

THE ALPINE PATH

Volume 5, June 2023

From the Editor

I recently came across an article written by Joe Bunting at The Write Practice. The title poses the question, “Why do we write?” He gave four reasons:

To be fully alive—Writing forces us to focus on small details: how a room smells or what a storm sounds like. It is easy to miss these details. Writing helps us to experience them.

To make a name for ourselves—When a person puts their thoughts down on paper, a piece of that person is now permanently out in the world, leaving a mark.

To change the world—Everyone has a story. The stories in this journal come from the hearts of those who wrote them. What comes from your heart will speak to someone else’s heart.

To discover meaning—When you fully experience the small details in life, create as only you can, and share those creations with others, you will find a deeper meaning to it all.

I’m sure most of the writers in this edition of *The Alpine Path* can identify with these reasons as well as many others. Whatever the reason, we are thankful that the authors represented here took the time to share their work with us!



Common Sense Press
Simple to teach. Easy to learn.

Odysseus’s story

Mia Pasquarella, 17

Oh, King of Ithaca, your people shout your praise. When the war was finished, they await your return. To hear the story of your fateful quest for glory. Oh, King of Ithaca, you’ve been gone for so long. Your wife waits for you, her loyalty so strong. Your son, patiently waiting at the door. While suitors for your wife’s hand, devour all your gold. Oh, King of Ithaca, why are you still at sea, is it because of the gods or is it because of thee?

Oh, Odysseus tells us all the truth. It was by your hand Poseidon cursed you. Your pride for outwitting the Cyclops and blinding his one eye. He screamed ‘nobody’ hurt him, because that was your lie. He believed that was your name until your pride took over. Oh, Odysseus, when you told the Cyclops that if any man asks who blinded him, he says your name. Oh, Odysseus, your pride gave the Cyclops your name for him to tell his father to curse you. You, oh, Odysseus, are the one who killed your crew. Those men could survive the war, but they couldn’t survive you.

Oh, hero, your name will be sung for the rest of time; but of all the monsters in your quest, your pride was truly your villain. Oh, hero, I could blame Poseidon or the Cyclops, but they only sought revenge for the wrongs done. Your men died by monsters and storms. Oh, hero, do you long to see your son? Your crew’s family waits to see their husbands, sons, and fathers. You need to tell them why your crew died. You could blame Zeus or Poseidon, or even the Cyclops. The families though should know the truth and should blame you.

Oh, husband of Penelope, a goddess sought your love. 7 years on her island, as you long for your wife, Who has been loyal all this time. When you journey home, will you tell her the truth? That the goddess on the island received your love too.

Oh, king of Ithaca, you’ve made it to your home. Killed 100 suitors and reclaimed your throne. Your name will be sung around the world one day. Your name will be a timeless word that everyone will read. A song that was originally sung by the men of Greece. 🏔️

Moon

Lindbergh Hughes, 17

"I love thee to the level of every day's,
Most quiet need, by sun and candle light."
—Elizabeth Barret Browning

From my window I watch the night,
A thought flies lonely in the sky.
Through the vast darkness of the space,
Between the planets and millions of stars.

My heart is young and open,
The flowers are smiling all over the way.
In every corner of the street I see your face,
From downtown to the parks I follow your steps.

I watch the stars over the sky,
Shining, dancing, smiling at us.
They sing and exclaim,
"An unforgettable story is coming soon!"
As our love calls
The New Moon.

All of a sudden, you are away from me,
The rain falls down, it is cold outside.
From my eyes rolls up a unique tear,
A sad poem is born under the moonlight.

No stars - all is silent and quiet,
Not a song, or a message to remember.
Not a call, or a last goodbye,
Over our loneliness shines
A Waning Crescent Moon.

Are you still mine? My heart wonders in deep silence,
A piece of me is missing as I miss you.
Empty words - my soul is incomplete,
The play of a silly lover in which nothing makes sense.

Am I the other part that you miss in your day?
The more we act how miserably we fail.
Fate is warning, "Run away from this doom!"
As our uncertainty calls
The Third and First Quarter Moon.

Then, I run to you as the rivers run to the sea,
You are all I want, all that I long to see.
A little piece of you is worth my day,
Strong my heart beats and asks you to stay.

Little shy stars in the sky
Are shining here and there so weak and so strong.
Our love keeps growing through the storm,
As we miss each other shines over us
The Waxing Crescent Moon.

All the artists in the Globe Theater celebrate,
The Knickerbockers bow their heads and applaud,
"What a play! What a marvelous story!"
Our love leaving its traces throughout the history.

From my window I watch the stars,
A Full and so Bright Moon is standing over the sky.
As it stands so strong through the night,
Stand by me—Night and day, day and Night,
my love, my life. 🏔️

A Foolish Duck

Bethany Loewen, 15

Now once there was a barnyard, in which many animals lived. There were pigs and cows, and sheep and chickens. And two horses and one duck.

Nobody really knew where the duck came from, but he was always there.

He was a small thing, with an unusually large head and ungainly feet, and because of this, the chickens were quite rude to him. Now you musn't feel sorry for the duck because he will learn his lesson.

You see, the duck thought he was a chicken. Because of course, there were no other ducks in the barnyard, how could he think otherwise? So he sat on a nest and clucked like a chicken and tried so hard to lay an egg. But of course he can't, since he is not a hen.

One day the farmgirl brought out a brand new animal, to lay in the hay, and catch mice. The duck was fascinated by the creature, yet all the chickens stayed far away. It was, of course, a cat. Presently the duck and cat became quite good friends, up until the point where she asked him why he always sat and clucked and pretended to be a chicken. He was surprised at this turn of events and told her: "but I am a chicken!?" to which the cat said "no you are not you foolish animal, you are a duck, like the ones by the river." And the duck was so astounded and confused with this news that he had been brought, and went away to hide in the corner for a while. When he came back the chickens all started laughing and clucking at him so that he was so embarrassed he ran off away from the barnyard, into a forest nearby. He sadly wandered further and further in until a wolf saw a nice fat duck wandering by and ate him for his supper. 🏔️

Hear

Abigail Cash, 14

Have you ever wondered what actual silence is like? I don't mean the silence at night, or the quietness of an empty house. No, I'm talking about the kind of silence where you can't hear a thing, not so much as your own breath or the faint buzzing that is constantly in our ears.

It's impossible to have complete silence. Unless you're deaf.

Which would you rather have? Complete silence, or the ability to hear everything around you for miles? Most people think that having super sonic hearing is the coolest thing in the world, but it's not.

I know, because I've had to live with the ability to hear everything my whole life.

Not only does it constantly give me a headache; it also hinders any chances I have of making a life for myself. I've never been to a party, or even a restaurant. Occasionally I'll brave a store if my mom needs to get me something, but most of the time I'm trapped in the prison of my own home. I can't even go to actual school. Friends? Forget about it. The only friends I've ever had were the birds in my backyard. Incredible hearing would be great, if it meant that I got to choose what I heard. I don't. It usually just sort of blends together.

Even my parents don't know what to do with their problematic child, and they both have very different opinions about it.

Right now I'm lying on my bed, and I can hear every word of my parents whispered argument downstairs in the kitchen.

"That just isn't an option! Surely there's something else out there, something that will give her a normal life."

"Laura, she's never going to be completely normal. But if she stays like this, then what kind of life will she have when she gets older? At least there is a deaf community out there."

I sit up. Deaf community? What is he talking about? I feel as though someone slipped ice down my shirt.

My mom speaks again, her usually warm voice holding notes of pain and worry. "I just don't want her to have to deal with this. She's so young, David."

"I know. No twelve-year-old should have to go through something like this."

I hear my mom crying, and it shocks me. I've never known my mom to cry, she's like the most confident and joyful person on earth. This makes me feel awful, that I'm the cause of my mother's tears.

I wait for more of their words, but suddenly their conversation is interrupted by a rumble of noise from outside my window. Groaning, I shift the noise canceling ear phones that I constantly wear back over my ears. They only help a little to muffle the noise of the construction happening at our neighbors two doors down, who are doing a renovation. I had moved the ear phones just an inch to the side to hear my parents. I don't usually use my hearing to eavesdrop, but ever since the audiologist appointment yesterday, my parents have been

acting strange. It's only a matter of time before the bomb is dropped on whatever they've been arguing about. I've come to dread family dinners, because that's when my parents usually want to have serious conversations.

A voice startles me out of my thoughts. "Carlie, dinner's ready."

My sixteen-year-old sister, Summer, pokes her head into my room. I feel a twinge of envy as I follow my near-perfect sister downstairs. Summer got the beautiful long blond hair instead of my wispy brown strands. She's tall, graceful, and smart. Oh, and did I mention that she has absolutely nothing wrong with her? No weird abilities, unlike me. Next to her I feel like a let down of a daughter. I bite my lip, trying to shove down these thoughts. I hate the feeling of shame every time my parents pay a huge bill for some new remedy to fix my ears, or cancel a work meeting to take me to an appointment. It's enough to make me feel hollow inside as I eat the spaghetti that my mom prepared, even though it's one of my favorite meals.

Dinner is quiet, with everyone being overly polite. Finally, I can't take it anymore, and I clear my throat.

"So, are we going to talk about it?"

My mom looks up nervously. "Talk about what?"

I roll my eyes, which I know is disrespectful, but honestly I'm fed up with being treated like a baby.

"Whatever Dr. Tillman told you yesterday has obviously been stressing you out. So can we just discuss it?"

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My parents exchange looks that speak a thousand words in a language I can't understand.

My dad coughs and stares down at his plate. "So . . . apparently we've tried all of the medicines available for this kind of thing."

To all of the doctors and scientists that know about my condition, I'm some kind of medical mystery. It's only thanks to my parents that they haven't tried a million tests on me to figure out what makes me so different. We've also tried hard to keep it from becoming public, because this is the kind of thing that could be on the news. I've been on eight different medicines that the doctors have created especially for me, and none of them have done anything. So I'm ready to try something else.

"And . . . ?" I prompt.

"There is another option, but I'm not sure if it's...the right thing." While she says this, Mom is twisting a napkin in her hands.

Summer speaks for the first time. "Mom, just tell her. She's twelve, she can handle it."

My parents look from me to Summer. "They said we could try surgery."

Something rushes through me, but I'm not sure if it's hope or fear. "Well, that's good isn't it? I mean if they think they can fix it . . ." I try to sound confident, but my voice trembles on the last few words.

My dad rushes his next sentence as if to get it over with. "The problem is, there's only a thirty percent chance that the surgery would be successful. It's possible that . . . the surgery could result in complete deafness."

I sit in shock. It feels impossible to think or even speak right now.

Summer looks from me to our parents. "Is that her only option?"

A nod is the only response my parents give, and the emptiness inside of me threatens to overwhelm.

Then my mom speaks softly. "Carlie, are you sure there isn't any way to control it? Maybe for you to sort out which sounds you want to hear?"

Staring at my plate, I whisper, "I can't do anything to stop it."

Then I pull courage from a well inside of me and look up at my parents. "I don't want to be deaf, but Mom and Dad, I can't live like this anymore."

Dad hesitates. "Carlie, I really think this should be a family decision. After all, it's going to affect everyone."

Temper rising, I push back from the table. "So even though this is about my ears, and this is my pain, I don't get to choose?"

"Carlie's right," Summer agrees. "We aren't the ones living with it."

I shoot a grateful look toward my sister, then turn back toward my parents.

"Well . . ." Mom hesitates. "Let Dad and I talk about it, alright?"

I'm furious now. How can they not get it? This feels like we're discussing some petty issue.

"This is about ME, and I would like to make this decision! You don't understand, you can't understand!" Tears roll down my cheeks, and I brush them away angrily. "Fine. Do whatever you want. It's not like anything I could say would make a difference." My words end in a shout, and I stand up and make for the stairs, desperate for some solitude.

"Come back here right now, Carlie. We are not finished with this conversation!" My dad yells after me.

"Let her go, David," I hear my mom murmur, and I'm allowed to leave.

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The next morning, I eat breakfast silently. My parents try to act busy in the kitchen, but I've noticed the black smudges of sleeplessness under their eyes. They were up late last night, arguing. I heard every word.

After an apologetic look, Summer departs for school, leaving me to the mercy of my nervous parents.

Finally, my parents can't find anything else to do in the kitchen. Exchanging looks that once again say a thousand words, my parents sit across from me at the kitchen table.

"Carlie, your mom and I are still talking about this," My dad starts.

Picking up where he trails off, Mom tries to smile. "We both agree that this is just too big of a decision for you to make alone."

The fury comes back, hitting harder than the night before. I fold my arms and glare at a crack in the well-worn wooden table top. It's useless to say anything, they've obviously made up their mind.

"But," Dad continues, "We recognize that this is about you, and so though we are going to help, you get the final say on this."

They're watching me carefully, waiting for an explosive reaction. But honestly, I have no idea how I feel. I guess there was a part of me that wanted them to handle it all, to make the decision for me so that if anything did go wrong in the surgery, I wouldn't be responsible. Another part of me is thankful that they are finally getting it,

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finally understanding. And that they aren't just going to leave it completely up to me. In the end, I can't look at them for fear of bursting into tears.

"I-I'm going outside for a while." Pushing back from the table I dash out the back door. The day is cool, but not chilly, and the trees look as if they're on fire with colors of red, orange, and gold. Bordering our backyard is a pinewood, my favorite place on earth. The huge trees muffle most of the modern world sounds, as if I've stumbled upon a time hollow where nothing has changed despite the fast paced world surrounding it. It's about as magical as Middle Earth, Narnia, or some other fantasy land. I eventually slow down, and the only sounds reaching my ears are the birds telling the world that the day has come.

I sit on a rock and just soak in the sounds of nature. It's calming, and my eyes take in the birds chirping in the pine trees. Finally, I pick myself up and head back to the house, a decision made. Walking through the door, I take a deep breath and look my parents in the eye. They're both in the living room.

"I want to try the surgery."

My parents don't look surprised. Mom takes a deep breath, and then nods slowly. "I'll call and make an appointment with Dr. Tillman tomorrow. I want to understand this whole process before scheduling anything."

I wince, but I know she's right. It's just . . . Dr. Tillman isn't exactly my favorite person on earth.

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"What?" My parents and I speak at the same time, startling Dr. Tillman.

He looks nervous and pushes his wire rimmed glass further up the

bridge of his disturbingly narrow nose.

Clearing his throat, he holds out his hands in an appeal for us to listen. "I just think we shouldn't be so hasty! After all, if we can find out what makes Carlie so . . . different, it could change the world! Maybe there would finally be a cure for deafness."

I frown, because it feels like he views me just as a specimen to try experiments on.

"So . . . you're refusing to talk about this surgery because you want to use our daughter in your research?"

"Well..." He says, not denying it.

"I see." My dad's voice is hard and cold. "Carlie, go wait for us outside, will you? We would like to speak to Dr. Tillman privately."

Dr. Tillman gulps.

I smile sweetly at him before walking out the door. I plop down on a chair right outside the door before concentrating hard, listening to the conversation inside. Thankfully it's easy, since the walls are thin and the building is pretty quiet around two o'clock on a Friday.

"Dr. Tillman, you always have your patients' best interests at heart, am I correct?" My dad's voice is polite, but firm.

"Of course! I'm only saying that if the girl-"

"Carlie."

"Yes, Carlie. If Carlie has the opportunity to help the millions of deaf people around the world, shouldn't both you and her want that? Think of the fame, of the generosity of the girl who donated herself to science!"

I'm absolutely disgusted, and I know right away that he isn't ac-

tually thinking about my fame or welfare. No, he's hoping that he could make some huge medical breakthrough so he could become rich and famous.

"I believe, Dr. Tillman, that you remember our strict 'No publicity' agreement?" My mom somehow sounds polite and demeaning at the same time.

"Yes of course," he says hastily. "This all would require your permission."

"Well," Dad says, "We don't agree. This is our daughter, and it is her condition we're talking about. She has made the decision to have this surgery, and we are asking for you to give us more information."

"Now, now. Surely we all would like to have more time to consider this?"

"No." My parents answer in unison. Something warm wells up inside of me at how my parents are sticking up for me.

"Perhaps we should talk to a different doctor?" I can imagine Mom's eyebrows raising as she says this.

"No, no, of course not!" Dr. Tillman's voice is raspy with anxiety over losing the money we pay him.

"Then you will help us with the process of the surgery?"

"I-I will put you in contact with a surgeon who specializes in audiology," Dr. Tillman says, his teeth gritted.

"Thank you."

After that, they talk about other technical things with the process, and I tune out, not wanting to hear any more of Dr. Tillman.

We walk out to the car a few minutes later. Mom smiles at me, and raises her eyebrows. I flush red, because I know that she knows I heard everything.

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“Well . . . that sounded interesting,” I say, knowing there’s no point in pretending.

Dad flashes me a look of surprise, then grins.

Mom slams her hand on the inside of the car door as she gets in. “What a despicable man! How could he say those things?”

I grimace. “It felt like I was some sort of animal that he wanted to take apart and study.”

Dad shakes his head. “If he wasn’t the only doctor who has ever seemed to help, Dr. Tillman would have one less patient.”

“You can say that again,” Mom declares, and I laugh.

We’ve all been so tense the past few days that a little laughter feels refreshing. It doesn’t completely wash away the worry, but it perhaps lightens it and makes it easier to bear.

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Three weeks later

I stare out the window for the whole car ride to the hospital. Usually I hate riding in the car because of all the noise, but this time I relish it, even cherish it.

“Hey . . . you okay?”

I glance at Summer, surprised. Her face is a mixture of sympathy and anxiety, and I know that her blunt comment is just her way of trying to reach out to me. Smiling wryly, I say, “Yeah, great.”

And honestly, it’s not that far from the truth, because it’s almost as if there’s a wall set up against my feelings. I don’t know how to feel right now.

She smiles back and picks at some lint on her sweater. “You know Carlie, no matter what I’ve got your back.”

“Thanks, Summer.” I say gratefully.

By the time we reach the hospital, I’m running with Mom beside me to find the nearest bathroom. I retch, but nothing happens because I haven’t been allowed to eat before the surgery.

Through the check in and in the waiting room, Summer has her arm around me.

When we’re sitting down, I whisper so softly that I’m sure no one else can hear. “I can’t do this.”

But Summer hears, and she squeezes my hand tightly. “Yes, you can,” she whispers back.

Then a nurse steps in the room and calls, “Carlie Hollows?”

I stand up and receive a bear hug from my dad. “You’ve got this, Carlie,” he whispers.

Mom’s next, and there are definitely tears in her eyes. “Oh my sweet girl, I love you so much. You are so brave.”

I nod mutely. I can’t speak because all of the emotions have broken through the wall like a wave crashing through a dam.

Finally, Summer holds me tight. “Hey, show them how strong

Carlie Hollows is, alright?” She says fiercely.

I smile through the tears dripping down my face, and then I turn and follow the nurse into a sterile white hallway.

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Four hours later

My world suddenly comes back into focus, though it’s dark because my eyes are closed. The last thing I remember is a kind nurse telling me to relax as the anesthesia made its way through the IV in my arm.

Breathless, I listen. Silence. Finally I open my eyes a crack, staring at a bumpy white ceiling.

Turning my eyes to the left, all I see is blue wallpaper with pastel flowers. Turning to the right, I smile. Summer is sitting four feet away in a plastic chair, texting on her phone. The window behind her lets in the sun sitting low on the horizon.

She hasn’t noticed I’m awake yet.

So this is what I’ve chosen. Complete silence, forever.

Beep!

Or is it? 🏠



“Marjy, Cream Legbar Chicken” by Joanna Malone, 16

Battle-song of Bobbie Bruce

Joanna Malone, 16

This song was inspired by an event which really took place, when my sister's pet duck Bobbie courageously flew towards an attacking hawk in an effort to deter an assault on the rest of the flock. He was successful in his attempt and is now a celebrated hero among his feathered friends, with numerous other acts of valour ascribed to his name.

Ho! See who's come to war,
Hunter of the Sparrow?
Robert of Bride's House,
Keen as an arrow!

Watch how his burnished helm,
Emerald gleaming,
Catches the battle-light
Of centuries beaming!

Breast-plate of crimson brave!
Brown and grey pinions!
No more the sky-high ways
Are your dominions!

Never was crossbow bolt,
Never was arrow,
Flew with a bolder path,
Hunter of the sparrow!

Turn out your wings, my foe,
Sunder the skies!
Little `twill avail you now—
The Bruce is on the rise!

Ho! See who's come to war?
Mark you who's coming?
List to his throbbing wings,
So martially drumming?

Well may you quake, my foe!
Well turn aside!
Never met you a drake like this,
Will you dare bide?

Give him never a shield or sword,
Never a blade,
He needs naught but a gallant heart,
And the wind's aide.

Valour, Honour, be on his wings!
Triumph, attend him!
Brigid of Kildare,
Shield and defend him!

Here! Through the teeth of gale
And the storm's roar!
Robert of Weaselstone,
Is coming to war. 🏰

Nighttime

Meredith Leaverton, 17

We cleaned up the garden
Yesterday, and tucked it in bed.
Did you hear it say amen
As we closed the gate, then

Sigh in sleep? Its tired head
Drooped for weeks before
We were finally fed
Up with care. Mama said

It was time and I agree, for
The white cover will come down soon
Tucking it more
Than we would. Snore

Lightly, Garden. Too soon
We will wake you again
With bright sun like the noon.
Then you will bloom.

We will be friends again. 🏰

Aurora Borealis

Robyn Nichol, 11

Aurora Borealis, up there dancing in the sky,
Twisting, twirling, sailing by,
Weaving between the stars on high;
I watch them as in bed I lie.

I wish I could be with them, those streams of light.
That will be my dream for the night.
And when the sun comes up, they're out of sight,
But when night falls, they're back, full and bright.
No matter how far or long they fade,
I'll keep them with me, those ribbons of jade.

Those glorious
Aurora Borealis. 🏰

Willow's Point of View Story

Brielle Latzman, 10

Hi. My name is Willow Pillow Latzman. I am a cat. I am fourteen years old in cat years, and in people years I am about seventy-two years old.

I have a big sister (and owner) named Brielle Latzman. She loves me to pieces and treats me like a one-year-old. I'm okay with it though, somewhat. I like the attention.

I also have a mommy and daddy named, well, Mommy and Daddy! Their real names are Randi Latzman and Matt (Matthew) Latzman.

I also have an older cat sister named Penelope and a little dog sister named Maisy. Penelope is fifteen years old and is so annoying! She is always in my way and always tries to eat all the food at breakfast and dinner time! So, I smack her. Continuously. And usually hiss or swipe at her to go with the smack.

Mommy and Daddy think I am mean and grumpy because I get grumpy after I smack Penelope. I mean, that is true, I do get grumpy, but only because she is annoying. Smacking her gets me grumpy because I have to keep on doing it to get her to stop doing what she is doing.

Then there's Maisy. Oh, that Maisy Daisy! (That's the mean name I call her.) She is so big and so long that it would take five of me to equal the size of her! I am small (eight pounds of cat muscle), and Maisy always barks and hurts my ears. Oh, her ears are so big! They are the size of the top of a spoon! I always sit by the curtain on the couch and sunbathe in the sunlight by the window. Have I mentioned I sit by the curtain on the couch?

I have? Did I? Good, good.

Brielle is my favorite creature (or person) of all time. Her lap is so comfortable to sit on and she always pets me and compliments me on how cute I am, or how soft my fur is.

Brielle always talks to me in that baby voice that coos, "Yes, you are my baby! Oh, you are just my little baby!"

It sometimes gets on my nerves, but mostly I am okay with it. I have sometimes swiped at her or smacked her on the face or the body, whichever body part I prefer to do at that moment.

I sometimes forget where I am or where I am going because I'm a senior cat. Like, if I am walking away from the couch, or going under the dining room chairs, I just forget where I'm going and just walk back to the couch again.

Brielle is the best person in the world. I love her so much. I want to hug her, but I can't since I only have paws, and you have to use hands for hugging, not tiny cat paws.

I am trying to hug her. I am reaching for her waist, and I slip and fall into her lap facedown and Brielle screams in pain as I have now scratched her. Oh well, it felt good. Ahh, that scratch felt so good to do.

I sit back up and shake my fur out. "Baby Willow, are you okay?" Brielle asks, shows me her scratch that is on her stomach. It is a little baby scratch, no more than the size of a needle.

I blink at her telling her that I am fine, but she cannot understand

cat talk. I blink hard, saying that I love her. At least she knows that signal.

She blinks back, grins, and takes me and puts me on her lap and rubs my fur out.

Ahh, that feels so good.

A few weeks ago, I told Penelope that I love her and that she needs to stop getting in my way all the time. You know, not actually talking, but in meows.

"Meow, mow."

"Mowie, meow."

It is simple. I wish I could talk to Brielle and tell her stuff that I haven't told her before.

But I can't.

Oh well, at least I have fur rubs and nighttime bathing.

And treats and cat food, and a litter box.

Daddy cleans my poop every night and changes my litter box every day. Brielle feeds me and Penelope.

Have I mentioned that I am everyone's favorite animal?

I am cute, little, and nice (most of the time).

I am funny and smart.

Mommy, Daddy, and Brielle are all my pets.

That means people do things for me and do whatever I want.

It is a living dream.

Penelope hasn't listened to what I said a couple weeks ago about how she needs to stop getting in my way. So, that means more smacking for me! Hooray!

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“Willow! It’s dinnertime!” Oops! I jump off my space off the window (are you sure I haven’t mentioned about how I love my spot on the couch?) I followed Daddy and Brielle upstairs and Brielle fed me and Penelope. We both take our bowls and eat while Daddy and Brielle go to her room to do whatever. Mommy puts Brielle to sleep though, so I wish I could just eat Penelope! That would be so good!

While I eat, I think about how Penelope had been sick a few weeks earlier...

About five months ago, Penelope had a diagnosis of diabetes and had to get shots in her neck two times every day. I watched it a couple of times, and it was pretty scary. I felt kinda bad for her at that point.

I kept on eating, and I spoke to Penelope. (In cat talk, meows, not real words)

“So, Penelope, why did you eat my bowl of food? Huh?” Penelope nodded and said, “Sorry Willow. I was hungry. I should have asked before I took your food. I am sorry.” I nodded. “No probamo. Just ask next time,” I said. Penelope nodded and said, “Yeah, about that-” Daddy and Brielle are coming in here! Oh no!

Me and Penelope ran into our cat perch and hid in there. Brielle called, “Penelope! Willow! Where are yooou?” Me and Penelope giggled and kept on shushing each other.

I smiled and licked Penelope. Penelope grinned and licked me back.

So, things were okay with me and Penelope again. She had finally listened to me and understood.

So fellow readers, I hope you enjoyed getting to know me and my life story. Bye! 🏠

O Western Wind

Joanna Malone, 16

O Western Wind, where have you blown my love?
`Neath what gold leaves his footprints have you hid?
Tell me but this, ye wind of sunsets flaming,
And I shall rise and follow where you bid.

I'll don a gown as gold as golden barley,
Walk iron shoes till I have worn them out,
To follow him whom I have pledge my heart to,
Through days or years of flood and drought.

O Western Wind, you loose the latest leaf's
Fast-failing grasp upon the parent bough,
But never will my hand let go my love,
It matters not how fearfully you blow.

I'll wander o'er nine hills of silver sand-dunes,
Through seven woods of blossom'd trees I'll wend,
Traverse a score of peopled cities,
Until I reach my journey's only end.

O Western Wind, the geese upon the meadow
Hear your call and rise on songful wings,
The flowers sleep beneath the fiery woodland,
Beneath the loam, the seeds of many springs.

I'll mount a horse as white as lilies honour,
And by my side a grey, grey hound shall run,
A fleur-de-lys set high upon my shoulder
And there shall be to tear it from me none.

O Western Wind, blow on, blow on forever,
But tell me where my true love I may find!
Ere these gilded leaves that deck the fading forest
Are swept apart and lost upon the wind. 🏠

Welcome Home

Eleanor Powell, 14

Freezing wind battered my face until my eyes watered, snow seeped into my boots until my toes were numb, and my injured ankle pounded, but I refused to stop.

My journey over the last month had become increasingly cold, until the night before when the snowstorm had started, but I refused to stop now.

I knew the road I was on, the woods that surrounded me, though seeing it felt like glimpsing a past life through a dirty window. I noticed a few trees were still charred, some fallen, from four months ago.

I'd only glimpsed the destruction, in the midst of the attack, that night four months ago. I'd seen it from the back of my captor's wagon as I screamed for help, watching Woren's face when she hadn't been able to save me.

I'd seen it all- the horrified faces, the fallen fighters, the destroyed homes. And I knew firsthand that not all the damage from that night was repaired.

But maybe, just maybe, it could be soon.

I trudged on through the cold snow, my ankle barely holding me up and exhaustion tempting me every moment to give up- but I refused.

Soon, but still not soon enough, I came to the familiar intersection of the road, and turned onto the narrow path through the forest, my ankle throbbing all the way. I reminded myself again and again that the narrow path through the woods was the only reason our house still stood, and I should be grateful. Still, I found myself frustrated with the long distance, and the tree roots that I tripped on, not seeing them in the snow.

Despite my heaving eyelids, injured ankle and freezing body, despite the shaking of my legs, from cold and nerves, I couldn't help but grin at the sights that greeted me.

Where some people might just see a tree, I saw a childhood playground. Where some might see a hill, I saw the site of countless sled races, and where some might only see vines strung over a river, I saw our favorite spot to swim in the summertime.

I wiped the single tear that fell away quickly, squeezing my eyes shut tight. I knew that, should my tears fall, my face might freeze solid.

Now, I walked around the familiar bend, past the two swings I'd spent hours of my childhood on, and now- my home! Our cabin! Despite the raid of four months ago, our home sat untouched, light emanating from the windows. I couldn't hear anything from inside, but only God knew how things had changed from the merriment we used to fill out evenings with.

Forgetting my exhaustion, forgetting the cold, I let myself break out running, tripping over my ankle but never allowing myself to fall, racing to the door and rapping my shaking hand on it.

What if she was still angry? What if they'd forgotten me? What if-

I shushed the horrible fears. They were groundless.

The door swung open, and there stood my sister's husband, Marken.

He stared down at me disbelievingly for a few seconds, before pulling me into a tight hug, despite the freezing snow that clung to every inch of me.

"You're home." I could hear the smile, the relief, the astonishment in his voice. He pulled me inside and closed the door. After the last four months, I finally realized- I was home.

My second oldest sister, Ardla, raced toward me, pulling me into a tight, welcoming hug.

"Wilda!" Her voice shrieked as I felt her arms tighten around me.

I sank into her hug, letting the tears I'd held in for four months begin to flow. Tears of pain, of regret, of relief, of joy.

I felt Abdiel, my older brother, wrap his arms around both of us, and we leaned in against him.

After a moment, after we'd pulled apart, once I'd gained my words back, I looked at Ardla, finally addressing the one missing member of our family.

"Where's Woren?" I asked in a hushed voice. She was the one I had endangered more than anyone else, she was the one I'd always refused to forgive or connect with.

Ardla nodded behind me, and I turned to see my oldest sister, waiting with arms open for me.

I ran and threw my arms around her neck, holding on tight, for what felt like forever, ignoring the throb in my ankle, resting in her comforting embrace- letting myself feel love with no anger for the first time in years.

Now, I knew she'd been doing what she could for me in the midst of her grief, that she did care, more than anything. Regret for all the other thoughts I'd had for two years flooded my heart, stronger than ever.

continued on next page

The emotion overwhelmed me, leaving me frozen in the shock of the ceaselessness of it.

Finally, tears flooding out against my sister's shoulder, I managed to say, "Woren, I'm so sorry."

I sobbed with the words, wishing I knew what else to say. So much of the extra pain she'd suffered for two years was my fault, and I didn't know how to make it right.

After a moment, I heard her soft, comforting voice for the first time in months, so gentle and forgiving, after everything, asking an unexpected question.

"Have you made things right with Christ?"

I nodded against her shoulder, knowing it was all that really mattered, still sobbing too much for words.

"Then you're already forgiven," She pulled me tighter, and I felt her tears on my shoulder.

We sank onto the nearby couch, and Marken, Arda, and Abdiel all wrapped their arms around us.

Wrapped in the arms of my family, I finally let all the joyful tears fall—for I was home at last. 🏔️

Autumn Leaves

Addie Collins, 13

Cold winds blowing roughly 'round
Stirring the leaves up from the ground.
How bright they are; those little things
And to my heart great joy they bring.

Swishing, swirling everywhere
Up throughout the open air.
Then once more, when the wind dies down
The leaves stop rustling all around.

Some leaves still, are on the trees
Moving slightly with the breeze.
As the soft pitter-pat of rain falls
The songbirds from one branch to another call.

After the gentle rain, the leaves
With silver water drops sparkle and gleam.
The smell of damp earth rising up
And the brook running over to fill my cup. 🏔️

The River

Addie Collins, 14

Slowly doth the river flow,
From high mountains capped with snow,
And into meadows with flowers bright,
Gurgling sweetly in the night.

Take heed, my friends! And listen well,
So many things are near that river in the dell!
Birds and beasts are at its muddy brink,
Eager and ready to receive a drink.

On and on the river goes,
Swiftly over colorful stones.
Winding like a ribbon, throughout the land,
Until the destination is at hand. 🏔️



by Zahra Velchez, 4

Psalm of Prayer

James Teoh, 13

Deliver me O Lord from the evil deeds!
Deliver me O Lord from the daily problem I face!
Deliver me O Lord from my sinful thoughts!
Hide me from your presence,
For I am not worthy to see You.

Praise the Lord Almighty!
Praise the Lord with all your heart and all your soul,
Praise the Lord with all your strength and all your might,
Praise the Lord forever,
For He deserves our praise.

Give thanks to the Lord for His mercy upon us.
Give thanks to the Lord for His provision!
Give thanks to the Lord for His protection!
Give thanks to the Lord for His steadfast love
endures forever! 🏔️

The Nightmare at Dawn

Brielle Latzman, 10

Once upon a time, there was a girl named Layla, who was born with dwarfism. Kids would always tease her for being small. When she wasn't crying at home because she was bullied, she practiced archery. She was excellent at it, and she loved it.

One day, she went into the forest to practice shooting bows and arrows into the trees. Then, something terrifying happened to her. She heard rustling and a big, hungry lion jumped out from under the bushes. He roared loudly into the girl's face, and his breath made her hair blow in different directions. Startled, Layla dropped her arrows, screamed very loudly, and ran away as fast as she could. The lion chased her. Layla was running so fast that she fell to the ground. The lion caught up to her and started walking toward her slowly. Layla backed up until she was pinned against a tree.

Layla was staring at the lion with fright, when all of a sudden, the lion started to laugh. He roared with hysterics, shook his fluffy mane, and said, "Wow. I've never seen someone so small before! You're like, a dwarf!" Layla said with fear, shaking all over, "You can talk? Bu-But you're a lion." "Of course, I can talk, you silly, little girl," said the lion meanly. Then in a gruff voice, he said sarcastically, "What are you doing here? You shouldn't have come here by yourself. You have no one to protect you, and you're easy to prey because you are so small. You know, I'm kind of hungry and you're the purrfect snack!" He started inching towards her, growling fiercely.

Layla suddenly recalled her bow and arrows! She started slowly scooting backwards and ran towards them. She quickly grabbed an arrow, and she did what she used to do when just practicing shooting an arrow in the corn fields. She slowly pulled the string of the arrow, pulled on it very forcefully, and shot him in the leg. She ran backwards, quickly, before the lion could pounce on her. The lion groaned in pain, and his eyes widened through the orange fur covering his eyes, realizing she was much more powerful and stronger than he thought. He limped away moaning. He would never pick on anyone again.

Layla took a deep breath trying to stop the tears from falling. But she didn't succeed. Her stomach lurched and two tears spilled down her cheeks. She swallowed hard, looking at the fluffy, white clouds in the bright pink sky that had once been blue and white.

"It's dawn now," she thought. She took one more look at the forest that was covered in colorful leaves and the dewy, green grass beneath it. The fall season was ready to emerge. She hastily grabbed her stash of bows and arrows and ran home without looking back.

She sped to her room, not stopping to say hi to her father or her older sister. Layla put her bows and arrows on her nightstand, and she flopped down on her bed and began to cry.

She wished she was not as small as she was; she wished the horrifying scene with the mean lion had never happened. She was mad at the whole world.

Then something occurred to her. She had fought a mighty lion, and she had survived.

Layla smiled to herself. She may be small, but she was mighty.

The story of her bravery spread throughout the entire school, and she was never made fun of again. Actually, she was known as a hero. 🏔️



Rainbow Rose by Liliana Choi, 7

As We Wait for the Wedding

K. E. Keseman, 17

Dearest,

The enemy is advancing. We are drawing closer to home and closer to you, but I would not have it this way. I would not have you see what the human heart can do when it puts brotherly love aside.

I am lonely, my dearest one. There are no friends here in this ravaged land. I am weary, too. Every day there is blood, smoke, dust, and a few hours' rest before another endless day, and I want to see your face. I must see it. There is nothing beautiful here...

A pair of tears fell onto the wrinkled page and blurred the ink. How she missed him! She would write and tell him the news from the family farm, the books she planned to buy for their new shelves, and best of all the wedding dress her cousin had finished sewing for her only yesterday. Would those things cheer him up and remind him of the wedding they both awaited?

Pulling a handkerchief from her apron pocket, she looked down at the letter again and continued reading it. Hardly had she come to the signature at the end when she took her own pen and paper and began to empty her own heart in turn.

Kneeling near the fire, he pulled the letter away from the glowing light and folded it again. It smelled faintly of flowery perfume and carried innocent, joyous news to match. Surely the gaiety she expressed was nothing but a transparent mask, covering loneliness as deep as his own.

If only her cousin had waited with the wedding dress; it was like selling chickens before they hatched. All around him every day, he had seen the severing of ties like theirs by a single arrow. Who was to say that she would be among the luckier women?

He shook his head, gazing about the circle of tents and then into the dancing flames. Tomorrow, before the other soldiers awoke, he would write back.

The enemy had reached the town. She knew it before she drew the curtain, for the light pervading her room was reddened with dust or smoke. When she stepped outside a few minutes later, the air was disturbed by distant echoes of battle. So it had come at last, as he said it would, and her own countryside of emerald hills would be desecrated. And her beloved, who would now be her husband had the enemy not invaded all those months ago... was he in the midst of the mess? Was he safe? Could anyone be safe where such noise and chaos were?

Before she knew what was doing, her feet were carrying her out onto the cobblestones, down the street, up the nearest hill, to search for a glimpse of him. When she reached the top, red-faced and breathless, she was not alone. Crowded together, watching for their own loved ones, were dozens of townswomen: some bashful and girlish with rosy cheeks, some hardened by responsibility, with babies crying in their arms, and some like herself, silver rings flashing on their fingers. All were waiting.

"Look. Look up at the hills," said a hoarse voice behind him.

He relaxed his pull on the bowstring to glance upward and see what the man meant, then nearly dropped it. The hills were animated with color, white and pink and golden, a flurry of skirts and waving hands.


"It's all the wives," the man whispered. "And the mothers and siblings and secret admirers."

He set down his bow to watch in wonder. "This... this is my town. Someone I love must be up there." His heart felt ready to burst. Around him, arrows stopped flying as others noticed the flood above them. Someone beside him leaped up and shouted some rubbish about the war being over soon, and then others joined in shouting from all sides.

Standing up, he blew a kiss as far as a kiss can go.

On the hilltop, tears turned to smiles and shrieked greetings when they saw the men stop fighting and heard their shouts. Standing on her tiptoes to see the waves of gray far below, she blew a shower of kisses of her own.

But the battle had never come to a standstill. The aggressors grew irritated and began to charge anew, and she watched as the two sides clashed again. The moment of reunion was over. She withdrew from the crowd and sank to her knees.

Dear Lord, protect him. Please protect him. Hold him tight, and protect us both as we wait for the wedding. 

Who?

Hanna Law, 12

Principle

In a school there's a principle,
They are as sharp as pineapples,
Scolding like they roar down the roof,
Cause students running from wild wolf,
It is pretty impossible,
To not notice a principle.



Maid

In a house there may be housemaids,
At times they may be underpaid,
Working diligent like the ants,
Who always help to fold the pants,
Worry and fret they are afraid,
That their hard work may get unpaid.



Parent

Everyone can be a parent,
No guarantee they are patient,
They can turn into a madbull,
Whenever we don't finish school,
We do need to be obedient,
So that we avoid arguments.

Teachers

Everyone may not like teachers,
Note teachers have special features,
They can be fierce like a lion,
Students pounded on get frightened,
But they too can be kind creature,
Guiding students to be better.



Students

Everyone is once a student,
They can become a big burden,
They might be cheeky like monkeys,
Causing teachers to go crazy,
But they will be nation's future,
Let's hope it'll be a nice picture. 🏔️



Journey of the Acorn

Keziah Khoo, 9

An acorn falls,
Where a squirrel finds it
And buries it
For the winter.
Yet the acorn sits untouched
Until spring.

As raindrops fall,
One after the other,
The acorn is watered,
And roots begin to grow.
Then a shoot of green emerges-
Tiny, delicate, but determined to flourish.

Over decades
The seedling grows
The seedling flourishes
Taller, taller, taller it grows
Withstanding lightning
Towering above neighbouring trees.

Wider, wider, wider it expands.
The crown,
With branches extending,
Expands.
And still it stays firm.

One twig over another,
A starling patiently builds its nest,
Nestled in a branch.
The tree becomes
A refuge.

The tree drops an acorn
Paving the beginning
Of another tree
Making a miraculous
Journey.

The journey of an acorn
To a tree
To a refuge
To a provider
Of a second generation of trees. 🏔️

“A Psalm of Praise”

Dacia Ells, 13

The LORD is mighty and worthy to be praised
I will praise him for he made me
The LORD made everything including the world
He made the sun, moon, and stars
He calls them all by name
He knows the hairs upon my head at any given time
The LORD is mighty and worthy to be praised

The Lord is creative and thought of it all
He made the striped horse and birds that fly
He made toads that can freeze and thaw again
He made gravity to keep me here but I can still move
The LORD is creative and thought of it all

The LORD saved me from my sins
I will worship and adore him, for he saved me
He shed his scarlet blood on the cruel cross
Then he rose again so I can be saved
The LORD saved me from my sins

The LORD is preparing a place for me
Far away in heaven Jesus makes a place for me
He gives me all I need on Earth
But also much, much more
The LORD is preparing a place for me

One day he will call me home
Oh, I long for that special day
When Christ will call me home 🏔️



Self Portrait by Audra Preuss, 15

Nancy Nelson, the Sweetest Woman in the South

Maddie Wray, 14

I open the refrigerator door, gleefully waiting for a breath of cool, breathable air, a welcome reprieve from the constant inferno-like conditions of late. While I love living in the South, the kind neighbors, the random bring-what-you-have barbeques, and sweet tea, it would be nice not to feel like you're melting every July. For the past two weeks, the air has been so humid that it feels like trying to breathe through poundcake. While poundcake, when made right, is delicious,

I have no desire to constantly breathe it. I freeze when the desired refreshing air does not appear.

"Noooo," I mutter, dread filling my body. "Please don't be broken; please don't be broken." I manage to shimmy the worrisome appliance out far enough to look and see whether it's plugged in. Alas, despite my hopes, it is plugged in.

"Mama," I call, glaring at the refrigerator. "What," Mama asks. "You look like someone just ran over your cat. What's wrong with...," she trails off, her eyes finding the refrigerator. "Not again; why Arthur? Why must you do this to us?" She says in despair before running to grab the phone, most likely to call our landlady, Nancy.

Nancy Nelson is quite possibly the sweetest woman ever to walk the earth. She's one of those old women who you look at and think, "I wish you were my grandma." That being said, Nancy can be a little, let's say, forgetful at times. By forgetful, I don't mean forgetting where you put the keys or whether you turned off the stove. No, it's more like forgetting that in our city, you have to

renew your driver's license every two years and complain about it every time you have to. Or that you can't throw paper trash out your window even though it's biodegradable.

The one we learned the hard way is that she forgot that any issues with appliances must be fixed before a new tenant can move in, and any problems not fixed before the tenant moves in will be fixed and paid for by the landlord. Arthur, the refrigerator, has been dying for as long as I've lived in this house, which is five years. Every few weeks, we think he has finally kicked the bucket, only for him to magically start working right as we're about to replace him. In my opinion, he does that on purpose. Mama comes back into the kitchen, a tired and slightly wistful expression on her face.

"Maybe he's gonna stay dead," I say, earning a tired smile. Right as the words leave my mouth, a somewhat concerning squeaking noise comes from Arthur before he whirs to life. "You evil, spiteful, old man of a refrigerator," I cry with shock and a bit of much-deserved rage. Mama sighs, more accepting of Arthur's spitefulness than me. "I'll go tell Nancy not to come," I mutter, still giving Arthur the death stare. "Don't bother. She's probably already on the way. Also, Nancy answered the landline, which means she has lost her phone. Again."

Sure enough, Nancy came strolling up the walkway, dessert in her arms and her French bulldog Bluebell in tow. Nancy never, ever goes anywhere without her precious Bluebell. Bluebell is the most

spoiled dog in the entire South. According to Nancy, it would be downright disastrous to Bluebell's mental health if she had to be left alone for more than five minutes.

"Hello, sweeties," Nancy calls from the hallway, having let herself in. "Has Arthur finally moved on to, uh, the other side?" "No," Mama says, resigned, "He's still with us." Nancy shoots Arthur a glare before patting Mama's arm in sympathy. "I'm sorry, Molly. I'm sure he'll die eventually." "Some day," Mama and I say in unison.

"What do you have there, Nancy," I ask, motioning towards the packaged dessert in her arms. "I made Tornado Cake, and it is one of the best if I say so myself, and I do." "Why don't you sit down, and Georgia can cut us a couple of slices of cake," Mama says, motioning towards the table. "Why, thank you, Molly. I do love spending time with you girls."

After a good few minutes of raving over Nancy's latest treat, we got to my favorite part of Nancy's visits. "Did you hear that our corrupt government is raising the sales tax? It seems that every new year they raise it," Nancy grouses. "I read that this is the first time they have raised it in ten years," I state, watching for Nancy's reaction. "Yes, yes, that's what I meant, dearie. Oh, and did you hear they decided to build another elementary school? They bought the Clemson estate to build it. Why do we even need a third elementary school?" "Since they combined the school system with the other county, they need a third school," Mama comments. "Back in my day, we had a one-

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room schoolhouse with all the grades together,” Nancy muses.

It's not uncommon for Nancy to use the phrase “back in my day” in everyday conversation. Despite being just sixty-five, Nancy seems to think she went to school during the prairie days with one-room schools where you had to walk thirty miles in the snow every other day to get there. Though you better not say that she looks a day over forty if you ever want to taste her famous deviled eggs again.

“Can you believe little old Middleton, the most boring county in the state, has free public school? I mean, this town is truly being run by dogs if we are behind Middleton for public education progressiveness. Speaking of dogs, poor Bluebell has been going through a lot lately. It's against the law to bring non-service animals to the store. So now she has to sit all alone in the car while I do my shopping. Poor thing is beside herself.” The animal in question is currently sunbathing by the window. “She truly is traumatized,” Nancy finished.

“Oh, and do you know what really has me all tore up? The new traffic law. What right do they have to tell me when I can and when I cannot use my headlights. If they wish to provide me with a chauffeur who will follow all the rules, fine, but I will use my headlights whenever I so choose to,” Nancy stated indignantly.

“Dear me, who knew time could fly so fast. I best be on my way. I don't wanna miss bingo. Tonight, they have a Butterball turkey for the winner. Bluebell, let's go, honey.” We walk her out and bid her goodbye. Time with Nancy always goes by quickly.

The phone starts ringing, and Mama runs to answer it, leaving me to put everything away. I clear the dishes and wipe down the table. Grabbing the cake, I go to put it up, only for Arthur to make a horrible screeching noise. I put down the cake before slowly approaching the refrigerator. Opening the door, my suspicions were confirmed. After hours of working fine, Arthur was dead. Again. 🐌



I christen thee, Harold, the psychedelic snail by Bethany Loewen, 14

Jacobite's Farewell

Joanna Malone, 16

I see the azure mountains
Wrapp'd in their shrouds of mist,
I see the outthrust headland,
The wavelets small have kissed.
But they're fading into nothing
As the ship is riding free,
They are vanishing in distance
And the cruel, cold North Sea.
(And no more I see the heather plants
Wave sad farewell to me.)

And this is the last glimpsing
I'm granted of my home,
Since in a foreign country
Doomed have I been to roam.
The Frenchman's road will know these boots
That want the rocky brae,
Instead of through the wild glens,
I'll tramp a foreign way.
(And when I lay me down at last,
`Twill be in foreign clay.)

It were better I fell at Culloden,
Aye, fell stricken to the heart!
Than I should see my country's woes
And after seeing, part.
Or better should my ship go down,
While yet on Scottish seas,
Than banished should I be for aye
From gowan-sprinkled leas—
(But cease! For thoughts of home will
Soon have me upon my knees.)

Oh France, she is a bonny land,
And bonny are her folk,
And there's many a gallant Jacobite,
That wears a Frenchman's cloak.
But he that roved the high country,
How could he in Paris roam,
Without a pang of home-longing
At coming of the gloam?
(I will forever haunted be
With visions of my home.)

For how can one who has been blest
Ambrosia's cup to drain,
With such inferior beverages
Be satisfied again?
It's so with me, I'll never be
Content to sip French wine,
When ballades of the Heather Ale

Are playing in my mind.
(These winds that kiss my face farewell,
How I have loved their kind!)

I've a wee bit sprig of heather
Pinned beneath my tartan cloak;
A tiny portion of the thread
To mend a heart that's broke.
Though I know it cannot do it,
Still I'll keep it through the years,
Though it withers brown and brittle,
Still I'll lave it with my tears.
(And `twill mind me of the homeland
Which the broken heart reveres.)

Ah, Lochaber! where the Carnoch flows
Through green banks, where mavisés chaunt.
But they've pulled down the stones my father built
And made it a vultures' haunt.
They've driven my brother from his rightful hall,
And set in his place their own,
They've driven his bairns and wife from the door,
To wander the world alone,
(And driven me from all held dear,
To cross the stormy foam.)

Though the traitors seek my brother
Who was Chieftain in the North,
Yet he will be kept from out their grasp,
So long as I go forth.
But if `twas not for my clansman,
I would turn the boat around,
For I'd rather die in Scotland,
Than live on Frankish ground.
(And let the heart across the waves
In sorrow's sea be drowned.)

The sailors do not mind me,
They are busy at their art,
They do not hear the moan of winds
In the cracks of a broken heart.
They do not hear the weary sighs,
Nor note the longing glance,

But steer their vessel on, aye! on,
Towards the shores of France.
(And it seems I have been dazzled
By the dizzy sea-mew's dance.)

For I see my home before me!
See the rough and moss-grown wall,
See my kinsfolk gathered round me,

continued on next page

See my brother in his hall,
 And the flag still flaps above us,
 And the cup still flows beneath,
 And the gorse blooms yet as golden,
 On the flower-spangled heath.
 (And amidst the whole blithe gladness,
 There's not time to think of grief.)

But the vision fades and leaves me,
 Leaves me sorer than before,
 Like the faintest strain of music
 To a man outside the door,
 Who would fain go in to sup there
 Fain would hear the music clear,
 Fain would taste the crimson beverage,
 But is forbidden to draw near.
 (Heaven pity all poor exiles!
 Through my grasp has slipped all dear!)

Slipped beyond my grasp forever!
 Never more shall I return,
 Though the mavis sings as blithely
 By the pretty, purling burn,
 Though the heather bloom as brightly,
 Though the heart beat still as true,
 Though the pipes yet call as loudly,
 And the thistles wave as blue,
 Though the glens be still as lovely,
 To my native land—Adieu! 🏔️

The New Pet

By Liliana White, 8

Once upon a time there was a family. There were 4 people in their family. A dad and a mom and two kids named Jerry and Debra. They were always bored because they didn't have any pets. But one day, the dad had a surprise for them. They went in the car and arrived at the pet store for wild pets!

They looked at a monkey but they didn't want it because it was too crazy! Then they looked at a leopard but they couldn't afford it. Then they looked at a lemur but it bounced up and up and up and they couldn't catch it. Then they saw a lion! He was calm. He knew how to do tricks with fire. He was cheap because people always treated him badly. They didn't like him and they wanted him to be gone. So the family bought him!

They had to go home and get a trailer because he didn't fit in their car. They got the trailer and then they took him home. He sat on the couch and Debra got him a glass of milk while Jerry was stroking his mane to calm him. They cuddled up next to him and watched a movie together. They decided that his name would be Rand. They set up a talent show with Rand and everybody in the neighborhood loved him. They loved their new pet! 🏔️

Poems

Mercy White, 10

Cat
 Cute, fluffy
 Pet, purr, meow
 So soft to pet
 Mammal

Pizza
 Soft, tasty
 Bite, chew, smile
 Very delicious
 Treat

The cat and the dog,
 Dog loves to run and play, Cat
 Loves to sleep all day. 🏔️



Gypsy and the Pearl by Audra Preuss, 15

Primoris Kingdom Newsline: Saved by the Kids

Lia Nicole, 17

The Primoris Kingdom is a peaceful home to many individuals, including the royal family. Despite their tempting palace, full of gold, jewels, and historic art, they have never suffered the calamity of a greedy robber. That all changed last week when two men attempted to break into the palace and steal as much of the wealth as they could smuggle out. This royal disaster was prevented by the miraculous intervention of three young children from the Meadowbrooke lands: Maverick "Ick" Farnet, Molly Mae Farnet, and Jerzy Farnet.

The Farnet family had decided to take a trip to the kingdom to restock on basic necessities and take a mini vacation from their farm life. Mr. and Mrs. Jebidiah Farnet left the care of their youngest children to the hands of their second eldest, Agricola Farnet, instead of the eldest, Jib, who had to stay with Mr. Farnet to help load bags of animal feed onto their family wagon.

"It was absolutely terrible!" Agricola commented. "Even though I take care of my younger siblings all the time, this was too much. How does one girl take care of six rowdy children who are all fighting for your attention and pulling at your hair and begging you to take them to the Magic Genie in the center of the marketplace while your brother Tiger is running around roaring at people and destroying the merchants' vendors? It simply cannot be done."

Agricola claims that she left the care of Ick, Molly Mae, and Jerzy to Lenny, the family nerd. Lenny, on the other hand, claims that

she merely dragged them over to where he was reading his textbook before running off to attempt to stop Tiger from causing any more harm. "Because of this indirect action, it was not made known to me her desire that I look after my younger siblings. Had she been more direct and taken a moment to speak to me, I would have gladly read Anthro's Speculations on the Human Insides to my unintelligent siblings to keep them occupied."

Ick, Molly Mae, and Jerzy, bored with nothing to do, saw the grandeur of the palace and wished to explore it. They managed to slip past the guards, who were trying to hold down Tiger Farnet and prevent him from eating the flower gardens at the entrance of the palace.

"Oh man, the palace was amazing! Is it literally made of gold? Or is it fool's gold? I've heard Lenny talk about that once but his lecture was too boring to listen to. Anyways, yeah, we had a great time! I was trying to explore the castle for secret spies so I could ask them how their missions were going. I'm a secret spy too, but don't tell anyone! It's a secret. My code name is Maverick so you can't call me that." When we asked him if we could refer to him as Ick like his siblings do for this article, he promptly replied, "I hate that name!" But he could give us no other name to use, so we had to resort to Ick.

When we asked Jerzy his thoughts on the palace, he replied, "Whatever Ick said!", followed by a distant yell from Ick, "Don't call me that!"

As the three children ventured the palace grounds, the two intruders were busy trying to locate the

royal family so as to steal the gold without running into them. That's when our three heroes found them out.

Molly Mae told us how things played out. "These two tall guys, well they were sneaking around, and I thought, 'Oh boy, they're probably playing a game!'," so I ran up to them and yelled, 'Heya! I wanna play too! I like your masks!' They didn't seem to like that, ya know, because they frowned at me just like Agricola does when I get in trouble. They told me something like, 'Shut up you little twerp!' but I didn't really understand them so I kept yelling, 'Oh boy, this place sure is big! Perfect for hide and seek! Do ya wanna play that? I'm the world's best hider, that's what my pa always says!' They kept mumbling at me and trying to put their hands over my mouth, that was weird! I just kept talking because I think it's non-polite to not talk to new people. Well eventually, they began running away so I yelled out, 'Wait for me! I didn't know we were a gonna play tag!' So I ran off after them! And we runned for hours and hours..." We had to cut Molly Mae's story short because of our limited amount of space.

Upon seeing Molly Mae chase after the mysterious intruders, Ick and Jerzy decided to follow and investigate. After a long while of chasing, the three lost the intruders but discovered a secret lair in the deep recesses of the palace where they had been hoarding all the gold and treasures to carry out of the palace. They figured out the scheme and worked out a plan to stop the criminals.

continued on next page

"We knew we had to distract the guys so we told Jerzy to start running around, forcing them to chase him," Ick reported. "He may be tiny but he's the fastest of us all! But when we asked him, he refused to do it unless I did it too. That little twerp! Why doesn't he ever listen to me? So we started arguing and then I went tackled him and we weren't getting anywhere so finally we had to make Molly Mae do it."

"I can't leave Ick! He's my best friend!" Jerzy told us.

"I was just like if they ain't gonna do it, then I will! Them lazy boys! Girl power!" Molly Mae told us before running off to play with Ick and Jerzy.

As Molly Mae distracted the criminals, Ick and Jerzy ran off to set a trap in the lair. They piled all the gold and jewels onto one big heap and then climbed up to the top, hiding and waiting for the men to come back.

When they did, they had taken Molly Mae hostage. As she struggled in their arms, they noticed how their stolen wealth was all on one side of the room. They quietly sneaked over to investigate, just as Ick and Jerzy had hoped. When the thieves were close enough, the two Farnet boys pushed over the gold and jewels, burying the criminals in their own loot! Ick told us that even though Molly Mae was trapped too, she yelled out for them to do it again, so he knew she would be just fine. Jerzy ran off to find the royal guards while Ick watched over the criminals.

"It was my first day on the job so I didn't know whether little boys running up to you claiming he had captured the bad guys was normal or not," one guard reported.

"We tried to calm the little twerp down but he wouldn't stop until at

least one of us had followed him," another told us. "So we sent the new guy to go with him. I still don't know his name."

"A big, hunky guard sent me with the little boy to see what was wrong," the newest guard, Fransico Q. Washington, continued. "I'm glad I went, because the little boy was right! Oh, his name is Jerzy? Well then, Jerzy was right! There, under a huge pile of stolen treasures, were two scrawny guys and their hyper-active daughter. Oh, that was Jerzy's sister? Ah, never mind."

As news spread of the prevented robbery, the royal family was alerted and commented on the victory.

"The three darling Farnet children were simply amazing! I talked to each one and I am in awe of their quick thinking and ability to stay calm under such pressure. Even though I don't care for the jewels of this world, I am quite pleased with their selfless efforts to protect our palace's treasures," Her Majesty (may Najjad bless her), Queen Almira, reported.

Heartthrob Prince Amir told us, "I'm always telling my mother that we need to get better guards who can actually protect this place, but of course, we can't do that because 'it would scare our citizens and guests away.' Peasants don't matter. Jewels do." When we asked him what he thought about the three children who were responsible for saving the wealth, he replied, "I could have taken care of the criminals myself, better than those little kids could have. They put scratches on our treasures with their filthy farmer hands!"

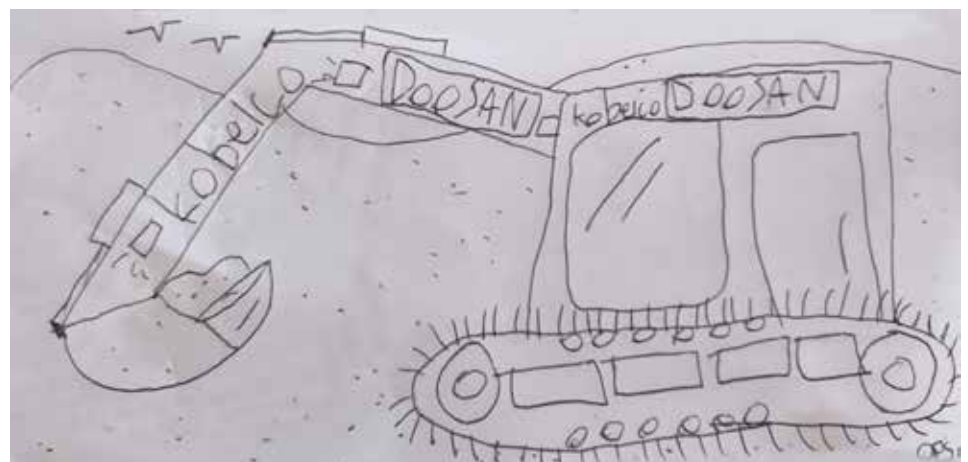
"I'm so sorry they ran off! I should have tried to keep an eye on them. But I'm glad they were able to be of help to their Majesties," Mrs. Farnet said.

"Them? Help? I don't believe it!" Agricola exclaimed. "They're troublemakers!"

"They sure can be trouble, but they're some of the sweetest kids you ever did meet," Jib told us.

Rosie Farnet, 4, didn't say anything when asked her thoughts on the situation and instead simply ran to Mrs. Farnet.

"Rawr rawr!" Tiger commented. 🏔️



by Asher Velchez, 9