

HOMMOCKS

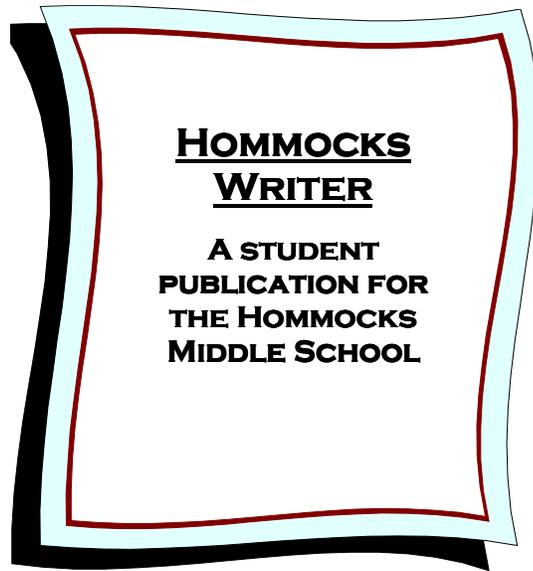


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**THANK YOU TO: KELSEY COHEN &
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Hit Me with Your Best Shot
Sophia Glinski

The ball just sat there. The little white monster with hexagonal eyes, lay in the dewy green grass and eyed me with a taunting look. Frustration coursed through my veins as a feeling of determination washed over me. I wasn't leaving camp until I accomplished this goal.

It was the last day of sleepaway camp. I was trying to complete the Palmer level for golf and struggling to attain that level. If you complete all the golf levels, including the Palmer level, you can play on the golf course. There were twenty minutes until the period was over. This was my final chance to complete the Palmer level because the next day I was leaving Camp Lohikan to go home. For hours and hours on end, I had been hitting an endless quantity of little white balls, failing horrendously each time, not knowing if this hard work would pay off.

I got into my stance and unhinged my clenched jaw. My hands were blistery and red from gripping the handle too hard and I was feeling irritable and drained. Sweat trickled down my neck and nerves made my fingers tremble. I took a couple decent practice swings, believing that I would be able

to hit an impressive shot, but when the iron club head hit the ball, my hopes simmered to dust. The little white monster happily cackled in my face as it coasted in the air for two short seconds, then plummeted back to the ground only a few feet from where I was standing. Anger bubbled inside of me and I felt like a pasta pot about to steam over. *I can play lacrosse and hit a tennis ball well, so why can't I just hit one golf ball?* I swallowed the lump in my throat and blinked away the tears that were beginning to cloud my eyes. *Golf is so challenging! It involves so much complexity and every little movement affects how far or how high the ball will go. People underestimate the power of the little white monster.*

"You can do it," Troy, my golf teacher said, interrupting my thoughts. "Change your position of your feet and rotate your wrist a bit." I did what he told me and clumsily swung again. I whiffed it. "Do you know what happened there?" Troy asked.

"Yes. I watched the ball while hitting it."

"That's right. You need to focus on actually hitting the ball instead

of worrying about where it will go.”

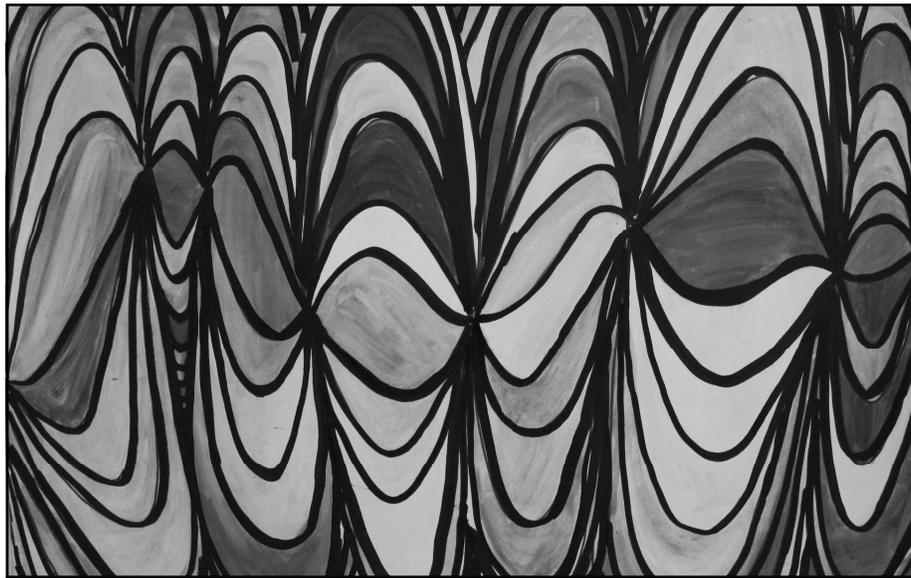
“Okay,” I said heaving a sigh. I was discouraged and wondered if I would hit the ball at all. Clearing my mind of lingering negative thoughts, I got into my golf position for about the one-hundredth time. *I will do this.*

Ten minutes remained. I had to get seven out of ten balls into the air that landed fifty meters away. I took a practice swing and then made contact with the little white monster. It lifted in the air at an unstoppable speed, rising higher and higher. Then it landed. Delight rose up inside of me and a small smile stretched from the corners of my mouth. I tightened my loose ponytail and set up my stance.

This was it. I had hit six out of nine golf balls fifty yards. Burning questions filled my mind. *Will I hit this ball well? Will I mess up? Will I complete this level with one minute until the period is over?*

“1, 2, 3,” I spoke under my breath and whacked the little monster that had caused me so much trouble. The ball propelled in the air, ascending so high it was just a dot of white against the baby blue sky. My heart leaped with exhilaration and my long face brightened.

After hitting that last shot, I realized that golf is hard, but finding the strength to persevere after failure is much harder.



Us? The destroyers
She? the
Destroyer
Pushes
Bitter words
She feels it
Pushing inside her
To the
Outside
Words like poison
As you drink it
You are done
The only thing that can save
you now
Is to be one
You are now
A destroyer

Stepped on
Crushed
My heart
Is broken
Harsh words
Soak into my soul
I feel
Small
Crammed into the corner
They get
Big
Big
Bigger
Down
Down
Down
I fall
Sydney Teitsch



Sophia
Glinski

Success

It could be the last touchdown on the field,
Or the smashing spike in the sand.
How about the final twirl on ice
Or the finishing sprint on clay?
These all represent something.
And that victory represents all of these.
But what you're thinking about
On the grass, sand, ice, or clay
Is how to reach that goal,
How to smash that spike,
How to gain momentum on your skates,
Or how to push yourself past your comfort-zone.
And when you accomplish these missions,
These targets or plans,
Then you start to think about your achievements.
Recognize your source of ambition,
By cherishing that feeling.
Because those who appreciate it
Will want it once again.

Emma Kaneti

Sonnet Poem

The sparkling mountain glows from far away
My skiing fun will soon begin at last
I hope that this is an amazing day
All other ski trips seem far in the past

I've bundled up in layers—
gloves, scarves, hats
I breathe in the crisp, cold, mountainous air
I pass the bunny hill (too old for that)
The longest trail: I hop on its lift chair

The skiers below look like tiny ants
I feel like I am riding through a cloud
I shiver a bit in my grey ski pants
The "snow" makers blowing powder are loud

Jacket zipped up and scarf pulled to my chin,
Slide off the lift—now the fun can begin!

Thea Barovick

Oh French fry,
Dear dear French fry
Your way into this world was harsh
But beautiful
Your potato mother
Peeled down to the very core
Of her existence
Then you and your delectable
brothers and sisters
Were tossed into angel's tears
Otherwise known as grease
A.K.A McDonalds
I ordered you
I found you
And you were carved into the depths
of my soul

Kailee Paterson

Pepper Spray Instead of Peppermint

Danny Regan

I was going to Macy's on December 19th to do some last minute Christmas shopping. I got there and I noticed that it was crowded, which was to be expected with all of the holiday discounts. By carefully examining news reports of people getting hurt in these kinds of conditions, I was able to find out how to survive in these sales. As I walked in through the large crowd, I turned around to see a woman who sprayed something out of a spray can. I felt a searing pain going through my eyelids, like a sewing pin was stuck through them. And then suddenly it dawned on me: pepper spray! My screams of pain did not outdo the crowd of rabid, sugar-high animals. I don't remember what happened after that. But from what they have told me, I was dragged to a hospital and the woman was arrested. While Christmas time brings joy to the world, it also brings out the darkness in humanity of which we are all sadly aware.

Stranded At Sea
Anabel Martinez

I felt the cold water cover me in a thick cloak. I heard the starting whistle blare like a siren, and my heart instantly sank. While the skippers on the other boats were pulling in their main sails, our main sail was submerged in water. Everyone else's crews were pulling in their multicolored jib ropes, while our crew was standing on the dagger board, trying to right the boat. Righting the boat is like trying to flip over a snapping turtle, literally and figuratively. Everyone else's boats were gracefully skimming the water. On the other hand, our boat was lying on its side in the dark and deep water like a dying fish that was flopping around, trying to hold on to its last dying breath. I thought that we were doomed, done, finished, but I hoped with all my might that I was wrong. It was a battle against the waves.

The feeling of deep despair clouded my mind with ghastly thoughts, creating a dense and thick fog. *What if we don't even start? What if this messes up all the improvement we had made?* I wasn't ready to throw away all the blistering and blood red hands, the long grueling hours of roll tacking over and over again. (Roll tacking is switching the directions in a boat, and then leaning towards one side of the sail). When you reach the point

when you are about to capsize, the only thing you see is the deep black water. My body was going numb from the cold, fear, and panic. I could see Mackenzie and Eric struggling to right the boat. Our boat wasn't moving an inch, even with all of their strength combined. This boat would be the death of us.

We were at our first pixel regatta together, already we had won two races and the third race had just started. But, of course, we missed the start because our boat was lying on its side, threatening to completely flip over. It sure is a joy to be me!

There were now four boats down, only three left. At the beginning of the race there were seven boats racing. At the moment, there were only three racing. The weather was completely awful. It was pouring rain and the color of the sky was like the tip of a pencil, bleak and gray. The wind sounded like a howling wolf that was getting paid to make as much noise as possible. But at the moment, the weather was the least of our worries.

"Anabel, help!" Eric yelled.

"Don't you think I'm trying?" I snapped. I wasn't in despair anymore, I was cross and aggravated. While Mackenzie and Eric were standing on the dagger board that was slick from the wet ocean waves, I looked over my shoulder. I saw

the worst possible thing I could ever imagine. The other boats had almost rounded the first buoy! When I looked over again I saw something really bad: our boat was drifting towards sharp rocks that are cruel and unforgiving. I felt a sinking feeling in my chest. *Where's the ominous music when I need it?*

It was crunch time. I climbed up to the dagger board and jumped up and down over and over again until I thought it would break. Like a baby tentatively taking its first steps, the boat slowly started to rock towards us. When the bottom of the boat was almost fully back into the water I jumped right in, not wanting to take any chances. You could see the sail leisurely rising from the water, like a blooming flower, except faster and uglier. You could see the jib rising out of the water too, like it was coming out of its grave, back from the dead. (The jib is the second

sail on a pixel boat; the jib makes righting a pixel much harder.) You could see the jib ropes, tangled up like pretzels. Pretzel knots would probably be easier to undo though. When the boat was fully upright, there was an abundance of happy cries coming from the water, most definitely heard in China. We had done it: the boat was out of the water, and we were starting the race.

We almost wasted our opportunity, because we were struggling with each other, and we weren't working together. I don't want to think about what would have happened if we didn't right the boat. Now I know that if I ever get an amazing opportunity, I won't let it almost pass me by because I am fighting with someone. Don't miss your opportunities in life due to the fact that you are fighting, because as fast as opportunities come, they go away faster.



8

Gabby Santos



Molly
Mackie

Don't Surrender

When anything ain't going right
It's alright: you just gotta
Hope that the next time
you can be stronger than before
When you can't see
What path you're on
Keep your faith
And carry on
Don't stop yourself from finding
Who you are

Times are hard; the mountain caves in
Don't surrender
Keep it up
Times are hard, I know too
You are you
Everyone else is taken
You're fine
Life's fine
It's alright to hurt inside
Don't stop yourself from finding
Who you are

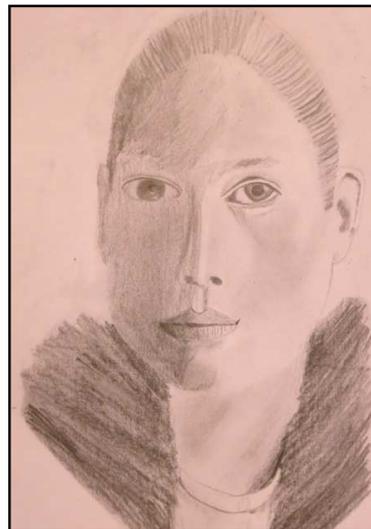
Refrain:

Times are hard; the mountain caves in
Don't surrender
Keep it up
Times are hard; I know too
You will survive
The roller coaster of life
Rainbows, after rain
The clouds will go away
Here comes another day
So don't surrender

Sarah Velazquez

Socks
I hug people
Yet they walk all over me
My body is multi-colored
Getting dirty is my specialty
As is getting smelly
Everyone needs me
But not everyone has me
But I can easily get lost
among others
Of my kind
I have a perfect match
Like a husband and wife
Always there for each other
Yet some get lost
And forget about their match
And find a new match
Yet they will never be the same
I hug people
Throughout the day
Yet they walk all over me

Bridget Anthony



Sophia Glinski

A Vicious Cycle

Why do I do it?
This is the question I fear to answer
The high from power
It grows in me
A bud that is watered with hatred
The fact that people lie and are fakes
I hate it
But that also includes me
Thus the flower of rage, the feeling that I am
better and higher
Blooms
It engulfs me with power but after
Nothing
Just some kid left crying because
Of me
I live a life where I can't handle liars
My friends lie
About being perfect and great at everything
They are mice on a ball trying to stand for as
long as they can
But they roll and roll until they fall
Their faults are covered by more lies

When I hit a kid for a second
I am in control
But at what cost?
My sister cries herself to sleep because of my
friends
And her friends do the same because
Of me
I am a predator
A monster
A villain
This bud of rage is all that's left of me
When I die this is what I leave behind
The tears and scars of kids I hurt
What am I supposed to do with myself?
I want to wither away and leave
They would be happier without me
Yet I am stuck
If I leave and become better
No one will believe me because I lied
And I can't erase that
If I stay, I will ask
Why do I do it?

Gabriella Tucciarone

Hey!
Get off the phone.
Can you even hear me?
I scream, yet you just look at me.
Do I have to text you to listen to me?
Do I have to color myself in to become
visible?
Why do you love me
and not love me?
Why do you poke me
and not talk to me?
Why do you base your life on a phone?
Look around you at the beauty of life
not at the magic touch screen glass.

Look at the stars and
the giant wheel of cheese
with a face staring at you with bright eyes.
Look at the beautiful flare of red, yellow
and orange
surrounded by a blue sky spotted with
clouds shaped like animals
not at the animal-fed ones stacked together
like pixels.
Please. Just blink.
Show me something.

Show me you care.

Liam Manning

Eternal Silence
Sarah Waring

*S*o you want to hear my story?

Fine, I'll tell you. But I'm warning you, it's very depressing. That's why I don't talk anymore. There's nothing I can say that will make any of it better. I bet what happened to me has happened a million times before, but no one would listen. Of course they can't hear you when you can't tell them anything. So how did it happen? Well, it all started with the worst friend ever.

It was a bright October day, with none of the awful weather you normally expect. My best friend, Isabelle, and I were walking home from school. Isabelle was in another one of her moods and wouldn't talk to me no matter what I tried to interest her in. My mother says Izz and I are like Yin and Yang, and she's right. I'm a very sunshiney person-or I was. I was always trying to cheer everyone up; Izz, on the other hand, was unpredictable. Her moods changed from one day to the next-cheerful, then insanely angry. But whenever she was in a sunny mood, I would feel uneasy-like sunshine before a storm. Izz turned to me, interrupting my thoughts.

"Why don't you want to be popular, Violet?"

"Are you insane?" I asked her.

"The popular girls are so mean! Besides, even if I wanted to be popular, they wouldn't let me."

It was true. The popular girls thought I was a freak. Now, of course, they think I'm even more of a freak, but that's not the point.

"Aw, Vi, they're not mean at all. They're actually really nice. You just want to ruin my chances of being noticed!"

"So what? Just because bullying gets you noticed doesn't mean you should do it!"

Izz glared at me. "Well, I'm sitting with them tomorrow at lunch, not you. You don't even deserve to be popular!" She stormed off.

I must admit that I thought this was just one of her moods that lasted a day and that she would completely forget about the next day. I mean, Izz was my friend, right? She'd never give up our friendship just to be noticed more. She knew how important our friendship was-didn't she?

The answer to that question, though, is no. Izz didn't care that we had been friends for four years, ever since second grade. She just wanted to be popular. I know, it's a huge stereotypical thing. There have to be eighteen million books about sixth grade girls that are popular and mean, and other sixth grade girls that would do anything to be. My story is dif-

ferent, although I'd rather it wasn't.

So anyway, the next day I found myself sitting alone in the lunchroom. I looked for Izz and found her exactly where I didn't want her to be. She was sitting with the popular girls at their table. My heart sank. I knew that now that she was popular, she would never want to know a freak like me. It wouldn't even matter if I was perfectly normal. I'm not, by the way. If Izz and the populars thought I was a freak, then that's what everyone else would think. I'd never have a friend again. Even then, I knew a lot, because I was right.

One of the popular girls looked over at me and smirked. "Hey Izz, isn't that your friend over there?"

I felt anger boil up inside me. No one called Isabelle *Izz*. No one except me.

"Oh, that freak? She is *not* my friend," Izz replied.

"Oh yeah? Then prove it!" The girl whispered something in Izz's ear.

Izz looked at me. "Um.. I don't know if..." The girl whispered again.

"Fine," Izz answered. "I'll do it." I wondered what she had just promised to do. I wasn't quite sure I *wanted* to know. Well, want to or not, I'd soon find out.

At the moment, though, I had absolutely no time to think about it. I was writing an essay for a contest. If I won, I would get a scholarship to the best private high school in the country. It would be my dream come true. But the due date was that day. I needed to type a paragraph or

so to finish in time. So I headed to the computer lab to complete it.

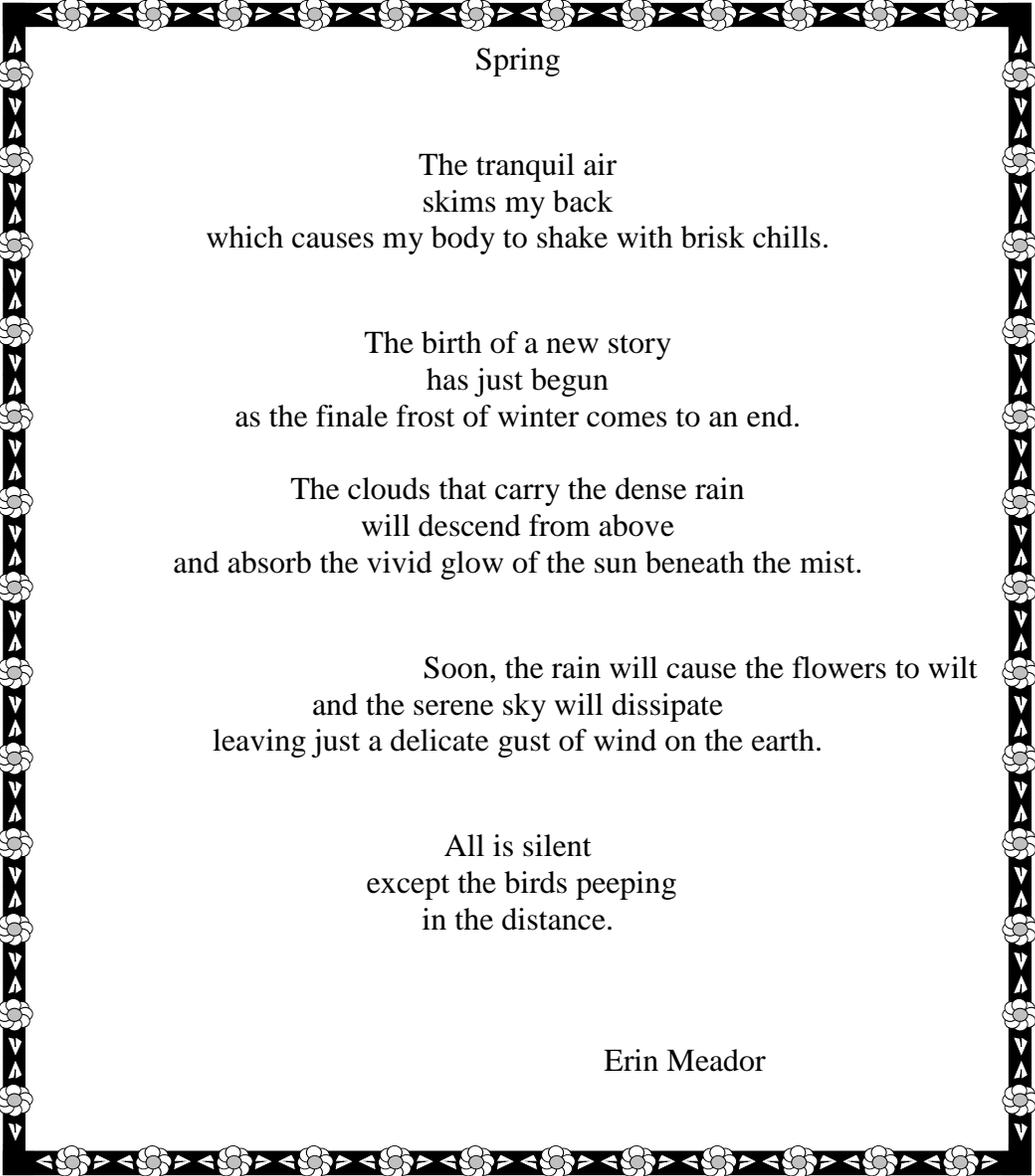
Twenty minutes later I was done. "Yes!" I shouted. "I did it!" I printed it out and hugged it to my chest, feeling the warmth of the freshly developed paper. Just then I saw Izz heading past the lab. Completely forgetting about her not being my friend, I rushed out to give her the news. "Izz!" I screamed. "I did it! Look!"

Izz squealed. "Oooh! Let me see!" I gave it to her quite willingly. She read it, and a grin came over her face. I didn't like that grin. She held it up, looked at it one last time, and... RIPPED IT UP. She tore it carefully into strips, then into shreds, and the whole time she had this crazy grin on her face. She dropped the teeny little pieces on the floor and swept away. I didn't even bother to look where she was going. My. Worst. Mistake. Ever.

I sat on the floor and sobbed. I didn't care who was watching me. So many things had just been torn apart-my essay, my best friend, my chances at achieving my dream. What was there to care about anymore? Then I realized something. I had saved my essay on the computer!

I ran to the lab and sat down where I had been before. I opened my personal files and browsed, but it wasn't there. I searched for it. It came up, but right when I was about to open it, I saw Izz right next to me. She turned her screen towards me, and she was on my files, looking at my essay. The "edit" screen came up. She grinned that awful grin and pressed delete.

Izz. Izz, who used to be my best friend. Izz, who all along had only wanted to be popular. Izz, who was grinning at me wickedly while the popular girls laughed like hyenas with plastic surgery. I tried to scream, but nothing came out.



Spring

The tranquil air
skims my back
which causes my body to shake with brisk chills.

The birth of a new story
has just begun
as the finale frost of winter comes to an end.

The clouds that carry the dense rain
will descend from above
and absorb the vivid glow of the sun beneath the mist.

Soon, the rain will cause the flowers to wilt
and the serene sky will dissipate
leaving just a delicate gust of wind on the earth.

All is silent
except the birds peeping
in the distance.

Erin Meador

Birds

A push, a shove, a word
Is all it takes
For someone to be hurt
For someone to cry

A push, a shove, a word
Is all it takes
For someone to be hurt
For someone to commit suicide

A push, a shove, a word
Can be all it takes
For someone to bully

That someone may not realize
How much they are hurting you

Or they might

But whatever you do,

Do something

Speak up
Tell them to go away
Tell an adult

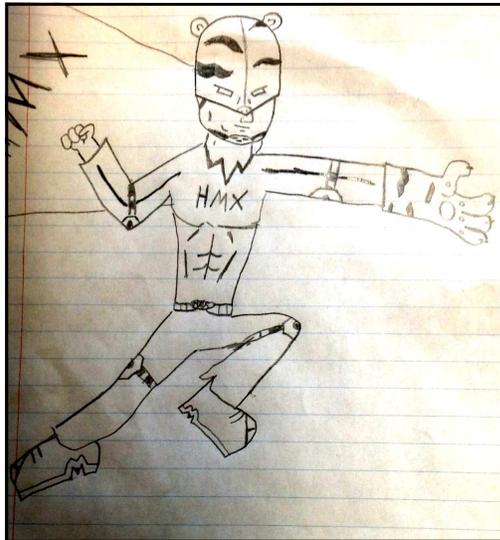
It's your job
To help stop bullying
To save someone's life
To make someone happy as a bird

And together
We can help that bird fly

And create a world where there are
No pushes
No shoves
And no harsh words

And all birds can fly, fly away

Emily Nadler



Captain HMX

Noah Katz

Shrieks of Terror
Lucas Loureiro

I can't believe I'm doing this. Do I really have the courage? How high am I going to go? Okay Lucas, don't be afraid. You can do it, it will be fun. I am not very convincing. *Just stop thinking about it and do it!* That's what I was thinking as my dad paid for the adventure.

"I know I'm afraid of heights, Dad, but I want to go up in that air balloon. I need to overcome my fear," I confidently told my dad.

"Ha-ha, I'm gonna love watching you cry while we're up there," my brother whispered in my ear so my dad couldn't hear him.

"Okay, let's go, team!" My dad whooped with a big smile on his face.

While we strolled down the sandy beach, I thought of what it was going to be like. This was probably going to be an experience of a lifetime. The yellow speedboat awaited us with its slim edges and sharp curves facing us. *It looks pretty safe, eh? What could I do about it if it were unsafe?*

When we got supplied with life-jackets, suited up and sat down, my father remarked to the driver, "This is quite a big show you're running here all by yourself."

"Yes it is, yes *it is*," the driver claimed proudly.

Now we were really ready to go, physically, and for me, emotionally. The

boat started to speed away. I was thrown back and almost went overboard. *That isn't even the scary part. I wonder how scary it's going to be up there.* We drove about a mile offshore so that the beach looked like a big sheet of yellow construction paper.

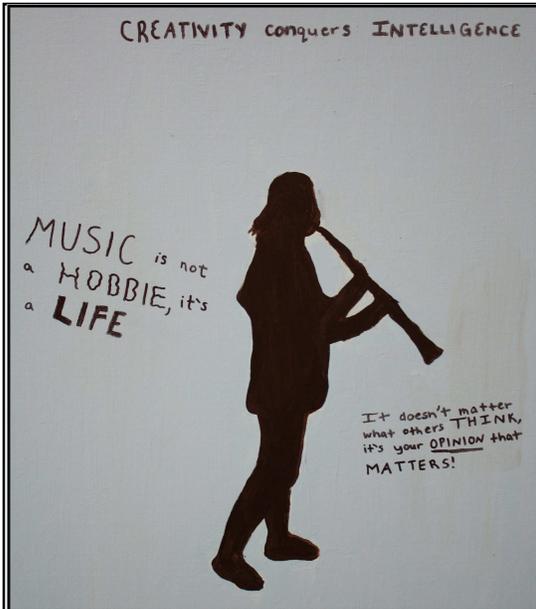
"Okay, this is it. Whoever is going on first, raise your hand and stand up," the driver mumbled with a forced smile.

My father, brother, and I raised our hands and walked over to the seat of the air balloon as instructed. It was a worn-out blue that looked like it had been sat on by numerous people of different ages and had a few loose threads. That made my imagination start to run wild, and I suddenly started to feel a bit queasy about the whole idea of being 100 feet in the air. All three of us sat down at the same time and it made a worrying sound like the sound played in a scary movie, just as the door creaks open. The strap that was supposed to hold me on to the blue seat was too complicated with strings here and there, so my dad had to help me. When we all signaled to the driver that we were ready to go, he pulled a long metal lever and, with a jolt, the blue seat started elevating and was now holding my life in its hand.

"Dad, how does an air balloon float? Does it use electricity?" I asked curiously.

"No, it floats by holding hot air in

Julie Stowell



its tarp and since hot air rises, the tarp rises with it,” he answered in his most scientific voice.

We were still elevating and it seemed like we had been going up forever. The one thought I had in my mind at that moment was, *don't-look-down*. I tried not to, but I just couldn't resist!

“AHHHHHHHHH!” I shrieked in terror and almost fell in the water! Before I could think, I had already imagined a dozen possibilities of ways we could plunge into the water and hurt ourselves. When I snapped back into the real world, I heard my dad yelling.

“Lucas! Lucas! Are you okay? What happened? Did the strap fall off? Did you almost fall? Did you look down?” He asked in a calmer voice after each

question.

“No, no, and yes. How did you know? Did you read my mind?” I asked.

“Yes, like a psychic, I read minds and I also know some magic tricks,” he smiled sarcastically, did a little hand motion, pretending like he had made an object disappear from thin air.

Now I was back in the moment. I could still make out the faint color of the shore and the people playing in the waves. In the middle of the ocean, the most colorful thing for a mile was our yellow speedboat. It felt amazing to be up in the sky like the king of the world and have the wind blowing in your face. It had been an intense twenty minutes so we called out to the driver against the blaring wind, and signaled our agreed upon hand motion to start descending. He understood.

The worn-out blue seat started descending, but slower this time because of the air balloon we were dragging down with us. Just before we reached the boat, our feet skimmed the water and we could see fish moving below the water. When we got back down to the speedboat, my feet felt weird touching a hard surface again. Everybody else that also came with us in the boat was too terrified to go up there since they heard me shriek in terror one hundred feet above them.

“Well, that was an experience I'll never forget. What about you, boys?” my dad asked in a way that sounded like he also had mixed emotions about the experi-

ence.

“I loved it, and I will never forget it. Thank you, Daddy,” I replied, with a hug.

“Me, too,” added my brother, also giving my dad a hug.

“Okay, driver, I think we are ready to go back,” he told the driver.

“Okay boss, hold on tightly,” he replied happily.

We took about thirty minutes to get back to shore in which we relaxed and the adults had interesting conversations about the economy, which I didn’t really know anything about, so I just lay down and put my thoughts in order. When we got back on the shore, my feet were wrinkly because they had been wet for three hours, but the burning sand soon dried them and my body instantly started to warm which gave me goose bumps. When we started walking to our spot on the beach, my mom spotted us, and, before she started screaming, all I saw was her face turning a bright red.

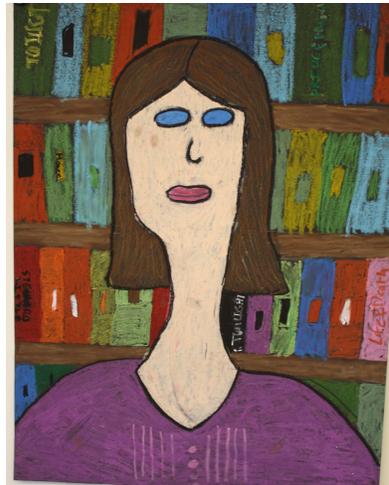
“Where *WERE* you? I have been looking all *OVER* for you!?” my mom questioned, horrified.

“We... um... were... just having some...” I uttered but my dad interrupted me.

“I took the kids out to go on an air balloon on the water. I told Alexandra to tell you; I guess she must have forgotten. I’m sorry, dear,” my dad answered while walking over to her and giving her a big kiss.

“You should have told me you were going to go; it would have been a fun adventure,” she said, disappointed.

The rest of the day was like a dream come true. While our parents had lively conversations, we danced in the crashing waves, and had the *best* home-made mozzarella and salami sandwiches ever! I finally lay and let all my muscles relax while I thought of how this impacted me; *Well, let’s see, I lost my fear of heights, I went a hundred feet above the ocean on a parachute a mile off shore, and most importantly, I spent a whole day at a beautiful beach, playing with my family in Portugal, which I’m sure none of my friends have done.* My body had relaxed by now and I was fed up from lying around, and got back in the water which cooled my warm body. All was forgiven and everybody was joyful and I just couldn’t *WAIT* to go back to the beach the next day. It was a day to remember.



Sova
Piven-
Kehrle

A Change of Mind
Natalie Manley

With a scowl on his face, one mass of a kid plopped down in front of locker 2113.

“Beat it,” he said, “scram!” Within a second, the five kids at surrounding lockers slammed them shut and scrambled away.

Whistling, a small kid with about a million freckles on his face arrived at locker 2112 and began to put in the combo, absentmindedly forgetting who owned the locker beneath it. Unfortunately, the owner of the locker below did not forget at all. With a sly grin on his face he stood up and said: “Give me your money.”

“M-m-my money?” the freckled boy stammered, turning around.

“Yes, your money, your lunch money, what other money could you have? Chop-chop I don’t have all day!”

Reluctantly, the small, sad boy dug into his back pocket and handed over a wad of crumpled up dollar bills, then turned and ran away. The large boy shook his head and sighed. Truthfully, he wasn’t the least bit sorry. Samuel McDowey had never come to school with a penny’s worth of lunch money. With so many kids ticking him off all day long, there was always a way to shake a couple of dollars out of someone. Left on a happy note, Sam nearly skipped off to class.

When Sam arrived home after school, he was greeted by the one other person who was ever in the house.

“Hi, Nanny,” he called “I’m home.”

“How was your day? Do you want a snack?” came the reply.

“No, I’m good,” said Sam, yet again avoiding any explanation of his day. He figured it was better not to tell her anyway.

Sam’s parents were rarely ever home. They were some super important scientists. Sam didn’t know or care about the details. Sometimes their faces popped up on the TV. As soon as he saw them, Sam changed the channel.

As the afternoon passed by, Sam battled his homework. He was in the midst of an algebra problem before giving up in frustration. “A football team lost five yards than gained nine. What is the team’s progress?” What was that supposed to mean? Sam crumpled the paper and threw it at the same wall he always threw homework at. If the wall was skin, Sam wondered how many paper cuts it would have. It wasn’t fair. How could his parents be famous scientists when he was such an idiot? With that, Sam fell

asleep in frustration.

The next day, even before Sam came near his locker, the hallway was clear. Everyone must've heard about yesterday's incident. He had just hung up his backpack when a girl he'd never seen before flopped down in front of the empty locker next to him. Sam thought that she was the strangest girl he had ever seen. She wore jeans (which was pretty normal) but her shirt was completely covered in yellow sequins. Thus, she was glowing like the morning sun.

"Um, excuse me," she asked, "are you done because you're kind of half in front of my locker and—"

"What?" said Sam.

"I said, could ya hurry it up so I can get to my locker!?"

"Do you know who you're messing with?" Sam questioned, trying to look tough.

"Yeah, I'm messing with the dummy that got a D on his last math quiz."

Sam looked down and noticed his math binder had opened in front of him. His face lost the tough guy look and turned quite pale. Without thinking, Sam slammed his locker shut, grabbed his math binder, shoved the girl and ran for the nearest bathroom.

How could he have been so careless? He couldn't be the toughest guy in school if everyone knew how stupid he was! He bet that new girl was going to tell everyone! He was doomed. How could a

new girl possibly be so mean to him? Weren't new girls just trying to fit in? Why had she been such a bully? She was a big, mean bully and he was a poor, stupid kid. Great. A tear rolled down Sam's cheek as he sat down on the floor in the bathroom.

Just then, the most unexpected thing happened; in marched the girl shining brighter than the sun. She just walked right on into the boy's bathroom! Sam was actually quite afraid.

"Ha!" she said. "Look at the big, mean bully cowering on the floor." The girl towered over him standing triumphantly. Sam began to cry.

"I'm not a bully!" he sobbed.

"Oh yeah? Well then what *are* you? Going around and being mean to a new girl!?"

"I-I'm a tax collector. The world made me stupid so I make the world pay for it."

"Oh well, I'm sorry *tax collector*; I was mistaken!"

Sam was at loss for words. He stared up at her like a lost puppy. The girl watched him for quite a few minutes until her face grew really sad.

Finally she said: "Gosh, I'm sorry, okay? I'm sorry I hurt your feelings but you've got to understand that just because you have trouble with, uh, you know, doesn't mean you can take it out on other people. Hey, nothing would ever happen if there wasn't a reason for it. I can help you out if you want."

He wanted to punch her. What, was

she some philosopher? Walking around like she knew everything? She couldn't tell him. All of a sudden, Sam realized something. The girl was right. What she had done to him was what he had done to other people all his life. He had teased and demanded and made a ton of people cry. He had been a big, fat bully.

Sam took a deep breath and managed to say, "T-t-t-thank you f-f-for helping me realize something."

"No problemo. I ah, I used to bully people too, but someone helped me out so I figured I'd do the same. Hey, if you want help with school stuff, meet me in the library after school."

"Yeah I'll think on it."

BBBBRRRRRIIIIIINNNGGGG!

"Guess I'd better go."

Feeling older than before Sam ran out the door.

Sam skipped out of last period history feeling amazing. He had actually really tried to pay attention and almost understood half of what Mr. Bruno was saying! He couldn't wait to tell the girl- wow he didn't even know her name! As if on cue, little miss sunshine rounded the corner and crashed right into Sam.

"Sorry," she said before realizing who it was. With a smile plastered on her face she said, "Oh hi, I don't think we've met before. I'm the new girl, Sally."

"Hi, um, I'm Sam."

"Nice to meet you."

And as if the two had known each other all their lives, they walked shoulder to shoulder down the halls of Bloom Valley Grade School.

The Ladder of Society

What do you see in the Hispanic man?
I see a person:
Someone who has tried to climb the ladder
of our society
but is pushed off and not accepted
called names like "beaners"
or "dirty Mexican."

What they get for enduring hard labor is
no respect
and low pay.

Even after being pushed off the ladder
they keep climbing.
These are the people that make up more
than 15% of our country
but people can't see past their skin color
or the language they speak.

Just remember,
your ancestors were immigrants too.

Mike McGowan

The Risky Waters

Grace Meador

“If I fall off the raft, please come and save me,” I whispered across the seat to my mom. My hands and feet were numb from the cold.

“I don’t know what I’ll be able to do,” she said. “The river seems very rough from what I’ve heard.”

It was an icy fall morning. I was in a rusty, old yellow bus heading up a mountain filled with crevasses, giant boulders, wild animals, and much more. The beautiful fall leaves were at the peak of color. The dirt road wasn’t even visible from the buckets of leaves that had fallen on the ground. Far out to the horizon, the sun was peaking up from the mountains. The sun glared in my eyes. Through the frosty and dust covered window, I could see the river and the water rushing down.

“Attention,” the lead guide shouted. He stood in front of the bus so that everyone could see him. “I don’t want to startle you, but I want to clarify the dangers of white water rafting. First, if you find yourself in the water, don’t panic. Lay down on your back with your feet up. If you don’t follow these orders, you might find yourself being pulled with the current and sharp rocks could scrape your body.”

I muttered to my mom, “I didn’t know white water rafting was so dangerous.”

“Me neither,” my mom replied. By the look of her face, she seemed con-

cerned.

The lead guide finished his speech by saying, “We will have a lot of fun but we have to be very cautious because of the loads of water that are pouring down the mountains and rivers from the rain last night.” He sat down at his seat in front of the bus and everyone began talking to each other timidly.

In that split second, we halted to a stop.

“Everyone!” the driver yelled. “Get off the bus as safely as you can. The ground is wet and muddy from the rain we had.”

I thought about the hours of endless rain pouring down yesterday. Suddenly, I questioned if we should do this. My family, another family in our raft and I got with our guide after the guide hollered for us to come over. He had tattoos covering his arms, piercings in many parts of his body, baggy jeans that covered most of his worn down hiking boots; he looked ready for an adventure.

I could hear the gentleness of the soothing water drift with us. Above our raft, high up in the trees, the birds were quietly chirping to each other. I tilted my body to the side of the river and could see the fish swimming below us. The colorful rocks were clearly visible from under the water. We paddled our way through the river, gazing at the wondrous landscape.

A girl in the family with us on our trip spoke for the first time. "I've never seen anything like this."

I wish we could stay here for a longer time," she said with an Irish accent. She and her family told us that their daughter became friends with the Irish girl many years ago and white water rafting has become a tradition for both families.

"Look at that outstanding view," our guide announced. Look backwards and you'll see the sun rising above the clouds." By the look of my face, our guide acknowledged, "Don't worry, give yourselves a break and I will paddle by myself for a bit."

Everyone answered by letting the tension from our bodies relax. My hands were so sore; I could start to feel blisters on my palms as I moved my hand around from the tight fist that my hands were in for so long.

Feeling hesitant, I tilted my body backward. At first, I was blinded by the sun. When I opened my eyes, I could see that the mountains stretched endlessly until I couldn't even see the trees and the colors on them anymore. The leaves blew off the trees with every gust of wind and laid gently on the surface of the water. It was very peaceful and quiet. Every whisper could be heard. But then, before the blink of an eye, a giant wave forced a tunnel over me. At a split second, I turned around and grabbed my oar. My family and I then began stabbing our oars into the water, synchronized. In this time, our guide had a grin on his

face. He stood up in front of the boat like a master, very pleased with himself. As water dripped down my face, I paddled over treacherous rocks. I felt like no one was around me as I kept paddling, my hands numb and aching. The waves jerked us back and forth. I felt at any moment I could plunge in the cold water, gasping for breath, and tumbling down the steep river.

I thought to myself, if I were lost and in the midst of a giant waves hitting my face and striving to reach the top of the water, who would know? This part of the river was when everyone was making sure they weren't going to fall off, and water was splashing in their faces. There isn't a chance that anyone would be able to see me.

We kept heading down the river. My eyes were stinging. All I could see was the river heading straight down. I almost lost my oar and tipped over a bit from a rock that hit our raft. I was able to catch myself and I was soon able to see the other rafts and hear familiar voices. I looked behind to see the roaring beast that we had been on just a second ago. It felt like hours had gone by but it was only a few minutes that we were working to get down the steepest part of the river. Everything seemed calm now and everything was over.

We all breathed a big sigh of relief. I looked around and, by the looks of everyone's faces, this was going to be a tradition with both families for years to come.

The Little Things

Words hurt

There are big things and little things

Sometimes big things don't matter

But little things do

The little pokes at what hurts you the most

Will they ever stop noticing the things you hate
about yourself?

Some people don't think

About what I said

Some people can't walk in other's shoes

Some people don't even think
about the circumstances

They think no harm was done

Even though someone hurts inside

Will they ever stop to think?

When they talk it's like knives

They push harder into your stomach

They won't stop until you succumb to their
thoughts

And you start to believe their lies

Will they ever stop stabbing?

Why can't the world stop?

Stop judging other people for their flaws

Going outside can be hard

When you feel that everyone's against you

You can't talk because you know every word
you say will be wrong

Every little thing you do will be wrong to them

Will they ever accept our differences?

You push hard on the door

Separating who you are from

what they want you to be

But society keeps locking you up
from who you are

Will they ever stop locking us in?

The cries can't be heard

Their ears are plugged with
words of perfection

Blocking out the sound of difference

Will they ever stop to hear our pleas?

The small bumps in the sidewalk will make you
trip and fall

But you will get up

Get up from the little things

pushing you down

With every little word you trip

It hurts more and more as you go on

Will we ever stop falling?

The things that make us different

Are the things that plague us

Ideas build up in our heads

Of imperfection

With every little thing

They build a fence of ideas

Will we ever stop doing nothing to escape?

Will we ever stop believing them?

Will we ever stop conforming to

society's needs?

Will we ever stop focusing on perfection?

Will we ever stop being like everyone else?

Will we ever stop containing who we are?

The simple answer is no

No

But no one asks

Can we prevent this ignorance?

Stop the tears

Stop the cries for help

Then the real answer is yes

Yes, they will stay.

Frannie Anselmo

Victim

I feel it when I'm told
I shouldn't hope anymore.
Like a surge of burning flames
Through blood
Taking a stab at my heart. (Confusing).
I feel every blow you take against me
As it knocks me to the ground,
And yet there's no desire for me to get up.
Yet I seem to fade away over time
When it gets worse.
I seem to slip away from Earth itself,
And I feel I have no power over my body.
A recurring thought bouncing in my head,
Asking why I stand on the face of a world
That'd be better off
Without me.
While I tell myself
I'm not worth it.
That all the words said to me
Are true.
They've been true
Since I came to the face of the earth.
Don't need this
Since I opened my eyes for the first time,
And saw the daylight.
That only now seemed to be the darkest
place in the world.
Every word like a dagger piercing my skin
Like a slash through my heart.
And yet
It seems that the thought
Is becoming a reality,
That all the world would lose in that night,
If it ever came,
Was me.

And I'm certain that the pitch black world
I'd go to,
Or a place with dancing flames
Rising as the dawn of a new age,
Comes to the place.
They realize,
I realize,
That where I belong
Is any place
That I most dare to go.
Hiding in the world of darkness
The mimic I've followed
For weeks,
Months,
Is where I should stand.
Am I better than that?
No!
The words only told
Were the ones that were true.
The people that tell me they care,
Love,
Cherish me,
Would hate to see me leave
One day.
Did lies flow past their lips
As they spoke in the presence
Of an unwanted,
Forgotten,
Hated "creep"?
I know the words they say to me
Are true.
I know I deserve
Every hit
Every tear, part of the river
Down my face.
Every feeling pounding in my heart,
Every thought that I'm not important.

I deserve all of it.
But then why
Does the sun
Still shine on me?
Why do those who love me
Have their eyes twinkle
With emotions dependent only on me?
Is the feeling...
Normal?
Is everything that blows against me,
And implodes inside me,
Not true?
Is where I stand
Where I'm meant to be?
Am I...
Simply a victim?

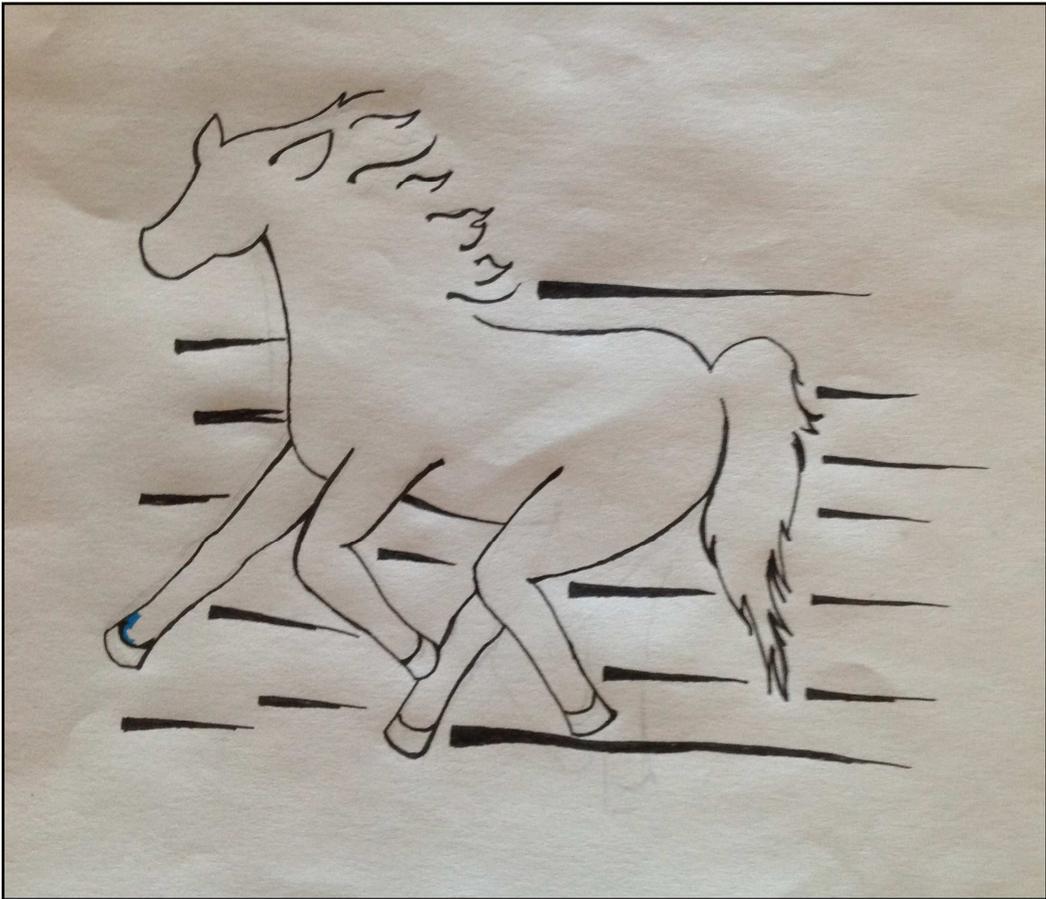
Lauren Kroell



Carmen Cowles



Bo Eaves



Yeji Han