

The Mirror



Fifth Edition
Fall 2015

Foreword from the Editor-in-Chief

Life is an honest game, sometimes brutally so. College applications, mountains of homework, and even terrorist attacks overseas take us away from the world that we wish we had and drag us into the world that actually exists. And yet, we still believe in a place where adventure lurks around every corner and there is always a happy ending. Fantasy is the world we wish we had, it is the daydreams in the middle of class, it is our hopes for the future. Our wildest dreams and deepest hopes, our world of fantasy, are real as we choose to make them. We invite you to join us in the fantastical experience within these pages, and we challenge you to make your fantasy real.

Acknowledgements

Editors-in-Chief:

Kelly Esparza

Sophia Fox

Editorial Board:

Julia Agos

Kelly Esparza

Kate Fernandez

Sophia Fox

Eliana Kontokanis

Sophia Nguyen

Digital Design Board:

Nicole Danuwidjaja

Sophia Nguyen

Club Proctor: Mrs. Kropp

Table of Contents

Cover Page

Castle in the Clouds, Grace Conlin

Art

<i>Submersion</i> , Ysabella Roberts.....	8
<i>The Wedding</i> , Mia Stephens.....	9
<i>Daze</i> , Mia Stephens.....	20
<i>Omniscient</i> , Ysabella Roberts.....	27
<i>Linger</i> , Mia Stephens.....	35

Poetry

<i>Page One</i> , Sophia Nguyen.....	5
<i>Fantasy</i> , Nicole Young.....	7
<i>Dreamlands</i> , Bailey Yates.....	19
<i>Gray, Oh, Gray</i> , Katie Isherwood.....	21
<i>Hush</i> , Eliana Kontokanis.....	29
<i>One Person</i> , Jordaine Tran.....	36

Photography

<i>Fall into Fantasy</i> , Nicole Young.....	6
<i>Reading Space</i> , Elisabeth Fernandez.....	12
<i>Wonderland</i> , Michaela Mark.....	13
<i>Drowning in Your Thoughts</i> , Michaela Mark.....	18
<i>Native Pride</i> , Sophia Fox.....	28
<i>Happiness Has No Horizon</i> , Sarah Larson.....	30
<i>Once Upon a Time...</i> , Kelly Esparza.....	48

Short Stories

<i>Flowers</i> , Katarina Fernandez.....	14
<i>The Spell</i> , Kelly Esparza.....	23
<i>Expectation</i> , Katie Isherwood.....	31
<i>Eliana and the Weeping Willow</i> , Julia Lathrop.....	38

Essay

<i>Leaps of Color</i> , Sarah Erckenbrack.....	10
--	----

Page One

Sophia Nguyen

The old door creaks as I open it.
I glance around for anything that looks intriguing.
Something catches my eye, and eagerly,
I pull it off the shelf.
The dust flies away like a flock of tiny birds,
the spine cracks,
and the journey to another world begins...



“Fall into Fantasy”

Nicole Young

Fantasy

Nicole Young

Open a book,
What do you see?
Each word and line filled with fantasy.
Like sparks exploding from each page,
A lowly bird bursting out of its cage,
Fantasy sweeps me off my feet,
Adventures fill me: oh how sweet.
My Wonder and awe flow like a river,
When reading Lois Lowry's Giver.
I cannot sit still, my mind at tauter,
When living the adventures of Harry Potter.
Last but not least, just one little thing,
Happiness is found reading Lord of the Rings.
So with these books, and many alike,
Fantasy is found, and fantasy strikes.



“Submersion”
Ysabella Roberts



“The Wedding”
Mia Stephens

Leaps of Color

Sarah Erckenbrack

Gray is a color that surrounds us. It is a color that overrides our moments of beautifully, mesmerizing auroras that appear with each moment of jollity. It is the color of the burden we bear, the duty that humanity is called to fulfill. In his poem “The Lady of Shalott,” Lord Tennyson takes this belief and crafts it into a philosophy that states each person is born onto this earth gifted or cursed with this gray we recognize as duty to fulfill. When, however, brilliant shots of vibrancy pass through the gloom, one must decide whether this duty is worth the price of one’s happiness which stands out with myriads of color. He then poses this question - if it is, then at what risk is a person willing to chase these streaks of tincture? Lord Tennyson utilizes the main character as an example of this theory. Just as we are born into the gray, the Lady is first described as being surrounded by four gray walls, never to leave. She is bound to her duty, spinning and fashioning the magical web she sits in front of, much like we are coerced to play roles in life, fulfilling the plans Fate has pre-arranged. With the ever repeating phrase of Camelot, a reader learns her desire to be seen, to be heard, to be a part of the color that she is barred from, much like how humanity’s own desires are heard through calls of peace and cries of war. As Sir Lancelot, the knight she desires, passes, she comes to a decision. Although she does not know what lies ahead of her or at what cost abandoning her duty may bring, she leaves the prison of gray she is surrounded by, chasing after the opportunity that is pulsing with

luminosity. It is then that the reader learns the cost of what chasing colors is – her life. Through the descriptions of her actions, one realizes that this price does not matter to her, for the Lady was able to achieve what she had longed for. Although she perishes, she is heard by the land of Camelot in a song that haunts the ears of even the bravest knights, except for Sir Lancelot, who blesses her in a last reminder to the audience that the illusion of an unbreakable wall of gray is really just a prism of color yet to be explored. Considering all the elements that make up this poem, it is hard to express in words what this means to me. It is not just the writing, for I adore the classics. It is the realization that duty is not a path that I must follow, but something to keep in mind while searching for my own happiness. This poem is a reminder that throughout our entire lives we will be bound by something, but it is up to oneself to take a leap and follow the colors that make our lives brilliant.



“Reading Space”
Elisabeth Fernandez



“Wonderland”
Michaela Mark

Flowers

Kate Fernandez

“Now, Cara,” Miss said, a note of warning in her voice. “I want to make it abundantly clear regarding what I expect from you. It’s not every day the king visits.” Miss proceeded to outline precisely how she wanted me perform, down to the number of inches my rear was to be from the ground when I curtsyed.

Bored by her lecture, I ignored her and turned to evaluate the gray sky. It had rained yesterday and for most of the night, and the result was a wet muddle, no matter where one travelled in Jarn. Gloomy clouds hung low in the atmosphere, threatening future showers.

“Gods above, Cara. Are you listening?” Miss’ sharp voice cut through my musings, scattering them like the crows bronze-skinned Asim was pursuing. Before I could respond, Miss directed her attention towards another of her adopted children. “Asim, stop that this instant!”

Asim, proud as ever, turned towards Miss with one dark eyebrow cocked rebelliously. He loved to invite her wrath, and he was my first choice whenever my plans to cause disorder required a partner.

“Come here, Asim,” Daleen commanded. Sixteen and beautiful, she was the oldest of Miss’ seven charges, myself included. Her blond hair was intricately braided, and a wreath of flowers and pink ribbons graced her forehead as if she were fairy princess. When Asim presented himself before her, Daleen began to reprimand him for his mischief.

I let my gaze wander over the people on the other side of the street. My eyes settled on William, the grandson of the healer and one of my few friends. He motioned for me to join him, and after confirming that Daleen and Miss had their attention elsewhere, I dashed across the mucky lane to join him.

Clasping his hands in greeting, I spoke first. “Why are you here? You’ll get me into trouble.”

“Are you scared of Miss?” William challenged.

I bristled and opened my mouth to provide a smart retort when green-eyed Azalea loudly announced my presence—or rather, the lack of it—to Miss. Gritting my teeth, I murmured an oath no child should utter.

Miss’ black glare was enough to send a shiver up my spine.

“Come on,” William nervously said, tugging on my arm. No doubt he also wanted to escape a confrontation with my forceful guardian. “Let’s go to Gran’s shop until she calms down a bit.”

We darted through the crowd and into an alley, giddy with disobedience. Our feet kicked up clods of filth as dirty rain-water soaked into my white socks and the hem of my sky blue dress, leaving them sodden and dirty. The alley opened up to Kalve, Jarn’s main road and only cobbled street. I kept a close eye on William, afraid that I would lose him among the thick crowd.

As a lock of my raven hair came loose and bounced against my forehead, a sprig of blue flowers fell out of my mane. I stooped to pick the blossoms up, calling out to William so he would halt. But when I looked up, he was nowhere to be seen.

I was alone in this horde.

Frantic, I screamed William's name. Pushing through the forest of legs, I searched for him, but he had disappeared. Fear overtook me. It was too loud, and the streets were crammed with far too many people. Turning every which way, I couldn't spot William's red jacket. I found myself breathless from fright. My hands clenched the flower stems, afraid to lose them as well.

Far away from me, the little lost girl, a man announced the arrival of the king. The news passed through the crowd, leaving silence in its wake.

Trumpets sounded and the sound of hooves on cobbled streets echoed through Jarn.

All of the people around me knelt, the knees of trousers brown and wet from the mud and excrement that covered the stone lane. But I, a little eight year old, stood with my muddy chin lifted and back straight, staring straight at the heavysset man on the beautiful black horse as he passed.

His brown-eyed gaze swept over his subjects, uninterested until they settled on the proud girl. When he saw me, he tugged gently on the reins. His monster of a horse was remarkably placid and halted as his rider directed.

He appraised me for a moment before speaking. "Why don't you bow to me, child?" the king inquired, his voice confident. It had a note of honesty to it, as if he were genuinely curious and sought to know why.

I stared defiantly into his eyes, the flowers in my hands lending me their strength. "My father told me that a king's a man, just like every other man, and he taught me never to bow to a man unless I find him deserving of it."

“And who is your father? A rebellious peasant with fire in his heart?” the king asked sternly. “Has he come to throw me off the throne?”

A smarter child would have withdrawn from the conversation, but no one had ever accused me of being intelligent. Tucking the unruly lock of raven hair behind my ear, I acknowledged the king’s question: “I can’t say I remember what he was exactly, but I do know who he was.”

The king shifted in his leather saddle, probing gently, “Is he no longer with your family?”

The maddening curl had once again found itself dangling in my face, and I batted it away, irritated. “I had no mother. My father left one day and didn’t return. Since then I’ve made a life for myself among the children in Miss’ care.”

“I see she doesn’t impart manners onto her charges,” the king remarked, a kind light in his eye.

I couldn’t stop from smiling. “Oh, sir, she’s tried something awful. But with me, they never seem to stick!”

“Try to mind your etiquette next time,” the king advised. “Not every noble is forgiving.”

“I’ll try, sir,” I told him. He rewarded me with a smile before tapping his heels against his mount. It obeyed, stepping forward, and the king continued his parade through Jarn.

I watched the company as they continued down the avenue, sweeping the curl behind my ear. I turned back towards the alley that led back to the Singing Crow, the inn Miss and Henry owned. William would find me later; he always did.

Then I noticed the flowers I held, clasped in one dainty hand. Although I had clenched them aggressively, their stems

were not broken. Rather, the stems had grown in the short time I had held them. Green stalks circled my fingers and wrist as if trying to embrace me.

I wrenched the flowers off of me. Something told me that I could not allow myself to be seen with them upon me as they were, for it would only bring questions.

But as I watched them fall into a puddle, I could only feel sorrow and separation.



“Drowning in Your Thoughts”
Michaela Mark

Dreamlands

Bailey Yates

Two-way mirror upon the wall,
I'm on both sides, standing tall.
Tell me which reflection's real,
And which I have yet to feel.

Imaginary beasts running wild,
In my mind much like a child's.
Every nightmare has been worthwhile,
Every dream has brought a smile.

I'm standing, brisk winds settling in,
I've lost a battle I was sure I'd win.
I'll hold myself close and won't let go,
The wind pushing me to and fro.



“Daze”
Mia Stephens

Gray, Oh, Gray!

Katie Isherwood

Gray, oh, Gray!
The color of clay.
The color of rain,
The color of vain.
Whose song may only be sung
By those with none
A clear heart and sound mind,
With no beautiful song or rhyme.

Gray, oh, Gray,
The color of wisdom,
A color of ages,
A color with many shades.
Just as an actress
May change her costume,
A storyteller
Turns the page,
Or an artist
Wipes his slate clean,
Gray never holds onto the past,
And brightens with a thought
Of a new day.

Gray, my Gray!
Gray by day!
Please, my dear,
Always be near
To hear my soft prayer.
To give me strength
Through every sweet rain,
And every dark tear.

The Spell

Kelly Esparza

“It’s full of magic,” the magician says to me. In the palm of his hand lies a beautifully crafted bracelet, and he waves his other hand over it in a circular motion like he is casting a spell. I nod my head, simply humoring him, because I know he is only acting.

My family and I had decided to come to the 22nd annual fall carnival. My little brother, Nathan, practically begged my parents to take us. Because he is only seven years old, he believes everything the magician says and does. During the middle of the magic show, I was randomly picked from the audience by the magician. After being a part of the act, the man decides to give me a bracelet as a prize. So, here I am.

“Keep it, and take good care of it,” says the magician, and he drops the bracelet in the palm of my hand, closing my fingers over it. I nod, and as I walk off of the stage, the audience gives me perplexed looks. I put the bracelet on and admire it from a distance.

“That was amazing!” Nathan exclaims in complete awe after the show is over. My family and I start walking through the carnival and stop by several stands.

“Psst,” says a voice. I turn around to see an old woman dressed as a fortune teller gesturing for me to follow her into her tent. I motion to my parents, and they nod in approval. Following the old woman inside, I sit down in a chair as she sits across from me. “I shall tell you about your future,” the fortune teller says. I nod slowly as the woman places her wrinkly hands onto the crystal

ball that sits before her on a small, oval-shaped table.

“Well, what do you see?” I ask, humoring her as I did to the magician. *This is her act after all, so why not play along?*

The fortune teller looks deeply into her crystal ball, and her eyebrows knit together in concern. “My child, you are in great danger. I see you running away from someone or something, but I cannot see what it is. You are wearing that magical bracelet,” she tells me. Then as if the lady merely wants to see my reaction, I give her a somewhat confused and bewildered look. I nod and thank the lady, and then I walk out of the tent. *What an imagination she has*, I think. I find my family, and we walk on, stopping by other tents occasionally.

As the sky darkens into night, we return home. I feel completely exhausted over today’s events, and for some odd reason, I cannot stop thinking about what the old woman said to me. *It is probably nothing*, I think. I tell my parents goodnight and head into my room, closing the door behind me. I climb into bed and turn off my light. As I try to fall asleep, I think about how it was strange that the fortune teller spoke of my bracelet randomly, but it was probably only because I was wearing it. *She has to act her part*, I reassure myself as I drift into a deep sleep.

I am sitting on a tree stump and looking out into the distance at the beautiful pine trees that surround me. Suddenly, I hear a growling noise behind me. The hair on the back of my neck stands up, and I shiver, becoming fearful.

Slowly, I turn my head to look behind me and see two big creatures growling at me. I cannot clearly identify them. Each is a combination of a grizzly bear and a wolf. The two creatures take steps toward me, and I suddenly feel like a deer in headlights. I rise slowly from the tree stump and try to back away quietly, but my foot steps on a twig, snapping it in half. This angers the creatures, and they pounce forward. Screaming, I turn around and start running. I look over my shoulder, only to see them sprinting after me at full speed. I run between the tall pine trees, panting from exhaustion, but the creatures are not discouraged. As I turn my head to see them running faster than ever before, I do not see the enormous log before me. Tripping over it, I tumble down a small hill and groan in pain as I come to a stop. I try to get up, but there is a surging pain in my knee. Looking down, I see it is all scraped up and bleeding.

Meanwhile, the creatures continue sprinting at full speed toward me, but I can barely move. *I am a goner*, I think. I squeeze my eyes shut as I know I am about to feel excruciating pain, ultimately leading to my death. But the pain does not come. Opening my eyes, I see a beautiful pegasus fighting with the two creatures. I can hardly believe my eyes as I have never seen anything so beautiful. One of the creatures runs away, but the other stays, fighting with the mysterious pegasus. The creature that chased me lunges at the pegasus, and the beautiful animal misses the attack by backing up. The pegasus allows me to climb on her back, and as I do, the pegasus is unaware of the other vicious creature about to attack her.

“Watch out!” I yell to the pegasus, and she immediately reacts by countering the attack. However, in the process of doing

so, I fall off of her back, and my head slams roughly onto the ground. My vision grows blurry, and then all I see is darkness.

I open my eyes and stretch. *What an interesting dream*, I think. I rub my eyes and look around, expecting to see my room before me. All I see are pine trees surrounding me. I panic. *This cannot be!* I look to examine my knee. It is still scraped up, but the blood has dried. I glance at my bracelet, which shines in the sunlight. *No way*, I think.

And that's when I realize it. Last night was not a dream.



“Omniscient”
Ysabella Roberts



“Native Pride”
Sophia Fox

Hush

Eliana Kontokanis

Hush, (I) want you to listen to the sounds outside.
Do you hear them?
They (wish) to sound as beautiful as you.
(I) know you don't believe me;
I'd make you if I (could).
Do you see them?
The fireflies (fly) to see you.
Yes, (I) will admit I sound cheesy,
but you (will) stop smiling like that if I'm not.
At night, before I could hold you,
I would play out how we would (meet).
Maybe that was crazy,
but nothing makes me as crazy as (you).
(In) my dreams,
I get to live (the) life we might possibly deserve.
I know you at least deserve it.
I'm here, looking up at the night (sky),
and I can't stop thinking.
(Let's) run away from the sadness.
We can play (pretend) like (we) did as kids.
I (can't) escape my own destruction,
but I can help you escape yours.
I will try to keep you safe until I (die).



“Happiness Has No Horizon”
Sarah Larson

Expectation

Katie Isherwood

When I was a little girl, I lived in a small house by a lake in a secluded forest. We had lots of neighbors to boast, but very few who would give us the pleasure of their company unless driving by our house on the way to town. Thus, without any siblings, I was given the freedom for an incredible imagination that worked round the clock in my small head with no one to stop me or provide me reason when all I had were dreams.

And my favorite thing to do was to create neighbors next door.

Now, we had real neighbors, but the house to our left was seldom occupied and left to abandonment. I was told that the people who owned the house used it only for vacationing and mainly lived in Texas. That didn't stop me from creating my own residents of the forgotten cabin.

One day, when Mom and Dad had let me go over to play with our two dogs in the forest, I silently decided to take a closer look at the house. The dogs were more than happy to follow me with nothing else to do, wagging their tails at the present enjoyment. I went up to the front door to see if it was locked. Of course, it was. The dogs whimpered at the misfortune and we all began to sadly go home.

However, I would be a liar to tell you that I was going to let the fun be spoiled like that.

I took the dogs around the back of the house for another look. Old log piles for the woodstove lined the back porch with

only sunlight to reveal their molded faces. The sliding glass door on the porch showed the inside of the family room, which looked rather cozy if one could imagine a fireplace with hot chocolate.

Right as I imagined the wood stove glowing inside, smoke began emanating out of the chimney. But the glass front of the woodstove was not red with dancing flames. The dogs stopped wagging their tails. Reluctantly, the dogs followed me around the house. The windows were all covered with dark green shades (a truly ugly color). One of the dogs barked at the house. I turned to look at the dog to calm him down, when I heard something clatter from inside the house. The other dog had run off to who knows where by this time. The one dog who remained with me kept a steady, gleaming stare at the house and growled. I followed his gaze and saw the dark green curtain move. It twitched once, as if a hand had pulled it back and then dropped it with haste, fearful of the attention it gathered.

The dog took full advantage of my distraction as assurance that he could jump into the same window with the ugly drapes. It made the loudest crash with lots of thundering footprints from the dog to follow. I called the dog's name as I chased after him with the torn collar in my hand.

The broken glass from the window did not make my entrance easy. After a few scrapes of the glass on the palm of my hand, I entered the house.

It was just as I imagined it to be. A small house, like my family's home, which was cozy. And yet, it produced the strange feeling of an old duchess who clung on to her imaginary jewels despite how her face had wrinkled.

There was little furniture in the house and few belongings to decorate it with. As I turned throughout the small house, in search of the dog whose barks I could no longer hear, I found that the house was trying to smile at me with evidences of shadows across its halls from long-forgotten pictures to show that it was happy when it could not frown more deeply with sadness at the fact that the only visitors it was to receive in these years were a deranged dog and child who broke one of its precious windows.

After a while, I heard more footsteps. Quiet ones this time, that were slow and steady like a heartbeat. I was partially relieved to know that the dog was near, but also shocked because for a few moments, I forgot that there was somebody in the house with me.

I followed the sound of the footprints throughout the house, but I could not find the owner of them. When I paused for a moment, their sound penetrated the silence of the house from all around me. Until finally they stopped, right behind me. I turned around and felt oddly unsatisfied and annoyed.

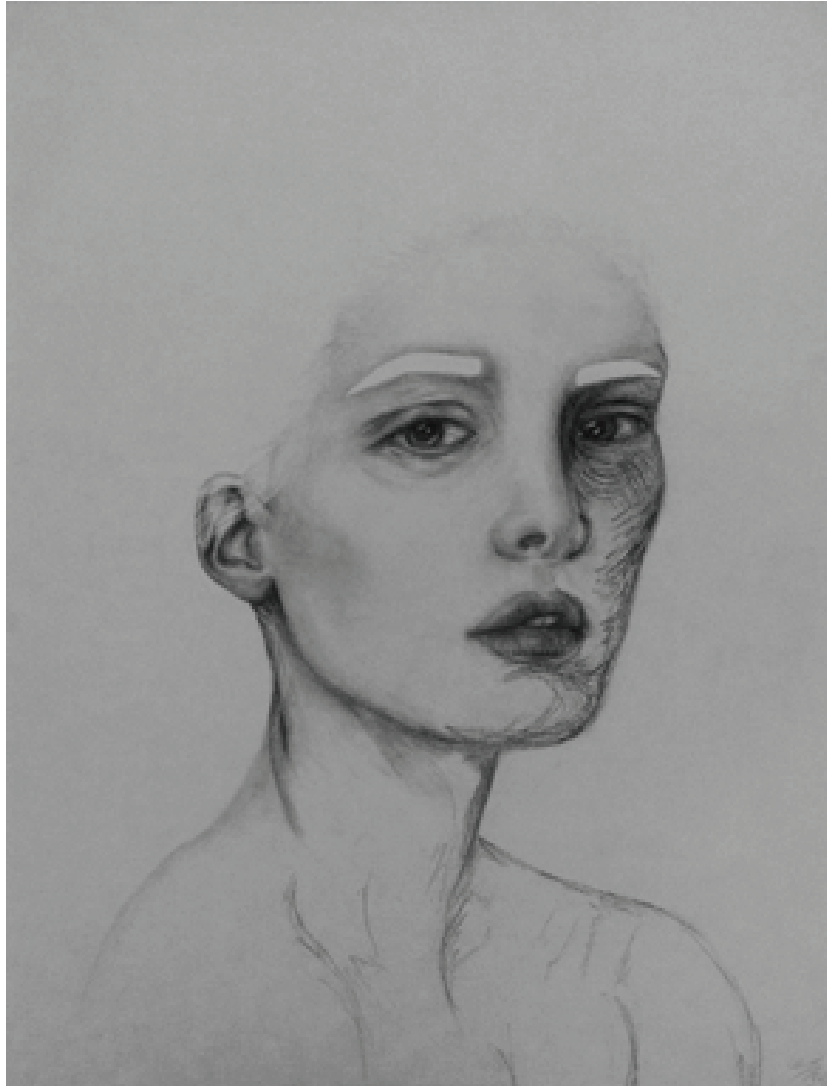
In front of me were faded pink shoes that belonged to some little girl who had probably long ago grown up. I sighed and shrugged my shoulders and shouted once more for the dog.

But, this time, I heard my voice echo throughout the house. *That's strange*, I thought. *When I first came into the house, nothing echoed.* I called out once more, and my voice did not echo. Instead, another voice answered like the sound of a cello after the violin has finished her solo. "Expectation is the root of all heartache, my friend. For we are such stuff as dreams are made of; and our little life is rounded with a sleep." I turned around in search of the owner of the voice and tripped over my own feet.

At which point, two dogs came licking my face.

“Come on, wake up!” Mama told me. “Time to head back home.”

I slowly sat up from the forest floor just outside my own back porch. The sun was shining, and the smell of BBQ chicken was rich in the air. Confused, I stood up, and felt something ache my hand. I looked down to find it bound with that dark green, ugly curtain material. I ran over to the house next door after Mama had left to go back inside our home. I found the same window that one of the dogs had crashed through, but the window was perfectly intact. Nothing showed that I had even walked by the house, except for a tear in the ugly green curtain to reveal a cold woodstove with shadowed walls that still smiled at me.



“Linger”
Mia Stephens

One Person

Jordaine Tran

There's always that one person in your classroom.
Nobody knows her or what she's done.
There's always that one person nobody talks to.
Thinks she has no friends but that's not true.
That one person has the people she likes
because guess what they're human too.

There's always that one person who knows all the names.
Everybody thinking she doesn't feel pain.
But that's so wrong because that one person
has feelings too.
She has those days where she feels sad too.
There's always that one person who lights up the room.

And all these people are human too.
They all have feelings and issues
But that's called Life.
Nobody understands
We all have plans to do something great.
But life will happen and sometimes we can't.
But that's okay because life is truly grand.

There's always that one person who reads this
Doesn't know it but she's cool too.
Everyone's got her issues it's true
But we all know
The future is bright!
No need to give up!

And all these people are human too.
They all have feelings and issues.
But that's called Life.
Nobody understands
We all have plans to do something great.
But life will happen and sometimes we can't.
But that's okay because life is truly grand.

Eliana and The Weeping Willow

Julia Lathrop

Eliana wiped the salty tears from her blurry eyes. Her long brown pigtails fell over her shoulders, dangling next to her petite purple backpack. She raced from the schoolyard, speed walking away from the taunting and the teasing that was her fifth grade year.

As she treaded down the heated sidewalk toward home, dainty Eliana pondered her dreadful day under the autumn sun. Oh that rude girl, Sadie! She made Eliana miserable, yanking her hair and humiliating her in front of her friends. Absolutely horrific.

Eliana jogged down the sidewalk and across the narrow bridge. She clutched her math workbook as cars whizzed by her. At the other side of the small bridge, Eliana suddenly tripped and tumbled to the concrete, her workbook sliding off into the nearby bushes.

She moaned in temporary pain, placing her dirty hands down to lift herself up. Sitting on her butt, she eyed her pale extremities. Thin streaks of neon blood patterned her palms, but the throbbing pain that resounded in her wrists didn't hinder her. Eliana then crawled over to retrieve her workbook, stretching her hand beneath the bushes, fingering around in the fallen leaves for it. But she could not feel it.

That's odd, Eliana thought.

She placed the side of her face to the concrete, gazing at the underside of the bushes with her left eye, her butt jutting into the

air. There it was; she could see it! So Eliana stretched once more and finally she felt the smooth cover page touch her fingertips. She stretched and stretched and yanked at the book, but it wouldn't move. It was caught on a branch. Eliana groaned and leapt to her feet.

“What a *perfect* way to end the *perfect* day!” she snapped to herself as she marched to the other side of the bush. Eliana inched her way down the steep hill that the bushes were plopped on top of. The hill sloped down, down, down and was covered in dirt, surrounding the thin trees above her that looked as if they were planted at random. Eliana's eyes grew wide at the sight of the steep hill; if she slipped even slightly she would tumble and hurt herself badly. But either way, she squatted near the back of the bush, her left foot below her, keeping her stable as she reached for her workbook. Finally she got it, and she stood up and observed the cover page triumphantly.

Eliana exhaled. “Got it,” she tweeted.

But to her misfortune, her left foot slid out from under her. Eliana gave a high-pitched yelp and began to roll down the steep hill. She tumbled over and over and over again until she splatted flat on her side at the bottom. Moaning in pain, Eliana wobbled to her feet and swiped the leaves and dirt out of her pigtails and off of her navy blue T-shirt. Pain flooded the muscles in her shoulders and side, and she rubbed her hands in discomfort. Eliana looked up and around at exactly where she was, for it was darker than where she'd come from. All she could make out was a large bush wall and the hill directly behind her. Curious, indeed. The wall extended all the way down to her left and all the way down to her right, running parallel with the road back up above

her. Eliana squinted, for streaks of sunlight flickered through the cracks in the looming plants ahead of her. She took three cautious steps and stretched out her hand to slide through the wall. She slithered through, pushing leaves and branches away as to not hurt her face or eyes. Five steps later, she emerged from the skyscraping plants. Her eyes latched onto a wondrously, peaceful sight.

Eliana tiptoed out into the short grass of a gigantic field. The meadow was aflame in fading autumn green grass and lacked any sort of fencing. All Eliana saw was wide-open space: no cows, no barbed wire fences and most importantly, no people. The field was utterly empty, not a soul anywhere. Eliana was purely and completely alone, but she didn't mind, for she gazed at the beauty in amazement.

How wonderful is this? She thought to herself, her jaw ajar and her eyes as wide as Kentucky. Eliana absorbed it all, but paused, for she spotted something rather magnificent in the middle of the meadow: a giant, monstrous weeping willow, but Eliana was not fearful, no, for the tree was the most exuberating thing she had seen all day. And without a second to waste, Eliana took off toward the tree, leaping into the grass like an antelope. The grass tickled and flicked around her ankles, but she ignored the itch.

Finally, she arrived at the willow tree and examined it from trunk to root. The trunk was several feet around with moss littering it and tiny black ants scampering up and down in the cracks of the bark. Leafy arms sprinkled down from the thick branches in hundreds and Eliana ran her fingers through the soft leaves. How extraordinary!

“A willow tree,” Eliana whispered.

Her little backpack slid down her arms and flopped into the bright green grass beneath her worn Converse sneakers. She journeyed to the trunk and laid a hand on the bark, its texture rough and bumpy with age. She gazed up at the sun shining through the tree’s thin and skimpy arms. Eliana removed her hands and spun around where she was, her head tilted up at the sky. The light swirled and danced around her as she spun, a joyful grin on her freckled face. But as Eliana spun, she began to notice something peculiar. The light was fading, getting darker with each new circle and before she knew it, Eliana was falling not back into the grass, no, but back into a strange daydream. Her joyful smirk turned into a scream for help. She was flying, swirling downward as the wind soared viciously through her fingers.

Before she knew it, the darkness had dissolved, and a terrified Eliana landed in a new location, somewhere different. Her world transformed around her and suddenly her scream was broken and she was sitting on a rock-hard bench in a cold and loud place. Eliana realized immediately where she was: a mall. And not just any mall, but Baker’s Mall, only fifteen minutes from her house.

Though she knew the answer, she still inquired, “Where am I?” She was desperately hoping someone would answer her.

People rushed past her, carrying shopping bags. No one so much as looked at her. Something wasn’t right. Not only did the mall not contain the new reconstruction that had been done last year, but everything she saw was in black and white. People wore a strange style; not the one that was “in” where Eliana went to school or at the high school down the street. So where exactly

was Eliana?

She got to her feet and walked to where people scuttled by. A friendly but busy-looking man was approaching her, and Eliana jumped out at a break in the crowd.

“Excuse me?” No answer. The man kept walking towards her.

“Excuse me?” Still nothing. “Sir. Sir. Please stop! Hello?” The man was close now, heading straight toward Eliana and not halting.

“Sir! Sir! Sir!” Eliana leapt out of the way, but it didn’t matter. He was going to hit her. But somehow, he didn’t. The man seemed to pass right through Eliana, right through her left shoulder. She felt nothing at all.

Eliana watched the man continue on. She furrowed her eyebrows, growing anxious as she peered at the bustle around her. In her periphery, Eliana noticed a box, a newspaper box. Quickly, she trotted over and knelt before it. Eliana placed a finger on the glass, skimming the newspaper with her golden eyes. She found the date in a matter of 18 seconds above the title *Baker’s Chronicle*. Eliana squinted at the tiny print.

“October 5, 1992,” she said aloud. “I went back in time!”

Eliana stood up abruptly, extremely concerned now. She glanced around her.

“Hello! Can anyone see me?” she shouted frantically, racing over to the crowds. They did not turn to observe the weeping, little girl behind them, for they could not see her. “Hello! Can you hear me?” Eliana yelped again. She reached out a hand to touch a kind-looking lady’s shoulder, but her finger slid through the figure. She could touch objects but not people, so how was

she ever going to escape this grim nightmare?

“Please, somebody help me!” Eliana sobbed, blurry tears filling her eyes.

What do I do? Eliana’s thoughts shrieked, her hands grabbing her face as she cried hopelessly. *This is a nightmare! Am I dreaming?* She wondered.

Eliana jogged into a nearby store and gazed into a mirror. Her body did not appear in the reflection in front of her. There was no image, nothing at all.

“I’m invisible,” Eliana whispered. In all the books she had ever read in her lifetime, none were focused on a time-traveling preteen. How on earth was this possible?

Eliana turned away from the mirror and realized she was in a high-end jewelry store. It had gold and silver bracelets and rings with diamond studs. She peered at them, comforted by their beauty.

Looking up, Eliana’s eyes latched onto the one other person in the store: a man dressed in leather jacket and pants. Eliana felt as if she’d seen him somewhere...his physique was utterly familiar...but where has she seen him? It was only when the man pulled a black mask over his head that Eliana remembered where she’d seen him: this was the Blackout Burglar, a robber who committed crimes by shutting out the power and escaping with a rich treasure, and Eliana was alone with him in a pretty jewelry store.

“Oh no,” Eliana muttered. She felt frozen in place. Suddenly, the lights went out and everything turned pitch black. Eliana gave a yelp and watched the shadow of the man snatch some-

thing from the wall. Glass shattered, alarms screeched and people screamed bloody murder in the aisle ways outside.

Without hesitation, Eliana bolted after the man who ripped and shoved through shouting people and crying children. Eliana followed suit, carefully dodging figures, though she didn't truly need to. Every now and then, her shoulder or foot swung through people's bodies mystically, reminding her that she was, in fact, invisible.

Behind Eliana, the security guards tore through the parted crowd yelling, "Stop! Stop that man!"

Eliana's heart pounded, her breathing was short and abrupt as she stalked the man. She chased him for two more minutes until they reached the end of the mall.

He'll take the shortcut out the back, no doubt! Eliana thought to herself.

Panting, she skidded to a halt and watched the burglar unexpectedly go, not out the shortcut to the dumpsters that she thought he would, but out the back up toward the neighboring freeway.

Eliana squinted then ducked out a different door to the dumpsters.

We'll cross paths! She thought. *We'll have to!* Eliana snuck out to where the trucks loaded off clothing and items to restock the mall. Invisibly, she dashed to the corner and hid behind the dumpsters to wait. To her left was the end of the building and around the corner was the door that the Blackout Burglar would escape from in order to get to the freeway, which she supposed he was trying to reach. She huffed, glancing around the corner in the skinny alleyway.

“Any second now,” Eliana whispered to herself, peeking around. She leaned back against the tough wall. “I’ve got to do something.” She examined her surroundings. Cardboard boxes were littered around her, but they were useless. She couldn’t catch a thief with a box!

But before Eliana could check inside the dumpsters to arm herself, a bang came from around the corner. A few moments later, the screeching security guards burst out after him. Police sirens erupted in the air like auditory volcanoes.

Eliana stepped out.

Too late, Eliana thought. The burglar sprinted her way and Eliana was defenseless. *I’ve got to do something*, she thought again, but he was getting closer. *Anything!* Her mind screamed.

He was almost to her.

Move, Eliana! She told herself. He was several strides away when Eliana skirted out of the way and snatched a cardboard box. Standing two feet away, she tossed the box out under his feet, and to her utter astonishment, the Blackout Burglar tripped and fell, crashing to the ground.

Eliana gasped as police cars sped up and halted in front of her. The security guards grabbed onto the man, latching handcuffs around his wrists.

He was caught! The infamous Blackout Burglar was caught!

Crowds gathered around the scene as the police shoved the robber into the police car. And people cheered, for the culprit who had stolen numerous items over the last three years from malls and stores all over was captured! Many had talked of him; he was a cruel legend, and now he was caught, and Eliana had

done the job!

“How did it happen?” someone wondered.

“He tripped over the box!” retorted someone else.

“It came out of absolutely nowhere!” the security guard gaped.

The crowds chatted and cheered. “The Blackout Burglar is caught!” they chanted.

Eliana grinned invisibly, thinking to herself, *You caught the Blackout Burglar! You did!*

Then, as crowds wandered back inside and dispersed and interviewers and news reporters flooded the mall, Eliana spotted a shiny item under the dumpster. It was the item he’d stolen from the store.

As the last people at the scene left, Eliana reached under the dumpsters with her pale arms. She was so close to touching the mysterious object. But it didn’t matter, for the dumpsters had begun to disappear. Everything blended together and spun and twisted and twirled just as it had before, and Eliana began to scream. She fell to and from absolute nowhere.

KaBOOM!

Eliana gasped and found herself sitting erect in the short grass, the sun blinding her golden eyes. Colors filled in around her, as if her world was a canvas and someone was making a watercolor painting. She squinted around, the weeping willow branches fluttering gracefully above her.

When she calmed down, she breathed a sigh of relief. Eliana reverted her eyes to her backpack pocket, for something glimmered inside. She crawled over and unzipped the zipper. To her astonishment, a gorgeous diamond gem shimmered inside.

Eliana lifted it and held it carefully in her palms, realizing exactly what it was: it was it was the gem stolen by the Blackout Burglar from her dream!

Eliana grinned at the delightful magic. Soon, she discovered that deeper in the zipper pocket was a small article from an old newspaper.

“Infamous Blackout Burglar Caught After Tripping Over Cardboard Boxes,” Eliana said out loud. Then she smirked, for she had been the reason that the culprit was captured, and she felt proud and victorious. “I did that,” Eliana said, and she sighed and fell back into the grass, gazing up at the magical weeping willow whose leaves swayed wisely in the autumn breeze.



“Once Upon a Time...”
Kelly Esparza