

Dyslexic Advantage

NEWSLETTER



CONGRATULATIONS KARINA EIDE YOUNG WRITERS AWARD WINNERS OF 2022!



Fernette Eide MD, Editor

It's our pleasure to share with you our most popular issue of the year, the Karina Eide Young Writers Award Winners!

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Editor's Note: to make our publications easier to read, we will avoid use of italics and certain types of fonts.

Thank you volunteers Shelley Wear, Trish Seres, Dayna Russell Freudenthal, and Michelle Williams for their astute critique and proofing. Thanks to Lady Grace Belarmino for beautiful design and layout.

Newsletters can be read online **HERE**. This issue will be available on the Joomag site for 3 months and can also be downloaded as a pdf file.



Dear Friends,

We are so pleased to share with you this year's record-breaking submissions to the Karina Eide Young Writers Awards of 2022!

The writers inspired us, made us pause and reflect, moved us to tears and laughter, and are bringing much needed light into this world.

Congratulations to all who submitted their remarkable works! With so many outstanding submissions, the judging committee found it very difficult to limit select from such wonderful work. The most important thing is that you have all changed the world by creating something new and we need your voices to make a better brighter world.

Fernette Eide, The Writers Studio, and the Dyslexic Advantage community

These awards are dedicated to our amazing daughter **Karina Eide** who brightened the world for us, loved spinning stories herself and inspired all who came to know her.

** If you are reading these entries with a younger child, please read the selection first before deciding whether it is appropriate for your particular child. Every effort is made to make the issue family-friendly, but some works may not be well-suited for some listeners or readers.





Emry, 8
NY

Bedford Hills
Elementary
Mrs. Herson

I would like to thank
my brother Vaughn.

Adventure with Ant & Friends: Rainy Day

A rainy day. two boys were walking home from school. one of the boys saw a mask flowing down a mini river on the street. That made the other boy wonder.

he thought of different things.
he imagined there were ants using that mask as a boat .
and he thought of this story about an ant...

One rainy day a little ant saw a large structure .
ant got his friends. "whoah, cool" said stink bug. "lets go on" said spider.
"what, no way, I am not going on that" said ant. "I am with him, who else?"
said stink bug. "uuuuuuuuuuugggggh"said ant "fine".
the three bugs went onto the large structure. as soon as they got on it
started rocking."w-w-what's going on?"said stink bug. "I'm already regretting
this!" said ant. the mask slowly but surely started moving.

It started moving faster-and faster-and faster. until they were moving so fast
they felt dizzy and no one knew where they were going.

finely they came to a stop."my head hurt's"said spider.
"no one ever listens to me" said ant.

"um guys.I think we're lost" said spider.
"nooooooooooooo! we're looooooost!!!!!" shouts stink bug.
"quit being a baby"said ant."we have to be positive".
so they thought-and thought.
"let's retrace were we came from"said spider.
"um how?"
"by following the water" said spider.

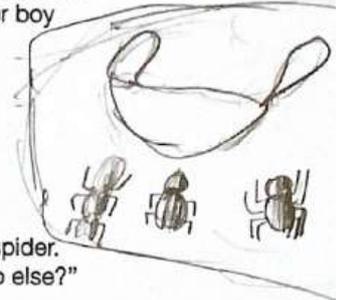
"oh no, we have to cross the street!"
"spider, can you spin your silk threads to make a flying hot air balloon?"
asked ant.
"well I can try"

so he tried. eventually he did it!!
"hay you did it!"

so they got in.
and away they went .

finally they got home . everyone was pooped after their adventure.

THE END





Josiah, 11
KS

Homeschool
Kimberly

I would like to thank
my brother Andrew.

Pioneer Bugs

Once upon a time on a very, well, dusty fan, there lived some pioneer bugs. Grandpuhpah Bug said, "I feel a storm is comin'. I read about it in a book last week that the olden' days, well, you know the ones when they had to walk around and they, you know, didn't use horses when the horses were wild. Well, the dust storms came, and they had to jump off large cliffs, and I think we should get a horse drawn carriage, and well, dare it!"

"Dare it right off the fan?!" said Mama Bug. "I think we should stay here until the storm passes."

"And watch our houses get destroyed? Never!" said Grandpuhpah Bug.

The kids chimed in, "Let's dare it! Let's dare it!"

"Well anyway, four against one. That won't be nice. Well, we could dare it. When's the storm?" asked Mama.

"Tomorrow" said Grandpuhpah.

"Let's pack up all our things and get it in the horse drawn carriage as we can and jump off that fan or whatever you call it...uh jump off the fan cliff," said Mama.

So they did. They got all their stuff wrapped up and stuck in the carriage. They put these special suits on and waited. Just before the storm came, Grandpuhpah Bug said "It would be much more adventurous if we do it a second before

Pioneer Bugs (continued):

they heard some voices, and Grandpuhpah said "Those are the people. They're gonna use their vacuum tubes to suck away our houses."

"Oh! No, no, no!" they all cried. Everyone chimed in all at once: "Horses! We need to get down beneath these gigantic mountains. Let's find a way under."

So they did. They climbed and climbed for days on end. Finally, they fell between a crack and into a dark place. Everyone was alright. Then Grandpuhpah said, "This is the place. It's full of dust. Well, we love the dust."

"The dust!" said the kids.

Grandpuhpah said, "Well, it's not the dust of the fan. That's the thick stuff. We can avoid it. We can be pioneer bugs of under the big things."

So to this day they are called "The Pioneer Bugs of Under the Big Things". No one spotted them there, and they're not the kind of bugs that live in your beds and bite you and itch you up. So they found these "linking" logs and blocks that connect together, and they made an assortment of things. They did not know what they were doing, but they made a funny little house. Half Lego, half linking log, half glue, and half of other broken objects and crayons they glued together. It was called the first pioneer house. Their first house on the fan they had to go to another bug to buy it. They claimed the land. But here it was free "reign".

They had a happy, a very happy life.



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House on West Dravus Street



Ryan, 11
WA

Seattle Country Day
School
Brenda Ajbour

I would like to thank
my brother Duncan.

“Hope you don’t poison us tonight,” my brother, Duncan, says, strutting into the kitchen like he’s the CEO. He opens the fridge, reaches into the fruit drawer, and pulls out a plump orange. Then he stalks away without another word, not waiting for my response. The sweet scent of the fruit triggers a memory that I quickly dismiss from my head.

Rolling my eyes at my brother's unreasonable comment about my cooking. I slide over to the fridge and pull our meal kit off of the second shelf. Taking the instructions out from behind our microwave, I get to work. I slice an onion into thick pieces before putting it in our onion chopper and closing it. I dice all of the onion in the onion chopper, then start slicing the carrots. I’m making my favorite tonight—chicken veggie soup. Now I’m cubing the carrots. Next comes the kale; it’s packaged so all I have to do is cut the stems off. The orange, white, and green of the vegetables mix together to look like a colorful flag.

After I finish preparing the vegetables, Duncan comes in again and breaks my peaceful reverie to the sound track of Fall Out Boy with the sharp pierce of his voice, “Uh, what is this music?”

“Could you just leave me alone? You don’t even like music, so deal with the music that I like to listen to,” I snap at him.

Duncan raises his hands up, not in peaceful retreat, but instead in a derisive motion as though I’m a sickness and he doesn’t want to catch me. Sometimes I feel as though me and my brother are like a painting, when you look at it from

far away it looks nice, but when you look at it from close up it looks like a mess. We used to get along better, but then it's like someone tore a rip in our painting and now we're broken. I turn back to my work and continue to cook the chicken sausage, breaking it into small pieces while it sizzles on the searing pan. The spicy aroma of the chicken salsa dances around the kitchen before creeping through the dining room.

Duncan slides through our house on his socks, and the signature creaks from our stairs tell me he is going back up to his room. As I set down the spatula, the cold stone of the counter reminds me of the frozen winter. Whispers from upstairs echo through my head as I try to decipher them—
an unknown code. I recognize the faint voice as my mom's. My eyes drift back to my work. I pull out a medium size piece of sausage, and break it apart; the inside is a tan brown. The meat is cooked through. I throw the chicken sausage into the soup.



Alice, 12
TX

Rawson Sanders
Kat Dewees

I would like to thank
my mother.

Small Gifts

What do I know of struggle?
I have heard stories of despair and misery
But I have never felt these things
Not really

Being given a toothbrush is a nagging reminder
A nuisance to me really
But to a tiny 10 year old
Who has never known of such things,
It is a gift

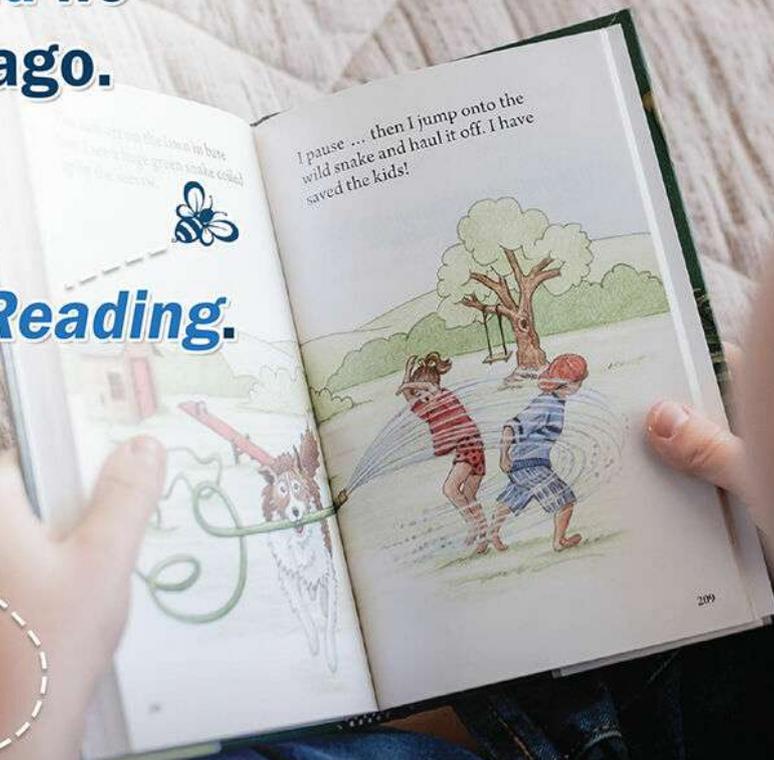
I have never been hit
I have never been truly hurt
Just as I have never seen
The inside of any prison

My mother is the reason
The reason for my never seeing
What she sees at work
And I am thankful for everything
Even the small things
Like a toothbrush

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**the same kid he
was a year ago.**

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Hazel, 12
MA

Carroll School
Emma Creeden

I would like to thank
my
friends, my cousins,
and my sisters.

Pixels

Some broadcast for all the world to see
An image of who you want to be.
Can you confidently say "it's truly me"?
Do you show the kind parts of your personality?
Or do you tuck away, scared away by reality?

We group ourselves into boxes
With other people:
I like something, you do too,
A pixel of our personality.

They tell us to break the mold
as our stories unfold.
A bigger picture is due
Would you like it to be brand new?
Do you want to change for the better too?

We box ourselves into groups
Making our own limitations
Dividing ourselves into separate nations.

I was always told the sky is the limit,
But I've met so many stars,
That shine brightest in the night
Where there is no one left to judge and they can
gleam without a fright.

When the sun takes back the day
They melt back into the fray
Of the pixels we box ourselves in.

Focus on the little things
What brings you joy
As simple as a toy.
Or more complex
Like your family,
Memories drifting
Dancing in the rain
Wild and free, never tamed.
Or stay inside
You can always find a reason to hide.
But there are a million more to shine.



Henley, 12

TX

Rawson Sanders
Kat DeWees

I would like to thank
my teacher, Amy
Young

When Yellow Stays Over

Yellow came in dancing on a ray of sun
Spilling life and beauty and a day of joy
Yellow is gooey syrup spilling across my waffles that shine
like early morning light

Yellow is children playing hopscotch and
and drinking from lemonade stands for 10 cents a cup
It's a fruit salad filled with bananas and pineapple with a lit-
tle bit of sugar

Yellow is the color of an afternoon picnic with mushy sandwiches
washed down with juice boxes
A pool day with friends too young to understand that they'-
re not mermaids
no matter how long they can hold their breath

Waiting in line for a snow cone to share with my younger sister
who's probably getting less
It's golden glitter flooding the carpet because we were not careful
Quick, blame it on the dog!
Catching neon fireflies in the back garden with no shoes, s-
oft grass tickling my toes

Yellow is sitting at the dinner table about to dig into a lovely meal
of spaghetti with melted butter...

Suddenly the door swings open
The frustrated footsteps of purple echo through the hall
She marches to the table

Her envious eyes dance across our confused sunny faces
Purple judges us
With harsh violet eyes
breaking us down into place pieces
The mood changes
yellow slowly fades to grey
When Purple leaves, the darkness clings to her
Sucking away the joy of today
and shoving tomorrow in our faces

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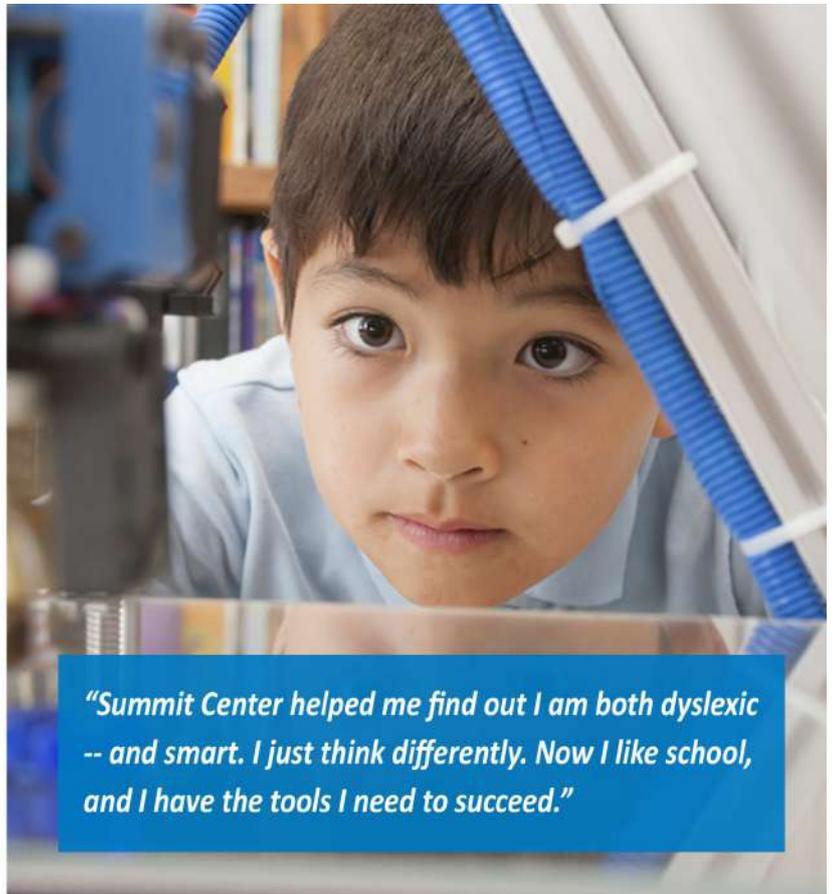
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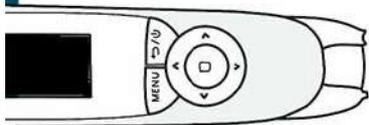
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Krish, 12

TX

Rawson Sanders

Kat DeWees

Emotional Eruption

Cool turquoise waves
lap on a warm sandy beach
Seafoam sprays upwards
as I listen to the
calming sound of blue macaws
Singing a harmonic tune
high up in the palm trees
Until I am ripped from my reverie -
a livid red knife cuts
through the serenity leaving a scar
as a reminder of the longing, pain, and depression
I had left behind
the oceans roar, the fire hisses
and just like that
the battle of the elements begins



Luca, 13
TX

Rawson Sanders
Kat DeWees

I would like to thank my parents who have supported me with my endeavors as a dyslexic.

A Day with Focus

Focus is a tall slender guy with orange and blue socks, a brown jacket with a hot pink interior, and green pants. This is his usual outfit that he wears to work at his marketing job downtown. Focus jogs in to the office staring at his phone and doesn't even notice Boredom as he walks past. Boredom works in the next cubicle over with Perseverance and Creativity sits in the cubicle that he shares with Focus. Creativity hands him an original origami swan that unfolds into a schedule for the day. Longing flops over the divider on the other side of the cubicle moaning like normal. Perfectionism pulls him back over the divider and goes back to editing all of the pitches for the week, for the twentieth time.

Focus gets a glint in his eye, pops in his headphones, and sets his fingers to the keys on the keyboard. Creativity has seen that glint before, and he cracks a smile at the memory. Creativity had asked Focus to help get decorations for his wedding to Harmony. When Creativity walked into the backyard of the chapel, he had to sit down because he was so overwhelmed with happiness when he saw everything was as he had wanted. All the colors seemed to sing in unison and Focus stood, suit jacket off, in the center conducting the choir of color. That is when Creativity had seen that glint for the first time. As Creativity turned to his computer, he paused to look at his framed print of Music with a fatherly love.

When the work day ends, Focus walks to the car and turns on the radio to Friday I'm in love. He waits for Creativity and Ecstasy, from HR, to get off work so they can go enjoy their Friday night. Every Friday, they go back to Focus' place and play pool, swim,

and hang out together with their girlfriends and wives. When they walk inside, they are met by Harmony, Patience, and Sensuality. Harmony and Creativity kiss, Focus and Patience do the same. Ecstasy slaps sensuality on the butt and goes to the fridge for a Bud Light. The group walks down to Focus' basement, which Creativity calls the "Colosseum of Chill", but everyone else calls the game room. The game room has a rack for the pool sticks and balls in the opposite corner from the pool table. There's a perfectly styled TV cabinet with a pristine PlayStation and QLED 75 inch TV. The orange dyed leather couch faces the TV, 2 chairs flank the couch in the same leather style but dark gray. The couples switch off turns playing pool and playing Rocket League. After a couple of hours, they switch to swimming in Focus' star bottom pool. The idea of making the tiles on the inside of the pool had been Harmony's; she thought the cool colors gelled better with the pool.

Creativity makes a call and Music is over in minutes with some turntables and her friends, Compassion, carrying speakers, and Inspiration, holding a remote for the whole system. They all have their bathing suits on already. Music sets up the turntables, turns on the speakers and starts singing along to Crazy Train by Ozzy Osborne as they slip into the pool. The light in the pool flips quickly through a rainbow of colors. Everyone joins in and soon the whole pool is sloshing around as they dance. Like usual, Focus is lost in the moment of this perfect Friday.



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Michelle Lucas, M.Ed., AT



Annie, 14
CA

Ocean Grove
Royd Hatta

I would like to thank
my beautiful mother.

Excerpt of a Tribute to the Poem Annabel Lee by Edgar Allen Poe

I will never forget the day I first saw her. I was walking along the pier going to fetch some tomatoes for my mother. I remember reaching the market, people bustling around looking for their necessities, mothers shouting for their children to stand still and behave, and sleazy salesmen trying to swindle unsuspecting customers.

It was all so normal. I would never have suspected that day would change my life, but then I saw her. I was looking for the reddest, juiciest tomatoes I could find, when I noticed someone next to me. It was a girl. her skin was as pale as the pages of a book, and she had beautiful long blonde hair tied into two braids, resting on her chest. She wore a white dress that was tight allowing me to see her body shape quite easily. It went down to her knees with a red stripe wrapping around her midsection making her appear thinner than she was. Her eyes were a beautiful blue shining in the light, and her lips were thin but a lovely shade of red. I stared at her for what seemed like hours, in awe of her beauty. I had to force myself to look away so as to not appear rude. It took me a moment to collect myself but when I looked back she was gone. I turned my head around wildly trying to catch one last glimpse of the girl but she had disappeared into the crowd.

My heart fell, for I knew without even having spoken a word to her, that she had stolen my heart. Knowing I would not be able to find her in the thick of the crowd, I turned

back to the tomatoes, but my mind wandered to her beauty, imagining her smiling at me. My heart beat so fast I thought it would pop right out of my chest. I even put my hand over my chest just in case it did. I shook my head wildly to try to erase the girl from my mind, but she remained.

After returning home, I must have drifted off at some point because when I woke, I was in a meadow covered in flowers, and the sun was shining warmly on my skin. I slowly rose and gazed upon the vast meadow. That's when I spotted something in the distance, I could not quite make it out, so I stepped closer. It was odd. The closer I got to it, the more I felt I needed to see it. It was like I was being pulled towards it. I finally got close enough to see what it was, and to my surprise it was her, the girl from the market. Her back was facing me, but I knew it was her. She seemed to be looking at something in the distance but when I looked, I could not see anything. I moved closer to her, but she did not turn around. Silence filled the air, and I was unsure of what to do. The sensation came again urging me towards her. So, I reached out to touch her. The moment my fingers came into contact with her everything changed.

The sky turned an awful gray and rain started to pour down. The flowers started to melt into the ground, changing into a muddy slope. I found myself sinking into the mud and when I looked up at the girl she was almost fully submerged in it. I grabbed her and pulled her body towards me and held her close. But when I looked down at her, Instead of seeing her beautiful blue eyes, fair skin and red lips, I saw a corpse staring back at me. Her skin was puffy and wet, her eyes gray and lifeless, her hair was scraggly, filled with sludge. I wanted to scream but I couldn't. I didn't let her go though, I still held her close because my love for her was too great to let go. As we sunk deeper into the mud, I knew this would be our fate if I chose to love her. She would die if I selfishly chose my happiness over her life.



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Kellan, 14
MN

Homeschool
Mom

Excerpt from a Short Story, *She Kept It*

Thud, Thud, Thud. I never realized how loud a rubber ball sounds when it hits a wall. It's like a hammer hitting a plank of wood. I threw it again, but instead of hitting the wall, it hit the corner. Ugh. The ball rolled under my bed. Defeated, I rolled over and gazed out my window at the ugly brick wall that was my view. I heard footsteps in the hallway and noticed that a familiar shadow was standing at my door. Dad. Now what, I thought to myself.

I heard a knock on my door. Actually, three knocks. Dad always knocks three times. Mom knocks twice. "Come in," I moaned.

He informed me that dinner was ready and asked if I wanted to go with him to pack up my grandma's house afterwards. Not really went through my mind, but I didn't voice my thoughts. Instead, I told him, "Sure."

Knowing that I had nothing better to do than stare at my walls, or the ugly brick wall outside of my window, going with my dad did seem like a better option, even though I really didn't want to step foot in my grandma's house. He left to go help with the table. I laid there for a few minutes, maybe three, before hearing dad beckon to me that dinner was ready. I begrudgingly got up and headed down the hall. I pulled my hoodie over my head.

Yep, dinner was ready.

There sat mom and dad, across from one another.

Last night's chicken, mashed potatoes, and red Jell-O "salad" sat on the old yellow plaid tablecloth.

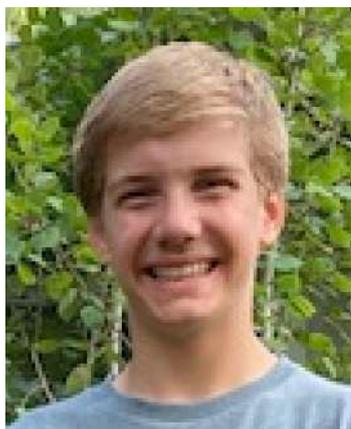
The potatoes tasted horrible, like baby food, and I imagine they even had the same texture. I didn't like them last night either. But the chicken wasn't too bad. Just a mushy texture to the skin, rather than being crispy. We didn't talk about anything; we just sat in silence. I could hear the neighbors shouting at their kids, the AC wheezing in our adjoining living room, and the drone of an ambulance a block or two away. I got up and brought my plate to the sink. It was filled with day-old dishes and the crusted food remains made me feel sick. I found a hole in which to wedge my plate. I carefully placed my milk-filmed glass in the sink's only lonely corner.

"I'm going to take a shower," I mumbled.

I grabbed the only t-shirt that appeared clean, smelling it to be sure, and a pair of too small pants. As the water was warming up, I looked in the mirror. What stared back at me was an average teen boy with mousy brown hair, blue-gray eyes, and an average nose with its fair share of welts. Not anything to faun over. I quickly looked away and hopped in the shower. The warm water felt great, and although it didn't wash away the pain, it did distract me. But the distraction didn't last long. I heard a knock on the bathroom door and knew I couldn't stay in my refuge any longer. I got dressed, gave my dog a half pet, and headed toward the car.

It was raining as I got in the car, not a torrential pouring, nor a light drizzle, but a steady stream of drops that blanketed everything. But at least my dad had turned on my seat warmer, so it was nice and cozy as I settled in. As I was buckling up, he asked if I had a good shower. I grunted out a "Yes," and clicked the seat belt.

He drove out of the parking lot, and onto the highway without a word. I was hoping that it would stay that way for the whole trip. But of course, he asked how I was doing, which was the thing I did not want him to ask. I couldn't answer truthfully, so I just said, "I'm fine." Which, of course, I wasn't.



Jack, 15
CO

Fort Collins High
School
Robert Schutt

I'd like to thank Mr. Schutt for inspiring me to believe in myself, that I can write even with dyslexia.

Squall Pass

I hopped out of the car into the cold damp lingering air of the valley that led to Bishop Pass. The gray sky offered a hint of warning about the forecasted storm. This trail connects to the renowned John Muir Trail in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Bundled up we started on the trek to the place my parents met and where my grandma's ashes would soon rest.

Shielded by rain jackets and pullovers, the mountains towered above making us feel minuscule. The pass was concealed by blended peaks with sharpened tips and glacier patches with leftover snow from the previous winter. The granite was like a lynx's fur. The closer we got to the Pass the nearer the storm grew. Seeing our chances dwindling, my mom ventured ahead in hopes of reaching the summit before the predicted squall. My cousin, brother, and I hustled in an attempt to keep up.

My Grandma known to us as Gigi passed away two years ago. She was an avid hiker, adventurer, and mountaineer. This part of the Sierras and the John Muir Trail were very special to her and my grandpa. Gigi was the name my oldest cousin had given her when he was small. At 5'2" she was a delicate woman with an extremely tender, loving heart. She clearly loved us more than anything. She created a lasting glue that promised to hold our family together forever. Gigi had been on countless hikes and backpacking trips over her lifetime and there had been multiple times that she had accidents during storms. One in particular left my grandma with a lasting fear of lightning. She had been in an exposed area when the sky

Squall Pass (continued):

began lashing down. She descended too fast, caught her foot on a rock, and crumbled over the dirt. She had broken her leg. From then on she made us all promise to never flirt with lightning while on a hike.

We reached the top of the pass and knew my dad was going to stay with PopPop, my grandpa, since he knew Gigi would want him to honor the impending storm. My mom recited a poem and dusted the earth with the ashes just as a bolt of lightning lit up the background and struck an area behind the pass. We took this omen as a message from Gigi that we should retreat. We started our descent as the thunder and lightning intensified and the frozen rain bombarded the treeless terrain. We were each scared in our way but all knew that we could not make a mistake in our descent like Gigi had in the past, so we kept pace and focused on our feet. We were pelted with hail like airsoft pellets, our bare cold hands aching. My brother started to cry under the stress and pain of the situation. I took his hiking poles so he could protect his hands from the elements. I stayed strong to reflect that we were going to be alright.

We reached the point where my grandpa and dad had stopped to shelter, but only my dad was waiting under the boulder. PopPop had started back when the hail began, perhaps he also felt Gigi giving him a nudge to head down so he could make it safely. I rock hopped along the trail to find my grandpa. We had all retraced our steps out of the boulder field when I overheard my dad and brother talking about a rockslide they had observed. Shaken from the moment and battered from the elements, we grounded ourselves with thoughts of Gigi for the remainder of our journey down remembering the moment the lightning had struck atop. As we continued to lumber down the trail I realized that Gigi had not only taught us to respect Mother Nature, she had taught us countless other life lessons; to follow our hearts, to never give up, and above all to have love and compassion for ourselves and for others.

Thinking back on the experience, I hope one day we can all return to the summit to say hi to Gigi and soak in the beauty of the high country.

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Trevon, 17
IA

Pella Christian High
School
Raachel Renaud

In Mmemory of Coach
Sanderson,
with thanks to Ruta
Septys (Salt to the
Sea)

We've Seen Cancer Take More Than Hair

We've seen cancer take more than hair.
We have seen it take joy, fun, peace, and life.
Cancer has taken our coach's joy.
And torn the heart of his son like a gift ripped away from a child.
Cancer can be battled, beaten like a knight in shining armor, overcoming an army.
We watched it.
"With God, all things are possible."
Later, it struck back like lightning in a thunderstorm.
Harder, Stronger, Faster.

"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil
for you are with me."
The army destroyed the warrior.
The lightning hit its target.
Gone.
We've seen cancer take more than hair.
We have seen a dad so in love in his last months as he watched us play.
"Play for the Audience of One."
While death tugs at his feet, he watches us compete in the game he will never again play.
The game he will never forget.
"Through all this, Life has spit in the eye of death."
He watched the rest of our season with the Audience of One, reunited with his father,
at home, and at peace with the Audience of One.

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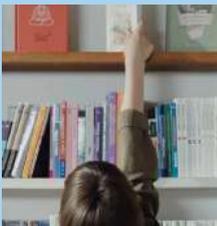
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Dyslexia Legislation Paasses House Panel (Idaho) Families Speak

Kivi TV



Olivia, 8
IA

Windsor Elementary
Ms. Zimmerman

I would like to thank
my tutor, Miss Nicki,
and my mom.

Alpha's Adventure

Once there was a donut named Alfa.

She was a strawberry donut with pink frosting and sparkli-
ng pink sprinkles on top. She didn't fit in until she moved
with her family to donut world. They unpacked their stuff.
When it was school, she went to her locker. Her number w-
as 88. When she got in her class room some cool donuts
walked in the class room. Their names were June, Samant-
ha and Chloe.

When it was recess, Alfa talked to them and the cool donu-
ts said we don't like you because you are a different kind of donut.

Alfa ran home and went in her room. Her mom said don't l-
isten to them.

The next day she went in her class room and the cool don-
uts walked in and Alfa stood up for her self and said I may
be different but I'm still a cool donut. Check out my sprin-
kles. They're glittery and pink.

And the cool donuts were impressed she stood up for her-
self. They learned that every donut is different and that's
what makes them cool.



Claire, 11
OR

Portland Online
Learning Academy
Megan Cleary

I would like to thank
my mom.

A New Nuna

"Horizon....

where are you?" A loud noise came from the shed. "Why are you in there? Silly dog." Sage flung open the door but only found some tools. A small figure suddenly jumped out, and she screamed. It was just her little brother trying to scare her, which unfortunately worked. "You little gremlin!" Her brother Jasper laughed and darted toward a tree that had withered in the summer heat. It was dangerously close to the canyon edge, and when Sage heard a familiar groan rising up from below, she screamed, "Earthquake!!" Before she could react, a chunk of ground broke free under her brother's feet. Horizon came out of nowhere and grabbed the hem of Jasper's shirt, but it was too late. They started tumbling down with the rock and crashed to the canyon floor. Stunned, Sage stood there as tears poured down her cheeks. "WHHHHYYYY?" she screamed. Her eyes flew open as she sat up in bed. There was no relief from this nightmare though, because it was a memory that haunted her every night.

Over three thousand miles away, in the Inuit Nunangat of Northern Canada, a young Inuit girl named Alasie was out for a walk when she saw a polar bear in the water carrying a cub in her mouth. The weird thing was that the polar bear was swimming very slowly and seemed to be struggling to go any further towards Alasie. Just as they both reached the edge of the ice, the polar bear started to sink. Alasie

the cub from the mother's mouth. Although she saved the cub, she could not save the mother. "HELP! A POLAR BEAR IS DROWNING!" "SOMEONE! HELP!" Alasie yelled. Others who heard the commotion came running, but it was too late. The polar bear had already disappeared under the surface. "NOOOO!" Alasie screamed. She had never seen this polar bear before but somehow now felt alone without it. Then, a new kind of cold against her skin made her look down. The orphaned cub was licking her chin.

A few years later, after many other stories similar to Alasie's and Sage's, the world's leaders started sending waves of young people to inhabit a new planet. Only kids had been able to evolve quickly enough to survive the new atmosphere. Sage and Alasie were assigned to the same spacepod. This journey would end up being one small step for humans, one giant leap for humankind. This time though, the mission wasn't for science or human achievement. It was simply for survival.

Now, Sage, Alasie, and with a lot of work, the cub Amka (who Alasie smuggled onto the spacepod), were all together on the new planet, with only 40 other kids, trying to survive. Luckily, the planet had a lot of very cold parts on it, so Amka could survive, too. The kids were assigned jobs by the leader, Kamala Harrison. The jobs were: medic, scientists (kids who study the new planet), and gatherers (kids who gather edible things by seeing what other living things eat). Alasie and Sage were both gatherers, like most of the kids. When Sage heard that there was such a job, she said, "It's like we're experiencing the Hunter/Gatherer period again."

Their days, though simple, were full of surprises and adventures. On one of their mornings that started like all the others, Amka, Sage, and Alasie set out to find edible plants (but secretly Amka was seeking the scent of fish). Then, suddenly, they heard a loud rumbling sound, and the ground started to shake. They were only sure of one thing: this wasn't an earthquake.



Adam, 12

IL

Mahomet Seymour Jr
High
Ms. Keller

I would like to thank
my mom.

Day and Night

The sound of chirps filled with delight.
Fill the air with all its might.
Sunshine fills the world behind you.
Making the trees grow full speed at you.
The forests are packed with life.
Deer, rabbits, and hares eat grass as green as moss.
Lakes are full of animal's, who drink around them.
Beaver building quickly to make a dam.
Then night comes around and the wolfs start howling.
Animals start to awake from their slumber.
Squirrels start to run back to their holes.
And owls start to scowl at the empty night air.
You hear the rummaging of animals in bushes.
Deer scared looking out for the wolfs.
The moon shining as bright as can be.
Making the forest a heavenly place.

HIGH HONORS



Morea, 12
WI

DC Everest Middle
School
Kia Thao

I would like to thank
my mom, dad, and
soccer coaches.

awakened

awakened
filled with cobwebs
fear I might fall
toward the river
the world below me.
awakened.
awakened.



Soren, 12
Washington DC

The Lab School of
Washington
Amy Young

I would like to thank
Amy Young.

Ode to a Spaceship

You are the spark of science
The eyes of the universe

You can see things we don't see
You break through our bubble that
holds us to the ground

You go to the abyss of space
And as the earth yearns for your return
You venture to the unknown

You break the laws of space, the rules of the
universe.
When you fly, we fly. You fly like a missile, a torpedo
through the deep water of space.

The worker of science.
The spark in the darkness.



Christopher, 13
TX

Rawson-Saunders
Libbie Dallaas

I want to thank my
teacher Libbie
Dallas who helped a
lot with editing.

Gilded

Chapter 1

"Hello? Wake up Gail,
" said what seemed to be a distant voice.

I opened my eyes and unfolded my wings as I got up to see
who it was, it was Guss, my roommate.

"Come on, we need to get to level 18, it's Friday you know
what's happening on Friday," said Guss.

My mind went from what anyone feels like just waking up to
as if I had woken up five hours earlier. It was a field trip day.

"Come on, we need to get to the 18th floor to go on the field trip."

The 18th floor was normally used as a platform to jump from
so we don't have to use as much energy getting in the air,
having wings and flying takes energy that's what being a G-
ustling will get you. I stretched my wings out as far as they
could go. I flew out the window to the water near the tower
and splashed my face with water just to make sure I didn't f-
all asleep. Even though my mind was going berserk, my body
felt like my wings were made of stone. Plus it was a part of
my routine every morning. But there's no time to go through
everything I need to get on a field trip.

All Gustlings had towers as homes, since we're on islands and
there's not much room to expand outwards. It's not all sunshine
on the islands, for example, I've been living with Guss on the 5th
floor. The 5th floor was reserved for people like me, the ones
that couldn't get their own home. I'm basically forced here
since my parents got lost in a storm.

I flew up with Guss and stopped only once to catch my breath. After a while we got up to the 18th floor. The rest of my class was already there including Gull, of course, he wouldn't miss this trip for his wings sake. Today we would be visiting the Marinian's, the people that are known for living underwater. Gull has loved the water, one of the only Gustlings that actually know how to swim.

There was also Pin and Jay next to Gull. Pin was an odd kid with a peppy state of mind. He is normally the one who finds himself in a new place every day. That's how we found a beam on the tower that could have snapped if left ignored. His curious nature has been something to look forward to on a boring day. Jay was not like the peppy Pin next to him. He's one who leaves much to be desired as he can only be described as having an edgy personality. When he talks, he wants something. When he runs, he's hiding something. If he's not around, he's up to something. Nobody really picks up on his behavior, but I've noticed. It's weird but I keep it to myself.

It's been hard hiding a yellow feather from my roommate. My yellow feather has been with me for years but it wasn't always yellow, it started out a light brown then a smooth silver to a golden yellow, like a really GOLDEN yellow. I've hid it under other feathers or crossed my wings to make sure it was hidden. I don't know why it's there but people lately have been obsessed with some legend about a golden feather and I don't want to be a part of any of that. I've never even imagined myself being a part of some big legend might as well, being a hero of some sort. It's hard just living on the same old island every day with no food other than fish and whatnot



Izzy, 13
TX

Rawson Saunders
Ms. DeWees

I would like to thank
Jack and Sam.

Perfect Imperfections

I toss and turn in my bed
as I think of the things I did wrong that day
truth mocks me, the burn of reality, the price we all pay
The need to be flawless, the feeling we all know
the pit in my heart as I lie alone
Draining my brain, deprived of sleep
I am not perfect

“Perfect” is a cruel standard from our society
The idea of a perfect human
That person we all strive to be
He she, they
don’t exist
We are not perfect

We have been told to learn independence
but we need to work together to achieve the great
No one person can hold all the crushing weight
Love

This is the key
And people can lose sight of this key to life
When they are focused on perfection
Only caring for complexion
Wasting time thinking of who we could be
When we need to embrace the brilliance of our world

(continued next page)

Perfect Imperfections (continued)

The brilliance of ourselves.
Imagine a world where
Everyone is perfect
Can you even see it?
Our perfect imperfections
make up the exotic brightness of our beautiful world
No, we are not perfect
and that's okay
our world thrives on the creative aspects of us
that's the brilliant truth
Love the perfect imperfections of you.

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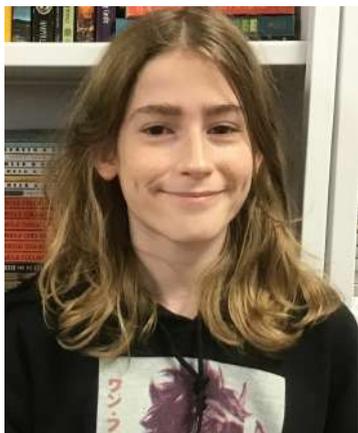
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Logan, 13

TX

Rawson Saunders
Kat DeWees

I would like to thank
Kat DeWees.

Feline Friend

I've had a few beta fish in my life, and I loved them a lot. They're flashy cannibals who like showing off their sparkling scales and unique color palette. I used to think that betta fish were the best pet I could get, aside from lizards. Because my mother is allergic to everything under the sun, I thought there was no hope for a pet other than a fish, until Covid took all of us by surprise, shook us by the shoulders, and threw us all into quarantine.

My family took a road trip into the middle of nowhere where the heat is unbearable and where crazy people gather. They drove us to the Texas Hill Country! I could technically go outside, but I didn't. Instead, I stayed inside the majority of the time either sleeping, eating, or watching stuff on my phone. When I did go outside, it was hard to stay out for long periods of time because the sun would stare intently down at me. Every time I went outside I would feel as if I were going to melt like ice cream left out of the fridge for too long. During that time is when I spotted her. A sleek and scrawny little cat with sunlight bouncing off her fur, scampering around the house. She looked like a small tiger with golden orbs for eyes. She'd usually observe us through windows then scamper off. Until one day, she approached my dad. He usually worked on the back patio sitting just out of the way of the sun's fiery grasp.

The cat slunk through the cotton white furniture that sat on the patio and started rubbing up against my dad's legs. She chirped in a way that made us feel entitled to give her food. My father called us out there and in glee, we began petting the mysterious feline. After that, she kept coming back and meowing at our doors trying to find a way to get inside. We

weren't allowed to give her any more food, but she kept coming. She made the house her base of operations, often bringing back her exploits from the wild, which was always small dead animals. We're not sure how many birds, lizards, mice etc she slaughtered, but she kept the corpses coming.

When we let her inside she became an indoor-outdoor cat. She would lazily relax on our couch or on one of us during the day. Then she would hunt in the dead of night, pursuing small animals to eat or bring back. Even though we gave her three meals a day, she seemed to enjoy the sport of hunting. She would also display her endless hunger for blood by trying to kill inanimate objects. We soon recognized that she hated everything that breathed, the exception being humans. She would get in scraps with the neighbors cats in the dead of night. We knew because we would wake up to loud ear piercing screeching and hisses from outside. This is when we also learned that she saw herself as an alpha, among all animals, she felt she was at the top of the food chain. Even though she was just a sweet little kitten during the day, she was a fearsome hunter in the dark of the night. One time I woke up before everyone else and went to let our feline friend in. I opened the door, and the smell of blood overwhelmed my senses. A cute little kitten looked up at me with her innocent eyes. As she was standing there over the mangled and dismembered corpse of what used to be a rabbit. I don't remember beta fish ever being this violent.



LOGAN, 13
CA

The Two Rivers
Academy
Emily

I would like to thank
my old school.

THE TALE OF KRAILIOUS

Once there was a faraway place, a place of magic and mystery, intrigue, and fantasy. This land was called Cailendel, it was a fairly flat land with large forests and rolling plains. The inhabitants of this land were not human, they were not dwarf, or elf, or fawn, but they were fairies. Not just regular fairies, but those did live there too, They were Seildain, about the size of your smallest finger joint with glossy butterfly or bird wings. The Seildain are a very interactive race and very determined too. There are also sects in the Seildain such as the Timber sect which live in Timberline. And they have the power to control small amounts of timber. Now we go to where our story starts. In a hovel was a male Seildain hunched over a table with a map spread out upon it. He glanced to and fro from one mark to the next, his eyes drawing an eight pointed star on the map. At each of the eight points on the map was a tribe city, Tronmar, Timberline, Jadvar, Caimblor, Edinborow, Helmaina, Seladean, and the great capital city of the Seildian, Renovor. This Seildain's name was Krailious. Krailious was tall among the Seildain and was also considered to be handsome, he had short brown hair and his skin was pale from all the time he spent indoors. He was also a part of the Vaidra sect which lived in Renovor, he was the Royal Relector. The Royal Relector is the person in the palace that finds legends and deciphers them to locate the treasure described in them. Then the Relector sends out Modron, Modron means treasure hunter in the language Seildian. The problem with the Modron was that their attention span

was very short. Right now Krailious was needed at the palace for he had uncovered a legend of the old ages, the old ages date back about one hundred Vlair. (One Vlair is equal to a century) And the prophecy translated into this; Cailendel is the protector and safe- It is protected by the Lendedvar stone- Cities are the key- The star is the bow(or back)

of key to door- What it meant was "the stone which was hidden behind" what Krailious supposed to be "a door". And the line "star is bow of key to door" gave him some trouble, but in the end, after a week of pondering and staying up late for many sleepless nights, he realized that the line meant that the star on the map was like a key, with a star on the back of the key, and the key is for the supposed door. Krailious needed to consult the queen, for the Seildain only had queens, and send out Modron. He needed to consult the queen about the Lendedvar stone and that they should locate it. He pushed himself away from the table and stuffed the map into his belt. Then walked to the door of his one room home and walked out. He unfurled his elegant raven wings, which were twice the size of his body, and took off into the sky flying southwest towards the capital city. It was mid morning when he had left and he flew all the rest of that day until darkness settled over the land, he flew on a few hours more until the palace came into sight. It had eight gigantic towers connected by large arcing walls fifty Narks thick. (One Nark is equal to one foot) He soared over the walls and towards a huge domed building. The dome had many large windows but no doors, only some Seildain owned doors. Gliding into one of these windows he landed nimbly. Then seeing the queen he bowed. "Rise," said the queen in a commanding voice. He stood straight, "What is it?" asked the golden eyed queen. "My queen," replied Krailious, " I have figured out the prophecy." They spoke for many a night on that matter, and in a matter of months they found the Lendedvar stone and saved themselves for all eternity. But that is a long story that I shall tell another time.



Ryleigh, 13
VA

Learning Boost
Laura Noe

I would like to thank
Laura Noe.

Merlinda Gets a Surprise (Excerpt)

It was an ordinary spring day in the village. Birds were chirping, flowers were blooming but nobody was expecting what was about to happen next. It was the missing princess' birthday. Prince Earwyn had been sent on a quest to search for her as they did every year on her birthday. She had been missing for 17 years. Prince Earwyn went searching inside every house, every store, in every inn and every market. Until he came to the last place he could possibly look. And there inside a bakery was a beautiful maiden dressed in rags with an apron around her waist and flour all over her.

She curtsied and said, "How may I help you, your majesty?" Prince Earwyn said, "You remind me of someone. Can you come with me to the palace? "

"The palace? But your majesty, have I done something wrong?" said the beautiful maiden.

"No, this may be the best news the kingdom has heard in a long time." said Prince Earwyn.

Prince Earwyn escorted her to the palace and on the way he asked her name.

She responded, "Merlinda."

Prince Earwyn said, "That's a pretty name."

When they arrived at the palace there was a huge line assembled to see the king and queen. Merlinda started to get nervous. Her hands started to sweat. Thoughts and worries were all jumbled in her head like a ball of spaghetti. She was worried about getting back to her bakery as she had just put a loaf of bread in the oven. She thought, what if I disappoint the king and queen? What if I accidentally do something very rude when I meet them? What if I am actually the princess?!?

She wasn't very prim and proper like a typical princess would be and she didn't really want to be a princess. What Merlinda really wanted was to live an adventurous life. That's why she got a job at the bakery, so she could get enough money to travel and have adventures. She was nothing like a princess. She liked sword-fighting, horseback riding and really didn't mind getting dirty. She never wanted to wear glitzy dresses or anything like that. She loved everything about being outside.

Pretty soon it was Merlinda's turn to see the king and queen. The queen looked up and shouted, "It's her!"

She knew in an instant that Merlinda was her lost daughter.

The queen also recognized the shell necklace that Merlinda was wearing. The king and queen were delighted but Merlinda was shocked! The king and queen were so happy they planned to have a great ball to celebrate the return of their lost daughter.

Merlinda was shown to her room which was in the tallest tower in the center of the palace.

Knock, Knock, Knock. The queen asked, "Can I come in?"

"Ok" answered Merlinda.

"I know this all must be very stressful." said the queen. "When I became the queen, I had to move into a new castle and everything was different. Several times I even got lost in the new castle. I had more duties to do and being in charge of the castle staff was not easy. What I learned was that going for a swim in the ocean helped calm me down."

"A swim?" said Merlinda "is this a joke?"

"No..." said the queen calmly, "there is nothing like flipping your fins in the ocean."

"Fins!?!?" shouted Merlinda in complete surprise.

The queen smacked her forehead and said, "Oh yes! I forgot to tell you.."

Melinda interrupted and said, "Tell me what?!"

"You are a mermaid just like me!" continued the queen.

Merlinda's jaw dropped in surprise and disbelief.

The queen talked with her and told her about the shell necklace she was wearing. It was no ordinary necklace. It was a mermaid necklace. If she slipped it up to her forehead she would turn into a mermaid. Merlinda was so excited to be a mermaid but not quite as excited to be a princess. She couldn't wait to try out her new fins and to become the most adventurous mermaid princess ever!

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Daelan, 15
CO

Broomfield High
School
Van der pol

Heart of fire

Red scales, glinting like rubies in the light.

Eyes yellow, intense, and bright.

Wings to fly through the sky, soaring above the clouds.

Elegant as a flower, yet we growl at her like hounds.

Flames burning bright, scorching the ground.

Towers crumble under her claws as she's crowned.

The mother of power.

A protector yet we cower.

The fire of her heart keeps her free.

Those whom have her soul shall have her heart of fire guarantee.



Matthias, 17
NC

The Fletcher
Academy
Koobs

Deadman Prologue 'Farming the Ghosts' Prologue

A grey sheet of lifeless yard grass coiled under the chipped overheads, railings, snapped bark, and arched entrances on either side of the high shed. The crescent moon began to descend with time as the grass turned ghostly, the animals grew silent, and the forest hushed its final whisper. A stone path winding in from a road led to a broken postern on the front and a dilapidated postern to the rear. A humming creaking shrieked off the corner courtyard that drowned out what had remained. Two bright blue eyes leaned over two flat wood surfaces against a thin oak wall to the front canopy. Saw over sap, brush over bark, and blueprint over surface created the perfect interface for a collection's worth of lifelike carvings strung over each wall's decor. The faces protruding from the crude carvings could only be described as unearthly and uncanny from the true normal. Depictions of epic betrayals, carvings of begged forgiveness, and a single carving of a half-smile strung over the center overpiece just above the oak stool. A lifeless oaken door guarded the high shed's entrance. One singular ball of light clung to the shed's center support. The shimmering glitter lightly touched a covered face toiling over yet another depiction of what would soon become a great feast of men, women, and children alike at a single table to the center of the piece's set. Yet, despite the overwhelming work, heated conditions, harsh weather and insulated surrounding, not a breath, crop of sweat, or dampness of brow could be detected from the lone silhouette behind the work station.

The moon crescent reached its final pass as one last shimmer of light sparked through the line that let the light pass in the day. Almost no animal made a move, caused a noise, twitched a muscle, or so much as blinked when this well-known nighttime occurrence took place of what the surrounding nature had once been. The amalgamated door screeched when it opened, the lessening ball of light barely backlit a single shape of a man, and the entire forest stood still when the grass was carelessly toppled over the heels of what one could only describe as a part of the ecosystem as well. Only, this time, the purpose of this environment's component was not to maintain the life it had once held, but simply maintain the balance of the life's amount in the canopy.

Blue eyes frontlit a once proud and mighty oak when a handprint set over a hanging off bark. For a single moment, everything took a breath and held to the impact of what would soon come for them. Then the proud oak began to thin. What green saturation it held in its inner cuttings, what great life the sap that held it together once had began to dry up like a desert, and the branches that held out to the families of the vegetation in the setting of nature began to wind back and flatten like the oxygen they once absorbed to stay awake was now powering a force that was tasked to maintain that very balance. The grey grass that stretched across the once majestic valley began to look eerily similar to the grey, decaying its coloring to a dead grey when the blight spread forward into the next family and the next. The bright, colorful blue eyes that shone like spotlights over the green sentinels glowed more than the light overhung from the shed's innerworkings from before and replaced itself with the once green array of extraordinary lime the sentinels also held before the sunset. The colors replaced themselves, the sentinels sank even further from exhaustion of weightless energy, fading blue, and the rising green glowing of light rising up to the treeline. Everything sank, everything faded, everything retreated to escape, and, in the end, nothing remained. The sun rose again. Life returned and the color came back to the forest once again. The blue turned to green, the sounds of life made the forest shake, and the high shed closed its doors until nightfall for the last time.



Gabriel, 18
TX

Westbrook High
School
Sheena Walker

I would like to
thaaank Coach
Sheena Walker

Blurry

They say you should stand up for yourself,
To become a man.
What I really need is help,
To see what is planned.

I've only been roaming the earth for so little,
Even though I can't see what's far ahead of me.
I still adventure out to look for what waits.
Though the path is brittle.

When I speak, why do my words stumble...,
Am I reading the sentence right?
Perhaps it is my eyes committing the fumble,
Making my language sound like a rumble.

It's so bright it hurts when I read,
I must turn down the lights.
It feels spectacular reading,
Where the light does not affect my sight.

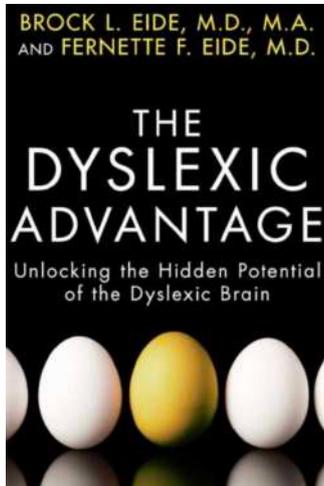
I was told to tell the doctor how do you feel,
How do you see the world?
Most words move on my paper,
Which means my eyesight is curled.
I receive an overlay to help me see,
Is this really how it should be?
Now when I read my words are flowing,
Just like the rapids of a river that look like they are fleeing

I am soft spoken but relaxed when I speak,
I can see without having to second guess myself.
I am relieved when I look out and see what awaits me,

My path is clear and I can see what I seek.

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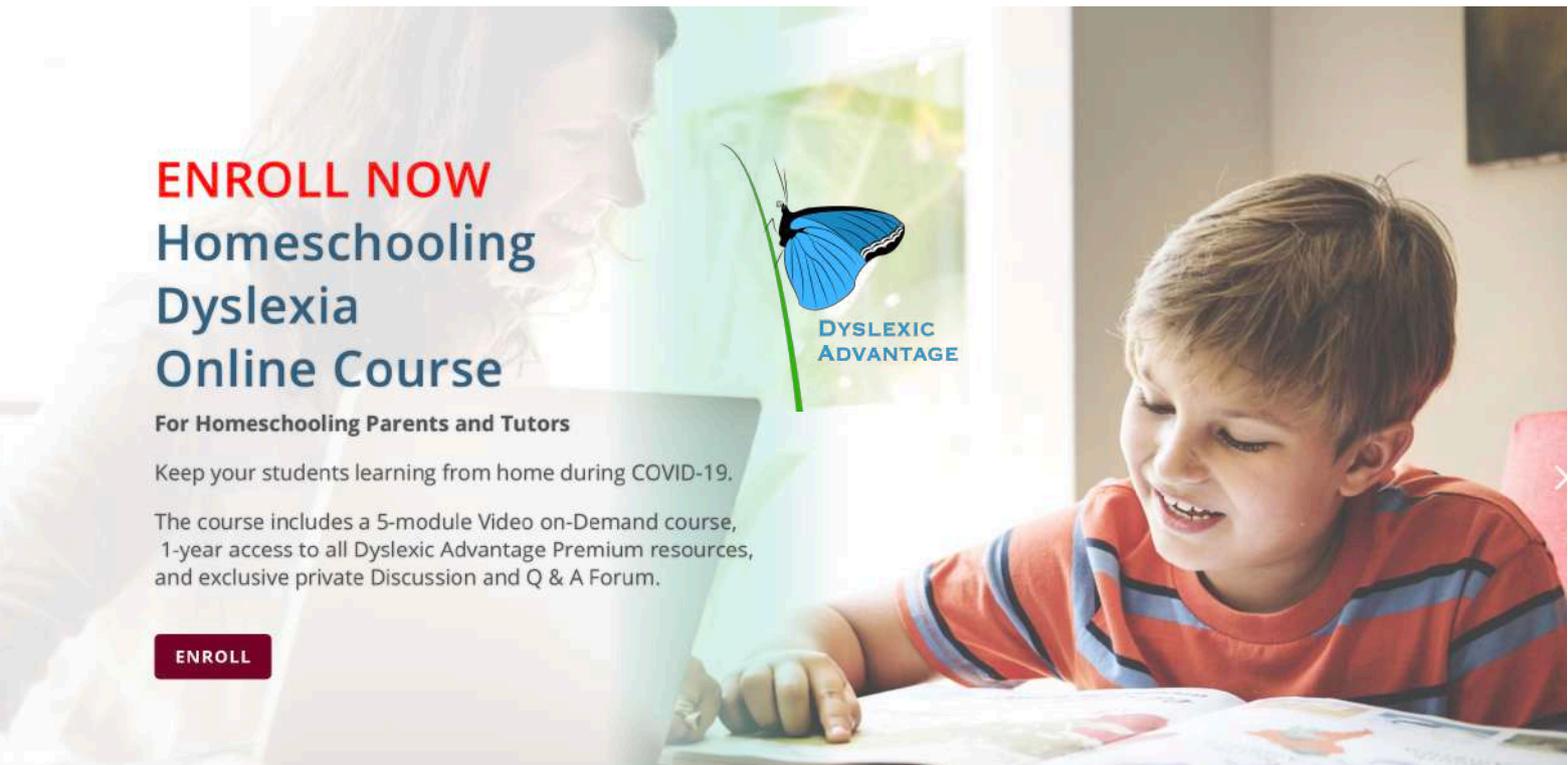
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Booker, 10
OR

Park Academy
Mrs. Susan Ramirez

I would like to thank
my brother Kofi.

The Great Food Crisis

There once was a man who was one-third human, one-third octopus and one-third goat. This man was named Mr. Sausage. Mr. Sausage loved to eat potato chips. His favorite were classic Lays potato chips. He had a beautiful wife; his wife was a family-sized bag of classic Lays potato chips. One day his wife went missing, so he looked all over for her but could not find her. He decided to stop eating potato chips and eat salad. Then he said to himself "This salad is not as good as potato chips. I need to stop eating potato chips, so what do I eat now?" He starts to think about what he could eat. He likes to eat bagels but they are not sweet enough. What about lollipops? Lollipops don't have enough flavor. Then Bob comes out of nowhere and suggests that he eats pickles. The pickles are just too sour. Bob suggested some honey. Mr. Sausage said that "honey is too sticky." How about salami? "That is not even close to sweet enough" yelled Mr. Sausage. Then Bob suggest candy canes "those are to sticky" replies Mr. Sausage. Then bob suggested organic chicken nuggets. I'm excited about the them but I have already tried them and I do not like them" Mr. Sausage replied. Bob ask "have you ever tried donuts?"

'WHAT, what are donuts" questioned Mr. Sausage. "You have never tried donuts? They are really good." said Bob. Mr. Sausage finally tried a donut and said "sorry classic Lays potato chips you were Great but now I have my new favorite snack, DONUTS."

If you were wondering about Bob which I know that you were. Bob is just an average man that I met at The Kuki Mart grocery store.

DYSLEXIC ADVANTAGE INGENUITY AWARDS K-12 Dyslexic Students

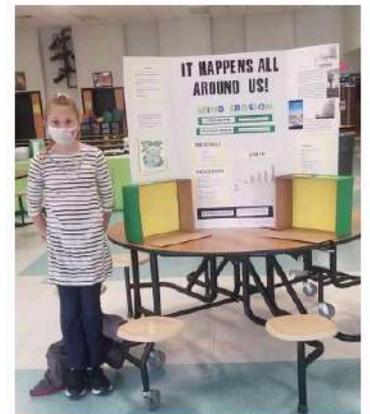


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Fiona, 10
MO

Horizon Academy
Shayne Sherwood

Roller Skates

Roller Skates, Roller Skates,
You make me smile,
You have more beauty
Then a rainbow itself
When I put you on my feet
All I can think about is
Soaring and gliding
In the wind



Charlotte, 10
Washington DC

Lab School of
Washington
Amy Young

I would like to thank
my Grandma.

Perfect

What makes me perfect?
a calm rainbow on a Sunday afternoon
marker caps that don't lie
puppy that plays all day long
pop colors to joy me up
my friends laughing
and everything that is opposite
perfect is a myth to me. no one is perfect. nothing is
perfect. perfect is a word to make your own way.
you are perfect



Henry, 11

Lab School of
Washington
Amy Young

I would like to thank
Amy Young.

The World Turned Medieval

It was a dreary night in London, for it was pouring rain outside. Luckily for one museum guard, his shift had just started and he was in the Knights of the Round Table area doing his rounds when he heard a big crash and then noticed a sword and shield were missing. Not wanting to get fired, he went off in search of them, but finding nothing he moaned and dropped down, leaning against the wall, moping in despair about getting fired again. The first time it was from the police force. He had fallen asleep on shift which got him court-martialed. Then it was on a mission he had failed. He sank into the memory, not realizing his shift had just ended.

He picked himself up and stood waiting for the next guard. The next guard came in and greeted him and told him to go home, for he looked very tired. He began the drive home and looked in the rearview mirror in shock! There, in the back of his car, were the sword and shield that were missing! Just then he heard a shout. "Stop right there!" He realized it was the police and his heart sank. He was going to be fired. But the policeman just gave him a ticket and said to drive more carefully. He thought, "Are the sword and shield invisible to everybody else?" He continued his drive home thinking about what his family would think of him.

When he reached his home his only family member that came out to greet him was his son Max. "Max looks happy to see me," thought James. Then Max said that Boston had won the World Series. James felt overjoyed. That Friday night they made popcorn and watched a movie. James had completely forgotten about the sword and shield in his car. The next night he had off, so he and Max went to a fish and chips restaurant for dinner. After they went home they went to bed. James then remembered the sword and shield in his car. He went and grabbed them and realized something was wrong. There was a medieval banner lying there!

The Way the World Turned Medieval (continued):

He thought it was strange, but he brought them inside. Then he got back in bed. The next morning he woke up to see the banner propped up against the wall next to a foot soldier armor stand with armor on it. He thought, "That wasn't there yesterday," but shrugged it off. When he got home from work, he noticed his house looked different, but nothing that out of the ordinary. Just, instead of clay bricks, it was made of stone bricks. He went in and realized that there was a small pile of coins at the base of the armor stand. He scooped them up and put them in a gunny sack. He brought them to a gold authenticator who said they were solid gold. He then sold them to a jewelry shop. They paid him 14,940.304 British pounds. He immediately ran to a shop and bought a new laptop and a phone for Max. He was ecstatic and very excited to show Max his surprise. He got home to see his home looked like a castle and the houses around look like wattle and daub. James shrugged. It was odd but, hey.

He went inside and gave Max the laptop. Max seemed overjoyed. He had said he needed a new one since his old one was super laggy. Later, after work, James realized his house looked like a castle with a moat and all he now knew was something was off... He went in to realize there was so much space and how clean it was. When he went to see Max, he looked the same. He said, "Hi" and asked how work went. James said, "Great!" then looked outside to see men in armor drilling in the yard which was still the same size, but he saw people farming and herding animals into pens. He then realized his history teacher was right-- one day the world would turn medieval...



Ian, 12
TX

Rawson Saunders
Kat DeWees

I would like to thank
my mom.

The Joy of Reading

I didn't know the satisfaction of flipping the pages of a book
and taking in word after word from the thin crisp papers
until I was eight years old
The loss of knowledge in my mind
Being unable to read
is like the loss of breathing to some
and the loss of a story
is like the loss of hope to all
The great stories of Harry Potter, Lord of the Rings, and Artemis Fowl
will be imprinted in my mind forever
like the path to water in an elephant's memory
I thank you, mom and dad for helping me learn to read



Lily Mae, 13

FL

Howard Middle
School
Renessa Hoffman

I would like to thank
Ms. Ginny McMillen

Dear Acting,

I love you. God-- I love you so much. Everything in my life is about you. Every choice I make I think about you when making it. Every step I take I take it thinking about you. I think about the bright shining lights above, the rush of adrenaline. The darkness in the crowd, how the stage is just you and me. How when I dance, you move with me. My cheek will always feel the burn of the mic tape, the stain of the heavily powered pink blush.

You know how when kids are little and their parents put them into every single activity around, hoping they can find their child's thing? Well, I was lucky. You were my thing the moment I stepped onto your stage. I was so little then, so naive. You were just my hobby, like how I was yours. I was your little side project since the age of 5, training me, shaping me, making me - me. I don't think either of us were expecting to fall for each other the way we did. After a year with you, I knew I couldn't let you go. I pushed through every skinned knee, every struggle so I could be with you. You ingrained in my brain that the show must go on. And you were right, and continue to be right. Acting, you have never failed me, and for that I thank you. Every bit of opportunity you have given me, every dance combination, every page of music you have taught me, I thank you.

I'm so in love with you, sometimes my love for you scares me. How every thought in my brain is about you, what you've created. Heck, I even go to school for you.. You're my

everything. I even wore a camisole for you, and since the day I put one on I'm convinced camisoles are devices of torture. But I continue to wear one every show, for you. And in return you give me so much more. You give me freedom, you give me hope, and you return my love, which is all I ever wanted from you. Thank you.

Thank you for every dance move I learn, every song I sing. Thank you for brilliant costumes, and brilliant make up. Thank you for the people you have given me. This might be rude to say, but I might love those people more than you. I love the scenery, the props, the way you tug at my heartstrings. Thank you for the laughs, thank you for the sadness. Thanks for being my first thought of the day, and the last thing I think about before night.

I hope that I can continue to grow with you, and that the feeling of the sticky mic tape will never, ever, truly go away. That is all I ask for from you moving forward. All I ask is that you continue to be there for me the way I have been there for you, always. You are everywhere around me and I don't think I will ever forget you, or ever give you up entirely. So this isn't goodbye acting, this is a thank you. Maybe I won't be as involved with you anymore, but you'll always have a safe and warm place in my heart. Forever and always.

Love,
Lily Mae



Riley, 13
TX

Rawson Saunders
Kaat DeWees

I would like to thank
Mary Caroline.

White Fluffy Cowboy Hat

Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today to mourn the loss of my white fluffy cowboy hat. It departed suddenly on Thursday, August 3rd, 2017 at 11:38m am on the move from Chicago to Austin.

After a well-lived life, the hat left the earthly realm and my head too early. My fluffy hat was always a lifesaver to me. My earliest memory of this great fluffy white cowboy hat was when I was running around the hotel where I purchased it and it kept dipping down over my eyes and blinding me because it was too big. This hat was truly special to me, always sparking, standing out. It even had lights! When I would flip the switch to turn the lights on in the car at night, my dad would get mad at me because he thought they looked like police lights.

I still remember one time when we were in the Chicago airport and I wandered off with someone I thought was my dad, but it turned out that it was someone else's family. My family started boarding the plane when my mom realised that I was gone. She found me pretty quickly because there I was, in my white, fluffy cowboy hat.

It's difficult to imagine a life without a trusty cowboy hat, but I will try to power through life without it. My hat may be gone, but it will never be forgotten. It will live on in my fondest memories and a few pictures (that hopefully will not embarrass me one day).



Sophia, 13
FL

The Christ School
Yvonne Doria

I would like to thank
one of my best and
oldest friends.

The Trust in Love

All she saw were blue eyes with specks of a dark, deep blue. The eyes of the person, the only person that loved her, and then a voice, the voice of the person that would die for her, that would never let anything happen to her. The person she knew couldn't exist because no one loves her, no one had and no one ever would except for that dumb cat.

When she woke up, she found that she was in bed. She was extremely confused and didn't know how she got in bed, but the question was quickly answered when Max walked into the room. He had changed into normal clothes, but he still had the same shoes. She had no idea what time it was, that made her nervous, but the first thing she asked was, "Why were you at my apartment?" She was too tired to lift her head, so she didn't know if he was going to answer. He finally gave a stupid answer.

"I just came over to pick you up," he said, suspiciously matter of factly.
"Lair."

"Fine," he said sheepishly. "I came to check on you., I got worried when you weren't at school."

"How sweet of you," she said sarcastically.

"And you're back," he said as he rolled his eyes, but he sounded sad. "You know you're much nicer when you're tired."

A.

T. didn't take that well. "I wasn't tired, I was knocked out," she snapped. "By you might I add."

"How did I knock you out?" he said irritably.

"You stressed me out!"

"Alright," he said. "Just calm down."

"How did you get it my..."

she suddenly stopped. "What is that!"

The Trust in Love (continued):

She looked across the room at a table full of trophies, metals, and ribbons from basketball and cross country.

"Where am I?" A.T. asked forcefully.

His face flushed as he answered, "You're, um, this is my apartment."

"What," she screamed "Why am I here! Do your parents know I'm here, do-" She frantically and immediately sat up in the bed.

Max cut her off, "Everything's fine, my mom is in the kitchen."

She calmed down a bit at that. She looked around the room. Max's room was bigger than her whole apartment, granted her apartment was a crap hole. He had three basketball trophies and four cross country trophies. She wasn't able to read them but she knew what they said because she was also on the cross country team. He also had a poster of Stranger Things 2 on the wall behind his trophies. Then she saw the book shelf, she got up to see the books. He had all her favorite books. He had The Great Gatsby, Huck Finn, To Kill a Mockingbird, and all the Austen novels. A.T. specialty loved Pride and Prejudice.

Max was just standing in the corner watching her. He watched as she picked up Pride and Prejudice. He had read and reread that one. He had scribbles all over the margins of that book.

A.T. opened to the middle of the book and read all the scribbles in the book.

"You feel bad for Marry" A.T. said finally looking at Max smiling.

"Whut"

"Pride and Prejudice"

"Oh yeah" he said attempting normalcy.

She looked at him and laughed for a moment and then turned back to the book shelf. Max stood up and walked over to the shelf and stopped behind her. A.T. was reading the last paragraphs of The Great Gatsby; she didn't realize he was behind her until she turned around.

"That one is my favorite" he said looking down at her.

She didn't realize just how much taller than her he was until then. He was only 5'6

so he was about a head taller than her.

"It's my second," she said softly. He was so close to her it made her stomach do a backflip. She wanted to turn around but her legs seemed to disagree. She was lost in his blue eyes, he still had the sparkle he had when they were kids. And for a moment she thought maybe she wasn't completely alone.



MacKenzie, 14
TX

Rawson Saunders
Kat DeWees

I would like to thank
Ms. DeWees.

Lake Lure (Excerpt)

That night I kept tossing and turning in my bed. I usually have a hard time falling asleep in new spaces, so I got up and went outside. It was really nice. Just the right temperature, not too hot and not too cold. It was a full moon, but it was still a little hard to see because of the low clouds. Though the stars that were visible were brighter than any that you could see in the city if you even saw any at all, it was peaceful. I stepped out onto the dock and looked out over the water. The moon was swallowed by a cloud and the dock became shrouded in darkness. The rotting smell was back. I was getting kind of sick of this smell someone needed to get the fish out of the water. Suddenly a figure of a woman emerged from the water's surface in front of me. Why was she swimming here? The other cabins were far from ours. Did she just accidentally swim too far? "What're you doing here?" I shouted so she could hear me, "are you OK? Do you need some help?"

As the cloud that was covering the moon slowly moved away, I could see the woman clearly in the light. My heart dropped in my chest. She had black hair that was so long it floated in the water around her. Her eyes were white and pearly and her lips were pale almost grey. I squinted through the darkness and saw what appeared to be gills on her neck. Her flesh was peeling off in some places on her face and scales were growing in their stead. Some of the scales on her face reflected the moon's light and seemed to glow. I was frozen in place. She was swimming closer to me, but my feet were lead and I could not move, could not rip my gaze from her ghastly figure.

I finally managed to step backwards, inching away from her advancing strokes.

“Don’t go,” She hissed.

I bolted back to the house, not looking back. As fast as I could, I darted up the stairs and into the house. I barged into my parents’ room, choking out, “There’s something in the water!”

“What do you mean there’s something in the water?” Dad asked groggily flipping on the lamp.

Mom rolled over and covered her head with a pillow avoiding the light and my outburst.

“Just come and look!”

I pulled him out of bed and dragged him out the door. The rotten smell was gone. I frantically looked around the water watching for any sudden movements. “I swear it was here! It was right here.”

My dad had finally caught up to me at that point.

“What exactly did you see?” But before I could answer, he continued, “Maybe it was just your mind playing tricks on you. You should go back to sleep. We can talk about it in the morning. It’s late, Junie.”

There was no point in arguing. He would never believe me anyways. Plus, he was already walking back to the house. I followed closely after him and quietly slunk into my room. Had my mind been playing tricks? What I thought I saw couldn’t have possibly been real. A woman with fish gills?! I couldn’t go to sleep that night.



Carly, 16
NH

Proctor Academy
Peter Southworth

An excerpt from the short story

Her

The snow glistens on the trees as I look out my window, the world shining with fresh snowfall. The world is deserted now, leaving only the trees to whisper their cries of loneliness that never quite reach human ears as they are carried off by the crisp winter breeze. My heart feels the same loneliness, a feeling that I've cultivated in my old age. But it wasn't always this way. When I was young, the world was alive with joy.

Growing up, I lived in the same house as I do now, a little white two-story cottage, crisp, clean, and put together. Back then most found me odd, scrupulously avoiding my company. Forced into seclusion, my time was spent alone looking for ways to pass the time and break the monotony of my friendless small-town life. But that would all change when I met her.

I was walking back from town on the secluded country road. I was surrounded by a landscape illuminated by a thick layer of snow, light bouncing off it creating a blinding beauty. As I walked I reflected upon the fact that I had heard chatter of a new family coming to town. For many this was exciting news that would at least temporarily revitalize their social lives. But resigned to my seclusion, I was assured this event would not affect me in the least.

Soon it began to snow, the snowflakes drifting slowly down, big luscious snowflakes flew from the sky, settling on the world like royalty ascending to a throne. This was

the type of snow that makes you believe you're inside a snow globe, the world shaking off its boredom to make way for new hope. It was in this magical environment that I first saw her; long golden curls whipped about her face as she sprinted down the old country road, her blue eyes sparkling with the harsh light of winter, her face radiating with what I can now only describe as the happiness of youth. Her movements were ethereal as she leapt off the ground in defiance of gravity. There was something about her that forced you to look and I can only imagine the absurd look I had on my face as I stood frozen watching her disappear down the road. Her presence struck me in an indescribable way, leaving me wondering who she was.



Charlie, 16
NY

The Masters School
Sara Thorn

Homecoming

There once was a house, a beautiful old house where I lived for several years. The memories are fond. Surrounded by acres and acres of forest that burst with life, it always seemed to have birds chirping under a glistening sun. The old Bullman house was a decent-sized, inviting, brick house with a white picket fence. The owners, a husband, wife and daughter, lived happily in their little town of Cobblton only a short ways down the gravel road. They were warm, welcoming, and treated even strangers like their own kin. They never turned their back on anyone in need, and in fact housed, and fed a number of out-of-luck folks. Their open hospitality gave way to a home filled with the most incredible of people. Craftsman, dreamers, good Samaritans. People who did what they loved, what made them happy, even if it meant a life of poverty. But they were rich in spirit, and full of hope and because of that never frowned a day in their lives.

I was in fact, one of these wide-eyed strays. When my father had first brought me there, I was but a shy, timid boy, nervous of the scary new world around me. It was only when I met the Bullmans' daughter, that this little slice of heaven became so for me. We quickly became the best of friends, "partners in crime", often causing mischief, running down the long, wide halls, with their eggshell walls, hardwood floors, carpeted by the most intricate of flower patterns. But time went on, like it tends to do. And eventually, I moved on from Cobblton to attend university. Even after my departure, the Bullmans of course, kept trying to save the world one soul at a time.

But they became more and more saddened with every departure and death of their "adopted" family members. They became increasingly discouraged by their inability to make a difference in these people's lives as it seemed that no matter

how many starving mouths they fed or how many families they saved, nothing ever appeared to change in the long run. There were always more homeless and starving souls to save the next day, and the next, and the next. It was only after I graduated from university when my past would greet me once again, as this is when the letter came from the Bullmans' daughter.

Dear Evín,

I wouldn't ask you this unless it was of the utmost importance, but I must urge you to come home. A lot has changed since you took off for university those four years ago. And I fear what this place has become. My parents are, - - - they don't quite seem like themselves at all. And after my Mom..., no, no, I must tell you all this in person. But please do hurry, I'm scared Evín.

All my best, Joy

It arrived a week later, just two days after graduation. I didn't hesitate to return to Joy's home, the Bullmans were like family, especially after my father died.

I arrived at dusk, the weather seemed particularly grim with the heavy fog and dark ominous clouds looming above. And strangely enough, it seemed as though I was expected, as before I could even knock, the door opened and Mr. Bullman greeted me at the door. "Evín! come, come, it's been too long. Here let me take your bags." Obviously, I protested as I did not want to be a bother, but he just said, "Ah, but you're my guest, I insist. And please call me Terry." He tucked my lone suitcase under his shoulder, and led me up the creaky old stairs all the while holding in his other hand an oil lamp hand-painted with patterns of vines, which made the light emanating from it turn emerald and infused the walls with a strange hue, painting the velvet curtains green.

Even in the obsidian of the night, I could still see quite a bit of house. And I was shocked at how much it had changed. Ever since I can remember the Bullmans walls crammed with visitors' gifts of pictures, pottery, and poems.



Madison, 16
TX

Wilson Hill Academy
Mr. Althaage

Thank you to Mrs. Crouch, a writing teacher and mentor who has encouraged me to find my voice through writing.

A December Love Chapter 1

December 20th, 1817

The night was cold, the air dark and thick. A perfect night to be snuggled up in my bed reading a good book instead of attending this stupid ball mother forced me to come to. When I entered the ballroom, the glittering lights hanging from the chandeliers blinded me for a moment. When my eyes finally adjusted, I glanced across the golden dance floor to see who else and what else was there. At one side of the room a long table held a punch bowl at one end and small cakes and sweets on the other. A band played a cheerful minuet in another corner. Across the floor, people talked and lightly danced or swayed. The smell of sugar from the sweet cakes on the table mixed with smoke from the fireplace wafted throughout the room.

Then I saw him. The tall, dark man, the one who I both feared and adored, standing in the corner watching the entrance and waiting as if he were watching for someone. Philip. Oh, Philip. His heart melting chestnut eyes, his warm, sweet smile, and his floppy brown hair that was always sprayed across his face. Oh, how I despised him, but oh how I loved him at the same time.

Amelia, my closest friend from my childhood, was also there. She stayed by the punch, looking lovely in her blue gown with silver details and white trim. She looked around the room, clearly waiting for someone. Perhaps me, since I was late as usual. I made my way to her, weaving in and out and in between people. The gown mother made me wear, a dark green cloth with black trim and small silver flowers all over the wide skirt, made it difficult to dodge people.

"Oh Emily! How darling you look!" exclaimed Amelia excitedly once I finally made it to where she was standing. She set her glass down to admire my gown. "The green really sets off your copper hair."

"Thank you," I replied with a roll of my eyes. My distaste of this situation showed too much. I stiffly pushed out, "You look very nice as well."

The minuet switched to a waltz and a few couples began to dance. Amelia was asked to dance by our other friend, Benjamin, so I sat down a little away from the dancing. I placed my small bag on the table to my right and took out my book. The music would make a nice background for the story, so maybe the evening would not be a complete waste. Before I could even find my place, though, someone suddenly grabbed me by the elbow and swung me into the waltz. When I looked up to see who had brought me into the dancing, I was astounded. It was Philip.

"You look beautiful tonight," he said with his silky voice as he placed my hand in his. I blushed and tried to hide the fact that his words made my evening. "I- You look dashing, too," I said. My face felt like it was on fire. Would he notice that I stumbled on my words? To cover up my mishap, I grinned saucily and said, "Do you even know how to dance?"

Philip's grin widened. I was close enough to smell the scent of his dress coat: vague hints of vanilla and mint rainwashed in a fresh scent of smoke from a fire. His grip tightened around my waist. The smell of the deep black coat increased as he brought me closer. I almost sneezed. Instead I giggled, thinking it would serve Philip right for grabbing me and pulling me into this dance. He leaned near my ear and whispered "I do," as we went flying through the ballroom.

The dance ended and I curtsied and he bowed. Breathless, I turned to greet my seat. Philip grabbed my hand, kissed it, then disappeared into the crowd. I slowly made my way out of the crowd, trying not to blush at what he had just done in front of everyone. Did he really think that would win my heart?

CONGRATULATIONS

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 Anya, 15 Snowflakes
 Luciene, 15 Another Word for You
 Abigail, 16 Run to Me
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 Elliott, 16 A Dream's Fancy
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EMOTIONAL TRUTH AWARDS

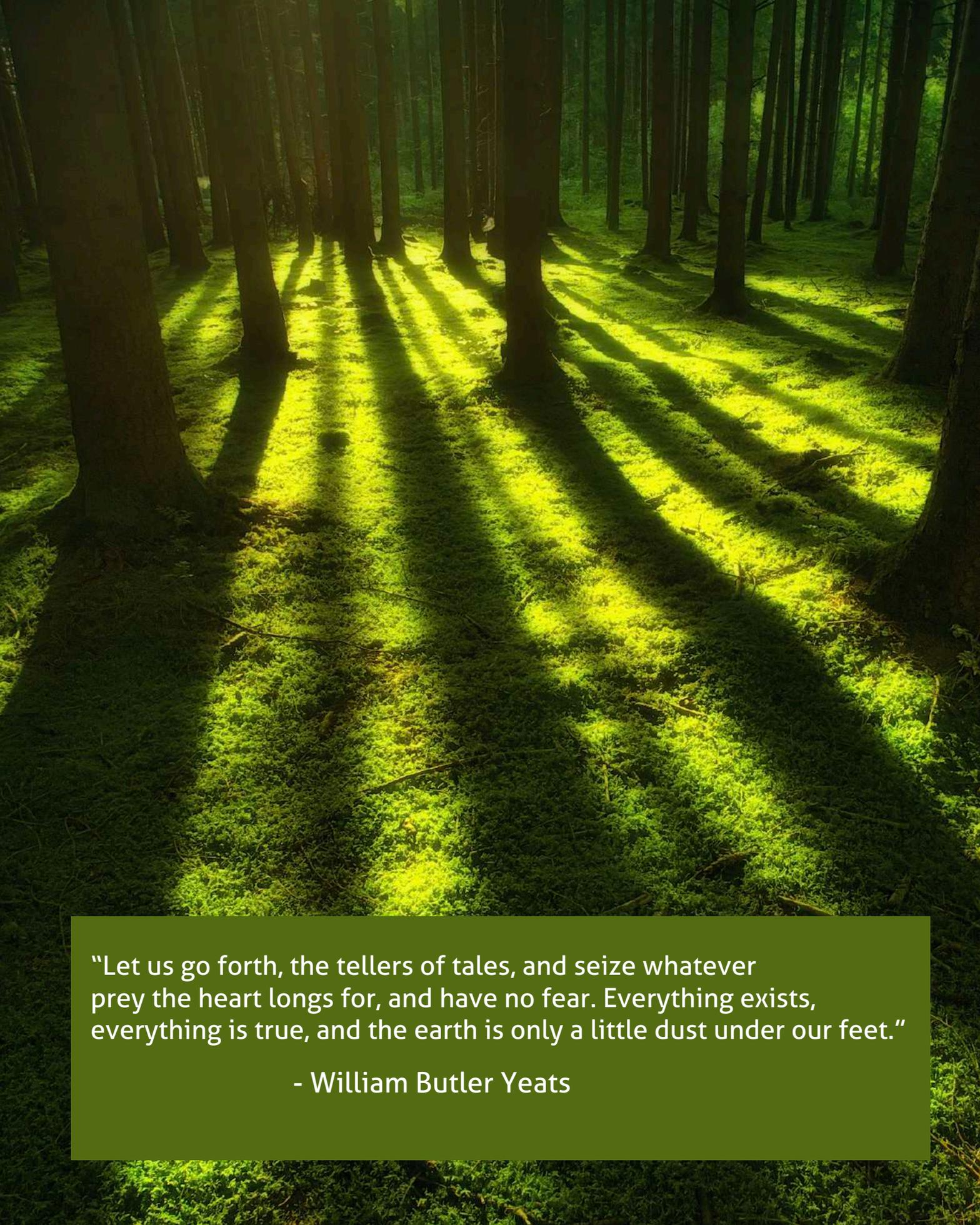
Mercy, 9 My Granddaddy
 Barrett, 10 Stuck?
 Carolna, 11 The Climb
 Isabelle, 11 Add Some Color (Excerpt)
 Leah, 11 Della
 Ainsley, 14 They're Watching Me,
 They're All Watching Me

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 Bella, 9 All About Red Words
 Cruz, 9 The NFL Star
 Charlie, 10 Pets
 Maximillian, 10 The Weirdest Halloween Ever
 Jonny, 11 Torch
 Will, 11 The Story of Rising NBA Star
 Orion, 12 What It Means to Be a Good American
 Daniel, 14 Fishing Trip Story
 Liza, 14 COVID-19, Mask Mandates
 Trey, 13 Robbing of the Red Chief

INTERNATIONAL

Mattia, 13 On the Bridge



“Let us go forth, the tellers of tales, and seize whatever
prey the heart longs for, and have no fear. Everything exists,
everything is true, and the earth is only a little dust under our feet.”

- William Butler Yeats