

Inklings 2016

Submerged *Felipe Urrutia (Digital Photograph)*



Inklings

2016

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A cat in a hat that is fat with a rat may mean just that,
but a cat to a brat sparks a chat in some format
and leaves you a fool for believing that.

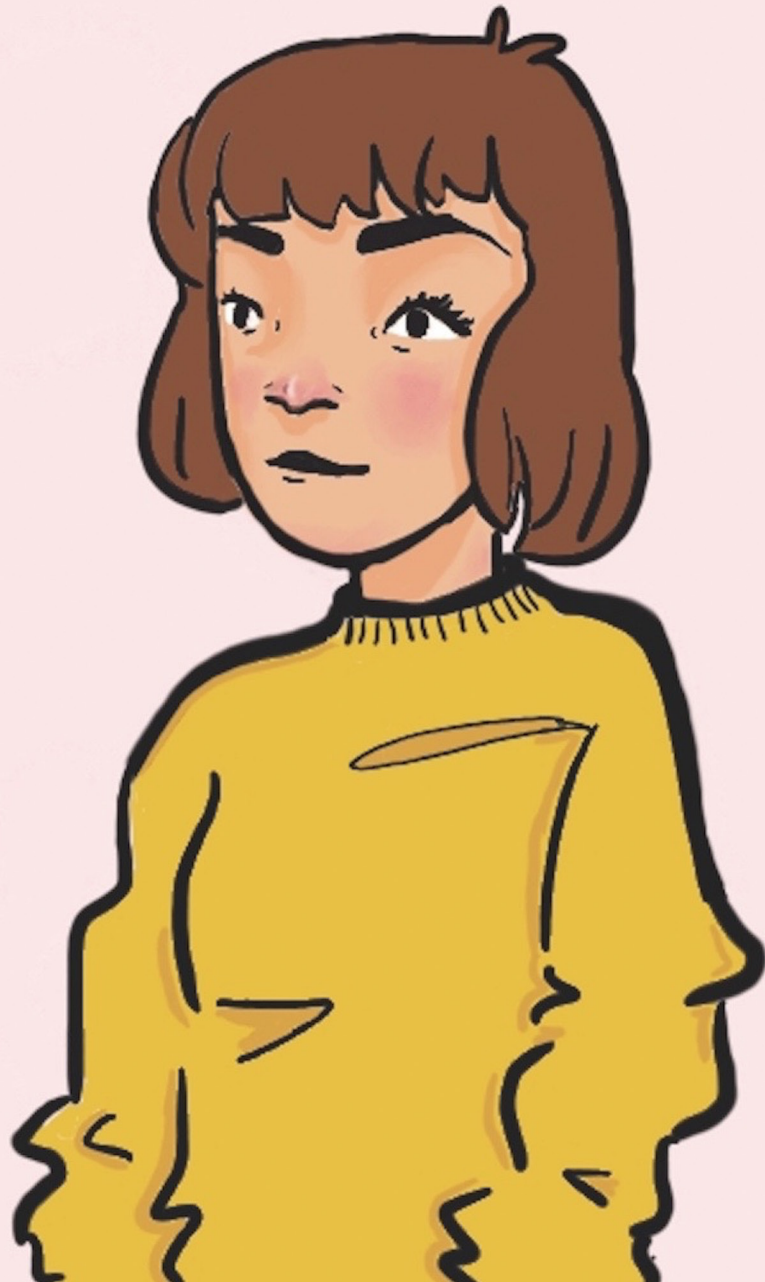
A poem is a thought and a cat might be a cat,
while the hat and the rat might disagree with that,
a cat is just a cat despite what you spat.

To be so subjective will not be effective
if your objective is to change my opinion.
What I believe, I will say to my very last day
so long as you'll play the role of the loser
content in his way that he'll tell me I'm wrong
'till our souls start to stray.

To stop with rhymes should be perfectly fine in a poem
despite how it starts,
a poem is a poem if it comes right from the heart.
While those last lines did rhyme, it's no concern of mine
as all I'm doing is expressing a thought.
In prose? Who knows. The point is to feel, sorrow or joy,
beating meanings to death does naught but annoy.

A cat in a hat that is fat with a rat to me is just that.
If to you it means feminism then i'm okay with that.





As a four year old, I knew all my colors, what to do when friends were crying, and how to spell the word “fun.” I also knew that when mommy promised she’d pick me up from school on Thursday and didn’t show up, something was wrong.

Ms. Bernal tapped her foot like a metronome, tap tap tap. She held a phone with a long, swirly, black cord attached to the wall. She said nothing and her face was pale. I caught a glimpse of teachers scrambling through the hallways outside, all wearing the same sober expression. We kids sat patiently in a circle in our Sr. Kindergarten classroom. Daniel constructed elaborate paths with Sean on the train sets, and Lauren and Caterina were playing princesses. Most of us stared at Ms. Bernal and the tear that escaped and rolled down her cheek. Because she cried, we kids cried. I am still an empathetic crier, and I often think of how prominent this trait is in toddlers. I think back to this circle of kids crying for reasons they could not understand. Ms. Bernal cried. We cried.

At four, with a rudimentary understanding of my mother’s profession, I believed that she was a movie star, the next Angelina Jolie. My mother flew to New York once a week for 3 days to tape her nationally syndicated TV show, *The People’s Court*. Okay, so she was closer to Judge Judy than Angelina, but at the time, I either didn’t know or didn’t care—it was her first year on the job, it was glamorous, and it was magical. Mommy was a movie star. At four, I stood beside a very somber Ms. Bernal and for a fleeting moment thought that I may have lost my movie star.

My movie-star momma did not pick me up on September 11, 2001. That morning held for us plenty of phone calls, serious faces, and crying children, but in the end I recall Fia’s mom drove me home. She asked me questions throughout the ride, making polite conversation. At home, I sat in the Florida room playing with my sister Cristi while Daddy sequestered the TV.

Now I realize what those serious faces meant and why Mommy was running late that day. I realize why Daddy kissed Mommy so hard and held her for so long when she finally came home the next week. When she came back from taping when we were kids, my sisters and I would run to the door squealing with glee at the sound of her car pulling in through the gate. Nowadays, my mom jokes that we don’t even emerge from our rooms. When she says this my chest swells.

Later that same year of kindergarten, we were told to write on a slip of colored paper what we wanted to be when we grew up and to post it on the board. There were the usual suspects—astronaut, doctor, fireman, actress, teacher, and professional volleyball player. I remember when all the parents came to retrieve their kids, some hugged me. One mother's eyes fogged up. Mommy walked in and embraced me as usual, then asked what I did that day. I explained and pointed at the slip of blue paper that read, "When I grow up, I want to be a stay-at-home mom."

Mommy cried. When I asked her why she was sad, she would not say. I cried.



Woman Chloe Chua (Tempera On Illustration Board)

It started when I was young. I didn't think much of it back then. My tree was a playground, a place to roam freely where no one would judge or interrupt me. But instead of swings and see-saws, there were leaves and branches. When I was little, it was exciting to climb. I would place my right foot strategically on a low branch, grab a higher one with my left hand, and use all my strength to pull myself up. Then I would climb higher and higher; that part came naturally. But now, rather than climbing that tree, I step up with little effort. The pathway is muscle memory, etched in my brain where it can never be forgotten.

This tree was strong enough to withstand countless hurricanes and storms, and this perseverance made me strong. I was a warrior in that tree. In fact, I was anything I wanted to be. I could see down, but the leaves covered me just enough that any person below wouldn't be able to spot me. I was like a bird in its nest, concealed within the branches. But I didn't go there to hide. I went there to think.

Sometimes, that tree was a weapon. The older I got, the longer I stayed there. I would use my ability to stay in that tree as a way to anger my parents. Occasionally, I went up there when I had a headache and needed some quiet. Because in that tree, there was silence. But, this wasn't just any silence - it was a special silence, for it wasn't completely silent. There were sounds, and each one told a different story. Leaves rustling, birds chirping, and the occasional drizzle of rain; a symphony of serenity.

There was a day where the stress in my life was eating me alive. It was as if with each stroke in the sea of life I took, a wave of disappointment took me backwards. So I ran away. I ran for blocks. I didn't know where, I just knew why. It felt like the right thing to do at the time. But, as time dragged on, the running drowned me of my energy. The anger devoured me, and since I could no longer run, I walked. I walked a few blocks. And then... I stopped. The sidewalk curved directly towards my house. It was a straight pathway back; a sign. I thought about my options. Run away with no purpose, no destination; a mere motivation. Or walk home, shamefully, to a family that would inevitably forgive me and move on. I closed my eyes and weighed the options. I kept them shut for a few more moments, until suddenly, my feet were drawn by what felt like a magnet. I turned around the bend of the sidewalk and began to walk. But my steps weren't powered by my brain. They were powered by a magnetic force. A force that gradually brought me back to my house. After a few long blocks, it came into sight.

Upon returning to my house, I had a revelation. The magnet wasn't so much my house, but rather, my tree. So I climbed up. The rough texture of the tree bark scratching my leg hardly bothered me. I was too focused on what seemed most important at the time, reaching my spot. Grasping deliberately for the branch above my head, I pulled myself up to my spot and sat down for what felt like an hour, but was only a few simple minutes. I inhaled the smell of nature, and then exhaled it as if, at that moment, the release of my breath would free all of the stress and negative thoughts from my mind through my breath alone. There was complete silence; unbroken and uninterrupted. Suddenly, I heard a creak, followed by the opening of a door. My heart skipped a beat.

He walked outside onto the porch, curious but determined. I wondered why. Why did my dad look so curious? And the expression on his face... What did it mean? He walked down the stairs, turning his head as if he was looking for something, and then I realized - I was that something. He paced back and forth, until he was within about twenty feet of me. Without any detection of his daughter sitting right above him in a tree, he did one last check around the yard, and he started heading back inside. But, as he was opening the door, he shook his head, and turned around, continuing the search. A wave of feelings washed over me, including a surge of relief, which confused me at the time. I moved around to find a more comfortable spot, inadvertently causing the leaves to sing their song, catching my dad's attention. He pivoted towards the tree and walked until he was directly below me.

"Hey," he said as if he knew I was there all along.

"Hey."

I then felt it was time to leave the tree and return to reality. I climbed down the tree and walked with my dad back into the house without speaking, as if nothing had happened.

I learned a thing or two about myself being in that tree. I learned, for one, that isolation comes easily to me. There comes a connection to the body when you are alone, and that connection extends out to the mind. In isolation I'm able to visualize, and even control my thoughts. I find comfort in this, because, on a daily basis, I feel the exact opposite. So I play around with this power that I obtain from my tree, and think of happy times and

become nostalgic. I think of sad times, only to be filled with melancholy. So instead of thinking of the past, I think of the present. I stare in front of me at my surroundings. I take time to admire the beauty of each individual branch and leaf.

Along with the control that I have in that tree, I also feel a sense of detachment from each person, each task, each duty. I ignore them for a while and instead, pay more attention to the little details that no one seems to notice. I notice how the sun peers through the leaves and branches as if it's trying to grasp the earth, how the veins of the leaves look like a spider web, or how the humble patterns of the bark look like a work of art. The little things that mean so much but are thought of so little. These things are why I am drawn to this tree. But I find myself visiting my personal utopia less and less as the days go by. Maybe I am growing up - maybe I don't need that tree anymore.



Perspective Vanessa Cilloniz (Digital Photograph)

I live in a town where summer bodies are required year round
 Big is bad and bony is beautiful
 Pressure... Pressure...pressure
 Photo-shopped Victoria Secret Models
 Tempting tigress on the prowl
 It's all pressing down on us
 Vital two hundred dollar haircuts
 Wiping my bank account clean
 Waxing my eyebrows, lasering my legs
 The pain imposed upon me
 And all for what?
 My body does not define me
 Nobody will brand me

Butt, Boobs and flat Belly
 You cannot carve me
 You cannot inject me
 You cannot implant me
 Perfection is not skin deep
 I'd rather be an olive in a sea of toothpicks
 My body does not define me
 Nobody will brand me

Sucking in my stomach
 Trying to get the perfect picture
 Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter shame me
 My shape is not a shame
 Crop tops and booty shorts
 Trying to squeeze into a double o
 Fueling society's ego
 Kendall Jenner propped up on stilt-like heels
 Smiling through the pain
 Silently awaiting the eternal effects
 My body does not define me
 Nobody will brand me

Demi Lovato humiliated by haters
 the pressure caused her to cut
 why should she be ashamed of her body?
 why are people taking offense to Adele's voluptuous curves?

when her voice is the most valuable
 why should Cosmo and Vogue degrade me?
 Rosie Huntington and Candice Swanepoel are "goals" we say.
 why should I strive to imitate their existence?
 when there is so much more to me.
 My body does not define me
 Nobody will brand me

Let us love our bodies
 double As or double Ds who cares?
 thick is just as perfect as thin
 listen to my voice
 before you look at my body
 "screw beautiful I'm brilliant"
 My body does not define me
 Nobody will brand me



Girl
 Lea Broudo (Colored Pencil on Paper)

They will tell you
How to solve for "x".
They will tell you
That "Cu" means copper.

They will not tell you
Where to carry your pieces
When your seams seem to come undone.
They will not tell you
How to find peace
When those awful thoughts
Continue to ricochet off the walls
Of your skull.

They will tell you
To take shelter from the rain.

They will not tell you
How often it comes.
They will not tell you
That you may as well
Learn to dance in it.

They will tell you
To smile
In the face of sadness,
To push through the pain.

They will not tell you
How good it feels to cry.

They will tell you
To be strong.
Convince you to make
A fortress of yourself.
And their masks will
Make you believe you are alone.

They do not tell you
That sometimes
Being strong
Means tearing your fortress down
And admitting you are weak.

Expression Harrison Denman (Digital Photograph)



Do you remember
When you first learned to hate yourself?

Do you remember
The first time someone told you
A piece of you wasn't enough,
So you broke it off?
Do you remember
How the jagged edges
Tore at your skin?
Do you remember
Where you put that piece down?

Do you remember
Before that, when
You knew for sure you had
A secret superpower, and you would discover
It one day in a room full of people
Who had never seen anything so spectacular
As your superpower, never seen anything
So spectacular
As you.

And I know you've probably realized
That you don't have a superpower,
That no such instance as this will ever occur,
But darling, I have never seen anyone
So beautiful as you,
So resilient as you,
So spectacular
As you.

Do you remember the time when creativity and individualism mattered? Do you remember when you weren't defined by a test score or a number? We do, and we want to forget it. It's time to let go of the sentimental past, and move forward into the future. We are aware of the efforts of both students and parents in eradicating the aforementioned qualities once prized by men and women. With more and more students focusing on test scores, as that is seemingly becoming the be all end all in their minds for college admissions, our goal of a better future is slowly but surely coming. However, we here at 2400:24/7 seek to expedite this process. Our goal is to rapidly conform children to our education model in an effort to make their sole focus the improvement of their memorization and test taking skills, while detaching them from their needless creativity. There is a small prerequisite to employing our services, however. The price to have a child's creativity crushed comes with a small fee. This fee consists of the rights and ownership to the child and a monthly payment of ten thousand dollars until their graduation from our program approximately fifteen years later.

Our methods to ensure our ideals are mentioned in the name of our company. In order to achieve the number that defines the child for the rest of his or her life, we must begin training them non-stop, twenty four hours a day. We would have parents enroll their children in our courses as early as possible, preferably before they reach 3 years old, as this time is critical in conforming them to our system. Firstly, we will begin overhauling their pre-existing educational and creative proclivities. This step would consist of Pavlovian conditioning. What we mean is that we will expose the children to harmful practices such as finger-painting or playing outside, and when the children indulge in these backward activities, we will apply an electrical shock to their bodies in order to condition them to despise engaging in either method of play. We will also expose the children to fun and interesting activities such as memorizing vocabulary or mathematical formulas. Once the children partake in these practices, we will provide treats, such as more memorization or gray clothes, in order to encourage their participation in these activities. This style of treatment will continue through elementary school and middle school, with the frequency of the conditioning increasing as the children are exposed to more and more of the world and all the bad things it has to offer.

Middle school is a critical time for the conformity of the individual to our educational and visionary goals. People have said that middle school is a place where children "find out who they are or who they can become",

but we view it as a time of dangerous influences. Some malignant influences include "friends" or "other people." We view these distractions as detrimental to our student's growth, so we cut off all interaction with others when deemed necessary. There is a small consequence for this action, however. Our program has caused many of our students to become bullied for being "completely engaged with flashcards" or having "no social lives to speak of." We implore parents to overlook these minor hiccups, as we can assure that our students will be so conditioned to study that they will take no notice of these slights. In addition, the same kids that made fun of them or mocked them would be at a very slight disadvantage when college application time rolls around, as they most likely will have a lower score than our students. This is a small revenge that our helicopter parents can indulge in, as seeing kids consumed by competition is a sight that can bring tears of happiness to even the most cold hearted individual. Once these youths reach high school age, our educational training system becomes a necessity. In high schools today, kids are taught that they are "important" or "can balance life with school work." These are all lies made up by senile men and women who, for some reason, believe that individuality leads to good things. Once these kids enter high school, we have to work swiftly in order to stamp out any remnants of their desire to engage in activities that would distract them from achieving the only goal that matters: getting a perfect score and earning a slight increase in their chances of going to the college they want. One might ask, "why not have the students engage in extracurricular activities in addition to their studies? Would this not help promote their image?" All we can do in response to these questions is laugh. Who would pick a well-rounded, intelligent, and kind individual as opposed to an antisocial person who defines themselves by a number? Exactly. Nobody in their right mind would pick the former.

In order to achieve our goals in the dangerous atmosphere of high school, twelve hour weekend classes would become mandatory. We would also have the students under constant surveillance. This would not be for safety purposes, but rather to ensure the completion of their required tasks. Now we are not monsters, we have taken precautionary methods in an effort to ensure their continued productivity in our demanding courses. We have secured the rights to dispense the required doses of performance enhancing drugs, such as Adderall, in order to make the students run as efficiently as possible. The consequences of these brain enhancing drugs pale in comparison to the fleeting joy at achieving THE PERFECT TEST SCORE. Once the students, now in their senior years of high school, have taken

both the SAT and ACT no less than 12 times, we will release them from our program and allow them to go forth into the outside world. Now, because we have reached the end of our presentation, we must inform potential parents about the small side effects of our schooling. For starters, students that have been through our perfect program have been known to have immense difficulty interacting with others, but this sacrifice must be made in order to ensure their futures. In addition, we have also received reports that our former students, now at their respective colleges, have been “at a loss at how to proceed with their lives in the outside world” or “completely unable to perform the work required because memorization can’t help them”. Again we must reiterate these consequences, which increase the likelihood of dying alone, are worth it in order to ensure the fleeting satisfaction that accompanies glancing at a nice, juicy twenty-four with two zeros after it.



School Students Bangkok Felipe Urrutia (Digital Photograph)

They stink! After about a week I can make a new pair of Top Siders smell like I walked through a swamp. If I don’t have time or forget to buy a pair of odor eaters, the greatest invention ever, I can’t bring myself to take my shoes off around people. I’d kill them! Not only is it embarrassing, but when everyone takes their shoes off I often remove myself from the activity. Going swimming or to the beach is always a relief, I just dunk my feet in the chlorinated or salty water and it’s not even noticeable. A real problem arises, however, when everyone’s lounging around to watch a movie, “making themselves at home,” and I still have my shoes on. People don’t always notice the weirdo with their shoes still on, but sometimes it’s hard to miss. “Seriously, Zach, take your shoes off! Get comfy!” “Errrr I think I’m good...” If I’m with good friends, I have no problem declaring that my nuclear stench might harm them. But when it’s someone I’m less familiar with, how am I supposed to put that?! There’s no better way to kill a mood.

I got this affliction from my dad, my parents joke. My mom will walk into the room where we watch tv and make a face, and we instinctively point at each other. As funny as it is, if I find out we’re having someone over, I have to run to my room and wash my feet, which must be a pretty sad sight. I have two methods of defunking my dogs: the first, for when I want a deep clean, is to sit on my toilet sideways with my feet in the bathtub and scrub scrub scrub! The second, for a quick job, is to do this sort of yoga pose (that I’m pretty sure I invented) and stick one foot at a time in the sink and use the powerful, fruity hand soap my mom buys. I always close the door because I know I look ridiculous, but I also feel terrible. It’s gross!

There’s nothing wrong with my feet (besides the obvious). They’re clean, my toe nails are pretty neat, and there’s nothing gross between my little piggies. The source of this stank is a mystery! I guess it really could be programmed in my genes. I would think natural selection would have taken care of that by now, but it hasn’t! Could smelly feet be a dominant trait that’s helped the Burns men reproduce? I won’t be around for it, but I envision a world full of smelly feet, where no boy has to leave his shoes on to watch tv, and the most putrid are celebrated. Well, that’s probably a stretch, but maybe they’ll develop a vaccine for it or something.

Although they say all fear is gone
when standing by its side,
no way exists for one to know
what lies beneath the tide.

From placid waves and salty wind
with colors bright and blue,
to shrieking sharks that radiate
an eerie, ominous hue.

The shark itself amuses me;
his goal is not to harm,
yet still I am afraid of him,
and fail to see his charm.

Abandoning my simple fear,
I plunge my head and stare.
A chill runs down my rigid spine
as I become aware.

I drag myself to meet his face
and stare him in the eyes,
and only then I comprehend
That he is my disguise.

Answer me, I called,
Shouting at his face.
I wanted him to listen,
But he just stared out into space.

Hear me, I said,
Screaming at him now.
I wondered if he could,
Or maybe just couldn't somehow.

I just need you to trust me,
Believe in what I say.
If you do not reply to me,
I just don't see a way.

Your blank look now mocks me,
It sneers in sheer confusion.
My words are true and pure,
Your world a mere illusion.

The Soldiers are on their way now,
You all must run and hide!
Mothers, fathers, children too,
Run now, side by side.

Your fates are all dim, you see,
A gray cloud of puff and smoke.
I wish you'd just confide in me,
For my concern is not a joke.

Take pride in yourselves and those golden stars,
They now follow your every choice.
Be one group, together unite,
One strong and single voice.

With this in mind, you must be brave,
Go fight for those you love.
Have mercy dear God, Please be kind,
Guide us from up above.

Through the wire, over the gate,
There lies a magic land.
Where boys and girls, Jew or not,
All stand hand in hand.

We will never be forgotten,
And neither will this day.
This will forever be remembered,
"Brave hearts" they'll always say.



Blurry Night Cecilia Lopez-Jordan (Film Photograph)

All of the stars in the night sky overcome me in a golden wave of light like I am drowning in an elysian ocean, yet willing I am as I sink beneath the intimately star-caressed froth.

All of the stars in the night sky are lovers' eyes, sparkling with uniqueness and diversity.

Under the heavenly sheet I walk through the forest.

I approach a river alone with a wish to seek my reflection as society outside the wood progresses,

On my journey I can hear nothing, yet can feel everything as though my emotions are interconnected with the hum of the natural world.

In the forest I am with the millions of stars above, together and united as one in the universe.

The air is of a moist and dampened smell, like a breeze coming off the ocean standing on a dock.

The serenity is such that my own thoughts are the loudest sounds in the calm wood.

The crackling and frail leaves are like the fabric of modern society crushed under foot, and make wet my new leather soles.

Here and alone, I reach the riverbed and peer into my flowing reflection on the river's distorted yet truthful surface;

Here and alone in the dark wood, the decadence of my fellow man, rises and covers like an eclipse, the moon of my faith in nature and man's connection to it, as the sublime;

For here I can see they have bled her of offspring in their attempt to satisfy their pangs of industrialization.

With a gaze into my reflection, the river's interpretation of my being, unmasked and highlighted in moonlight, I feel a new sense of solitude as I was one with all things.

With a gaze into my reflection, I could feel the awe of aloneness and seclusion, yet have the sense of being truly organic.

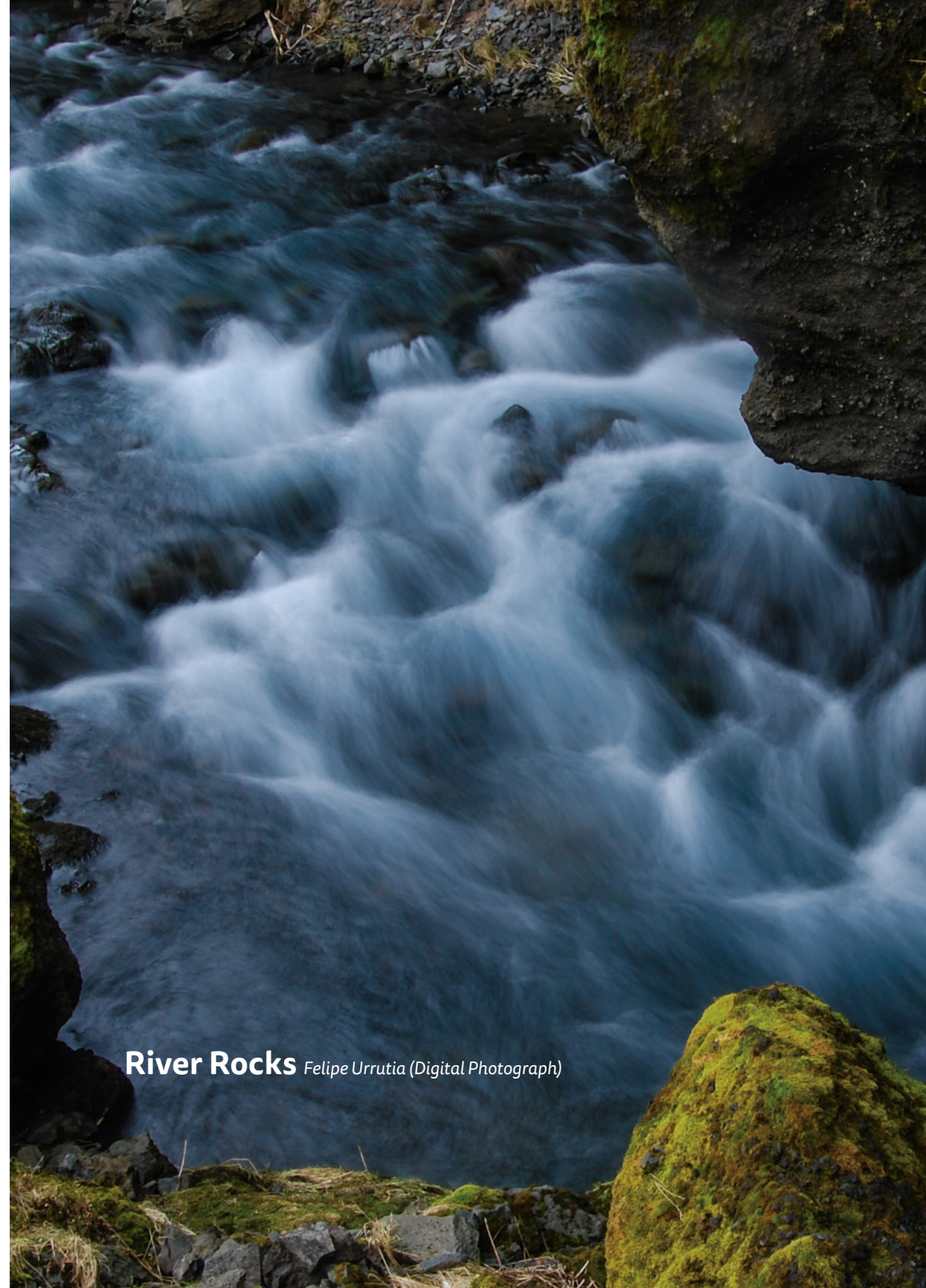
The forest is the only seclusion from the perdition that surrounds, and a refuge it serves to be;

And so it seems that the only individual to notice such splendor is me.



Darkness Francisco Cabrera (Digital Photograph)

The breeze gently plays with my hair
Salty water pools around rocks
Silence
A bird searches quietly for a meal
The clouds hide
And the sun stares down at me
Silence
On a distant shore machines boom
Yet silence sweeps over this island
I sit and observe on a splintery bench
Sea grapes fall like rain from a tree
Silence
I tuck hair behind my ear
It is tugged back by the wind
Waves crash harder on the rocks
A bird gets restless
Yet the silence remains
The sky blackens
A cool breeze sends a chill down my spine
Yet I feel silence
This island rests in the middle of it all
Quietly
Accepting the few visitors that come to sit
To enjoy
To feel the silence they often ignore
The silence that surrounds them



River Rocks Felipe Urrutia (Digital Photograph)



I stood upon the largest rock
And gazed out at the sea
And wished that I could fly away
To anywhere I pleased

I'd fly up high over the sky
Until I reach the moon
And when I finally arrive here
I won't be stopping soon

Looking back upon the Earth
It seems so far away
To fly all this distance in one
extraordinary day

And on the next day I will fly
Right past the planet mars
And on this journey I will count
The billions of stars

And then to fly past Jupiter
What a stunning place
I can't fathom that such beauty
Exists in outer space

Next comes Saturn and Uranus
Past them I will fly
My home now seems so far away
I have to say goodbye

As I pass the blue Neptune
I create a new mission
Because now after all this time
I've left our solar system

Forever flying through darkness
This voyage is quite long
To find myself so far away
From the place where I belong

I stood upon the largest rock
And gazed out at the sparkling sea
And after a while I realized
That there's no place I'd rather be

I never thought a 94-year-old woman named Sophie could make me realize just how important it is to give. A few years ago my family was giving baskets of food to the elderly for Rosh Hashana, the Jewish new year. At first, I was opposed to participating, yet my parents forced me to join them. We spent the day going house to house giving the baskets to the elderly. I don't remember the first few people we met, for the chit chat lasted a mere five minutes. However, I will never forget one lady named Sophie. She was smiling from the moment we walked through the door when she greeted us with a big welcome. She wore colorful makeup, a grandmotherly looking dress, and a white sweater. I remember everything that happened in the hour we spent with her. Sophie was extremely kind, like most of the people we met that day. Unlike the rest, though, she was more lively, almost having the personality of a young girl. It was as if she forgot how old she was, which was probably why we were all so shocked to hear she was 94.

After giving her the basket, rather than leaving, Sophie offered for us to sit down and eat the food basket with her. It had been a while since anyone had visited her. After hearing this I wasn't thrilled; I was still planning how to get out of there. We sat down in her kitchen on a wooden table that had been freshly wiped; in fact, the whole apartment looked spotless. I wondered if it was always like this or if she had done it just for us, since she knew someone was visiting. After we all sat down, she insisted on getting us water and sharing the food we had brought her. I stopped thinking about when we were going to leave and, instead, got lost in her story. As she spoke, I realized the importance of the small gesture we had made that day. She spoke about her childhood during the Holocaust, and I could feel the emotion pouring out of her. Sophie cried, laughed, and got angry as she remembered the horrors of what she and her family had experienced. Her emotions throughout the story were so high that she would sometimes take a long pause to recollect herself. Other than her voice, the entire apartment was silent as she spoke for 20 minutes uninterrupted. I remember feeling how fortunate I was because I had never suffered what she and so many other Jews did.

So many things raced through my brain. I realized how rude and selfish I was being by wanting to just give the basket and leave, by not caring about the act of charity as much as I did about the next soccer game on TV. I looked to my mom after she told the story and she had tears in her eyes, along with my sister. I wasn't crying; however, I was thinking. I was thinking about that story for the rest of the day in fact. Sophie made me think about how paradoxical it was that she has such a lively and happy

personality despite having had a truly miserable childhood. When she finished her story, Sophie broke the silence that hung in the room and told us she hadn't talked about those days in a long time because she didn't have many visitors. My mom said something in response. I don't remember much about what anybody said after the story; I was just too busy thinking. It wasn't until my mom gave me a tap on the shoulder and signaled that it was time to leave that I realized there were other people in the room. That meeting with Sophie made me realize the power of a simple gift like a food basket. Sophie rarely gets visitors and so for us to visit and hear her whole story must have felt so good. The gift basket wasn't the only gift that day. Sophie gave me a gift I will keep with me for the rest of my life -- she taught me that doing a kind gesture will give you much more in return.



Bright and Early Cecilia Lopez-Jordan (Film Photograph)

On a peaceful island, I feel the protected breeze against my skin like
feathers.

On a peaceful island, I hear the ocean lapping against the calm side of the
beach,
but on the other side,
I see the indomitable will of the ocean smashing the feeble beach sand.

On a peaceful Island, I smell clean air, and its faint smell of ocean life.

On a peaceful Island, I bend to taste ocean water, a fountain of youth.

On a peaceful Island, The clouds drift above, unaffected by the troubles of
life below.

On a peaceful Island, I see the destruction of humanity's construction in
the distance.

On a peaceful Island, the sand around me dances in the life-giving breeze.

I feel alone, I feel happy.
I am nobody.

Ginkgo Leaves *Chloe Chua (Watercolor on Coldpress)*



The sea breeze whistles, whispers in the trees, kisses my forehead.
It is the breath, life, rejuvenating my senses as I taste the pure, saline air.
It is in this moment I wonder.... we set the air conditioning high in our homes,
oblivious to the natural breath of life that blows high on the island.
Is it worth anything if technology keeps advancing? Even for a "better lifestyle?"
Is it true technology is, in fact, suicide? Suicide that robs us from the breath of life?

A hermit crab is perched before me, on a damp log, soaked by rain.
Sitting, waiting, minding its business.
Sitting, with only its simple, white shell for company.
Around the log, shells of all colors and of great sizes lay, sitting, waiting for a new owner.
These homes beckon the crab, inviting a lavish and more plastic beginning.
And yet the crab sits, not capitulating to the distractions that would alter its simple way of life.
For the crab sits simply and with perfect tranquility.

As I inhale the delicate sea air, a pungent odor attacks my nostrils.
This is the smell of cans, boxes, and green plastic bottles, washed up on the shore.
This is the byproduct of human ignorance and technological advancement.
This is European colonization, forcing native peoples to succumb to "civilized ways,"
To forsake the simple, familiar way of life..
This attack on the sublimeness and purity of nature does not have to happen.
We need to avoid materialism and harmful side effects in nature.
We need to pay less attention to technological advances and pay more attention to spiritual and natural advancement.
We need to live simply, just as this island in the Florida keys beckons, that we may become closer to spiritual tranquility.



Writing is my haven,
A safe place for my soul,
Writing is my everything,
A bridge without a toll.

Writing is my light at night,
The food to feed my ghost,
Writing is my guide in life,
It's what I love the most.

Whenever I feel out of place,
Slightly lost or just confused,
My thoughts flow out so easily,
As I write, I feel amused.

When no one's there to hear me
When voices fill every ear,
This new world opens up to me,
My journal, my one sole peer.



Icelandic Horses Felipe Urrutia (Digital Photograph)

Views Cecilia Lopez-Jordan (Film Photograph)



So much
depends upon
an inky tattoo
framing the underside
of a wrist,
branding tanned skin
with a spiraling blue S,
as if to give strength
to that weak link
between the hands that create
and the arms that support,
as if the pain
of needles etching on skin
eliminate the fear
that one day
those veins and tendons and filaments
that run under that soft layer of bronze
will snap.
Because now
those raven colored trails
that hold the joint together
have infused soft skin
with invincibility,
that even kryptonite would fail
against it.



No one liked to make a big fuss in my town. Everyday the same group of teens bicycled their way to the 7-11 for two-dollar Slurpees as the same ancient retirees, sprawled on rickety porch chairs, told stories of their youth to the hurrying passersby. A smell of oysters and bluefish, mixed with the fresh snowflakes, seeped onto Main Street as the fishermen headed out to sea. Lily, my neighbor with a knack for knitting, hopped out of her dinky bungalow in an enormous trench coat to retrieve the Asbury Park Press. As she grabbed the paper, Dr. Farmer watched out his window, and, as quick as a whip, she shot right back inside. Dr. Farmer took care of everyone in my town, always volunteering at the clinic or jumping on a roof to help patch a hole. Turning away from the frosted glass, I perched on a stool in the dining room, watching as my brother threw Christmas lights onto the tree, muttering protests. My sister was grumbling about the latest restriction on her social life: no staying out the day before Christmas Eve. She glared as I grinned at her complaints. Nothing changes.

“Answer the front door, it’s your cousins,” Mom shouted from inside the bespattered kitchen, vigorously stirring a vat of cranberry sauce. Memories of afternoon bike trails and hot tar boardwalks swelled inside of me as I swung open the door. As my cousins funneled inside, I could hear the faint final hurrah of day trippers crowding into the train. My mother hurried us all into the dining room and laid out the spectacular ornaments. I snatched up my favorite, the pink elephant, as everyone chuckled and sang charming carols. My brother sat playing Tiddly Winks with my youngest cousin as Mom and I enveloped the tree with tinsel, giggling while Grandpa complained about the mess. By the end of the night, we had sung all of the Christmas carols twice over and drained the hot chocolate, finally retiring to the living room to watch the late night flurries. My baby cousin asleep in her lap, Mom turned to me and presented her famous Mona Lisa smile. She whispered, “Isn’t this wonderful?”

Just a year later, it all changed. Walking down the ocean-side street to my house, the stench filled my nose, my mouth, everything. It felt as though the whole sea was in my throat, rotten fish burning my eyes and the gritty taste of sand on my tongue. It had been two weeks since the storm hit, drowning the entire East Coast in the Atlantic Ocean.

So many houses were gone. Bungalows that once housed day trippers now looked like undercooked soufflés. The yellow house where I wanted to live as a little girl was split straight down the middle like a shipwreck, its

foundation washed away with the tide. My best friend had a house that lost its first floor. When there was nothing else to do, we used to catch crabs at the lake and rush to her house and cook them for lunch. She used to complain about walking the two blocks to the beach from where I lived, and I used to complain about going to the beach so often. Now the beach was everywhere, and nowhere. I picked up a shard of her blue window and went away.

The worst was the silence. No carols in the houses for the coming holidays, no buzz of excitement for the New Year. No one laughed and no one smiled – you don't when you're at a funeral. The only sound I could hear was the eerie creak of the lifeless houses, as if they were shivering as the gusts of wind pounded their cracked walls.

I scrambled my way to my own pile of a house, gawking at the surreal splinters of plywood and strewn insulation that looked too much like spilled guts. A red X was spray-painted onto our pink door, displaying to the world the destruction that waited inside. We found a kid's jungle gym in our backyard, wedged between our flooded garage and cracked fence. We didn't know whose it was, but we also didn't have the heart to throw it away, imagining the child sitting in his yard of sludge with no swing set. I looked around for Dr. Farmer, expecting him to be deep in a pile of macadam searching for Lily's newspaper. But, Dr. Farmer's house had swum away. Mom came out from our sunken garage and shooed me away, afraid I would fall into one of the sand pits sprinkled around the lawn. So, I shuffled in the direction of where it all began.

Hiking down to the ocean's edge, I gazed into the blue. The pure white foam tickled my feet as the sea swayed back and forth. Sand dollars and pieces of sea glass sprinkled the coast, and I could hear the calm lapping of water against the jetty. At least some things don't change. My hand wandering, I found the shard of blue window in my coat pocket, drew it out, and flipped it over in my hand, its rough edges glinting in the setting sun. Blue sea glass is quite a treasure in my town. It's made from rubbish discarded into the sea, but it's a sort of art all the same. The ocean sculpts the broken into beauty, trash into treasure. I hurled the shard into the sea, promising to find it next year. Next year it will be perfect.

With a plop, the glass dove into the water and disappeared into the unpredictable ocean beyond.

If there is a god, he was unjust
in the creation of the cat and koi.
Though scientists say
they came from the same nerve,
and split into
two nodes,
one shielded by luck
which stuck
like the flakes he is now thrown daily by new gods
and polished into pristine scales,
tipped only by the weight of their beauty
while the other limped away,
growing dark as to hide from those
who would otherwise shoot him and his brothers in barrels,
weak, limping, left behind.

The catfish grew into mud by necessity,
aged by the stress of predation
as his whiskers now brush the grime
all he can do is gaze up at the blinding flurry
flying high above.
And should the koi look down
at the struggling mass,
desperate for recognition
if not life itself,
all that he sees,
all that he can possibly see
is the lesser,
the one who simply
did not try hard enough.

And so it goes
his bones, ossified over years of wear,
now abandon glamour for purpose.
He coats his skin
with the most wonderful shimmer,
for it allows him to escape,
to slither away
while the koi wander aimlessly,
barely glancing at
their brother of the membrane.
they squint,
too close to the sun
to even notice it is there

the catfish climbs
and struggles, shouting with shallow breaths,
HERE I AM! LOOK AT ME!
But the koi stay idle,
Swimming in their circles,
their destiny since birth,
Ignoring the haphazard, darting strokes
of the unfamiliar enamel.
But there is the catfish down under,
Still lurking among the muck.
if he looks up now,
he can see a dark streak
swimming his way
among a sea of stars.

Basking Koi Luca Gonzalez-Abreu (Digital Photograph)



Nature is our greatest teacher. From the Gobi desert to the Amazon Rainforest, the world is constantly absorbing the information and wisdom around it. I always saw nature as a great teacher, but I didn't understand the major role we play in nature and the all-encompassing role nature plays with us. Just a week ago, and for just a week in the Everglades, nature showed me the oneness of everything. It showed me the role humans play in the circle of life. We are definitely a part of that same circle, not above it.

Nature did not show me Nirvana, or transform me into the next incarnation of the Buddha: I am no Dalai Lama, but being subject to the grand power of the Everglades led me to see that I, and all people, are pawns in the game of nature. To think we are above nature is deny our role as humans. The final day of paddling changed my perspective of the entire trip. The weather looked abysmal. Despite our bubbly yellow rain jackets, my group was soaked to the bone. I was feeling poorly and being waterlogged led to a full blown fever. I could barely keep awake, let alone paddle. However, one of the great lessons I gleaned from nature was to find the will to dig deep. I saw it in my crew. I saw it in every animal fighting for survival. I saw it in the entire ecosystem, continuing to live whilst deforestation ravages the world's wildlife. In a particularly strong storm swell, I found myself paddling on a large, open bay, surrounded by lush mangroves. Ten feet to my right - a quick glimpse followed by more flashes - I saw something unknown pop out of the water. I kept my head planted to the right, feeling wet, sick, cold. Then I witnessed a pod of dolphins leaping, chasing, and playing around our canoes. I felt a sense of beauty and wonder for nature as well as a respect for its impact on my sense of well being.

Waking up the next morning at basecamp, I looked at myself in the mirror. I had not changed. I still had the same values, the same traits and traditions. I did, however, recognize myself as a part of the bigger picture. I saw, and continue to see, myself, and all people, as a branch in the tree of life. I saw my insignificance as the light of a candle, bright and full of energy, but with an easy breath I could be snuffed out. This feeling paired with the new notion of oneness that I felt, the way I could see myself as a small, but existing part of the circle of life and a part of the world.

Nature was no conventional teacher, for my case it turned out to be quite the opposite. For the rest of my life I can continue to understand and reflect on how to live my life, however unimportant, in a meaningful and ethical way. I was shown a sliver of my part in the world, but nature showed me more of my part for the entire world, the complete and connected life of nature. For myself, I was not looking for Nirvana, and I didn't quite make it to that perfect completion and oneness anyway. But I did see myself as a part of something bigger, as something I could reflect on for the rest of my life.

she walks into the lovely garden
to feel the hot sun on her skin
removing one shoe at a time
her face slowly shows a grin
the plants and flowers give off scents:
mint, chrysanthemum, cotton
bees buzz by and whisper to her
each presenting gifts of pollen
booping and beeping go the bees
causing her smile to grow
they're everywhere: the ground, the bushes, the trees
little insects in a buzz filled frenzy
closer and closer they come to her
and her grin turns to a frown
one bee buzzes briskly to her throat
and she tumbles to the ground
slowly they begin to swarm
she thrashes as she falls
the bees have taken to her form
each stinger breaking skin
the flowers still smell so sweet
the sun still beats down hard
the scene could take one's breath away
except now it's all she's got
poison seeps into her blood
and she begins to cry
she never thought the lovely garden
would be the place where she would die



Silence is golden, just like she
I loved her so why did she flee?
Oh please come back I need you here
I wish I did not overhear

Oh! That dreadful night, still too soon
Ten years ago in late June
Silence I asked, Silence I got
It all ended with my gunshot

Silence is golden, just like she
I loved her so why did she flee?
Oh please come back I need you here
I wish I did not overhear

“Mama and Papa, stop!” I yelled
Why does he make life a living hell
I asked you once, I’ll ask you twice
hit her again you’ll pay the price

He grabbed her arm and threw her down
that’s when I had a breakdown
Silence I asked, Silence I got
I picked it up and took the shot

The bullet sliced straight through the air
It was not meant for her, I swear
Like an ancient brick wall she fell
left without a single farewell

I’m not to blame, the gun killed her
the entire night was then a blurr
But don’t forget it wasn’t me
It was the damn gun, don’t you see?

Mama was pure mama was mine
should be father’s face on the shrine
Mama was pure mama was mine
Daddy a drunk who drank too much wine

I spend my time behind these bars
With nothing left but my mental scars
An open wound left in my heart
only heaven keeps us apart

Silence is golden, just like she...
I loved her so why did she flee?
Oh please come back I need you here
I wish I did not overhear



Morning in Notting Hill Cecilia Lopez-Jordan (Film Photograph)

By the end of his first year in the outpost, Paolo had seen more death than many would see in a lifetime. Some of it was natural. There were those whose bodies gave out during the rough winter weeks, unable to sustain themselves on meager amounts food and alcohol. It was like their insides collapsed, no longer strong enough to hold themselves together. But most of the death was not that which God had premeditated; it came at the hands of those men who thought themselves gods. Day after day the outpost commanders sent small groups out into the forests and surrounding towns to scout out any hidden undesirables. If found, they would have to come back and alert a commanding officer and meet the rest of the group by the soldier's barracks. Here, the captives were bound at the hands with a coarse rope; it would cut through their skin with its thick fibers, sometimes drawing blood that tainted the light brown a sharp crimson. By this point, the captives were usually sobbing, if they hadn't been already. Many screamed, some angrily. Voices barking at the soldiers in Croatian, cursing them and the country they represented. Some shrieked out of terror, high-pitched and hair raising noises that ripped through the silence of the surrounding trees. Some were silent like those trees. Eyes stayed still, unfocused and glazed over, mouths shut tightly, white from the pressure of being sealed.

There was always a soldier per captive. The captives were then lead to the stream, where they were lined up and forced on their knees. Their feet were submerged in the edge, sometimes freezing their toes, causing some of the weak and old to cry out in pain. Many would have tears running down their faces now, fear looking for an escape from their insides. But they wouldn't know fear until the soldiers pressed the barrel of a rifle to their temples. Real fear was the cold metal touching the soft patch of skin that was slightly indented on their skulls, knowing that on the other end there was a finger resting on a trigger. Hatred was the feeling of the men whose fingers were forced to be on the trigger towards the commanders. Emptiness was the life leaving the limp victim's bodies. Real emptiness was pieces of their souls being chipped away at carrying out their duties.

Paolo hated himself now. He thought of himself as a murderer. His comrades were made villains because of their loyalty to their country and their fear of following orders. Any dissenters met the same fate as undesirables. That was the last kill Paolo was in charge of: one of his own. The boy's name was Claudio. He was only six months younger than Paolo, but had the stature of a thirteen year old. His frame was thin and willowy- his height was barely

over 165 centimeters (5'5"). Despite his physical weaknesses, Claudio had a heart of steely resolve. Once his mind was set on something, there was no convincing him otherwise. Because of his strong hearted will and good nature, he and Paolo became close. Paolo had always been drawn to people with good morals, a tendency which stemmed from his desire to emulate them. The two found confidence in each other to express the hatred they felt towards their superiors and the useless murder and war. The type of talk that could get them killed.

One day, a search party came back with an undesirable. A young and frail woman. As usual, everyone was gathered for the execution. Paolo and Claudio were shoved to the front, with many of the younger boys trying to stay unnoticed behind them. The soldier holding the gun to the woman's head looked towards a superior officer, who was standing in a corner, watching the crowd of soldiers. By this point, Claudio had looked away.

"Stop," said the superior, his strong voice silencing any noise from the group. Everyone's head turned towards his except Claudio, who kept his eyes trained on the ground. The superior walked right up to him, until he could see the man's shiny black boots. A hand forced his chin up, until two pairs of eyes met, one filled with arrogance and another with hatred. "You will do it."

A soldier handed a gun to Claudio, then ran to take his place in the crowd. He was relieved to be freed from his duty. The superior led Claudio to the woman by the arm who sneered in cruel delight. Claudio threw the gun down.

"Do it."

There was silence as Claudio stood motionless. Suddenly, the man turned and grabbed Paolo. He took the gun from the ground and pressed it into Paolo's hands.

"Kill him. Kill him or I will kill you both."

Paolo looked at Claudio in panic. He wouldn't. He couldn't. He would die first. Claudio looked up at him and smiled. He nodded, and mouthed to Paolo 'Kill me, please.' Paolo shook his head. He wouldn't. 'It's okay.' He shook his head again. 'Please.' The superior grabbed Paolo's hand, gun and

all, pointing it at Claudio. Paolo began to protest, tugging his arm back, but the superior- pressed Paolo's finger down over the trigger- and Claudio was gone.

The superior threw the gun down and hit Paolo across the face, knocking him down.

"Next time you hesitate you will end up like him."

There would be no next time. Paolo thought of all the times he and Claudio fantasized of running, of making a wrong turn and heading to the village away from this hell. Claudio was gone now. Paolo knew he couldn't last much longer, mindlessly killing. Maybe now was his time to run...

Paolo remembered the day well. The air was crisp. It left a sharp aftertaste that made him think of the mint leaves his mother would let him chew as a treat when he was a boy. The day smelled of bitter cold, and the ground was covered by a thin layer of powder. Foliage jutted out of the fine snow, a mess of dry leaves and snapped twigs. His shift was about to end. He had stood post outside the ground's limited arsenal overnight, back pressed against the planks of wood for support. His spine was stiff, having found no comfort in the rough planks in the last seven hours. Paolo reached for his flask, pulling out the metallic canteen from his olive green canvas sack. He pressed the cold tin to his chapped lips, tilting back his head. Nothing. There was a crunch and a snap to his left, and he snapped to his feet, hand reaching for his weapon. He saw the familiar face of the soldier who relived him of his post every day; the same scruff bordering angular cheekbones, each day seemingly thinner, as if eaten away by weariness.

Wordlessly, he stood up, nodding to his friend. He turned his neck from side to side, waking up the muscles he had neglected for the night. His legs tingled with the feeling he likened to radio static. The ground snapped occasionally under his step, each one leading him towards the barracks. The path he followed took him through a stretch of wooded area, long stretches of brown stretching into a nearly transparent sky, wispy fingers reaching for sunlight. The area around him became more and more dense, trunk after trunk impeding his way. He'd taken the wrong turn. He looked back up at the trees, more of them now grasping for the sun.

He started to run, matching his breathing to the steady crunch of the earth below him. He reached a clearing, suddenly blinded by the whiteness of the powdered ground that replaced the maze of brown. Smoke rose up, tendrils of gray in stark contrast with the dream like blue of the sky which was so light it, looked as if it would float away. He followed the smoke as if it were a beacon, the North Star in his sea. Soon he could taste it, a thick burnt sensation coating his tongue, leaving the same acrid aftertaste of lemons, but more familiar - the smoke of a heated home. He knew someone would hide him, that someone would shield him. Paolo was no longer willing to sacrifice his soul. Paolo was no longer a soldier.



Torre del Lago Cecilia Lopez-Jordan (Film Photograph)

Once upon a time, there was a group of bald eagles living together. They lived in Bald Eagle Land, and everything was perfect. There was plenty of space, an ample supply of food and water, and most importantly, no foreign animals. The Bald Eagles liked to keep to themselves because they knew that they were the superior predator bird and they were virtually untouchable. Not only could they fly higher than every other species, but they were stronger, better hunters, and much smarter. Things began to change, however, when the pandas started popping up. At first, the Bald Eagles were tolerant of the foreigners because they resided in small numbers too minuscule to affect the living conditions. The Pandas were useful in a lot of ways and most of the Eagles benefited from their sudden invasion. The Pandas were strong and could do jobs like tidying and pruning that Eagles could not, but some Eagles were worried that they were becoming too dependent on the Pandas.

But then more and more pandas appeared. And, all of a sudden, there were llamas, chinchillas, Cuban tree frogs, Asian beetles, pythons, African bees, and more. It was getting out of control and soon the Eagles started to protest the immigration of the foreign animals. The land was still thriving as always because it was the best in the world, but this enticed other animals to come to their land.

Every month or so, the Eagles held a private meeting to discuss the dire situation their species was facing. A majority of the Eagles were in favor of halting the immigration of foreign animals. There were problems that could not be ignored, such as the communication barrier between different species. This posed a real threat because with a dozen or so species, things felt chaotic. "We are the superior species on Earth," one Eagle announced. "They [the other animals] don't want us at the top. They don't want us to continue thriving so they'll seek to exploit our weaknesses anytime they see fit to do so." Another eagle suggested to build a monstrous wall to surround their property. A few nodded in agreement, and Freedom, a very boisterous eagle, added the only real solution was to kick them all out. This did not sit well for one particular eagle named Justice. Justice and Freedom engaged in a heated exchange over this topic.

Freedom spoke first. "We have to make a whole new set of standards. And when animals come in, other animals want to come in —"

"You're going to split up families," Justice interrupted. "You're going to

deport the baby animals?"

"Justice — no, no. No, we're going to keep the families together. We have to keep the families together."

"But you're going to kick them out?"

"They have to go."

"What if they have no place to go?"

"They have to go. Justice, we either have a well-functioning society or we don't have a well-functioning society."

Freedom went on incessantly about why these other animals had to leave. For example, he didn't like the Pandas because they had squinty eyes. The Cuban Tree Frogs had the most trouble speaking the language of the Bald Eagles, and most of them did not want to learn another language. The chinchillas smelled really bad and their food made the other animals fart a lot. The African bees were so striped that the bald eagles thought they had all gotten a disease.

Any eagle with a slight amount of intelligence knew that Freedom was uttering complete nonsense and that there was no way his proposals would be allowed. However, an astounding number of eagles who were absolutely incompetent sided with Freedom; the more and more he preached about his insane diabolical plans, the more support he received. When it came time to elect a new leader of the Bald Eagles (as they did every 2 years), Freedom received an astronomical amount of votes. People started sporting his haircut (a sort of toupée style), and cheered his name everywhere he went.

Freedom went straight to work, ordering all the other animals to build a colossal wall to enclose Bald Eagle Land. It was one thousand feet tall and gutted the environment outside of Bald Eagle Land. Once the wall was completed, Freedom kicked all the other animals out. Everyone lived happily ever after; well, except for all the other animals, but who gives a damn about them?



Click Lea Broudo (Colored Pencil on Paper)

The ever-increasing population of the world caused countries to band together. Food was rationed and businesses were put under strict regulations to conserve resources. Because of humanity's failure to heed to the drastically changing weather patterns, the Earth was constantly covered in clouds accompanied by a perpetual rainfall. This rain steadily beat on the countless buildings of the world, all similar except for a large label plastered on the side of each building. In a building labeled Business and Finance Company #7639, a man named Amin worked. He had the same clothes, shoes, pens, and haircut as all the other people on the planet.

Amin glanced away from his company-issued computer, identical to the computers of his coworkers. From his cubicle, he could see an endless sea of cubicles, identical to his own. Every worker had the same cubicle, the same company-issued computer, the same hologram of a desk plant sitting exactly three inches to the right of the same holographic keyboard. If an employee looked to their left, a bland, black and white motivational poster reading, "Work is Important!" in large, capital letters was nailed to the wall of the cubicle. All of a sudden, a loud noise played through every computer in the room, the sound echoing throughout the cubicles.

"The International Society Preservation Organization is hosting another event," the clipped tone said politely, sounding like the voice one would hear in an ancient early 21st century airport.

"Everyone is eligible to enter, and was automatically entered in today's function. Please check your ticket to see if you have been chosen as one of the few to help advance the human race."

The voice resonating from the computers stopped abruptly. A friendly blip sounded from Amin's computer, along with the blips coming from all his coworkers' computers. A giant image of an envelope had appeared on Amin's computer screen, covering the documents he had been working on. Amin hesitated, then clicked on the envelope. After an excessive wait, a letter emerged from the envelope, with the words, "Congratulations, Recipient. You have won this event. You and a lucky few will work together with the government to create a better world for us all. Rejoice in your victory and celebrate."

Amin sat back in his chair, shocked. He had won. The chances were so low, but he had won. He was in a daze, barely hearing the cheers or seeing the

disappointed faces of his coworkers. Everyone knew what winning meant. As children, their parents would tell them all about winning International Society Preservation Organization events. Amin, along with many people, had simply assumed that winning was a myth, as he had never seen anyone near his cubicle actually win before, not to mention himself. Amin stood up from his seat and started his journey home. After all, it was customary for winners to go home to their families before claiming their reward.

Upon entering his apartment, Amin was greeted by his family. When he had come of age, the government had paired him with his wife and had encouraged raising a child, only one child.

"Oh my, sweetheart. I can't believe that you won." she said politely, eyes unmoving. Her face was devoid of the feelings she portrayed through her words. Amin looked around his house, reminiscing in the same home that he had lived in as a child, that every person on the planet had lived in as a child. A crisp voice announcement rang throughout his house:

"All winners please report to your nearest International Society Preservation Organization center to receive your reward."

Amin gathered himself as he walked into the ISPO center, like the rest of the people that had won walking in beside him. Amin entered a large room with an observer window in the far wall. All the people around him wore his face, a resigned face, a face completely drained of life.

"Over the course of the next few minutes, you may feel as if you can not breath. Do not panic. This is completely normal. Thank you for your contribution to society. Please continue to support us in the next life."

As the oxygen slowly began to deplete, Amin wondered about the meaning of victory. *We are the winners*, he thought. As black dots swam through his vision and he started to suffocate, Amin wondered why victory was so painful and why anyone would ever want to win.

1. When you're a rower, you're born to row and forced to study because rowing is 6 days a week and 3 hours a day.
2. Your homework will be done 5 minutes before your class starts.
3. Your coach doesn't see studying for exams as more important than going to practice.
4. Classmates will ask you why you have bubbly blisters on your hands. Just respond, "Crew is life."
5. You will hyperventilate every time you hear the words "2" and "K" in the same sentence.
6. Your crewmates will become your only friends because they understand your pain when you do a piece on the erg, or wake up at 5:30 a.m. to get to a Saturday practice.
7. Tan lines will become your worst nightmare: uni tans, sock tans, sports bra tans, and stripes that never fade because you don't have time to go to the beach.
8. Coming home with salt in your hair and on your legs will become a regular thing. There's no way to avoid it.
9. Your crewmates are your worst enemies on the water and your best friends on land. You will have stories to tell each other about catching a crab, or flipping a boat, twice consecutively, by accident.
10. Crew is crawling off the erg after a 2K of exhaustion. Crew is saltwater blinding you and splashing in your face. Crew is putting all into 1 race and then doing another. Crew is flying across the water. Crew is learning that nothing is given to you: you have to earn first place. And crew is crossing the finish line after a 1500m race. It is being so tired your lungs are dry but knowing you won. And you earned it.

Monday is my kind of poetry
Somber maddening midnight
Cold like 1,000 snowmen
In a nightmare about fate

Monday is my kind of poetry
Like a bathtub full of bad metaphors
And rubber duckies
Empty suburban streets
Deep into the night

Monday is my kind of poetry
Like a dream
In which you are a goldfish
At the bottom of a swimming pool

Monday is my kind of poetry
homeless men on hay fever, hallucinating
Images of flat families stuck in between
Dimensions

Monday is my kind of poetry
The moonlight cast upon fallen glass
The sliver of silver in her eye
Ricocheting between reflection
And projection



Inklings has been underwritten in part by an endowment to Ransom Everglades School in memory of Sheila Natasha Friedman, mother of Natasha '92 and Chloe '95. Mrs. Friedman died on February 11, 1993. She was a noted artist, poet, photographer, performance artist, and fashion designer. Because creativity was so much a part of Mrs. Friedman's life, her friends chose to perpetuate her spirit through an endowment. In this way, we have an ongoing memorial to her imagination, ingenuity, and originality.

The recipient is chosen by the Fine Arts and English Departments and receives recognition during Upper School Awards Day. This year's winner is Mia Lennon.

Regarding her involvement in the theatre, her director and teacher Mr. Warfel shares this: "There are people who love theatre, and people who live theatre. Mia Lennon is squarely in the corner of those who live theatre. This past season, her roles were as diverse as a bored, preoccupied bureaucrat in *DMV Tyrant* to a negotiating teen in *Blueberry Hill Accord*. She was featured as the Narrator in *Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. Her vocal abilities were showcased front and center as she guided the audience through the story. It is a vocally demanding role, but also requires the actor to shift the mood of the piece. Mia accomplished both with flair. She concluded her artistic journey at Ransom Everglades with a directorial triumph on the Lewis Family stage. It is Mia's contributions off the stage that speak to her commitment to the art form and the RE theatre program. She was chief organizer when it came to any theatrical event on campus. As leader of the Drama Club, Mia promoted and celebrated the theatre community with all of Ransom Everglades. She was a valuable liaison between the theatre department and the Drama Club, and has earned the respect from faculty, student-actors, and tech crew through her efforts. Mia leaves a theatrical legacy that will continue at Ransom Everglades for years to come."

Her English teacher Dr. Dughi writes this about her work in his class: "As an English student, Mia Lennon's love for literature and the arts is always evident. She invests herself deeply in her reading, and she reads carefully and sensitively, with an actor's awareness of how subtleties of language create tone and meaning. She writes clear, simple, and graceful prose which serves as an effective vehicle for her superior insights into and analyses of both poetry and prose texts. And in the classroom, she sparks conversation by sharing her responses, her questions, and her ideas even when she hasn't yet fully worked them out. And by always giving the thoughts of her classmates a sympathetic and respectful hearing, she fosters a sense of community and brings out the best in her classmates."

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