The next issue is scheduled for a June release. Anyone who wishes to contribute artwork or writing to Orthogenique can do so by giving the piece to Michelle Z. or Michelle P.

Pieces submitted will be used at the discretion of Orthogenique staff and will be incorporated into existing spreads and sections.

Many thanks to the people who subscribed to this issue of Orthogenique. Your donations are greatly appreciated. All others who wish to subscribe to this magazine can do so with the order form at the back of this issue.

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Many people have watched a bird take flight from a perch and wished that they could fly; wished that they could gain the perspective and the feeling of the ability to soar above the world. If I could have a superpower, though, it would be teleportation. Think of the benefits. You could be with the people you love for every holiday, or non-holiday, occasion without the expense, stress, and delay of your standard forms of transportation. You would never have to worry about being late, about parking, or about forgetting something at home. If you wanted Italian food for dinner, you could get authentic fare. Honestly, would there be a better power?

I guess you could have super strength, but if you can go anywhere with the wiggle of a nose, you would never have to fight. You could have the ability to fly, but teleportation...hello? I must admit, though, Wonder Woman’s invisible jet was pretty cool. Still, none of the Marvel or DC heroes could convince me that teleportation wouldn’t be the way to go. I guess the only option that comes close would be Peter Patrelli of Heroes, who can take on the power of anyone he is near. The drawback to that would be if the person’s power happened to be the ability to clean well.

It is fun to think about what it would be like to have a power, but the flip side is also something to consider. I mean, think about it, Superman had to avoid pretty green rocks and keep his identity secret. Also, what would happen if he misused his super strength or x-ray vision? Batman had a cool car and underground lair, but in reality he had to deal with appointing himself chief vigilante and making the necessary decisions that go with that position. What would happen if he went after an innocent person? Great power can lead to great destruction; can lead to oblivion.

Even my seemingly benign power of teleportation, in the wrong hands, could lead to a loss of privacy for those around me or those I chose to pop in on. I could steal with abandon or cause conflicts that could escalate beyond control. Truthfully, though, it doesn’t take a super power to affect the world around us in such negative ways. An unkind word at the wrong time can have a devastating effect.

It would be amazing to be able to see the world with that bird’s eye view that flight would offer, to know how your actions had an impact on a small and large scale; to know how they ripple through the world and come back to you. Maybe then being powerful would not have such a negative effect. In my mind, teleportation would be great, but who knows. That bird on the telephone line may see it differently. From that perspective, are there waves that I can’t see?

Most of us leave a path as we move through our lives, whether we notice it or not. That bird’s eye view may show us that we have impacted things in ways we don’t realize. It is not often, once we pass through childhood, that our lives are truly recorded in any meaningful way. Each semester it is amazing to me that our students are creating a legacy with Orthogenique. They are forging a path that future students will follow, hopefully for years to come, and the impact of their work will be felt years after they are gone. It is permanent, it is published, it is tradition. The O’School loves its traditions.

So, maybe leaving a lasting impact is a superpower. Maybe that is all of our greatest power. Maybe, considering the fact that I get to watch the kids create their legacy each semester, I don’t really need to teleport. I just get to have that bird’s eye view of the path our students create. That works.
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orthogenique
Scary Hand, Digital Image, Photoshop CS3  By Casey
The benevolent master scans the cave for his pupil. Wounded and severely anguished, he searches. His eyes peer across the morphing chasm to which his adversary has drawn him until he, the once master, has now succumbed to the pupil.

Singuin, his powers fading, and his life’s spark falling to the will of young Raong, his pupil, creates a void from his body and his mind; this as it to move his mind out of reach from the ever powerful Raong. He stumbles, his body buckles and he is enveloped in the dark.

Raong first came to Singuin as a young boy of 10; he pleaded with Singuin to teach him his ways. These ways mostly involved peace of the mind, so that he might be able to be one with the beings and creatures around him. Raong sought this path through Singuin, first finding him meditating under a willow tree.

Singuin had sensed his presence, knowing instantly that the boy was not a danger, but a vessel; a vessel, in which he, Singuin, could pass down knowledge from his ever fading body. Aged wisdom could not be suppressed. Without a word being spoken, they began the process.

A beam of light emerges from the dark. A void, or rather a portal, has been reopened. A shock of red, an oval opening, reveal a hand, a rage filled vessel, trying to grope its way into existence, reaches out from the abyss.

Somewhere across the cave something singes Singuin’s snow white hair. He awakens. How long he has been unconscious he cannot tell, however he soon learns that it has begun. He is being hunted.

He hears light trails of foot steps to his right, then a swift motion of accuracy to his left. He dodges blindly as Raong races out of the darkness only to find no one there.

“Singuin, you have not lost your touch, but you are fading, I can sense it. Your aura has diminished quite a bit. Don’t worry; I shall end it for you soon old Master.”

Singuin, shaking, emerges from a dark envelope at the North end of the cave.

“Aha, you have come to accept your fate. Your words are quick and steady but your will is fading, I shall bring you to your knees old one, but not before you denounce your powers onto me!”

Singuin dodges the gust of wind aimed to pin him against the wall, he ducks back into the shadows as Raong shakes his head in a disapproving manner.

“Come on old man! Stop playing games. You are only delaying your demise! However, do not fear. I shall bring it to you.”

He, Raong jumps stealthily across to the rock Singuin had at one point been hiding behind. His disappointment spreads across his face, like an infection. His hands clench in rage, and his eyes seem as though to spout fire. In all of this, he lets down his guard, possibly losing Singuin to the portal just opened.

Singuin, breathes heavily from atop the cave. His portal brought him here, but it shall be the last time that it shall take him anywhere. He knows he is fading; with each step his heart beats slower, his breath gets heavier, and his eyes grow weary. All of his life, he had known, he had known that this would be his fate, dying in the midst of a battle. However, to whom he did not know. He knows now that his death will seal no destiny, cause no ripple in the river of time, but he questions it. Should he, Singuin let his fate be sealed without a fight, letting his own destiny come to be, or, should he take a life and let Raong, his once most prized pupil, fail?

Either way, the sun was rising across the once midnight blue sky. He welcomes this new wave of light and warmth, as he acknowledges that Raong will find him soon. However, he feels the winds of fate blowing, and they seem to be in his favor. Raong chose his destiny, and as Singuin chooses his, he sits atop this cave welcoming the new day, welcoming it, and waiting.
Accident?
No, I shook my head, I don’t remember being in an accident. Was that why I couldn’t move?
I woke up, tried to move my arms, and realized I couldn’t. My eyes felt as though they were glued shut, and I began to panic. What was going on? What was that loud ringing noise I could hear all around me? Why couldn’t I move my body or open my eyes?

“Lacey. Lacey, can you hear me?”

I didn’t know the voice of the man who was talking to me, but he sounded a little frantic. I opened my mouth to respond, but found I couldn’t say anything, so instead I just nodded my head slightly.

“Lacey, my name is George. I’m a paramedic. Do you know where you are?”

A paramedic? Why would I be with a paramedic? I shook my head no.

“Lacey, you’re in an ambulance. We’re on our way to Central Hospital. You were in an accident. Do you remember what happened?”

Accident? No, I shook my head, I don’t remember being in an accident. Was that why I couldn’t move?

I guess I must have passed out or fallen asleep after that, because the next moment I was in the ER with a bright light hanging over me. Maybe I was dead. I couldn’t be dead. I could hear my mother’s frantic breathing coming from the corner. No, I wasn’t dead. Just in pain. More pain than I could ever remember.

“Lace? Are you awake, baby?” My mother’s voice sounded hoarse.

How long had she been here? Once more I tried to talk, but like before, when I opened my mouth nothing came out. I just nodded my head.

“Oh, Lacey!” My mother sobbed. “I’m so sorry! I’m so, so sorry!”

What was she sorry for? She started to sob something out, but the door to my room suddenly opened.

“Tristan, don’t run, and be quiet!” My dad was trying his best to keep my little brother calm, while at the same time not breaking down himself.

“I told you not to bring him here,” my mother snapped at my father.

Why didn’t she want Tristan here?

“This is his sister. I’m not going to leave him in the dark,” my father snapped back.

Great. They were arguing again. Please, I silently begged to myself, not now, not here. I was in too much physical pain to have to deal with their fighting. I tried to tune them out and focus on my brother’s breathing. He seemed to be the calmest out of everyone in the room, even though he was only ten and I must not have looked too good, because I could hear him gasp when he got close to me.

“Lacey,” he whispered, sounding a lot less calm suddenly, “why were you so mad? Was it me that got you hurt?”

Oh my god. He thought it was his fault. Mad? What was I mad about? Is that what got me in this whole situation? I frantically tried to shake my head no so that he would know that it wasn’t his fault. I didn’t really even know whose fault it was, but I didn’t want him to think it was his. I could hear his sigh of relief, so I knew that he knew it wasn’t his, which made me give out my own silent sigh. I wished at that moment that I could see my little brother to let him know things were going to be ok, even though I myself didn’t know how bad things were.

A few more minutes passed by when the door once again opened and several doctors came in.

“We’re ready to take her into surgery now,” one of them, a man sounding like he had smoked his whole life, said.

A second doctor, a woman whose voice would make a dog howl, came in after him and said, “We’ll be taking her into OR four, and we should be through, supposing everything goes well, in about six hours.”

“Six hours?” My father questioned, trying hard not to yell at them.

A third doctor, another man, replied, “Her condition is bad. The x-rays we took show she has some spinal damage, as well as a few broken bones. We’re going to do our best to reverse the damage in her spine so that she doesn’t end up paralyzed.”

Oh no. I play soccer. There was no way I was going to be paralyzed. Take me to the OR right now!

“What will happen to her if the surgery goes well?” My mother asked.

What do you mean if? It was going to go well. Where’s your sense of optimism, Mom?
“Well, she’ll have some scars, and it will take some time for her broken bones to heal, but other than that, she might just have a slight limp for a long time,” the woman doctor said.

“That’s a relief,” my mother sighed.

“But,” said the first doctor; “you need to realize what could happen to her if the surgery doesn’t go well. Due to the injuries in her spine, she could end up paralyzed from…”

Now what was happening? I must have blacked out once again, or maybe they had me under anesthesia, or it could very well have been both, because I woke up in yet another room with bright lights. I could tell it was another room because in the other one I could hear a lot more beeping and crying out. Did I already go through surgery? I must have, because I tried to open my eyes, and lo and behold they opened, not wide, but wide enough that I could see around me. The room was a disturbingly bright yellow with a large window covered by horrific shades. The bed stand next to me held a phone, small lamp, and a bible. I had to laugh to myself, partially because I was alone and partially because I couldn’t laugh without it hurting. The sight of the bible was a bit much; I’m Jewish. Oh well, it was the thought that counts, I guess.

I didn’t see my family anywhere. Did they leave? Great. I hated being alone, but, then again, that was why I had left in the first place. Wait! I remember! Well, I remember something. I wanted to be alone for a while so I left home. Why did I want to be alone? I tried to remember more of what had happened when my little brother quietly slipped into the room. Now that I could see him, I could clearly see his big, bright blue eyes were red and puffy, his cheeks stained with tears. He had been crying a lot recently.

“Hey you,” I whispered, my whole body aching with the effort it took to speak to him. At least I got the words out, or I think I did.

“I’m not supposed to be in here,” Tristan said, confusing me. “I just wanted to see you before I had to go back home. I have school tomorrow. You’ve been asleep for a while. I’m glad to see you awake. I have to go now because I don’t want to get in trouble for being in here. Bye. I love you.” With that, he slipped through the door just as quietly as he had come in.

How long had I been asleep? Why wasn’t he allowed to be in here? Why had I left home to be alone? I was so tired. My head was throbbing and my back ached. All I wanted to do at that moment in time was to just go home and go to sleep. Well, here would do for now, seeing as I obviously couldn’t leave. I closed my eyes and slept.

I woke up the next day to find I was, once again, alone. I had had this horrible dream that a big red truck ran me over. Big red truck? I live in a small town and I’ve never seen someone with a big red truck. Maybe it was just a dream and didn’t mean anything, but strangely I could clearly see every detail of that truck. I usually don’t remember my dreams. The paramedic had said I was in an accident. Was it with a big red truck?

The door suddenly opened with so much force, it could only be my Uncle Jerry. He’s a big guy, but he’s basically a teddy bear. I was glad it was him. Maybe he knew where my family was.

“Oh no. Look at you. You’re a mess.”

Thanks so much, Uncle Jerry. That’s just what I needed right now, to know how awful I looked. That was Uncle Jerry for you. Always so honest.

“Listen kid, I don’t have too much time to stay and visit, but your mom wanted me to see if you were awake and let you know that she and your dad are at work. They tried to take off today, but can’t till tomorrow, so they’ll be in to see you later tonight and will be in tomorrow. Tristan is staying with a friend for a couple of days, but he’ll be in as much as possible. I brought a list of numbers for you to call if you need anything. Well, my time is up, so I’ll see you later kid. I love you.” He leaned over, gently kissed my forehead, placed the list of numbers next to the phone on the bed stand, and left, closing the door behind him.

That made me feel a little better, knowing where my family was, but I was still confused and frustrated because I could not for the life of me remember what had happened.

Time went by and I dozed off every so often. Once again the door opened, and through blurry eyes I could tell it was my two best friends, Caleb and Aurielle. I was so excited to see Caleb, but for some reason that I couldn’t figure out, the second I saw Aurielle my heart started to beat faster and faster, rage beginning to build in me. What was going on? Aurielle was as close to a sister as I got,
and yet all I wanted to do right now was shut her out.


How could I tell him that I had no idea what happened? How could I tell him that I wanted Aurielle to leave?

With all my might I managed to say, “I don’t know.”

“What do you mean,” choked out Aurielle, “you don’t know? Do you not remember?”

I shook my head, no, because once again I was too weak to manage anything else.

“Are,” Aurielle once again choked, now more clearly, through tears, “are you still mad at me? You know I didn’t mean to hurt you.”

Was that the rage I felt building up? Was that why I wanted her to leave?

“Not now,” snapped Caleb.

I must have had no emotions, or maybe even looked angry, because Aurielle suddenly burst into tears.

“I didn’t mean to!” She sobbed. “What if you had died? What if I never got the chance to apologize! Oh god, Lacey, I’m so sorry!” With that, she ran out of the room crying.

Why was everyone apologizing to me?

“Do you even remember what she did?” Caleb whispered softly. He must have pulled a chair next to my bed because suddenly he was sitting by my head. I shook my head, no.

“She cheated on her test, and when she was caught she said you were the one who was cheating. You got kicked off the soccer team.”

Oh no. I remembered now. It was math class and I had stayed up all night studying and Aurielle had gone to some party. She was looking at my answers, and it just so happened that when I looked over at her because I saw her looking at my paper, the teacher saw, and I got blamed. The dean was called, and so was my coach. My consequence for “cheating” was that I got a zero on that test and I was no longer allowed to play on the soccer team. That was why I wanted Aurielle gone. She betrayed my trust, and in the end I got punished because of her. Tears rolled down my cheeks as I remembered.

“Lace, she didn’t think you would get in so much trouble. Her mom didn’t know she was at that guy’s party, and she wanted to keep it that way. Yes, it was wrong, but she felt you would understand. She’s really sorry, Lace.”

I turned my head away from him. Soccer had been my life for seven years, and now it had been taken away because of her. Caleb knew that. How could he be taking her side?

I just wanted to be alone right then.

Caleb must have picked up on that because he said, “I’ll leave now. If you need anything, don’t hesitate to call me. I’ll talk to Aurielle for you.”

Then he left. When he opened the door to go, I could just barely hear Aurielle crying.

I didn’t even feel a little sorry for her.

Around eight thirty, my mother walked into my room. With her she brought a small teddy bear that could have come from the hospital gift shop. Upon closer inspection I found that it really was from the gift shop due to the CH embroidered on its foot.

“Hey sweetie. How are you feeling?” My mother cooed as though I was a child.

I tried to smile so that she would think that I was feeling better, even though I was still angry with Aurielle. Obviously my mother didn’t buy it.

“Sweetie, listen. I know your father and I should have told you sooner. We just didn’t know how to say it.”

What? What was she talking about? Oh no. Was this another thing that I had been upset about?

“I know this is going to be hard for you,” my mother continued, “it’s going to be hard on all of us. Your father and I, we just think that it’s for the best.”

Tears rolled down my face once more. Why did I have to remember everything today?

“Go away,” I managed to say through my sobbing. “Sweetie, I…”

“Get out!” I yelled, cutting her off from whatever it was that she was going to say. She left the room without a word.

They were divorcing? Why? I knew they argued a lot, but wasn’t this a little drastic? My mother couldn’t survive as a single parent, and my father, well, he couldn’t survive on his own. What about Tristan and me? How were we supposed to take this? Did she expect everything to be ok with us after that? What were they thinking? I couldn’t deal with
the thought of all that I had learned today, so instead I just closed my eyes and went to sleep.

“Stop! Stop! Stop!” I screamed as I ran up to my bedroom.

My mom and dad were arguing again, this time about who was right and who was wrong about whether they should have told us sooner or later about their divorce. I just wanted them to stop fighting for once. I had already had the worst day ever, and now they were adding to it. Aurielle had betrayed my trust; my parents had betrayed my trust. Now who was left for me to trust? I was so angry!

I went into my bathroom and slammed the door. Tears burned down my cheeks and my breathing was getting worse and worse. I grabbed my inhaler from the cabinet and took two hits. I felt a little better. I stood there looking at myself in the mirror, my tear stained face and puffy red eyes, my brown hair going every which way. I was a mess. Nothing could make my day any worse.

I was so mad. The occurrences of the day kept running through my head like a hamster on a wheel. I couldn’t stop thinking about what was going on. As I stood there looking at my reflection, I had an impulse to smash the mirror, hit everything that got in my way. So I did.

I trashed the bathroom, throwing everything every which way, Tylenol from the bottle I kept in the cabinet scattered across the floor. I ripped down the shower curtain. I didn’t care. Finally, after what felt like an hour but was really only a few minutes, I stood once again in front of the mirror. I looked worse. My hair looked matted, I had somehow managed to scratch my face, and my knuckles were red, ready to bruise. The only thing I hadn’t managed to trash was this mirror. So I smashed it, hitting it as hard as I possibly could. Glass shattered everywhere, my rage filling my mind.

“Lacey?”

It was Tristan. What did he want? Couldn’t he tell I was too angry to deal with his incessant talking?

“Get out of here! Who said you could be in my room? What do you think you’re doing?” I screamed in his face. My hands were bleeding from hitting my mirror.

“I…I…I…” He muttered.

“You what? What the hell do you want?” I never curse in front of him. I made it a point not to.

He began crying, and I couldn’t deal with him right then, so I shoved him out of the way knocking him to the floor, and stormed out.

I wanted to be alone, so I grabbed the car keys and left. I was so mad. I kept driving and driving, eventually turning onto the highway. I drove for several hours until I was several towns over. I got off the highway and kept driving. My cell phone was ringing; it had been ringing for at least an hour. I ignored it. I didn’t want to talk to anyone, and when I finally looked at the caller ID, I definitely didn’t want to answer. It was Aurielle.

I was so mad at her that I just sped up, trying to get as far away as I could. I turned a corner, and suddenly all I could see was a big red truck coming my way. It was almost like slow motion. We hit; a head first collision, causing my car to flip at least four or five times, his truck running into the streetlamp. I could taste blood in my mouth. I sat, crushed in the car for what felt like at least thirty minutes before the ambulance came.

I woke up in a sweat. I suddenly remembered everything; the accident, my parents, Aurielle, and Tristan. I felt horrible for what had happened. I let my anger get the best of me. I had continually asked myself what everyone else had been thinking, but what had I been thinking? I slammed my car right into someone’s truck. Had I hurt the driver? What did my parents think? Tristan; did he hate me for what I had done? I knew that my family would eventually forgive me, but I had to find out what had happened to the other driver.

I picked up my phone, and then put it back down, not knowing who to call. I didn’t want my parents to know what I was doing, and I couldn’t call Caleb. The only person who could possibly understand what was going on in my head was my uncle Jerry. I called him, and he was at my side twenty minutes later with a week’s worth of newspapers. It took about another
twenty minutes until I finally found the news coverage of the accident. It was short, but it gave the name and a picture of the driver of the truck; it also said that he died on his way to the hospital due to blood loss from a head injury. What had I done?

He was only twenty-two, and a father of a nine-month-old little girl, his obituary said. It also gave a phone number where I could contact the family to give condolences. I put the papers down and dialed the phone. I had done everything I could possibly think of wrong, and this was the one thing that I could do to even possibly make things right.

“Hello?” The woman on the other end of the phone said. Her voice shook, most likely from crying. I almost hung up the phone because of how ashamed I was of myself.

Instead I replied, “Hello. My name is Lacey Taylor. I’m…”

“I know who you are,” the woman said, sounding a lot less angry then I had imagined she would. “I accept your apology. Jason always talked about forgiving those who hurt you, forgiving the ones who cause you pain and grief. I know that what happened was an accident, and I forgive you.” All I heard after that was the dial tone, indicating that she had hung up on me.

How could she forgive me? I had gotten her husband killed because of my own stupidity. Even I couldn’t forgive myself. What I had done, I didn’t think I could bear to live with. I decided to sleep it off for the night.

The next day I woke up coughing. I felt something thick and wet in the palm of my hand. I reached for a tissue to wipe off my hand when I saw that the viscous liquid in my hand was a dark red; blood. I had taken enough science and health classes to realize that coughing up blood was never a good thing, especially right after having a serious surgery. I began to feel faint and I knew something was seriously wrong. I coughed up more blood, actually puking a pile of blood and bile onto the floor next to my bed.

“How?” I managed to cry out, blood filling my throat once more. What was happening to me? Was I dying?

I reached for the emergency call button on the side of the bed when...
I face a road that ends uncertainly;
My vision blurs with flames all swathed in red.
Though frankly such a fate should worry me,
I find my mind is drifting towards the dead.

My feet betray me trudging ever on
Towards hellish heat that chokes, searing with pain.
A shirt, a hat or shoe I dare not don;
On this long road they shall bring me no gain.

For where there’s naught but skulls and bones I fear
Such worldly things will only cause offense
To souls of old who now hold nothing dear;
I walk to meet them, all my muscles tense.

My true forever lies waiting ahead;
And in forever I seek out the dead.
SKELETON

Mixed Media, Acrylic Pen and Pencil by Shelby
Impossibly Far

Poem by Ryan

in the blackness of space
impossibly far
remote and distant
empty and alone
suddenly a flash of light
color floods the cosmos
from reaper comes birth
in cycles from now and forever
Starburst III
Acrylic on Paper,
Digitally Manipulated
By Felicia
THE FOREST

SHORT STORY: BY SHELBY
A small hut, constructed of dry grasses and mud stood in the forest. The wind carried loneliness; except for the occasional chirp of a bird or crunch of a leaf, it was silent as death.

She lives in the grass hut in the forest. The golden sun in the sky and the worm-bitten leaves are her only possessions. The forest provides the essentials for her being. The trees provide ripe, sweet, juicy, mangos, and bright purple sugar plums. The grass from the dry plains and mud from the ground form her shelter. Elk, deer, and birds are abundant throughout parts of the land, and these creatures provide her with meat, and clothing. The stream supplies fresh, cool water and a hodgepodge of fish frolic in the stream, supplying her with fresh food.

It has been ten years since her disappearance. Before that she was known as Sidney, or Sid, as everyone called her. She ran away from her village, to be alone and away. She was happy when she was alone, especially in the forest. She used to spend hours enveloped in the forest, marveling over its beauty. The ever-changing seasons never ceased to amaze her.

Winter’s frost destroys everything, biting it cold, leaving the trees bare and yearning for spring. Spring eventually arrives, but winter’s frost still hints in the air. The sun occasionally shines, and the flowers awake from their nap. Finally summer is here. The forest is in full bloom, sprouting bouquets of vibrant flowers. Daffodils peek from behind a tall oak and lilies are gracefully nestled by the stream. The leafy canopy provides a wonderful source of shade from the blistering hot sun. Soon enough, the days are getting shorter, and the nights drag on. Sid felt the chill of fall coming, observing signs of the flourishing greenery fading to crimsons, yellows, and oranges.

At night, she can see the entire sky. The stars glisten. This is not the solitude she has been wishing for. The wind lets out a lonesome howl. As she stares at the night sky she wonders if her family is still alive. She wonders if they ever searched for her when she left or if they still think about her. These thoughts often cross her mind. She misses the festivities, the laughing, the familiar sights and smells. She longs to go back to her village, but quickly realizes that there is no going back. Sid is not the young girl she once was.

Her hair is dirty, long and unkempt; the fur on her coat is crusted together by dirt and blood. She does not look like the bright-eyed young girl she once was. She once had long beautiful, curly, brown hair. Her mother used to put it in one long braid, tied with a piece of yarn. She told her that girls were expected to look presentable if they ever wanted to find a husband.

Staring with vacant eyes, she forces herself to think of times when the solitude of the forest didn’t feel lonely. Images of better times fill her head. Sid travels back to a time before fleeing ever crossed her mind. Familiar music fills her mind. She closes her eyes and sinks into a trance. There is laughing and groups of people having conversations around a hissing campfire. The warmth surrounds her, making her feel welcome. This is foreign to her. This is oddly comforting. She sees her family amongst the crowd. They immediately recognize her and greet her with hugs. Sid is relieved to have finally made it home. At last, she is home. Finally, she is happy.

A brisk wind sweeps across the terrain; winter is near. Sid awakes, sits straight up. Was she dreaming? Is she dreaming?

Ten years have passed and Sid is alone.
Kingdom Acrylic Paint on Canvas by Brooklyn
Early Monday Morning
Prior to the rising sun
Many awake to the ringing
Of alarms of which they shun

Going through the motions
Of that already done
A day full of laboring tasks
All complete, all but one

The sun sets as those set off to home
But first to make a run
Off to the casino, the drug den,
The strip club, the pub

To get their fill,
To have some fun
These addictions have them
Close to none

In search of satisfaction
Following the setting sun
To fill the empty heart
With the song by preachers sung
The angels tickled the clouds below them, causing them to laugh and spurt out flakes of snow that fell in a flurry. The moon was a knife blade in the midnight sky, casting bitter light upon the parts of the forest that weren’t hiding behind the trees, and the ocean was slapping against the sands of time upon the beach. It was at this time, upon this night, here at this secret part of the forest that the she-wolf felt her body convulse for the third time that night. Howls of pain escaped her lips as the third of the pups squeezed itself out into the wilderness of the planet. This time the convulsions doubled the pain, and the flow of blood was more intense than the first two pups had brought about. The howls not only expressed the physical pain that the wolf was experiencing, but they also warned the world that she was in a state of emotional agony. She knew that the moment the pups squeezed out into the snow she would have to abandon them forevermore because of the curse. When the third pup had fallen into a pile of snow, she forced her paws to run away, knowing that she could never return to them. Her ears immediately picked up on the cries of the pups from far behind her; cries coming from the throats of the babies who had been left to die by their mother on the coldest winter’s night the world had ever seen. She forced her heart to ignore them as she ran farther and farther away from the pups, knowing that she was abandoning them in the same way that their father had abandoned her. Her heart lingered for a moment in the past and mused aloud to warn her about the dangers that would soon befall the babes she had left behind. At that point she knew that her final choice would not leave room for her to turn back. She immediately turned around and ran back to her pups, calling their names for the world to hear. She reached them within a matter of minutes, and already she could see that they were shivering in the cold. Swiftly, she laid her body down to rest and cuddled around her young, cleaning them off with her tongue. Surprisingly, she noticed that neither of the first two pups bore the pentagram scar on the back of their left paw like she did. Her heart sang a song of gladness, and her stomach was instantly filled with fluttering butterflies as she examined the third pup, praying silently that the mark of the curse was not present on this pup either. Things seemed too good to be true, and the she-wolf stared in horror as she discovered the sign that she dreaded most was there on the back of the left paw of the pup. It was glowing red right now, but the she-wolf knew that it would soon dull to a brown color once the night wore on. After all, the she-wolf bore the same mark on the back of her left paw, and she knew of its curse. Her heart turned cold as she continued to stare at the mark on the pup, but she knew she was too soft-hearted to be able to murder her own child, which would bring about the end of the curse. She sighed deeply as she realized she couldn’t keep the third pup, but her mind couldn’t seem to churn fast enough to conjure up a solution to the problem. Then she realized it wasn’t just the third pup she couldn’t keep. She knew then that she couldn’t keep any of them. She howled to see if there were any nearby packs that would care enough to adopt the pups, but she received a deafening silence as a response. Suddenly she noticed a light glowing far off in the distance, bobbing up and down but coming closer to the ocean from some forgotten path in the forest. Within minutes the light appeared in front of the hazel eyes of the she-wolf, and a human appeared behind the light. From the physical shape and size, the human appeared to be a woman, and she was holding the light
She remembered what it was like to love as she noticed the dying rosebushes on the beach.

Every rose has its thorn, just like every love story, and hers was no exception. She suddenly wished she had instructed her pups not to open their hearts to love so that they would not experience the heartaches that she once did. As she walked into the water to have a conversation with fate, she struggled to breathe properly. Suddenly one of her paws slipped on a rock underneath the water, and she found herself being pulled by the force of the water underneath the waves. Her paws fought against the flow of the tide, but her efforts were to no avail. She said her goodbyes to love, and then she breathed her last breath.

Naomi Higgens was the town’s funeral director, and naturally everyone averted their gaze upon seeing her. As a result, nobody ever came close enough to her to hold a conversation, let alone spend time with her, because they were all afraid of her profession. Because she lived alone on the outskirts of town in a cabin in the woods that were said to be haunted, she was also rumored to be a witch. She had no friends, yet she was the friendliest person in the town. Even so, nobody had the patience to want to get to know her. This, among other factors, led her to be extremely lonely, and she desperately wanted a family of her own. She had once had a husband, but he had died suddenly in a car accident on a highway near the woods nearly three winters ago. They had never had any children of their own. Naomi had considered adoption several times, but she felt that it would be unfair to her children if they didn’t have a father figure in their lives. She had also tried
simply having pets, but they didn’t fill the void in her heart quite like she had hoped. It was the eve of the third anniversary of her husband’s death when she had decided to try looking into adoption again.

That day, she had driven into town and gone to the local adoption agency, but alas the receptionist had interrogated her bluntly about her personal life in such a degrading way that she had promptly left, feeling sure that the townspeople would talk about her erratic behavior again. This time she wasn’t sure she minded quite as much because she was used to being the subject of gossip at this point. It was around the time that she normally would have eaten supper, but she was too frustrated and flustered in general to eat anything. It was then that she decided to take a drive through a forgotten path in the woods near her house to brighten up her spirits. After all, maybe she could visit her husband’s grave in the cemetery by the ocean while she was out.

Naomi always felt at peace with nature, and she centered her whole spirituality on nature itself. That was why she and her husband had built their cabin in the woods in the first place, and honestly that was the way she preferred it to be. She wanted her children to grow up with the world as their backyard, and she wanted to encourage them to find their own path just as she had done so many years ago. She noticed that the sky was growing darker as twilight was fast approaching, but she didn’t mind it one bit. To her mind, twilight was the best part of the day anyway.

When she found the private grove in the woods where she and her husband had shared their first picnic, she sat in awe of the beauty of the rosebushes and the willow trees. She recalled how her husband had pointed out each and every constellation known to man and how he had given her a special star to remember him by. Together they had named the star Exodus, but they were sure that scientists everywhere had their own name for the star. They didn’t care much for scientists. To their minds, they saw scientists as the reason global warming and such had begun in the first place. Tears flowed down her cheeks, making her mascara bleed as she recalled the first kiss she had been given by her husband when they had been in the quiet of the grove together on that special night. Suddenly, she entered into a world of dreams that took her back in time to the place where she was beautiful once again. Until the wolf began to howl, Naomi had not realized that she was not alone. She opened her eyes to see Exodus and all of the other stars that were many worlds away from the earth on which she had been asleep, but she could not locate the stars anywhere within the midnight skies. The wolf’s howling had woken her up, and she felt a sense of danger because she had never before heard a wolf howling that close to where she was. In fear, she ran to her parked car and opened the door, slamming it shut harder than she intended. When she listened again to the sound that the wolf was making, she decided it was not a howl of happiness. Instead, it seemed to be the ghastly howl of a she-wolf all alone in the midst of a blizzard. She drove through the woods until the wolf came into view.

Never before had she seen a live wolf this close. She feared that danger was fast approaching,
Fate  Acrylic Painting on Canvas By Kayla V.
yet she could not seem to draw herself away. The beauty of the wolf beckoned her to get out of her car, taking with her the flashlight from the drawer under the dashboard to light her path. She trudged through the snow until she was literally within three feet of the marvelous creature. By this point, the howling had ceased, and now the wolf was almost whimpering like an abused canine, begging Naomi with her hazel eyes to take the pups into her arms and carry them away into safety. For a moment, Naomi swore that she could see the love story behind the hazel eyes, but then the wolf blinked, her eyes returning to their expressionless state of being. Naomi knew what she must do, and so she did just that.

In her heart she knew that keeping the wolf pups would be a challenge, but she was prepared for anything that might come her way. After all, she had been to the adoption agency that very morning looking to start a family of her very own. Wolf children were not exactly what she had planned, but she thought that raising wolves was better than raising nothing. She lovingly scooped the pups into her arms, cradling them as if they were her own children, and walked away with them into the darkness of the night.

Deity awoke with a start. Around her lay her two siblings, dead in sleep and snoring obnoxiously. She looked out the window into the eyes of the impending dawn and then turned with a smile to look at the beautiful human who had been her mother all these years. Again she had been dreaming about the waters surrounding her, but she did not know what her dream meant. She couldn’t comprehend what it was like to be standing on solid ground one minute and be drowning the next. The she-wolf had been in her dream again, and Deity supposed that perhaps the she-wolf had been her mother. The wolf in her dream had looked a lot like her, with the same scar and everything, except that wolf had hazel eyes while Deity’s eyes were a deep shade of blue. She had black fur from the tip of her nose to the end of her tail, and she was always thirsty for answers to questions that haunted her when she was alone.

She rose up on her legs and began to explore the cabin, becoming curious about every little trinket of humanity that she laid eyes upon until she noticed the human woman opening the door and heading out into the summer’s heavenly light. Her mind racing with questions, Deity followed the woman out into the wilderness until she was startled by a howl coming from behind her. She turned around and found herself face to face with Dita, her sister. Dita had the beauty in the family as well as the common sense. Her red coat of fur stood out against the wilderness, and when the nearby packs would migrate around these areas, it was always Dita who gave them directions to the greatest hunting spots in this neck of the woods. She had opened her heart to love long ago and been disappointed, so now she was rather reserved in that area of her life.

“Where do you think you’re going at this hour?” Dita barked at Deity, her grey eyes full of concern.

“I wanted to know where the human was going,” Deity answered, annoyed that her sister had interrupted her investigation.

“She’s probably just watering the plants again like she always does,” Dita commented, “and besides we don’t need you getting into any more trouble than necessary.”

“Well, I was just… thinking about a dream I had last night,” Deity admitted. “It was the one with the wolf that I think was our mother.”

“You mean to say that you dreamed of our mother again?”

“Yes,” Deity began to explain, “and I was just wondering if my dream took place out in the woods nearby. I was going to do some exploring to find out.”

“Well then, at least let me come along with you so you don’t get yourself lost again. The woods can be a dangerous place,” Dita offered.

Deity said that it sounded like a good idea to have Dita tag along on the expedition, and so she bounded off into the woods with her sister only two paces behind her. For some reason, Deity felt as if she had taken this new path before, which didn’t make any sense to her at the time, but her instincts helped her to glide through the woods at the speed of light. Dita, however, was starting to have a difficult time keeping up because she tripped over the roots of a nearby willow tree and fell flat on her face. She called out for her sister to wait for her, but Deity refused to listen. It wasn’t long
after that, Deity came to a halt, out of breath and in awe of the sight before her. She was still standing in awe when Dita finally caught up to her.

“What is it?” Deity questioned aloud, walking forward slowly but then bursting into a run. Water surrounded her on all sides, and soon she was in up to her neck.

“It looks like a ton of water to me,” Dita mused as she cautiously sauntered into the depths of the murky water behind her sister.

“Maybe it’s the ocean that the human woman was talking about the other day,” Deity thought aloud, feeling more confident that she was right when her sister agreed with her.

Soon they figured out how to swim, and they began to play a game where they took turns sneaking up behind each other and splashing each other with their paws. They played this game, among others, laughing and genuinely having a good time until the sun disappeared from the sky, dipping down into its bed below the ocean, and the stars covered the sky. They suddenly realized how late it was and sped back to the cabin using the same trail that they had earlier that day and panicking the whole way there.

The next day was pretty much the same, and so was the day that followed that one. Each sunrise the two girls would sneak out of the house and take the secret trail to the ocean and would return around midnight when everyone in the house was sleeping, so no one was the wiser. It was not until the third day when they woke up at the crack of dawn that things were different altogether.

On the third morning, they awoke to the screams of the human woman and the snarls of Dido, their brother, who was busy gnashing his teeth at them and attempting to bite the human’s left arm. Suddenly the scar on the back of Deity’s left paw started to glow a bright red and ooze blood as if it were a faucet. Every time a drop of blood hit the floor, Dido would succeed in biting the human in a random area of her body until blood began to spurt from her like a garden hose. Deity howled at her brother in a panicked tone, telling him to stop what he was doing. This wasn’t his typical behavior. Usually he was quite a sweetheart, but when Deity looked closer at her brother’s eyes, she noticed that a bloody pentagram took the place of his pupils. He not only looked dangerous; he looked downright possessed. Dita leaped in fury at Dido to stop him from attacking anyone else, but at the last minute, Dido attacked her with a vicious bite. She fell instantly to the floor just as Dido bolted, howling like a banshee, out the door into the wilderness. Deity looked over helplessly at her dying sister and then ran over to the human woman she had loved so dearly all this time.

It was clear to her that the woman was dead, and soon her sister would be too. Deity felt a pang in her chest, as if she had swallowed her heart without chewing it first, and then she smelled smoke. When she ran outside the cabin door, she saw a truck drive away, the driver laughing maniacally and a cigarette on the ground next to the wood of the cabin. That’s when she noticed for the first time that the cabin was on fire.

Heat. Flames. Blood scent. These were the things that glowed in Deity’s eyes within the next instant. Then she remembered that her brother had run into the woods, and she instantly grew worried about the ocean. She looked up at the sky and noticed that it was as black as the smoke spiral that had come out of the burning house, and then she looked to the trees and saw that they were being ripped out of the ground by the wind. It became clear that a storm was approaching.

Deity bolted down the path that she and her sister had created together until she saw the ocean again, but this time she saw that the ocean was the source of the imminent storm. The water rose and spiraled into a giant cyclone of the sea, urging her to come closer. She was sore afraid, but the spiral intrigued her, so Deity ran headstrong into the ocean just like she had done before. This time the water dragged her under and held her captive. The next thing she saw was darkness, and it claimed her completely.

Deity awoke with a start on an island that she did not recognize. The sand beneath her clung to her fur, and she noticed at first that she was very wet. She tried very hard to remember where she had come from, but only one word rang in her mind like a bell: Exodus.

“Exodus? Is that... where I am?” she mused aloud. She knew she would not find out today, she would not find out tomorrow, but in time the answers would come.
Lost,  Photo by Ethan
Land of Dark, Poem by Denzel

A gleam of light in the land of dark
A man walks alone trying to leave his mark
The man walks in his shoes miles and miles
He is not nice and he never smiles
The leaves on the ground are now blowing in wind
He is standing trying to comprehend
There is a great darkness where he stands
It is like the darkness is what he demands
He enjoyed the darkness, it was to his liking
The man thought the darkness was just striking
Darkness is all around this man
All he is wondering is what is his plan
He is clueless and has the thought
That something is after him and he is now caught
There is an evil lurking behind him
An evil so bad and oh so grim
The man has no life, he has no friends
He is afraid of his past but makes no amends
He has commited numerous crimes
But he was never caught, not one single time
And now he is caught, oh what a joy
That he will be something’s new chew toy
The creature comes out, now he is pursued
He should have been nice and not so rude
He sees the creature and how big it is
It has a weird shape that is different from his
He tries to run and he tries to hide
He knew he was done, the man even cried
The creature opens its mouth and swallows him whole
Then it goes back and hides in its hole
His life is now over, he exists no more
He has been eaten, chewed to the core
It’s all over now, the creature returns
It is waiting for another, my how it yearns
Colorful Abyss
Short Story By Kayla

Untitled, Digital Image By Denzel
Michael saw a blindingly bright light and the next thing he knew he was thinking, “Is this a dream or is it really happening?” He was floating through nothingness and eventually would get sucked up into the black hole along with everything else that once existed.

He didn’t know what happened; all he even remembered was seeing a bright blinding light and then opening his front door to see what it was. The next thing he knew he was weightless. He knew it must be a dream. Little did he know that it wasn’t just a dream, it was reality.

All around him was dullness and a blur of colors at the same time. Somehow he just knew he wasn’t going to be getting back to Earth, because, after all, it was the end of the world and his house was the only form of anything that existed. Now it’s gone, and surely forgotten by now. He was the last of the humans existing on what was once Earth. Now it is just a blur of black and the colorful remains of happiness and life.

He could feel himself flow toward the black hole that all the happiness and life were fading into.

Where would he go? What would he do?

As much as he wanted to break free, he couldn’t. It suddenly dawned on him. He didn’t even know where he was. The more he kept convincing himself that this was only a dream, the more he realized that he would have woken up a long time ago. This, indeed, was not a dream or a nightmare. He was going to fade away, become only a blur along with the colors of life and happiness.

Michael was curious, though, as to whether or not someone may be around. He kept looking around. He was all alone and about to be sucked into a black hole of emptiness.

The hole was getting closer and closer to him. As he got closer to the black hole he noticed a cold, tingling feeling. He looked at his hands; they were faded blurs and he could see right through them.

Wherever the black hole was, he was about to be sucked up into it. By now he didn’t really care what happened anymore because he was convinced it was a dream, a nightmare. He was convinced that he’d wake up safe in his bed, on Earth, with the rest of the world. Yet somehow he wasn’t quite so sure about anything much anymore.

He took one last look around as he realized he’d be floating forever, colorful life forms fading away just like he was.
Hate isn’t Hereditary
A Children’s Story by Casey

Deep in the mountain recesses of the fair land of Shireland, there was a family of Yetis. The cold is harsh up there, and is only home to those who can bear the conditions.

“Clara, where’s me ‘at? Ye know I cen’t go ta work without me ‘at.” Dave’s voice echoed through the cave.

“Clara! Where’s me ‘at? Tell me ‘fore I’m forced ta go find it mahself!” Clara peeked out from around a corner, chuckling to herself. “Dave, calm down. It’s under the couch,” and so, Dave slipped his paws under the couch, pulling out his hat.

“Godfarsaken women, always puttin’ the men’s ‘ats under couches... The nerve,” and with that, Dave was off to work, strolling down the mountain.

Bobby crawled out from his hole, pushing the air up with his arms, yawning a tiny Yeti yawn.

“Mum, what does Daddy do? It must be something amazing and noble, right? I mean, he looks so professional with his fancy hat and all,” Bobby said, jumping up and down in obvious excitement.

Clara sighed, but quickly hid her dismay. “Well, uh... Your Daddy, he works as a criminal justice lawyer.”

“Well that sounds neat!” Bobby exclaimed. “Except on Tuesdays,” Clara quickly said.
“Well... What does he do on Tuesdays?” Bobby inquired.
“Well... He’s a professional population regulation specialist,” Clara said quietly, sure that she had fooled her son.
“You mean... HE DESTROYS CITIES FOR A LIVING? AND KILLS PEOPLE?!”
“N-no.”
“Oh.”
“That is to say –Yes.”
“What?! That’s sick!” Bobby cried, tears flowing from his eyes.
“Now Bobby, it’s not that bad, he—”
“Is a Murderer!” Bobby said, cutting off Clara.
“Look, it puts free food on the table and—”
“You mean... That wasn’t cows and lambs and horses?”
“No.” Clara sighed once more.
“Oh.” Bobby responded.
“No as in, no, those weren’t cows, and lambs, and horses.”
“Noooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!!!” Bobby shouted to the ceilings of the cave, fists raised to the sky.

Dave made his way down the mountain, left foot, right foot. As he neared the city, he began to unsheathe his monstrous Yeti claws, and bare his monstrous Yeti teeth, which were in dire need of brushing. His persona changed from a humble creature, to a nasty monster. He reached the city, and sat before the city limits. Dave approached a man, who immediately dropped his suitcase and ran for the hills. Dave then began to grow in size, reaching monstrous proportions, growing to the size of a house. One of the perks of the job was the ability to enlarge one’s self, which was sort of the selling point for Dave. He romped around town, smashing buildings, scooping up the citizens, and eating them.

“Time for some popyalation control,” he roared,
laughing a maniacal laugh.

The citizens all promptly scattered about like chickens minus their heads. This was indeed one of Dave’s most destructive days yet, and would be forever known as, “The day that a giant Yeti came and smashed Shilalay city to bits.” It would go down in infamy from then on.

Dave walked through the cave opening, and removed his hat, throwing it across the room, where it landed under the couch. Clara welcomed Dave home. Dave gave Clara a hug and a kiss, and called up to Bobby,

“Bobbeh, it’s dinnar time!”

Bobby came out of the hole slowly, slouching all the way to the
“Bobbeh, what’ve I told ye about postyar?”
Bobby grimaced at Dave, and sat up in his chair.
“Alreight, dig in!” Dave said, tossing the meat on the table.
Bobby turned away, and muttered under his breath, “I’m not hungry.”
“What’s thet, boy?” The room was silent for a moment.
“I’m not hungry!” Bobby shouted, pounding his fist on the table.
Dave looked perplexed, and looked to Clara for advice, but she had already left the room.
“Why not? It’s pearfectly good meat.”
Bobby sat in silence for a few moments, running his hand across his face. He looked up slowly, and looked his father straight in the eyes, “I don’t consider humans ‘pearfect’ meat,” he said with a firm attitude in his tone, similar to that of any pre-teen boy.
Dave looked at him with a solemn look in his eyes, “Well, you’re gonna have ta learn to. You’ll be taken’ me place someday.”
Bobby was stunned. He wasn’t sure what to think. He looked to his left and to his right, feeling cornered. What was Bobby to do? His father, whom he loved, was asking him to hunt for a living, which he wasn’t entirely fond of.
“Listen, Bobbeh, they are scum. Nowhere near our standards. We’ve gotta take ‘em out, because they deserve no less, lad. If it weren’t in me job description ta only terrorize them, that city and many others would be decimated by now. You see, laddy? It’s the way things are supposed to be.”
“Hate isn’t hereditary, Dad!” Bobby yelled, running into his hole, crying.
“I HATE THIS FAMILY!”
Days turned to nights, nights to weeks, weeks to months, months to years, and years to... more years. Bobby had grown into a ‘strappin young lad’ as his father would say. Bobby shared many great times with his family, believing that the troubles surrounding his inheriting the family business were done with after that fateful night.

Soon, he was in high school, where he made friends with all sorts of creatures, including humans. He
never brought them to the cave though, as he feared that his father would eat them. He became a prize of his high school, a friend of all students, but that time passed, and at age 18, Bobby graduated high school, and moved on, beginning to work at an electronics retailer in order to raise money for college. He became revered there as a prize of the store, and worked there for two years. Now the day had come for Bobby to leave home and seek bigger things, though neither he nor his father knew it.

Dave walked through the cave door, his old age beginning to show through. He weezed as he came in, tossing his hat just in front of the couch. He sat in his chair, and relaxed. He called for Bobby to come down, to break the news to him. Clara came into the room as well, succumbing to old age herself. Bobby came down, and sat on the couch adjacent to his father. Clara stood at the doorway, knowing exactly what was going to happen.

"Bobbeh... I'm gettin' old. It's time for you ta take the reigns and own the family business."

Bobby fell silent for a moment.

"Dad... I love you, and I love
mom... but I can’t.” Bobby said, sighing at the end of his sentence.
Dave became angry, and threw his arms up in the air.

“Ya will take my place, whether ya like it or not!” Dave bellowed, his teeth
bearing.

“No, Dad, I will not. I can’t stay around while innocent creatures are being
threatened.” Bobby looked down for a bit, hanging his head, “Goodbye, Dad.”
he said, and with that, he made his way out of the cave, pushing past his
father, taking little notice of anything his father did as he walked out.

Off he went, traversing through the mountains, controller of his own fate
and identity, follower of none. He now had the choice to do what he wanted to
do, and be what he wanted to be, without his father’s or anyone else’s opinion
being forced upon him. He could be himself, without needing to follow his
father’s morals or beliefs. He walked into the distance, unsure of where to go,
off into endlessness, only knowing that what he had done was the right thing
to do.
Unknown
Series of Haikus, by Ethan

Dark Side of the Moon, water color and ink by Ryan
I mosey, wander
Am engulfed by the novel
And all that is vague
Stopping to ponder
Contemplating what I am
Or where I belong
It does not matter
For whatever I may be
I am the unknown
superpowers

oblivion
How I Became Spiderman’s Roommate

Literary Essay By Brooklyn

Spiderman, Oil Pastel by Felicia
Spiderman lives in a cage in my bedroom, and on top of that he does this without complaint. If you want to call me a liar, all you have to do is look at my pet hamster’s cage. That’s because my hamster’s name is Spiderman. He has no special superpowers of which to speak, but he loves to cuddle with me on my bed because he likes the texture of my comforter. He’s also a self-trained fashion critic. His method of letting me know that he doesn’t like certain articles of clothing is that he’ll urinate on them. So far he’s let me know that he’s not a huge fan of denim or that white peasant skirt I have that twirls when I swish my hips.

It was almost a year ago that Spiderman came into my life. Petco was having a sale on hamsters that day, so they were ten dollars each. I was having trouble trying to decide which hamster I should bring home with me until I saw a streak of orange and white bolt out of a plastic purple igloo and head straight for the wheel. Instead of running forwards like most hamsters usually do, this particular hamster was running backwards, which made me laugh hysterically. It soon became clear to me after watching this little furball for about ten minutes that he was the clown among the group, and I decided that I wanted to buy him instead of any of the other hamsters in the display. My mom found one of the Petco employees and summoned him over to us so that he could wrangle the hamster into a ventilated box. He dramatically pulled some rubber gloves over his fingers and opened the display. After a power struggle in which Spiderman tried to hide behind the wheel, the igloo, and the water bottle, he surrendered and waddled into the box.

The people at Petco had to answer a lot of my mom’s questions about how to properly care for my new friend, and actually I learned a lot of interesting facts. Apparently, you’re not supposed to touch the hamster for at least one week after buying him or her because hamsters need some time to adjust to their new environment. Also, female hamsters tend to be more fiesty than the males. Oh, and the most important fact that they told us was that hamsters are nocturnal, so they have a whole different schedule than the rest of us.

In many ways hamsters are like humans. First of all, whenever I’m in a new environment, I need some time to adjust. Even something as small as going to summer camp or having a change in the lunch menu requires time for me. Trust me, some things can take longer than others to adjust to, but nevertheless, I’ve always needed time to adjust to strange and foreign things. Next, the females that I know, including myself, have a bigger attitude than most of the males. Oh yeah, and last but not least, we all have different schedules than each other.

One night I fell asleep on my bed with Spiderman curled up inside my hands, and a thought popped up in my head like toast in a toaster: no matter who I am Spiderman will always love me. Even though I have qualities that he might not like, he’ll always accept me for who I am. I don’t know if that’s because he’s so highly evolved that he knows that it’s not good to judge people or if he just doesn’t care, but I think in its own way his unconditional love for me is a superpower. In retrospect, I suppose it’s pure irony that my pet is named after a superhero.

So, you can keep your big, burly men in tights that can fly but crumble under kryptonite, and your well-endowed women with cat ears and your capes and sidekicks. You can keep your powers of flight or telekinesis or whatever makes you unique. I’ll just keep myself warm as I cuddle with my own superhero.

We, as humans, get pretty lonely in a world where friends can be hard to come by, so we rely on animals to be our loyal companions. It’s quite logical if you think about it. If you’re having a hard day and all of your friends are mad at you but you have a pet, then you know that when you go home there will at least be someone who loves you and who can comfort you in your time of need. Even though your pet doesn’t have the ability to process through your issues with you, there’s something irresistible about a crouching hamster, begging to be cuddled with that makes it hard, at least for me, to remain upset.

I have an old therapist who lives out in the country with his wife and dog, and he says that whenever he is feeling sad, his dog will come over to him and put her head upon his lap as a gesture of comfort. So it’s not just hamsters that can help someone feel better when they need some extra support, and it’s not just comfort that animals can provide.

They can also provide the opposite of comfort...
in times when you least expect it. For example, there was a report a couple of months ago about a cat who lives in a nursing home. She goes to visit each resident, but only when they are about to die. So far, her predictions have never been wrong, which I find to be both creepy and astonishing. There is clearly something inhuman about animals besides the obvious qualities, and some might even consider it to be supernatural. How else would you be able to explain all of the stories of animals being able to rescue their owners in times of peril or the cat in the nursing home I mentioned earlier? In my opinion, the supernatural explanation is the only one that seems to make any sense whatsoever, and I’ve been known to get into philosophical debates in regards to my position on the issue.

It’s almost as if animals are psychics, but instead of reading human minds, they read our emotions. For example, the old therapist I mentioned earlier once went to a conference in Kentucky with a bunch of other therapists at which a horse was present. The counselors were all seated around the horse and were told to think of their happiest memory. Soon after, the horse began to prance around, chipper as a dandelion. Then the counselors were told to think of dead puppies, and the horse slowed down to a complete stop with its head down, as if it was in mourning. This powerful experience is merely an example of how the animal psyche works.

We, as humans, give our emotional energy to the animals of the world, and then they read it like a book and act accordingly. I find it incredible to think that I have the power to influence Spiderman’s behavior based on what I’m feeling. I know that in the past when I’ve been sad around him, I’ve leaned down and cried into his fur, and he’s cuddled up against my cheek, as if trying to dry my tears. When I’ve been happy around him, he crouches on his hind legs and pulls his paws in close to his chest while emitting a high-pitched pleasant sound that brings music to my ears. If we’re both annoyed, then he’ll either start biting at my fingers or he’ll squawk while I try to ignore the noise. Even through these behaviors you can see how Spiderman feeds off of my emotional energy. He has become an expert at his job of being my caretaker. Honestly, it’s almost as if he’s my own private counselor whose payment comes in these little treats from Petco that look like pink chocolate chips but are filled with yogurt.

So the next time you have a chance to come into contact with an animal, don’t take it for granted. It may well be that that same animal could have the chance to save your life someday in a way that’s similar to how Spiderman saved my life. Through loving him, I learned how to love myself and furthermore learned what unconditional love is in the first place.
The Tibetan winds are sometimes calm and soothing, but many days they carry a harsher tone as they whistle through the ears of the mountain dwellers, often indicative of something foul on the horizon. It's days like these when the Buddhists prefer to meditate in the sanctuary of the indoors, as not to provoke nature's rage. As the winds rage through the mountains, winding through the valleys, there are a select few who choose to endure the harsh wind, and face whatever evil might come. Those who believe that there is something to be learned from adopting the stinging pain of the wind upon their face, those who have learned to enjoy it through force of their own will, forge ahead.

Myama sat atop the roof of her house, legs folded, hands relaxedly strewn across her thighs. The harsh winds blew across her face, throwing her flowing crimson red hair about. She only revealed her eyes to feel the refreshing blaze of wind scathing her retinas, filled with the color of the sea. Her hair continued to lacerate her face, but unwavering, she continued to meditate, her mind and body at peace even within the midst of the chilled winds.

She walked through a field, a grassy meadow. She was filled to the brim with joy as she lie in the meadow, and nature began to envelope her, wrapping her arms and legs into a grassy bind, she was becoming the roots of nature itself, becoming one with the serene beauty of everything around her. The grass, the trees, the dirt, the lowly forest animals all sang in unison as she was accepted as part of them. She felt as though absolutely nothing could go wrong, desired nothing more than to lay there and exist, that her world was perfect.

Suddenly, she heard sounds from the outside, voices cutting into her perfect world like razors, "Myama, Myama! We have something to show you! Come quickly!"

The skies began to fall down around her, the serene peace turned into a harsh chill, the wind slapped across her face once more, the grass faded, and then she was sitting on the top of a gray stone.

She sighed, her relative youth less obvious at times like this. "Yes, what is it, pups?" she looked down on them from her stone pedestal, and noticed tears streaming from their eyes, their lips puckered straight across their pudgy faces.

They began to walk in the other direction. Deciding this was an indication to follow, Myama leapt off the rock into the air, flipping mid-jump and landing without so much as a thump from the impact. She thought to herself along the way, the walk seemed to take much longer than it normally would. She figured they were heading to the Temple of Hope, where they would inevitably show her some new trick that the head wiseman had figured out while meditating. They finally reached the temple, but the children refused to go inside.

Myama slowly, one foot after another, stepped through the doors. She began to feel something was wrong, her gut began to cramp in anxiety. She walked into the age old temple, where she saw familiar faces. The monks all seemed to be looking the other direction, not willing to look her in the eyes. Finally stepping through the doorway to Wei-Gun's private quarters, she saw him lying on his bed, breathing heavily and shallowly. The many monks quickly moved away as Myama pushed the curtains aside. She looked down upon his lifeless body, choking back tears. Biting her lip, she extended her petite hand towards him, lowering her body in the same fluid motion. Now on her knees, her black scarf resting limply across her body, she rested her hand on his chest. The black rags wrapped around her body, the cloth wrapped around her neck to shield from the wind, all seemed to be constricting her as she sat there.

The room was silent for many moments, but Myama finally spoke. "How much longer?"

The monks looked at each other, obviously not sure how to answer the question. "Not long," one said. Myama rested both of her hands on his chest, and began to draw energy from his body. "He shouldn’t suffer through this." The monk’s jaws dropped as she absorbed the last of his energy, finally sending him into eternal rest.

She kissed him on the forehead, and lowered his eyes. "I hope your next life reflects your kindness. I love you," and with that, she was off and out of the temple.

She trudged up to the top of the mountains, enduring the cold in search of salvation. As she made her way up, the winds got harsher, and the air colder. Certainly she would find her way at the peak of nature. Almost to the top. She began to feel nature embrace her, or perhaps that was just the biting of the cold.

She decided to take a break to meditate, and sat on a nearby rock, placing her body in the position she preferred. She did not start meditating, though, for she felt another presence nearby, five or six presences,
in fact. She closed her eyes in an attempt to draw out the enemies she sensed, acting as though she didn’t notice them. They crept out of the bushes, one by one. Five men in full black suits stood around her. One reached in as if to grab some part of her, but in that instant, she threw her hand from her leg, grabbing the man’s arm and breaking his wrist in one quick motion. The man fell back, gripping his disfigured wrist. “Guys, heeelp!” he screamed, attempting to regain his footing.

The five men in black suits all charged towards her as she stood still, awaiting the blows. The first man threw an open-palmed punch towards her face, only to be swallowed up in between Myama’s forearms. The blow withstood, she flung his arm back, and with the energetic force of her blow, sent two other men flying backwards. The man she had punched lay on the ground, his arm twisted backwards around his elbow. The other man sat beside him, holding his stomach newly free of air. The remaining two sat on either side of her, readying their strike. Finally, one threw a punch towards her rib cage, but was almost immediately overtaken by Myama’s energy and flung around her, as she motioned her hands, causing one man’s ribs to strike perpendicularly against the other one’s, sending them both soaring down beside her.

Without even breaking a sweat, Myama lowered her fists. All of the men sat dejectedly with broken bones and bleeding stomachs. She began to walk away, as she...
heard one of them utter under their breath, “I knew it was bad Karma to kill that old cook, Wei-Gun. Should’ve waited for a better opportunity. We didn’t even finish... He might still be alive.”

Myama immediately stopped in her tracks, her fists now clenched to her side. She turned back to them, eyes bursting with fiery rage, and said, “He’s not, and soon neither will you be!” she cried as she threw herself towards the man with the broken wrist, sending her arms around his neck, snapping it as if it were a dried noodle.

She dropped down, eyes laid upon the man’s lifeless body for moments, her knees digging into the ground. Briefly, she felt sorrow for committing such a crime, even in light of their actions... but then suddenly, something took over, she felt a surge of energy, a delightful energy coursing through her veins, forcing her back onto her feet. She felt the energy surge through her like a constant intravenous flow of strength.

She turned to the other man, with his bleeding stomach, smiling, “Neither will you.” She spoke softly, planting a blow that nearly pulverized his face. She turned to another, “Or you,” and forcefully shoved a foot into the man’s gut.

She smiled in delight. “Or especially you,” she said, with a disturbing calmness, driving the tips of her fingers into his throat.

She turned to the final man who was attempting to back away, clawing at the ground. “You thought it would be easy, both me and the feeble man. You were mistaken. I however, am not,” she said, her delighted stare piercing the man’s sanity.

She drew her hands back behind her back, and with a sync’d motion, then threw her hands forward, sending the man flying off the cliff in the energy torrent. Calmly, Myama made her way back down to the village. Coming off of her bloodlust high, she began to think deeply about the circumstances that had just occurred. She had always been taught, and had always believed, that killing was unacceptable, even if done in self-defense. Why was it that she had enjoyed it so much? Why did she feel the need to do it again, even without the anger to fuel it? Thinking so terribly hard, she made it back to the village almost as a surprise. She was welcomed back with warm embraces, which she somewhat ignored deep in her thoughts. The children hugged her and the monks patted her on the shoulder, walking her back to the temple. Her mind was already scheming secretly, how could she find more? She wanted to continue on her path to Nirvana, but she couldn’t if everyone knew that she was a murderer.

The forest is peaceful and harmonic again, Myama is sitting atop a tree canopy, once again part of nature. The energy flows around her evenly, creating an atmosphere of serenity. Suddenly, a man appears before her, with no discernible features, fists raised. Myama arises, and the energy around her begins to pulse, swirling quicker, infusing with rage. She throws the man off of the tree canopy, the energy now insanely shooting all over her body, absorbing into her. She feels like never before, like she could accomplish any feat of strength she desired. She jumps down beside the man, and notices that it is Wei-Gun. She stops for a moment, but cannot contain herself. She plants her heel in the ground, picks him up by one hand, and sends a fist flying, infused with all the raged energy she possessed, sending him soaring many lengths. She looks ahead, and he is dead.

Myama comes out of her deep meditation sweating, unsure exactly how to take her vision. She lies down, basking over the rock. She couldn’t stop the killing... she had killed at least fifteen people by now, and still she craved it, but she would reach Nirvana, no matter what it took, and certainly that would solve her issue. She continued to meditate, seeking strength in her Zen.

Myama sits in the middle of nothingness, contemplating her situation. Suddenly, she notices flickers of energy, red energy to which she is drawn. She feels suddenly as though she needs it. She wants it. She opens her soul up to absorb the energy, and she begins to feel pain from it piercing her soul. Soon, the pain fades, and all she can feel is the rush of the energy being sucked into her like a vacuum, and she feels empowered.

Flinging up out of her meditative state, she feels no better. In fact, she feels as if the cravings have become worse. In anger, she jumps off of the boulder on which she was sitting. She quickly picks it up, lifts it over her head, and throws it straight off the mountain. Now mind you, this boulder is the size of a car, and with that in mind, she stands there, stunned, but also pleased with her feat of strength.

She begins walking back to the village, thoughts weighing heavily on her cerebrum. She thinks to herself, weighing the possibilities. She finally decides that killing is in her nature, and there is no way to stop it. Her masters had always taught her to go with the flow, so that’s what she was doing. Going with the flow.

She concluded that her amazing strength
was gained through meditation, but not that of the Zen variety, that of a twisted Zen, a broken Zen, which feeds energy to her, transferring it to power, and strength. Many times a week, she would take a break from her Nirvanic meditation in order to practice this broken Zen, drawing negative energy from all around her to empower her. The energy twisted and mutated into raw power, giving her the strength of an elephant, and the durability of a block of titanium.

There she sat, in the sanctuary, arms across her thighs, striving for Nirvana. She felt it, she was close, she had to reach it. The bright colors before her eyes are mesmerizing; she feels no pain, no sadness, no anger, only peace. The colors slow down, almost to a standstill; her mind slowly walks through the light. Inside the light is darkness that encases her mind, squeezing out of it what little good was left, stealing her emotions and desire, darkness fading, and she awakens.

She feels nothing now; no desire, no happiness, no sadness, no anger. She looks up, and suddenly sees ten monks surrounding her, all looking at her in an accusatory manner. She slowly arises, almost as if floating up into a standing position.

"Myama... We can’t let this go any longer. It has to stop. We’ve found the bodies, and you must be dealt with," the old monk said.

They all move into a martial arts stance. Myama finally feels another desire; kill them. Obliterate them until there’s nothing left to recognize. This was the only way she could now find happiness.

She throws her arms to the side, releasing a torrent of negative energy all around her, sending the monks flying back. She moves to them one by one, smashing the head of the first, breaking the skull, the second gets a kick to the face turning his head backwards. The third, still lying on the ground, receives a stomp to the chest, instantly caving his lungs. Only seven remain. They stand in awe of her power, almost cowering away, but that is against the code. They stand and fight. They all leap in together, each striking different pressure points.

She stands unmoving, unscathed. She grabs two by their robes, and smashes them against each other, causing the other five to jump back. The two fall to the ground, lifeless as she drops them. The five of them begin to build up communal energy, readying a strike sure to decimate her. She lifts her leg, knee to her chest, and with the force of a falling star, strikes the ground with her foot, sending a shockwave through the room, shattering the ground as it moves. Pieces of the shattered ground are flung into each of their bodies, tearing like shrapnel, and, almost in unison, they fall as well.

Pleased with her work, she begins to walk out of the sanctuary, but she hears a voice behind her, a voice that seems familiar. She looks behind and there he stands; master Wei-Gun.

She did not seem startled, she merely stood calmly, "I thought you were dead, master," she says.

"I am, Myama, but my soul could not reincarnate knowing that you were causing so much chaos. I will stop you before I find my new life," He struck, throwing a punch towards her gut, filled with spirit energy.

She flies back against the wall, stunned. "Ahh!" She screams, "A challenge! Excellent!" She claps her hands together, shooting a burst of negative energy at him, throwing him on his back.

Wei-Gun looks in horror as the beautiful, kind young woman he used to know fades away, any traces of humanity seemingly destroyed. "You’re no longer Myama. I have no reservation in destroying you!" he yelled, jumping off of his back, lunging at her, fists glowing with energy.

Even in his greatest attempt, though, his power was no match for her Unirvana, a force which when unleashed before, as Wei-Gun knew, was devastating, and now was back, manifested in the girl who he had known and cared for as his own from the youngest of ages. His thoughts dissipated as he was thrown to the ground, pulverized by her unnatural strength, the negative energy tearing away his soul.

The city air is cold and damp, not much unlike the mountains in which Myama had resided originally. Myama rushed through the alleyways, leaping too and from buildings, bags of money in her hands, laughing all the way with the souls of many lying dead behind her.

"Run! It’s Ms. Unirvana!" the citizens would scream, only bolstering her laughter.

Myama had found her true home now, a home where what she does is revered by some, and feared by many. A place where she can bathe in the fear and plight of the ordinary just by doing what she likes to do; America. She is doing dirty jobs and crooked deeds, and doing what she likes to do most, cause pain. America truly is the land of opportunity.
Windy
Poem By Alicia
The consistent patter fills my ears
Rain trickles down my face
And blurs my vision
I’m lost in the depths
Of the dark night
Seeking your touch
Seeking your comfort
It is then that I feel your presence
I turn and there you are
In an instant
I am in your arms
Your wet hair
Is in my mouth
Your warm breath
Is on my neck
It has been so long
Since I have been in your arms
We look into each other’s eyes
I kiss your soft lips
And suddenly
Something engulfs us
Something warm
A bright light
A strong wind
I hide my face in your jacket
And grip your sleeves
The wind is so powerful
So powerful
It begins to lift us
Off the ground
Our bodies
Intertwined
Appear weightless
I look at you
You’re looking at me
I smile
You smile
Instantly
I understand
DELETE

Short story by Ethan
I sit in front of this gleaming white display. It taunts me with its silence. I struggle to seek out answers, but it remains quiet. My toes tap anxiously as I wait for answers. Untouched rectangles exclaim with enticements; with efforts to lure me in. I greet a couple, and their figure jolts into the white light. As I rest my fingers, full of achievement, the rectangles radiate a homey warmth throughout my body.

These rectangles now resemble keys, able to unlock anything in their path. I am astounded by my progress. I can now create sentences that rapidly morph into chapters. My story grows and grows, but occasionally I unlock the wrong path. Easily distracted by confidence, my story freely roams the luminous white display.

I abruptly scroll alongside my story. Figures soar past as if they are in a time warp. I take a moment to examine it. This chapter does not fit. How did it get there? This was never suppose to happen. The shimmering white screen turns into an eerie gray resembling an approaching storm. However, I do not fret. I simply tap that one supernatural rectangle branded with “delete” and watch as that familiar luminous white display returns, ready to be rewritten.
Thanks for Asking

I’m Super,

Rachel

Recently in my dorm at the Orthogenic School, my home of three months, we did an activity called “The Game.” The whole dorm, including our staff, answered a page of questions, which were then cut up into strips and crumpled into little balls. Those papers were then housed in a box labeled “The Game.” I filled out that sheet of paper and some of those simple get-to-know-you questions threw me for a loop. Most of them were just plain silly and surprisingly, it was one of those simple silly questions that really hit home.

“Who was your childhood hero?”

This is a pretty standard question. There are many generic answers: Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman, Spiderman— the superset of all heroes. Yet I did not know how to answer, and that small slip of paper wound up blank.

I have been asked that question before, of course. I have racked my brain for the answer for years now, for every essay assigned by a teacher and when my parents were hoping for one of those “how cute” moments when children say funny things in early childhood. Then I was asked by a sheet of paper, a sheet of paper at a school where I felt I shouldn’t be. My answer was the same as it always has been; I don’t have a hero. The whole concept of super heroes is beyond my comprehension.

I don’t really remember life before the O’ School. Over the past few months I have been putting the pieces of my memories together, determined to solve my puzzle of a life.

Five months ago, I saw my life coming to an end. I was, as I so often describe it, “one foot out the door.” My life felt like a bad movie. Every day followed a pattern, like every bad movie, one that I knew far too well. I didn’t feel like anything I did was really happening to me. How could it be? It was all very unreal. I always felt like I was surveying some tragic event, only I was watching it with a bag of low-cal butter-free popcorn from the comfort of my couch.

No, I thought, this couldn’t be my life. My sense of reality had evaporated long ago.

One day, April the ninth two thousand and eight to be exact, I had a little (okay perhaps big) confession session with my school therapist. I wanted the movie to end. I don’t even like movies, exact, I had a little (okay perhaps big) confession session with my school therapist. I wanted the movie to end. I don’t even like movies, even though I was a part of the film, I still doubted “Orthogenic” is even a real word.

“How are you, Rachel?”

“Great.”

If you got a great you should feel great, because in truth I had no desire to even grant that question an answer. I didn’t feel great at all. So the weeks passed, and I did a great job of what I thought was taking my way through the program. I even changed my “great,” to a “good, how are you?” The weeks turned into months and it hit me. I really was doing well. My life really is a bad movie, but it has sort of turned into the cheesy kind. Right about now is where the “surprising” twist comes in. One thing is different, though. Instead of watching the movie I am in it.

So there I was facing that piece of paper, and I left it blank. I told the truth. I had never and will never have a hero. I am simply opposed to the idea. No super heroes or super powers for me. What makes someone a hero, and once you are deemed heroic enough to be a hero, what makes you a super hero? These are all very confusing thoughts. Taking away the super and being a plain old hero is okay, but can you super without the hero? I certainly am not a super hero. I have never saved a life or jumped off a building, living to tell the tale. I have never met a hero and certainly not any super heroes. I have, however, met some pretty super people. I see the superness in the ordinary, people who go about their days and are okay with themselves. They will succeed in super. Everyone at this Orthogenic (definitely not a real word) School is super beyond doubt. Maybe we don’t need to have heroes at all; we could all leave our slips of paper blank.

I’ve changed a lot in the past few months, whether I do or do not believe in heroes. I am satisfied with the word super without its little friend hero trailing behind it in the same sentence. I can be at peace with my own superness. From now on when I am confronted with a hallway “how are you?” I can answer as honestly as I did in “The Game.” I know exactly what my answer is. I will honestly say,

“I’m Super,

Thanks for Asking.”
Heroes Out the Door

Photograph by Denzel
Theft

Short Story by Ryan

Criminal
Acrylic on canvas
by Brooklyn

winter 2008

62 orthogenique
Officials are still stumped after a mysterious bank robbery at First National on north Washington Boulevard left the vaults empty with no trace of the burglars entering or leaving.

It was night, and a light rain descended over the metropolis that had adjusted all of its streetlights to shine directly into the only window of an apartment. The only things alive in the room were an old, grizzled reporter and the equally aged laptop that responded diligently to the tapping of fingers against its dirty keyboard. He was just putting work into what could possibly be the biggest story of the century, at least until the next World Series.

“We’re doing all we can to find the perpetrators, but we have to admit this is a little strange,” said Joan Kissinger, the city’s police chief, in a press statement released on Monday. “If anyone has any information on this, please call our non-emergency hotline at 311 and let us know immediately.”

Police have yet to apprehend any suspects in the case.

The robbery occurred last Friday Night at around 3 am. An anonymous witness who was near the building noted that the streetlights had gone out at around the same time the alarms in the bank were tripped. Only three security guards were in the bank at the time, and all of them were immediately at the bank vault door only to find it was still closed.

It was a very strange occurrence, he thought as he continued to type away into the little machine. He constantly leaned over his notes that sat on a small end table to his left. It was very important that he kept his facts straight.
“At first I thought that maybe the alarm had gone off by mistake or something,” said Henry Wood, one of the security guards who was on shift that night, “but then when the police came and looked around, the vault was empty.”

Investigators found the scene to be completely clean and free of evidence. No signs of disturbance were found around the vault door. Bank security systems showed that the vault door hadn’t even been opened. However, a complete handprint was found on the inside of the hatch, which was devoid of fingerprints. A footprint of a bare foot was also found in the main lobby.

There’s the clincher, the reporter thought to himself. What a strange set of evidence. He continued typing.

The vault, however, had been completely emptied out, including the bank’s cash reserves and security boxes. The room was completely empty.
“I don’t understand it,” adds Wood. “It’s like all the money in the vault just disappeared.”

Wood claims he never left his post during his eight-hour shift, but he has been identified as a prime suspect in the case, which officials have admitted is one of the strangest they’ve seen in a decade.

“People shouldn’t be worried about this,” announced Kissinger. “We’re doing everything we can, and I’m confident we’ll catch the perpetrator.”

The reporter sat back, smiling; another beautiful news piece. He quickly saved it, and then emailed it to his angrily waiting editor.

He opened his desk drawer, admiring the single ruby sitting therein. Then, taking his shoes off, he jumped out the window of his apartment, disappearing as he flew into the distance.
Another Brick in the Wall Part 3 Mixed Media By: RYAN
I wake up in the morning
My battery is charged
I greet the mirror with a grin
    My superficial friend
The closet is wide open
Chameleon’s skin galore
My persona’s freshly ironed
My façade’s been freshly washed
My happiness is at the cleaners
My sadness can’t be found
    I zip up my persona
    I button my façade
My ego’s in the driveway
It’s nearly half-past eight
I better pick up my happiness
And be on my way
I am me
And whatever that may mean
I will live my life
And not what has been foreseen

(Green, Hulk’s getting mad
Combing through the feelings he’s always had.)

I am a daughter
Complicated from the start
Confused and loved
All coming from the heart

(Crunch, someone’s bending the metal
And yet they’re as delicate as a petal.)

I am a teenager
Fighting against the world
Wondering when it ends
Wherever I am hurled

(Splash, across the water like a torpedo
Watch out for aqua man in his Speedo.)

I am a girl
Majestic yet incomplete
Tainted for an eternity
And forever obsolete

(Vroom, across the sky like a rocket,
Not one can tell what’s in one’s own pocket.)
For I am a Superhero
And at the end of the day I am me
And I shall strive no matter what
No matter who can see

(Whoosh, I take off without a worry in sight
Off to save the people of the Earth’s plight)

For what counts isn’t where you come from
But where you shall begin
Superpowers, we aren’t born with
But they all come from within

(Bam, the end, or rather the beginning of my
life
My superhero status cuts through the air like a
knife
And when I finally get there, to that open
ended journey
My powers will be revoked, and I will begin
my learning.)
Super Gage

A Children's Story By Julie
There was a town somewhere in the middle of nowhere called Happyville where the people were always happy. The children were always out playing together, eating junk food and watching their favorite television shows. Parents never had to worry about such things as taxes and paying rent; they were always able to afford what they wanted. Birds, squirrels, chipmunks, and rabbits roamed the fields of Happyville, the occasional fox frolicking in these same fields. Everyone was always joyful and friendly. There never seemed to be anything wrong in Happyville.

The only thing that the people of Happyville ever had to worry about was an evil, black cloud called the Dark Cloud of Darkness, ruled by the evil King Darky and his army of Sad People. If the Dark Cloud of Darkness roamed over a town, King Darky would take it over and turn everyone there, no matter how jolly they had previously been, into Sad People, condemning them to an eternity of homework, taxes, being alone, and all around sadness wherever you looked. No one in Happyville ever expected this cloud to pass over them, but it was still a gloomy possibility.

In the town of Happyville, there lived a little boy named Gage. He lived in a large house with his

parents and his best friend ever, his
dog
Cash. He was always munching on one of his favorite foods, lovely green popsicles that his mother would buy for him. Everyone loved Gage, but there was always something about him that no one could quite understand.

He was extremely bright, learning such things as reading, writing, walking, and even swimming at extremely young ages. When he was about two he was given a dog, because he was one of the few children in Happyville who had few friends. He bonded immediately with his new best friend, whom he himself named Cash.

Through the years of his life Gage was always special, but no one could figure out why, and no one knew his deepest, most darkest secret; Gage was a superhero named Super Gage, and he had a trusty sidekick, Cash Boy, his dog. Everyone loved Super Gage, yet no one knew his true identity.

One day, Gage’s mother was putting him to bed. She took out his favorite jammies, which were plaid purple pants and a simple white t-shirt. He also had with him a blanket that matched his plaid purple pants. Gage changed quickly then let his mother put him in his bed, and Cash went to sleep at the foot of his bed. That night, a dark cloud came over Gage’s home. Gage looked out his window and said to Cash,

“Look, Cash Boy! It’s the Dark Cloud of Darkness! This looks like a job for Super Gage!”

He stood up, took his blanket, tied it around his neck to make it a cape, jumped out of bed and said,

“Come on Cash Boy! Away we go!” And with a swish of his cape, and a wag of Cash’s tail, they were off to battle the Dark Cloud of Darkness.

Now, everyone knew that the Dark Cloud of Darkness was the root of the evilest of evils, and the
home of King Darky, ruler of the Sad People. Everyone in Happyville knew that the arrival of the Dark Cloud of Darkness only meant one thing: the people of that town would slowly turn sad, and never be happy again. They also knew that there was only one person in the whole wide world who could save them: Super Gage and his trusty sidekick Cash Boy!

King Darky walked out of his castle into Happyville, singing a little tune, “I know a song that gets on everybody’s nerves, everybody’s nerves, everybody’s nerves! I know a song that gets on everybody’s nerves and this is how it goes! Bum bum bum!”

The song started over and just kept going and going.

The mayor of Happyville came, annoyed out of his mind, and said to King Darky, “Now listen here! If you don’t leave this town and stop singing that song, I swear you’ll be sorry!”

“Just how will I be sorry?” King Darky asked, with a curve of his ever-curving snarl.

“We’ll just have to send Super Gage and Cash Boy to get you out of here!”

King Darky coughed out an evil sounding laugh, and walked back into his Dark Cloud of Darkness, not allowing anyone to see the fear behind his eyes.

“There he is Cash Boy!” Super Gage said as he watched the mayor of Happyville confront King Darky. “We can’t allow him to get away and make everyone sad! Then this town wouldn’t be HAPPyville anymore, it would have to be called SADville, and no one wants that!”

The people of Happyville were getting anxious. They never expected the Dark Cloud of Darkness to come after their little town, and yet here it was. What were they to do? It wasn’t like Super Gage to be so late to fight evil. He had super speed and super strength; nothing could get in his way, even if he was as small as any other little boy. He was as fast as a cheetah and as strong as a machine. He shouldn’t be missing. Was he off somewhere else? Did King Darky take him so it would be easier to enslave everyone? If that was the case, why was he just standing around doing nothing?

“Where is Super Gage?” a woman asked an hour after King Darky and his Dark Cloud of Darkness showed up.

“He should be here by now!” shouted a man next to her.

He should have been. However, he was in the middle of trying to plan what he was going to do to stop King Darky. Already people were becoming agitated and sad. It was up to him
to stop this madness. Oh, what would Super Gage do?  
“We need to get ready, Cash Boy. I think this could get messy!” Super Gage said, suddenly realizing that he himself was starting to slowly become more and more sad.

With a swish of his plaid purple cape, he was off to the kitchen to grab some lovely green popsicles. Cash Boy, coming in behind him to make sure no one was watching.

Suddenly he cried out with a very loud “YIP!” It wasn’t, Super Gage suddenly realized, because they had been spotted, for they hadn’t. It was because they were out of lovely green popsicles!

“Oh no Cash Boy! What do we do now?” Neither of them had any ideas.

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King Darky was getting anxious. He wanted to see that little super hero with the plaid purple pants, matching cape and big black dog. He wasn’t there. Not so far at least. Where was this Super Gage? Did he really even exist? Had he come all this way for nothing? His supposed arch nemesis, Super Gage, was nowhere to be seen, and neither was Cash Boy, that retched dog of his. What was he waiting for? He could have enslaved each and every citizen of Happyville hours ago, but he hadn’t for he wanted to have his fair fight with Super Gage. This was wasting his time. He needed to either enslave everyone, or leave, and he definitely wasn’t going to do the latter.

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“What do we do? What do we do?” Super Gage cried out. Cash Boy had his head on Super Gage’s lap as he cried. They didn’t know what they were going to do when suddenly a beautiful woman, who they knew as Mom, but who didn’t know who they were, walked into the room.

“Super Gage, my name is Leanne. There is this horrible man out there trying to enslave all of Happyville and turn everyone into his sad slaves. We are all waiting for your help, but you’re sitting here crying. Can I help you in any way?”

Super Gage was ecstatic! “Yes mo-, ma’am. It seems this home is out of lovely green popsicles. My sidekick Cash Boy and I need them to be stronger to fight against the evil King Darky and his evil Dark Cloud of Darkness. Without them, we’re powerless.”

“Well, you’re in luck,” said their beautiful mother. “We just got some for our son, and have lots of boxes in the basement.”

The basement! Why hadn’t Super Gage thought of that?

“Thank you so much ma’am! You’re our hero!” Super Gage declared, Cash Boy at his side wagging his tail.

“No,” said their mother, “you two are the real heroes. Everyone loves Super Gage and Cash Boy! Now go and get those lovely green popsicles and fight some evil King Darky butt!”

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They were coming. King Darky could see Super Gage and Cash Boy coming over the hill. Now it was time for their epic battle, but what was this? They looked super energized! How was this possible? He had heard about how they would eat lovely green popsicles before a battle, but he had thought it all to be a rumor. As he looked, he could see the remnants of green around Super Gage’s mouth and on Cash Boy’s lolling tongue. He needed to run away. He wasn’t going to face this boy and his dog. They would be too strong for him, but it was too late. They were already here.

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“King Darky!” Declared Super Gage. “You need to leave this town immediately or else I will be forced to use force!”

“I will leave on one condition,” King Darky said, trying not to show his ultimate fear. “I will only leave if you promise not to hurt me!”

This little super hero and his dog horrified King Darky. There was no way he would win a battle against them. He wasn’t strong enough to fight against the boy staring him down now. He had to leave, or he would be
forced to lose a very worthless fight.
"Uh, yeah, ok. Deal. Just leave please," said a very confused Super Gage.
With that, King Darky jumped into his Dark Cloud of Darkness with his army of Sad People, and left without another word.
"Yay!" Cried the people of Happyville. "Super Gage and Cash Boy have once again saved us all! All hail Super Gage and Cash Boy!"

However, when the people of Happyville went to thank Super Gage and Cash Boy, they were nowhere to be found. Super Gage had hopped onto Cash Boy's back, and they had run back to their home where they tucked themselves back into bed and went to sleep. Another day's work was finished, and they waited till morning to even so much as move. They were exhausted.

In the end, King Darky and his Dark Cloud of Darkness were never seen again within hundreds of miles of Happyville. Gage and Cash were never suspected of being superheroes. From then on, they always knew where to find their lovely green popsicles: in the basement.
That, dear readers, is the story of Super Gage and his beloved sidekick Cash Boy.
The End
Skydancing
Literary Essay and Marker Drawing by Felicia
I was seven years old, and my superhero status was absolute. I was a Sky Dancer. Though this is not considered a “great” superhero, I thought I was magnificent. Sky Dancers could literally dance across the sky. They had wings, wore awesome outfits and saved the day on a daily occasion. What could be better? This way I could escape from all of the fighting at home. This would occupy my time alone.

My time was greatly maintained by a longing to become a Sky Dancer, and to play with a father who was never at home. I thought if I was a good enough daughter, or even superhero, he would come home more often, and not be so mean to mom. Now that I think about my childhood, I think about the pain that I endured, but then it was just about becoming an adult, and escaping from everything. My Sky Dancer dream vanished when my father left us in Italy. We were deported back to the states on my brother’s birthday, and then mine followed the day after. I was made fun of as a “Navy brat,” for being a nerd, being white in a multi-cultural neighborhood, and eventually gaining weight. I was beat up after school by some childish gangs, and witnessed the near death of a friend. My being a superhero did not convince anyone.

I have been through a lot. However, all of this has made me stronger. I know that I am worth a lot. I KNOW that I will strive despite my past telling me otherwise. For as much as I have done, and as much as has been done to me, I am able to say that I can be really strong. What else is a superhero made of but strength?

Superheroes are not made of a superb past, but most likely of a haunted one. Who would want to save a world that they thought of as perfect? I have a haunted past, or as they say, “skeletons in my closet.” It is sharing this that makes me one kick-ass superhero; I have been able to make it. While everything has told me that I will not persevere, I have. I will turn eighteen in less than a month, on October 10th, an age I never thought I would see, and in the midst of everything I have come out knowing myself better.

I know now that I will never be a Sky Dancer, but what I also see is that being Felicia is enough to be considered a superhero. Every one of us is a superhero; we all have had a skeleton or two in our closet, but it is that we are still here that makes us who and what we are. We are all fighting a battle each and every day, and I think that it is with a happy heart that I say I am fighting, as there are some who will lose this battle to survive; there are many, though, who will conquer and live to fight another day. I believe that this makes us all superheroes, everyday Supermen, only kryptonite isn’t our weakness, we are. As soon as we face ourselves we will be invincible. So I say to all, be all you can be, continue fighting this fight, and your superpowers will come into focus.

After all this, I kind of wonder, why do Superman and Sky Dancers get to be the only ones who can fly?
There once was a boy named Oliver
He was not like anyone you or I knew
For supper was beef stew and liver
Which made Oliver sick to his stomach
When mother wasn’t looking
Oliver glanced at the cookie jar on the counter
He reached his hand out and without touching
The lid popped open
Cookies went floating
One, two, three cookies, four
All came Oliver’s direction
Then just as he had taken the lid off
He put the lid back on
Hid the cookies in his pocket
Just as he heard mother coming
Luckily for Oliver, Rocket, his dog was begging
Oliver fed Rocket the liver
Rocket swallowed it up in one bite along with the stew
When mother finally came to see how Oliver was doing with supper
She was amazed to see him finished
Cookie Magic, Photography and Digital Imaging by Julie
The Fist of Doom
Short Story by Denzel

Handful of Heroes
Drawing/Digital image by Casey
In the 90’s, the government had a top secret experiment called Hand of Doom. They took five kids from the same area who showed promise in a number of things like smarts, athleticism, and flexibility. The government took the kids and experimented on them in many ways. They tested for cloning, memorization skills, body mass index, and compatibility with technology. The outcome of these experiments was not what the scientists expected; some of the kids almost died. So, Hand of Doom was shut down, the kids were brainwashed, and they were sent back into society to live normal lives, or so they thought...

Dr. Phillip Fisher was once a normal man, but then when he lost his wife he lost his mind. All he could think about was trying to get his wife back. He was chosen as one of a handful of scientists to work on a top secret government project - Hand of Doom. It was in this project where he really showed his true colors. He was so mad with rage and sadness that he almost killed a couple of test subjects. It was because of this that Hand of Doom was shut down and Dr. Phillip Fisher was never heard from again, or so it seemed.

It’s Raymond High School, 3:07 PM. It’s detention; only five this time but they couldn’t be more different. One is a jock, the football star, another is an outcast and a rebel without a cause, another is a geek and a nerd with a pocket protector and all, another is a cheerleader apparently dimwitted, and the last is a goth black make-up and all. They converse about what got them in this predicament.

The Jock
His story is that he was in P.E. class playing basketball. All of a sudden he started doing all of these crazy moves like flipping and doing tricks in mid-air. He lost control of the ball and hit the P.E. teacher square in the face. The P.E. teacher was not happy at all and gave Vince the detention.

The Outcast
In his story, the outcast was in science class. At first he was joking around, but then he grabbed a beaker and it just broke. The science teacher was, needless to say, mad, and gave Hector the detention.

The Nerd
This guy is different. He was in computer class and he was in the zone. Then, out of nowhere, he started typing fast and was entering different codes in the computer. Consequently, he hacked the computer and made it not work. His teacher then gave Dustin the detention.

The Cheerleader
She is also a different story. She was in math class and saw what she says was a third hand. She started freaking out and the teacher thought she was playing a joke and gave Janet a detention.

The Goth Girl
Her story is simple. She was in the lunch room and her leg started acting erratically by shaking and flexing. Next
thing you know, her leg tripped an oncom- ing teacher who gave Sophia a detention.

After they shared their stories with each other, they realized they had something in common. Weird stuff had been happening to each of them. They were thinking, could all these things be related?

Vince then said something odd and different. He said he was having these flashbacks of men standing around him while he’s lying down. Then everybody else shared similar flashbacks, and they think these things have been happening for a reason. They decided to meet up with each other at a secretive place to sort things out.

It was Al’s Scrapyard, 8:20 P.M. The students met and talked about what their next step would be. Hector said that they should try to get those weird feelings again. Everyone agreed. Nobody wanted to step up and go first. Then Janet came forward and said she’d do it. She tried for a while to get that feeling, but nothing happened. Then, suddenly she did it. She found that feeling. She then found out that she could duplicate. There was another one of her right before everyone’s eyes.

At first they were scared, but then each of them realized that they might also be able to do something special. So Vince stepped up and tried to get the feeling. For some reason it was easier for him, and he did it in a matter of seconds. Everyone eventually tried to get the feeling and did.

After a series of weeks, they figured out that they all had superpowers and learned how to use them, somewhat. Vince had the ability to memorize body movements, Hector had the ability to increase or decrease his body mass, Dustin’s ability was that he is a genius with technology, Janet had the ability to duplicate up to five people, and Sophia had the ability to stretch her limbs.

It was three months later, and the team had gotten a lot better at their powers. They had come together as a team and chosen a leader, Vince. The team had come up with costumes and even a name, The Fist. For a while they were practicing their skills on petty criminals, but then a real threat arose. The threat was a mad scientist who tried to takeover the city; his name was Dr. Fisher.

Dr. Fisher had this giant monster that he created. The monster was red with blue scales on its back, and it had enormous fangs. It had a tail with a sharp tip. The city was being destroyed, and people were getting hurt.

The Fist was at the scene as soon as they heard about it. The Fist fought hard using their powers as best they could, but they were no match for the monster. After a long battle the team was hurting and they eventually fled to the mountains. Dr. Fisher had won and the city was taken over by him.

In the following months the Fist was not to be found. Dr. Fisher was the in control of the city and all was lost. The people were under his control and there was nothing anybody could do about it….or was there.
The winter 2009 edition of Orthogenique was produced at the Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School in Chicago, Illinois. The magazine was thermal bound by the Orthogenic School. The covers are 1/4 inch linen tab covers from General Binding Corporation in Northbrook, IL. The content pages were printed by an HP color laserjet 6015dn on 32lb. Hammermill Color Laser Gloss with 90 brilliance. Sixteen fonts were used in the magazine. Avant Garde LT was used for all body text, while magazine staff chose fonts in keeping with style and content for titles and pull quotes. The following fonts were used for titles and pull quotes: Brush Script STD, Charlemagne Std, Rosewood STD, Herculaneum, Orator STD, Harrington, Lucida Blackletter, Handwriting-Dakota, Mistral, Bank Gothic, Gill Sans Ultra Bold, OCR A Std, SchoolHouse Printed A Giddyup Std, Curlz MT, Höbo Std. Orthogenique is a full color magazine. Layout was created in Adobe InDesign CS3 on Apple MacBooks. Adobe Photoshop CS3 was used for image processing. All submissions were judged using standards agreed upon by the staff. All text submissions were typed using Microsoft Word on Dell PCs running on Windows XP, and MacBooks running on Mac OSX.
Policy

All of the students at the Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School are invited to submit their literary and art work to Orthogenique.

The Orthogenic School is a small private school consisting of students who represent school districts throughout Illinois and California. The school has limited extracurricular activities or after school meeting times. As a result, Literary Magazine is offered as a for credit course in which the enrolled students alternate writing units in which they write in reference to a specific theme and art units in which they illustrate for a classmate’s writing. All students then create spreads that incorporate their writing piece and the illustration completed for the piece.

Students not enrolled in the course are welcome to submit their work to the advisors at which time the staff of enrolled students will decide which pieces can and will be used based on the themes employed and the fundamental belief of the school that all student work is of value. The literary staff reserves the right to edit the body of the works for spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

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