the message had to be loud and clear. I decided on “No boys allowed.” After a few hours of lying in hiding, I heard the side door open and my Dad’s cheery, “We’re home!” My grandmother was sitting in the pink chair and I was holding my ground. My Dad was not happy when he saw my baby brother protest. He told me to get out. I said, “No.” He asked my grandma, “What’s wrong with her?” My grandma said, “I guess she wanted a girl.” I yelled, “I don’t want any stupid baby!” and began to cry.

My mom walked in with my aunt, who had the baby in her arms. My mom told me to come out and give her a hug. I cried for a while and my middle brother came into the room. He peeked over my aunt’s arm to see the baby. He was only 6, and obviously not aware how our powers would decrease with another kid around. He said, “He’s cute.” I hopped out of my mom’s arms to see for myself. I guess I do have to set a good example, even if he is only 10 pounds.
Endless hours to play  
Sunshine, time and friends  
Mom calls for lunch, then dinner.  
The backyard is the universe.

Familiar playgrounds  
The railroad tracks down the hill,  
the field next to the house,  
not necessarily what they seemed.

The field attached to the neighboring utility becomes,  
a dangerous forest filled with,  
snakes and scorpions,  
poised to attack without warning.

Ditches along the railroad tracks become,  
the dangerous Amazon where,  
exotic tadpoles are collected,  
and watched as they transform.

This is my universe  
So close to my house  
Not allowed to  
Cross the street or leave the block

In quieter moments,  
looking at the tracks  
wondering where they go,  
as I stay here.

In quieter moments,  
looking at telephone lines in the field  
wondering where they go,  
as I stay here.

Where will I go?  
On the tracks to the castles  
from my books?  
Through the lines to the voices  
of my grandparents?

Where will I go?
Where Will I Go?

By Michelle Z.
“Coe! Come down here, we have an appointment.” Sleepily I rolled out of bed, dreading what was to be in store for me. A week before, my sister, Kelly, and brother, Jack, had gone to the library with my dad. Kelly had told me that he had checked out some books on children with ADHD, books with titles like, “The Troubled Child” and “The Explosive Child.” And now I am being dragged out of my bed. “Coe! Get down here! We are going to be late!” Oh, mom.

“I’m coming.” I called back.

Exasperatedly I pulled on my favorite t-shirt from Abercrombie that said “bubbles” on the upper right hand corner, and “scuba school” on the back, topped off with my favorite blue and green floaty skirt. I pulled my hair into a high ponytail, slipped into my birks and sprinted down the stairs. To my surprise, when I finally made it down to the kitchen, I found that my mother was really dressed up, wearing a suit, and my dad was wearing a sports coat. Where were they taking me? I followed them to the car, bewildered.

I wasn’t a bad kid. I was going into my sophomore year of high school at St. Mary’s Immaculate Heart all girls Catholic High School. I got straight A’s and I played on the varsity soccer team as a freshman. I was smart, talented, and pretty; but I was full of energy, and almost too much to handle. I didn’t have many friends, and I wasn’t very happy. I also had quite the temper.

Mom turned around and said to me, “You know honey, life isn’t supposed to be this hard. You are running in a race, and you are keeping up with everyone else, but you are pulling a trailer behind you. If we could just cut it loose, you would be faster than everyone else, and you would win that race!”

“Mom… what are you talking about? And where are you taking me?” No response came, and about twenty minutes later we arrived at the Springfield Mental and Behavioral Health Center.

“We’re here!” My overly enthusiastic mother said with a big grin. Dad gave me a fake smile and opened the door for me. My parents could take their fake smiles and shove them. I am not mentally ill! I walk solemnly into the building with my parents. I was scared. We walked into a large waiting room, and I sat down with my dad as mom went to the receptionist’s desk to tell them that we were here. I felt so awkward. I thought to myself, I’m not mentally handicapped, I’m not mentally insane, so why would they be taking me to a psychiatrist?

“Hello there!” a plump man with salt and pepper hair combed over his bald patch shouted at me, “I’m Doctor Craig, and you must be Coe.” He said with a little too much enthusiasm.

“Oh, hello!” My mother said shaking his hand fervently, “I’m Allison, and this is my husband Ben, and you seem to already have met our daughter, Coe.” She said it so crisply, as if she had been rehearsing. I smiled weakly at him, and he beamed down at me.

“Height and Weight!” I stepped cautiously onto the old-fashioned manual scale, and he weighted me. “5’4 and 103 pounds, very good.” I searched his face wide-eyed, looking for answers. He then took us to his little, cramped office at the very end of the hall, and ushered us to take seats. I sat across from my parents and started to look around the room. Pamphlets on Concerta and Zoloft littered the table next to me. There was a metal figurine of two children playing, and two pictures of landscapes adorned his whitewashed walls.

“So, Coe, I hear that you are having some trouble concentrating in school.” He posed it more as a question than as a statement.

I had just finished up a five-week summer school biology course. It was one of the hardest things that I had ever done. We would do a week worth’s of work in one day, spending five hours a day sitting before slides of ameba and cells, which nearly sucked my brain out. Some of the labs were cool, but I had so much trouble with the formaldehyde. I was okay dissecting my frog, but when the fetal pigs were taken out, for extra credit, I almost lost it. The smell made me so nauseous, I could barely sit through the lab, and the room continued to reek even days after the experiment. I spent all night, every night laboring over the textbook in anticipation of the test we would have the following day, and I had a low C the whole time. I took the teacher aside and told him that I did not get C’s. I managed to scrape by and pull off a B at the last minute, so it ended well.

“Your parents have also told me that you have a lot of trouble making friends, and you have an excess of energy.”
Thank you, mom and dad. Okay, so I have some trouble with friends, it’s not making them that is hard, it is keeping them. Everyone loves me, at first. I am a fun person to be around, but I overstep boundaries, and I say things that hurt people’s feelings, innocently, without thinking before I speak. I do have two very dear friends, though, and they are all that I need. Sophia and Kathryn, but we call her Kit. They have been with me since I was five years old, and I know that they will never leave my side. We have been inseparable for the last nine years of my life. They are all that I need, and they mean the world to me.

“Now, Mr. and Mrs. Harra, Allison, and Ben, you have mentioned that she has quite the temper.” The doctor said in his droning, monotone voice. “Are her problems more social, or more mood?” He asked as though I wasn’t even there.

“More social,” my mother said very quickly, with an eager expression on her face.

I cringed. I know that people really don’t like me, but I didn’t want mom pointing it out, and telling this complete stranger all of my secrets and embarrassing problems. Plus, what could this quack do to make people like me? They already have their impressions of me set in their heads, how can he change their minds?

“We are also concerned about her impulsivity,” Mom continued, “in June she snuck out to see a boy at midnight, he could have raped her.”

No he couldn’t have, and he didn’t! And why is this relevant? Why did she need to tell that to the doctor? Why did it matter? He didn’t even kiss me! We just talked, and he touched me, but that doesn’t matter! I was hurt, and now I’m not, so why does she need to bring it up again? I don’t want Dr. Craig to know about that! It is certainly not his business! It is not even my mom’s business; I shouldn’t have even told her in the first place. It had been obvious that something was wrong; I cried and I couldn’t hide how used I had felt. When I told my mom, she was angry that I had snuck out, and was scared of what could have happened to me; what didn’t happen to me.

“All right Coe! I’m going to put you on Concerta, for ADHD, which stands for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.”
WHAT? ADHD? I am not crazy!
“The medication should help with your concentration, and self control.”
Who the hell does this guy think he is? I’m NORMAL! I am! I really am! I gritted my teeth and smiled, holding back a horrible fit of rage.

“Now, Mrs. Harra, I can give you some samples and a coupon for when you fill your first prescription. I am writing the order for it right now. Lets start at eighteen milligrams, which she will take in the morning. I am starting her off on a low dose, so her body can adjust to it, and next time I see you we will adjust the dosage accordingly. For her height and weight, the standard dosage is 36 milligrams, which I think will be the right dose for her.” He said this so matter-of-factly. My parents were nodding continuously, looking like bobble heads. They honestly believed his guy?

“Okay,” My mom replied as he handed her the medication, coupon, and prescription.

“Oh, and Concerta is a form of Riddilin, but it differs in that it is slow release, so it will stay in her blood stream longer. Riddilin is a form of speed, so naturally, the medication is a controlled substance, it has been abused, so you can only buy a month’s worth at a time. That prescription can be filled three times. Now, lets see, I want to see you again in two weeks, when is a good time for you?” he directed his question at my mother, who was hanging on his every word.

He directed us out of his tiny office, and back into the waiting room. My mother paid the over-priced cost of our visit, and we left. Upon leaving, my mom seemed happy; happy that her first-born was mentally ill? The car on the way back home was not a quiet one.

“Well, Coe, what did you think? How do you feel? The medication is going to make everything easier.” She spewed out.

I shrugged my shoulders trying to find the words. Taken aback? Confused? Overwhelmed? Angry? Frustrated? Scared? All of these answers flooded my thoughts, and all I could say was, “I don’t know.”

I didn’t want to talk; I was still taking it all in, and there was so much to absorb. Why were they choosing now to decide that I am “challenged,” and who says they are right? I’m normal, aren’t I?