



# overture

literary magazine

winter | silver linings

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# OVERTURE

SILVER LININGS; WINTER 2014-15

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This is *Overture Literary Magazine*, a new pursuit led by the San Jose Youth Advisory Council of District 1 to expand writing, art, and imagination within the Miller Middle School community. Join us as we share the creativity of students by publishing their work in a monthly magazine, distributed to San Jose City constituents.

In musical terms, an overture is an orchestral composition forming the prelude or introduction to a musical piece. Much like an overture in music, this creative writing program will serve as an introduction to the landscapes of creativity, self-expression, and imagination.

*Overture* strives to inspire imagination, foster literary and artistic talent, and promote creative growth by teaching middle school students how to develop their own creative writing or art styles through mediums not offered at their own schools.

The Winter 2014-2015 theme of “Silver Linings” is a derivative of the idiom “Every cloud has a silver lining.” This is a nod to the oft-dreary weather of the winter months, and the post-holiday season depression that affects us all to some degree. In terms of *Overture*, this theme is a step up from our previous theme of “With Flying Colors,” and denotes our writers’ and artists’ increasing skill and ability to convey more complex emotions.

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## CHRISTINE LEE; GRADE 8

### Only A Day's Dream

Snowdrop. It is the discordant name that I am branded with at Hanaro Middle School. Maybe it is because of the way I automatically hang my head when I walk or speak to my classmates--a rare opportunity that pops up every occasional round of Truth or Dare. Or perhaps the reason is that I always keep my mouth shut, unless called out in class by my teachers. And even then, I make my voice small and quiet. The problem that my classmates have with me must be my hair. It sounds silly and hard to believe, but I know without a doubt that it's true. The hue of my hair is the lightest blond anyone would have laid eyes on. So pastel, it appears almost completely stark white when bathed in pools of moonlight or by the overhead, fluorescent glow. I guess if you look at it like that, I really do resemble the milk-white, wilting flower of adversity.

Other than that flawed, troublesome name, most of the time, life at school is fairly peaceful. Almost too peaceful. It helps that I usually shut the world out with a good, riveting book that I engross myself in during breaks and lunchtime. It keeps me busy and occupied and distant from reality. It is a brief moment that I can't get enough of to be someone else besides "Snowdrop" for once; to be a someone who is the heroine of the story. All I want is a happy ending for myself once in a while.

I don't feel lonely, not being able to chat comfortably with someone, or laugh alongside with a friend-- at least, I don't think so. As long as I have some peace and quiet, and good book in my lap, what more could I need? What else would I want? I'm fine with the way things are now.

"Are you really, Snowdrop?"

My head snaps up at noise of the person's voice, which sounds much too close for comfort. Even scarier is that whoever he or she was, was asking me to doubt my routine as it is, isn't he? "What?"

"I asked if you're Snowdrop." A boy with black hair and blue eyes looms from where I stiffly sit at a lone seat in the library. He wears a plain, navy hoodie, his hands shoved into the pockets and his bangs nearly falling over his eyes. "The girl who cheated on the math exam today." I did a double take-- did this person not know me? Out of nowhere, a thought hit me. Of course he doesn't know me--I'd recognize those sharp, sky-blue eyes anywhere. He is the transfer student that lately everyone in my class has been fawning over. If he isn't, then he would have just avoided me like everybody else.

My eyes sharpen and I find myself staring blankly at the open pages of the book in my lap. Even without looking at it, I know the embossed title of the story tale read: *Children of the Moon*. "That's not my real name." My grip on the hardcover tightens ever so slightly. "And I... I didn't cheat." *Is he only talking to me because of the test? Huh. Is that so...* Without me knowing, my chest tightens and my back starts to slouch bit by bit. Then I right myself almost immediately and sit up straight, wondering where and why that peculiar, foreign feeling of longing had come from.

The boy cocks his head to the side in a amused, quizzical manner. "So not only do you insist that you didn't cheat to get that 102 on today's extremely tough exam, you're also implying that you're not Snowdrop, the one who has hair 'like snowdrop petals' and *always* hangs out in the library? Interesting. Then what's your real name?"

I blink at him, inwardly baffled as I consider my next answer. There is no question that I am the only answer to that description: 'hair like snowdrop petals'. Even so, am I truly the 'Snowdrop' that everyone claims I am? Would it be better to continue like this, every day at the library, alone and wrapped up in my own, imaginary world? To accept the name-calling as to be inevitable? Or would

fighting back be the preferable option? Although there isn't much to be indignant of. After all, all they do is call me 'Snowdrop' and leave me off to myself.

But one thing is clear, and it is something important, something I have long forgotten, that I have to tell him, to properly answer his question. "Day. My name is Day."

A corner of the boy's mouth lifts slightly. "Day," he says aloud, testing the feel of that word, which now holds a purpose, a significant and hopeful meaning. It was as vast as the endless, cerulean sky, and more influential than anything my ears have ever heard. It is a simple name. Specifically *my* name. Then the boy smiles and says, "I'm Skyler. It's nice to meet you!"

\* \* \* \* \*

Despite the time when he accused me of cheating during our encounter, there was something different about him, that boy Skyler. But a good kind of different that I like. His eyes bore a determined, almost challenging feel, as if he would be the first to take on anything and everything. It's as if he isn't afraid to hang out with me during the dreary forty-five minutes of lunchtime. That is how all my noon meals were like: as dull as the overcast, winter sky and so quiet, the silence was deafening. It amazes me that this boy, no-- Skyler-- has lasted for nearly a week.

There is five, remaining minutes before lunchtime ends. Before it does, I have to muster up the courage to tell him.

"You don't have to keep visiting me during lunch anymore," I finally point out somewhat reluctantly on Friday, the final day before the weekend. "It must have been so boring, eating lunch with me. I'm sorry. But thank you, it was actually a little fun to have someone to eat with." It was true. Though we had spoken little with each other over the past few days, there is something warm and absolutely wonderful that undoubtedly passes between us whenever I find him there, waiting for me at my usual table. Something that requires no words to be spoken, something that I have grown a bit too fond of. I admit, I'm going to miss it on that gray, bitter noontime of next week's Monday.

Skyler glances over at me in a bemused way as the words leave my mouth. He bursts out laughing, his dying chuckles echoing in my ears. "What are you talking about, Snowdrop?" His eyes catch something behind me, near the library's exit. "Sorry, I need to go. Meet you back in class!" And with that, he raises his hand in goodbye and leaves the library. I stare after him, momentarily stunned. Snowdrop. Ever since we'd met, he had *never* brought up that mockery of my real name.

I watch Skyler in shock through the see-through doors. He is standing before the entrance, speaking to some friends of his. They gesture to me through the doors, then erupt into a fit of laughter. I can't make out Skyler's face as his back was facing me--but I can only imagine him snickering with them and at me. My hands curl into tight fists, my shoulders tense and my eyebrows crease with distress. All along, he was just... playing with me? Laughing at me from behind my back whenever a surge of happiness from him being there brought a small smile to my lips? Unable to stand watching any longer, I turn away.

My heart plunges and tears threaten to spill out onto my cheeks. I rapidly blink them away, fighting back a sob. I was stupid, *so* stupid. Skyler is just as bad as the classmates who ignore my existence, just as bad as the teachers who only see a girl being called by a 'friendly nickname' by her fellow classmates. All of them... everyone one of them--I can't trust anybody after all. The only thing that I have is-- I reach my hand out and gingerly brought the worn, leather cover of *The Girl Who Fell from the Moon* closer. *But books... were fine. Perfectly fine. Humans on the other hand...* Chills run down my spine as I bury my face in my arms. *I hate them.*

*Who are you? My name is Day!*

The question I had assumed Skyler asked me just days ago comes to my mind once more: *Are you really, Snowdrop? I am Day! I really do exist!*

*Then... where in the world are you?* Tears start to stream down my face, wetting the sleeves of the garments I wear that my classmates always say are strange, are weird, are different. But what was wrong with being different?

Unable to hold them back any longer, a sob escapes from my throat as I cry into my arms. At last, the school bell rings, signaling the final end of my last chance with someone who I thought was closer than anybody I had ever known-- who is now the furthest away; the distance between us too drawn-out to hear the painful, noisy thoughts that crowded my head so much that there was absolutely nothing that I could possibly do but surrender.

*I am nowhere. Day is gone. And only the winter flower of snow flurry is to be found.*

\* \* \* \* \*

Finally, Monday arrives, and with it, all the crashing feelings from the week before. Skyler has been sending me weird looks all day-- I can only avert my eyes and keep it faced straight ahead. When lunch comes, I am the very first to leave the front door. In a blink of an eye, I'm at the library again, sitting all alone. However this time, I perch myself at Skyler's usual spot, mourning his absence. Reaching into my backpack, I pull out the last book, opening to where I have left off from before.

"What are you doing in my seat, Day?" a familiar, teasing voice splits through the air.

*Don't look*, part of me warns. But I am already turning my head in the direction of his voice, my expression a mixture of hope and hurt.

He frowns as his eyes come in contact with my silvery-gray irises. "What's wrong?" he immediately says.

Something was definitely wrong. His face clearly has showed concern for me and yet, he supposedly mocks me when I'm not looking? Could I have possibly misunderstood him? I nervously swallow, gathering up my nerve once again. There was only one way to find out.

I open my mouth. "Y-you wouldn't happen to be... making fun of me behind my back, are you?"

He stops and stares with an uncharacteristically serious expression back at me, now reduced to a mere bundle of nerves. Time stretches on until he finally speaks up. "What makes you say that?"

I shakily reply to him, telling him about witnessing him laughing with his friends, him calling me 'Snowdrop,' everything. By the time I'm done, multiple scenarios are playing out in my head, each leading to a wrong end. But I am so afraid of his answer, so sure how this will all end, that I know. There was no way I will ever be able to grasp that happy ending. No no no. *This can't be*, I think. *There was absolutely no way*. But no matter how hard I try, I can't convince myself enough. *What's the point of making friends if it's going to end like this?* "Day," he finally starts, his voice gentle. I stare back at him, my right hand beginning to reach for the book that innocently sits on the surface of the table in front of me. *If I get to that book*, I tell myself assuredly. *This, all this, will go away. I will be able to escape to another world, be another person, and most importantly: get the happy ending that I will never obtain as a girl named Day*. "Day, you actually thought that I would do such a thing? Don't tell me you faith in me was that low," he adds, his voice teasing.

The hand that reached for *Back to the Moon* draws to a halt.

"I only called you 'Snowdrop' on that day because at that time, you were speaking as 'Snowdrop,' not as Day would." I search his face, looking for anything false, any signs of he is lying or not. "Not as *you* would. What you said... it wasn't what you really wanted, right? Also, before I could finish, my friends were already calling me over. And what my friends were talking about," here he hastily turns away, but no before I catch a glimpse of faint pink dusting his cheeks, "it wasn't at *you*. I swear they weren't talking bad about you."

Tears begin to fill my vision, but it isn't out of pain or dejection.



My hand eases away from the book, the once glorious ending I had so desired moments ago, and I stand up, facing him. And through my mouth, I spoke up as Day would want to: "Can... c-can we-- starting now-- be friends?"

It is something warm and absolutely wonderful.

\* \* \* \* \*

I never knew what the ending of *Back to the Moon* was. But that's okay. This world was enough-- I didn't need to go back anymore. And if this is all just another dream, everything and what happened; then I'll wake up and meet him and agree to be friends with him again.

This isn't the ending that I would have preferred, but it's enough. It's almost there. It's the beginning of something new, something breathtaking.

With that thought in mind and a smile on my lips, I reach and pinch myself, praying that it wasn't all a daydream.

"What are you doing?" Skyler asks, staring curiously as I pinch the soft skin of my arm and then crack my eyes open.

I smile back at him. "Just seeing if this was all a dream."

He grins back at me and reaches forward for my cheeks with both hands. "Lemme try too." He playfully gives my cheeks a squeeze before I swat him away.

"No way, these cheeks are all mine!"

We joke and childishly fool around for a little longer before he brings up a question.

"Hey Day... would you mind meeting someone else?" he asks out of nowhere. "I'll introduce you to her. Maybe we can even eat lunch together, if she's interested. I doubt it though."

I could feel my shoulders tense up a little. Although I know that I could fully trust Skyler, I'm not sure if I could relax and get used to being around others. Despite this, I answer, "Okay." It took a chance, a risk to reach out and gain Skyler's friendship. Perhaps this is not so different.

~\*~

"I'm Daffodil," a girl with dark hair says as soon as we're face-to-face. "I've heard about you. You're Snowdrop, aren't you?"

I involuntarily stiffen at the sound of that name. Skyler seems to have noticed my discomfort, and rushes to fill in the building awkward silence. "Her name's Day, actually."

Daffodil's face scrunches up with puzzlement. "Really? That's a shame. 'Snowdrop' is a marvelous name." I perk up at this, my eyes are large and wondering as I stare up at the girl from where I sit. "'The little, strong-willed drop of snow that blooms in the dead of winter, against all odds, representing a small, but everlasting hope,' is what Mother would say. She's an amazing florist you know, and a florist has got to know what her flowers mean."

"'Day' is a pretty name, too," Skyler argues, before a strange, rosy flush creeps into his cheeks and he hurries to add, "not that I'm implying anything weird or anything."

"You said 'anything' twice, stupid," Daffodil accuses.

Skyler raises a questioning eyebrow. "So? What about it?"

"So that's not allowed."

"What?" he exclaims, a dubious look crossing his face.

Sitting here with a good book in my lap and the two bickering in the background, I decide that here was better than any other place that I would ever rather be. *I never needed my own happy ending, I figure to myself. All I needed... was a beginning, a start of something like this.*

## ANDREW MERRIAM; GRADE 6

### Goblins

Blurily, he opened his eyes. He appeared to be lying on a hospital bed, all white except for the silver metal frame. It looked like it had one of those curtains, the ones people pull around to keep other people from seeing what's going on, but it was down. *No reason why it should be up*, he thought groggily, *I'm not injured enough to be horrific. I think*. He tried to remember how he had got there. *The goblins... the flamethrower... is this the Lab?* He jerked upright and winced as a searing hot javelin of pain shot through his left temple. He reached up and touched a bandage that certainly hadn't been there before. *Ouch*, he thought, *that hurt*.

Then started a cacophony of small, muffled explosions from down the hallway. They were accompanied by screeches of metal on metal. *Sounds like someone's doing combat practice*, he thought, then instantly wondered why he thought so. Dismissing the matter for the moment, he looked around- slowly, so that his head didn't erupt and shatter with pain. Upon noticing a large plateful of eggs and sausages, he decided that he was famished and pounced upon the plate with great gusto. A loud, staticky screech, obviously meant to get people's attention, blared through the air, making his teeth rattle and sending another jolt of pain through his temple. "All active personnel please report to the mess hall, it is breakfast time." The boy looked around to see where that short message had come from, and, after exhausting all other options, he looked up. A large loudspeaker was mounted there, and was that- a camera! He was being watched! In a fit of rage and annoyance at having his privacy invaded, he snatched up the butterknife from his sausages and threw it, extending his arm, snapping at the elbow and then the wrist, releasing at the apex of his throw. It described a perfect, glittering ark through the air, gleaming as it caught the light in a billion different places. Then it slammed into the lens, instantly pulverizing it, fragmentizing it into nanopowder.

Or not.

The lense resisted his throw. The knife bounced off without leaving a scratch on the lense, but as it slammed into the ground, the force of the throw was obvious in the way the knife sunk into the scarred hardwood floor up to the handle- and then some. The loudspeaker blared, and this time the cause was obvious. "Would centurions Amy and Yahili please report to the hospital wing, the prisoner is stirring -quite a lot." *Prisoner?* he thought nervously, *This is going to be dangerous*. Subconsciously, he picked up the knife from his eggs, and held it at the ready, positioning himself so that he had a clear line of fire in case anyone walked through that door. With the other hand, he grabbed a plate like a heavy discus, to use as a shield or a throwing weapon.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the other end of the loudspeaker, Atharv looked at the screen and let out a ringing peal of laughter. Before anyone could ask why that sound came singing through the intercom, he added "And bring your weapons."

\* \* \* \* \*

Amy edged slowly down the corridor, weapon drawn, approaching the hospital door. The warning seemed premature to others, but she knew that Atharv wouldn't joke around. "Shield up!" she snapped at her companion, Yahili. Although he seemed large and clumsy, she knew that Yahili was extremely proficient with weapons and could move with astounding speed. He instantly complied with that order, raising his shield and effortlessly dropping into a fighting crouch. They edged into the room.

Yahili's senses were extremely alert as he entered. He heard the quick breathing of battle, and then the prisoner seemed to realize that they were heavily armed. He stopped, but something told him that the man was still alert. He smiled behind his helmet.

The so-called prisoner lowered his arm that was cocked to throw. He had seen the swords and armor of these centurions and had no wish to mess with them. He kept his knife pressed to his side, but dropped the plate visibly and called "I surrender." Amy and Yahili sheathed their swords, but he wasn't fooled. He saw the ease with which they handled their weapons and knew that they could draw them in a moment's notice. They pulled off their helmets and dropped their shields, but kept their swords close.

Amy observed the figure sitting in the bed. She noticed that he had a clear line of fire to the door and had apparently been wielding a plate like a discus to throw at them. Her eyes narrowed as she perceived the slight lump in the bedding, and then saw that the knives from his breakfast were missing. "And the knives!" she ordered. Sheepishly, he let the knife drop. "What about-" but Yahili cut her off.

"We have a lot to discuss. Let's visit my room."

"No, wait. She was going to ask about the other knife. It's over there." He gestured to where the knife was stuck in the floor.

Yahili raised his eyebrows. "How did that happen?"

"Well, I was angry at the camera for intruding upon my privacy, so I threw the knife at it."

"Let's see you do it," said Amy, who had retrieved the knife he had dropped.

"Okay" he said, taking the knife and throwing it, extending his arm, swiveling his shoulder, snapping at the elbow and then flicking the wrist, releasing at the apex of his throw. It described a smooth, shining arc through the air, spinning end over end, colliding with the camera lens point-first. As it bounced and fell, he reached out and snapped it out of the air by the blade.

Amy's eyes grew to the size of saucers. "How did you do that?"

"I honestly have no idea."

"Okay then, let's bring the knives." Amy went over to the knife in the floor and pulled. Then she leaned back and used her body weight. The knife still didn't budge, so Yahili tried it. It creaked, and with all three of them working together, they managed to get it out.

"So, technically, you're a prisoner of war. Since we 'captured' you in battle, you are a prisoner. However, I'll release you and let you in as a cadet- if you can pass the tests. We've got an organization here, you see, built like a Greek army. Rank has its privileges- as a foot soldier, you sleep in barracks. But get to be a veteran or a lieutenant and you get a room." All this was rattled off in one breath, a feat only made possible by Yahili's enormous lungs. The 'prisoner,' (completely contrary to the general procedure for prisoners) then got a tour of the base, which was simple enough- gym, centurion's wing (A wing only for centurions and higher,) barracks, hospital, dining hall, armory. He wasn't allowed in the centurion's wing, but got a look at where it was positioned.

An interesting thing happened while he was touring the gym. He noticed, with some distaste, that a group of lieutenants- the rank below centurions- were practicing knife throwing in one corner of the gym. And they had horrible form. One of them noticed the expression on his face and shouted "Hey, Yahili! Is your prisoner a knife connoisseur? Does he dislike our throwing knives?" Yahili rumbled "Stay here" and then walked over to where the lieutenants were practicing. "No. He dislikes your style." He gestured to the 'prisoner.' "Let 'em have it!"

The lieutenant laughed. "What's he going to do to me, shoo-" The sentence was cut short as a spinning pinwheel of light and metal flashed through the air centimeters from his nose. With a howl of surprise, he jumped back like a startled rabbit, to the amusement of the other lieutenants. A second later a dull *thunk* sounded, and a butterknife was sprouting from the bullseye of the fifty-centimeter target they were throwing at. "But- but- that's from the other side of the gym! I can't get

a bullseye from five meters away!” A senior centurion, who was passing by and had witnessed the whole thing, said, “Well, *I’m* going to recommend him. What’s your name, lad?”

He hesitated, and then said decisively, “It’s Jack.”

“Why the hesitation, lad?”

“I think I got amnesia, apparently, and I can’t remember my name. So I had to ask myself, ‘Do I want to be called Jack for the rest of my life?’”

Atharv came over. “You just won the support of two of the most influential people in this base, Me and him, a senior centurion and a decurion- the only one in this base. Just try not to die on the acceptance tests- if I know that scumbucket-” He gestured to the lieutenant that Jack had humiliated- “He’s going to pull some dirty trick. Live through it and you’re golden. Otherwise...” Atharv grimaced- “People will remember you as a weakling. And you’ll be dead.”

TO BE CONTINUED

## SOWMYA MAMBAKKAM; GRADE 6

### The Lemon

Marietta Dubrook lived by herself, and she didn't like it.

She had never known her parents - she didn't even know if they were alive. All she had been told that they were imprisoned for committing a serious crime. No one had told her what to do at school. No one had told her how to dress. And no one had told her what to do when people knocked on the door asking for food.

Many people in the small town of Cvanen were homeless, and even more didn't have enough to eat. At least Marietta, usually called Mari, wasn't homeless. She had the same house that her parents had supposedly lived in. No one had ever thought to make her live with another adult. In Cvanen, it wasn't needed.

Mari didn't like seeing people starving on the streets every day. She knew what it was like to be stared at. Kids at school always looked her like she was different. She *was* different, and not in a good way.

She lived on the second floor of a small building, right outside a place filled with people without shelter. Mari often gave them food. Occasionally, a perfectly fine person would act like he was homeless and starving, and come and beg, just to get more food. Mari knew how to tell the difference. The pretenders never really sounded hungry.

On this day, though, only one person came to the door. "Food! Do you have any food?" She cried. She sounded a bit older than Mari, maybe 14 or 15. Normally, Mari was generous and would give anyone outside food. Today, though, she had a hard day at school, and was too tired. Besides, the girl sounded like she was pretending. "No food!" She called back.

"Please! I have nothing to eat!"

Mari sighed. "All I have are some lemons," she said wearily.

"One will do!" the girl called. "Thank you!"

Mari picked up a lemon and opened the door. On seeing it, the girl brightened and something in her eyes shone, but she was probably just hungry. Hungry enough to eat a lemon - the sourest thing Mari could think of.

The girl bit into the lemon and ran off. Mari closed the door and went to start on her homework.

That night, Mari had a very strange dream.

*A blond man was walking toward another in a small room. "Will you give it to me?" the first man whispered in a dangerously low voice. "Never," the second hissed. The first man drew a long knife from his pocket and brought it down . . .*

Then Mari woke up.

School was not good, as usual. The kids teased her, mostly because they knew that her parents had been arrested once. The only unusual thing that happened was that the girl who she had given the lemon to came up to her holding another lemon. "Marietta? Your name is Marietta Dubrook?"

"Yes," Mari replied. *How did she know?* But before she had time to ask, the girl burst out, "This is for you. I got from someone else," pushed the lemon into her hands, and ran off again.

*What will I do with another lemon?* Mari wondered. But she pocketed it anyway and headed back home.

No one asked for food that day. She didn't have anything to do except make dinner, so she fixed up some salad with juice from some of her own lemons and ate it alone, as usual.

She had more strange dreams that night.

*A copper-haired woman was being confronted by another with deep black hair. "You killed him!" The black haired one screamed. She threw herself onto the other one and they descended in a writhing mess. Mari felt a choking sensation in her neck and saw the screaming woman drop.*

Then Mari woke up again.

It was just a while later that she saw the girl who had given her the lemon again, going into a house that seemed like her own. *So she was just pretending.* It didn't matter, though. She had paid her back anyway. With another lemon.

School was hard again that day. It was the same routine every day: Being teased, being tired. It seemed like Mari couldn't have one without the other. She had nothing to help her get rid of the teasing. She had only her lemon to get rid of the tiredness. Maybe the taste would keep her alert.

She cut it in half and squeezed the juice into her mouth. In sharp contrast with the sour taste of most lemons, this one felt like heaven. The right amount of sweet mixed with just a bit of tanginess. Cool and refreshing.

It wasn't until afterward that Mari began to feel faint. She heard her head hit the floor, then everything went black. A dizzying, swirling, black.

TO BE CONTINUED

## SUPHALA NIBHANUPUDI; GRADE 6

### I'm Just Cool Like That

#### What are we going to do with da KD?

A text flashed onto my phone as I paced around the room, wearing a 5 inch deep groove. I picked up the phone and tapped on it, magically creating letters on the screen.

#### Whst cwn we dp?

I not exactly the greatest texter.

I sighed and slumped onto my bed. Jade was one of my new friends and she was amazing. But it was hard to tell her much. I knew she would not understand anything of my real life. Ever since it has gone missing, I had been in an emotional wreck, sometimes kicking the wall. It wasn't the best idea though, because now I had Adias footprints on my wall. Nowadays, I started to pace in order to calm myself down, which does work. But without it, I was doomed. I couldn't sleep.

I tossed my phone on my dresser. Focusing, I made it land right on the dresser, in its little stand. I studied the pictures. Jade and I, Zachery and Zemora when they were just born, and me in kindergarten with two gaps in my smile. They all had it in the it in it. I shuffled downstairs to have breakfast with my family. My brother, Felix, 9 years old was studying "the laws of physics" which was really a boiled down version of the real thing. His spiky hair had not been combed, so Mommy was going after him. He couldn't stay still, so he was dashing around at 200 miles per hour. That was pretty slow for him. His twin, Faith, was reading a picture book. At least I think she was. She had pale skin and delicate hand that were immune to paper cuts. Taylor, 11 years old, and my other sister was serving breakfast to Mommy and Pop like a little waitress. She was flying over the chairs taking orders with that notebook and pen she got for Christmas. Zemora, was bursting into flames, just like the rest of us when we were babies. That is so annoying for us kids, but Mommy can handle it. I slid into my chair and started to eat the pancakes set front of the empty chair set for me. I had the maple syrup pour a tiny drop on my hot pancakes. Theodore was making mini volcanoes in his food. The lava was dripping everywhere so he created a thunderstorm to cool it. Zachary was whining for Mommy to feed him.

We have a very... active family.

"Nice pacing, Felix. But don't go too fast. Remember when the house was on fire?" Pop leaned in and grabbed my brother. It was hard to stop my brother. You would need super strenght for that. He turned to me.

"Well,well,well. Miss Psychic finally showed up" He smiled good naturedly and Mom stretched over from the kitchen and and patted my cheek. She had just gone to yoga. I didn't feel good that day, but attention sure helped.

"You'll find it soon, don't worry." Taylor was doing a figure-eight with backflips while her necklace hung on for dear life.. I lifted myself up to her at the ceiling, with little concentration. Taylor's pale, freckled skin glowed and her dirty blonde hair was shaking around her.

"I think Zemora will get her fixed power soon." Faith said shyly, turning her head upward to me as she let her hands flicker out of sight. I lifted her up too. Her strawberry blonde hair was the only sign of her now.

"gahay" Zemora whined, lifting her hands, She was back to her normal self, She had white skin and pale blue eyes. Her face was was pleading to go up high.

"Jacky?" My twin, Jason, called. "What was yesterday's homework?" He had blondish-brown hair that turns into platinum at the tips and a freckled, tanish, face. His animal friends surrounded

him like you could have sworn this was a Disney movie. He knows what they say. It makes me jealous.

“Jacqueline, time to go. Round up those crazy kids of mine will you?” Mom’s brown bob jiggled as she commanded.

Ten minutes later, all us “crazy kids” piled into our Honda Odyssey and headed to SWB Elementary and Junior High. Jade texted me.

**KD...is a huge cheat! she said she didnt but she did have it.**

I gulped. I felt it. It was near.

KD sashayed on the scene, with lip gloss sheen blinding me. She looked at me and walked over.

“Your watch *la cocotte*?” She smiled as she pulled it out of my reach.”By the way, have you heard of Bounty Hunted?”

The color drained from my face.

Now you probably have noticed that my family has superpowers. Mom can stretch Googleplex million miles long, Pop has super strength, Felix has super speed, Fiona has invisibility, Taylor can fly, Theodore can use weather to his aid , and Jacob can talk to animals. Me? I am hard to figure out. I am psychic and can move things with my mind, read and take control of other minds. I am the most powerful in my whole family. But I didn’t use my powers on Winifred. I was a statue.

Winifred laughed her hyena laugh. “Scared? I would never be.”

Suddenly, the ceiling broke. Bounty Hunted jumped onto a desk smashing it into pieces. Everybody screamed. Winifred was the loudest. Taking advantage of the opportunity, I ran in and grabbed the watch and put it on. My siblings ran toward me. Suddenly, I was full on director mode. “Everybody out! Everybody weaken him!!! Further back Taylor, be the fly! Jason, get some flies...People! Get outta here! ”

I am a very good leader.

Suddenly, Jade ran in. She pulled an arrow from a quiver on her back and shot . The arrow whistled and struck BH. He started growing smaller as we laid more attacks and finally disappeared. I stared at Jade while the others gave each other high-fives. She shrugged shyly and showed me the pendent on her necklace. She had an orb, like the one I had on my watch. It helps amplify your powers. That’s why the watch was important to me. I smiled back.

\*\*\*

It was the middle of the day. I was teaching Jade how to balance when lifted by a psychic. She was horrible at the. Jason was sneaking leftovers for the fawn, and Fiona and Taylor were looking after Zemora and Zachery. Suddenly Mommy screamed.

“The plants!!!!!!!!!!” We looked up and saw plants creeping toward us and screamed to. They stopped suddenly. Zemora moved to the left and so did the plants Zachery was bursting out of his high chair. His hand had suddenly inflated and he was knocking everything around. I looked at Jade and Jason in amazement.

“Their powers.”

That was the most eventful fixed power beginning ever. I know. That just means I can survive anything. KD started worshiping me and asking for eternal forgiveness. I discovered a great secret without reading someone’s mind. I survived.

How?

I’m just cool like that.



## CAITLIN LEONG; GRADE 8

### Presfira

My hand shoots across the countertop. My fingertips just barely brush the bell and I stand on my toes to nudge it a little closer. I groan as it slides farther away. I try again, and this time there's a terrific crash as the bell falls off the other side of the counter.

I step back.

The lady comes running to the window, still holding the pen in her mouth and gloves in her hand. Her gaze flicks past me, still bleary with sleep, and then she bends to pick up the bell.

As she sets it on the counter, she looks around and frowns.

"Excuse me," I say.

She looks down. "What can I help you with?" Her voice is cool despite what just happened.

I unfold the crumpled sheet in my hands and step forwards to smooth it out on the countertop. "I have a prescription. Can I see the medicine if it's okay?"

She leans in to take a closer look, her only earring shaking softly. My hands clench as I step back again, and I let my sleeves fall over my hands. "Presfira? This isn't yours, is it?"

"It's for my mother."

"I don't think that would be the best idea. You're not supposed to claim medicine until you're 18."

"I'm not claiming medicine. I just want to see it." Behind her, huge racks for medicine rise up to the ceiling. *Why can't she show me the bottle?*

"See it. Why would you want to do that?"

"It's important."

"Presfira isn't for the general public to see; it's expensive."

"Oh." My mouth forms the word, but there's no sound. "How much exactly?"

"That shouldn't worry you."

"I need to know."

She frowns. "700k a bottle, but that's pretty much all you need even for severe lung cancer."

I nod, then wince at the sharp sound of high heels against the pale floor of the pharmacy.

"Is that all?"

"Can I see the medication?"

"I told you--" The intercom chirps: *Yvonne, please report to the front desk. I repeat: Yvonne, please report to the front desk.* Our gazes lock, and I stare back, squaring my shoulders. There's a horrible pause as her gaze sweeps over me. "--fine. Come over to the side here." She opens the swinging door and I step inside. I can barely keep up with her as we weave between the tight shelves and in the back. There's a glass case against the wall, a few bottles the size of my little finger on the shelf. The bottles are transparent and the sunlight peeking through the window turns the medicine silver.

It can be mine.

"There, are you satisfied now?" she says breathlessly, her hand against the wall.

I smile as she opens the back door for me.

"If anyone asks, you didn't come here."

"Okay!" I say as I back out the door of the pharmacy. The wind blasts in my face and I narrow my eyes. I don't want to be late. I pick up my pace, until I'm sprinting along the road, prescription fluttering in my hands.

## ANUSHA FATEHPURIA; GRADE 8

### Death

A never ending cycle of life and death,  
Repeated over and over,  
Continuously taunting us from the day we're born,  
Till the day we breathe our last breath.

We live knowing we're set to die,  
But we choose to push it away.  
We don't know if it's a mistake or not,  
But we do know that death isn't child's play.

One may think that there is a long way to go,  
However it may actually be quite close.  
You never know when it will occur,  
But know it can give one quite a blow.

It scares people, frightens them,  
They wish life was theirs to keep,  
But realize that although life is long,  
Dying, it's "quicker and easier than falling asleep."

(Quote from Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows by J.K. Rowling)

## The Deal

Summer sighed and looked away from the crowd gathering around Lucy Star, Lakewood Middle School's most popular girl. She had better things to deal with, like the dumb pen pal assignment due today that she hadn't even touched. Ms. Simmons had told her class that they were going to be writing letters to another student their age across the country. Summer had groaned, along with the rest of the class.

Shooting daggers at her pencil, Summer quickly scrawled down a hurried letter. "Hi," she wrote. "I'm Summer Eveland, an 11-year-old from California. Well anyway, now that we got the intro done, Mrs. Simmons, my teacher, told me to write this: How are you doing? Where do you live? How's life like? Yay. Good-bye." Summer then, feeling satisfied with herself, scribbled down a signature, took out the envelope Ms. Simmons gave her, and stuffed the letter inside. Just when she finished, the bell rang, signaling the end of lunch.

Once Summer hurried into her language arts classroom with her classmates, Ms. Simmons cleared her throat. "I believe the pen pal letters are due today. You may all turn them in at the end of class on top of my desk. I'll be sending them to the post office tonight so we may receive the replies in four to five days." Everyone nodded and listened to Ms. Simmons blabber on and on except Summer, who had started to dream of the look on Lucy's face when she would beat Lucy and her clique in the Lakewood Talent Show.

Every year, Lakewood Middle School held an annual talent show. It was by far the most talked about event in the whole school and almost *everyone* joined, Summer being no exception. The judges were three teachers and one high school student who, in the end, would decide on the number one contestant and grant them fame throughout the school. Last year Summer performed one of her favorite piano pieces, *Kiss the Rain*. She had spent months preparing herself for her big moment. At the last moment, though, Summer's "best friend," Angela, decided that she wanted the glory to herself. She had, during a sleepover party, secretly cut a string in Summer's piano. It took her weeks to get the piano fixed and she lost valuable practice. As a result, Summer had lost the competition. It was comforting, though, that Angela didn't win either. Weeks later, the friend-turned-enemy ditched Summer and joined Lucy's popular clique.

Meanwhile, Lucy and her clique had performed a karaoke sing-off. Summer felt as if her eardrums were going to burst, though apparently the judges didn't think so. Much to Summer's horror, they awarded the group as the grand champion. Lucy had then started strutting down the hallways with the golden trophy everyday while the entire school worshipped her. She had told Summer, "Hey, *Winter*. I loved your performance." Summer knew that, because of her tremendous lack of practice, she had utterly failed in her performance. Lucy knew it and was rubbing it in her face. That was probably as close as a compliment as she would ever receive from her.

As Summer snapped out of her daydream, she heard a voice behind her. "Hey, Summer," Summer turned around, startled, and found a pair of electrifying blue eyes piercing into hers. Lucy! The familiar sense of anger washed over her.

Summer ignored her and picked up her pencil, trying to look busy with whatever Ms. Simmons had assigned.

"You're friends with Angela, or so it seems." Lucy paused for confirmation, and Summer nodded weakly. Technically they weren't friends anymore, but Summer had a feeling that she would like what was coming next. "Anyway, Angela's this really big idiot. She's just tagging around with my clique and it's *so* annoying. So basically I want you to give her some hints about how I don't want

her in my group. I don't care how you do it, just do it." Summer opened her mouth to say something, but Lucy held up a perfectly manicured finger and rolled her eyes. "Of course, as a total freak, you would ask for a payment. Well, you'll be invited to the best clique ever and hangout with the coolest girls. It's all you have to do." Lucy smiled at Summer with her do-it-you-loser look. The gears in Summer's head were turning. If she did this, she could give Angela the revenge she deserved, and somehow she could get Lucy in the dirt too.

Summer locked eyes with Lucy and said, "Sure."

"Okay, great, whatever. You can start tomorrow." Lucy sashayed away to join her clique and gave Summer one last look before sauntering off.

Little did Summer know that she was about to face the biggest dilemma of her life.

TO BE CONTINUED

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# ARTWORK

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SOHUM INDHARAPU; GRADE 8

[Untitled]



**MEHEK KAPUR; GRADE 8**

## Raindrops





**ANUSHA FATEHPURIA; GRADE 8**

## The Seven Sacred Pools



**MICHELLE LUM; GRADE 8**

## The Light House





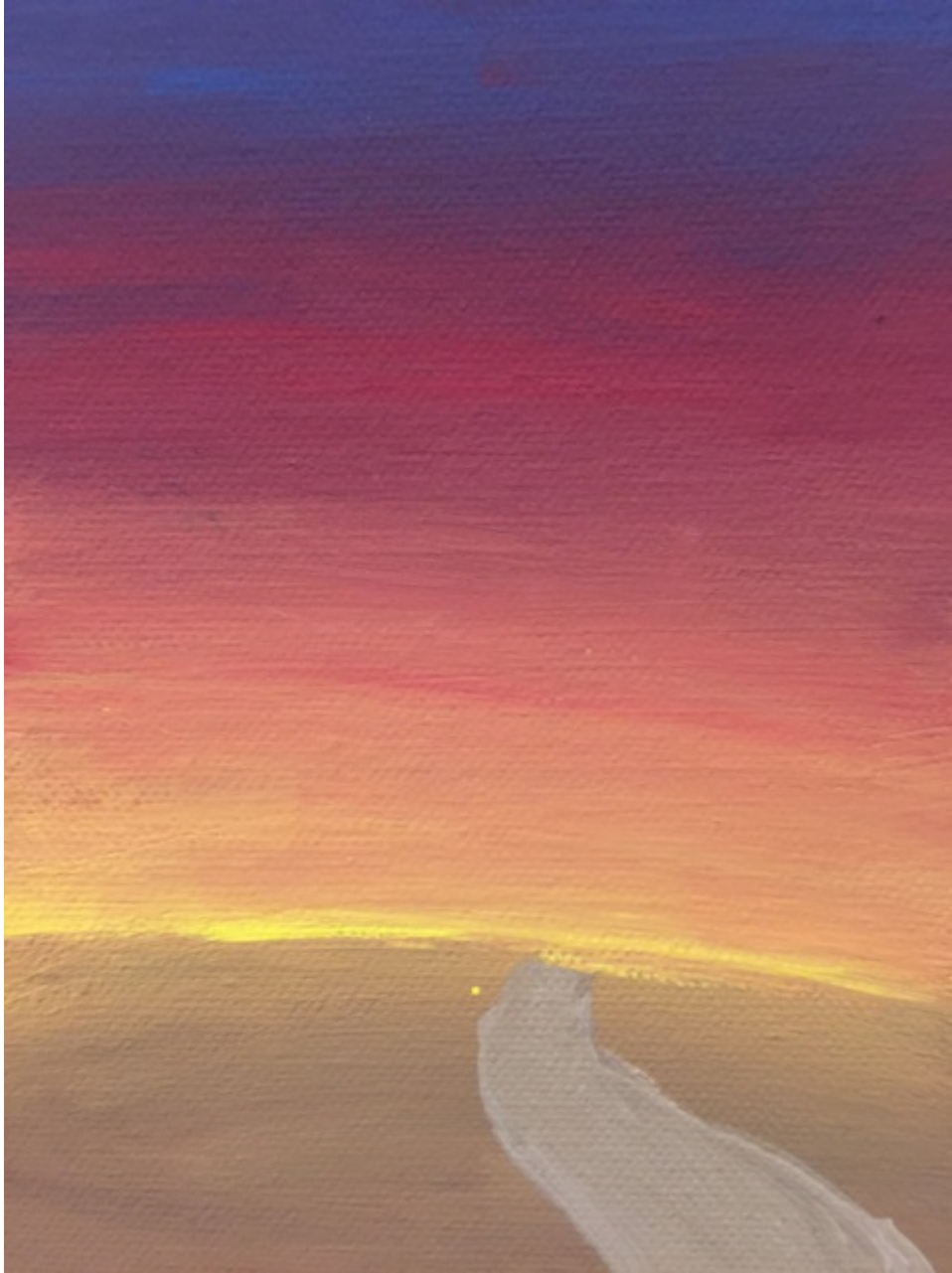
**MICHELLE LUM; GRADE 8**

Mormon Row



**SUNNY LI; GRADE 6**

[Untitled]



AMANDA ZHU; GRADE 7

Inflorescence





AMANDA ZHU; GRADE 7

## The Water Skies



AMANDA ZHU; GRADE 7

## Signs



**MAHI GANDHI; GRADE 8**

Home





**MAHI GANDHI; GRADE 8**

Amidst the Darkness



**MAHI GANDHI; GRADE 8**

Light Before Nightfall





ELAINE CHEN; GRADE 6

[Untitled]





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