

# Oak Literary Magazine 2018 *Editors*



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#### Dear OMS students.

We hope you enjoy this literary magazine composed of your fellow students' work. We have had a great deal of fun over the past few months working and editing to make these pieces the best they can be! Many people helped in the making of this magazine: writers, photographers and artists.

Thank you to all who had a part in this journey whether it was submitting, editing or designing! Enjoy!

### **Faculty Advisors**

Ms. Heal and Ms. Newton



# POETRY



### **Too Young**

### Kathryn O'Brien

You say I'm too young.

Too young to be depressed

Too young to worry about sexuality

Too young to be a feminist

Too young for anxiety.

And you're right. I am too young.
I shouldn't have to worry about bullets
Whizzing through school halls
Trying to keep my friends safe during lockdowns

I'm too young to worry about politics.

To worry about what our president will do to our country

Who he is and how that affects me.

I'm too young worry about raging wars Hiding away from the bombs and missiles Of angry country leaders.

I'm too young to worry about

How people will react to me when

I tell them I'm rainbow

I'm too young to worry about Being pressured by people To fit 21st century standards In beauty and talent.

So yeah, I am too young.

But I know it all.



## Flanders in Spring

By Arjun Warrier



Do you remember those days?

Of that fateful spring many years ago?

How harsh that winter was but the flowers were born again

How cheerful they were, so red that not even the rose could aspire to be such a colour

The cheerful red flowers in Flanders, do you not remember?

Do you not remember how the enemy came marching in?

How we sacrificed blood and tears?

Do you not remember how we fought on, our blood staining the flowers a brighter red?

Do you not remember how so many died?

How they are beneath the crosses row on row?

How now each flower only adds to the beauty and peacefulness of a battlefield

Those red flowers now have crosses on them

Do you not notice how they return every spring?

And how they have a colour that every rose aspires to be How they rest eternal in that field in Flanders every day as a memorial for those who have died?

Do you not notice?

After all it is Spring
a rebirth of colour and remembrance
A remembrance of that
faithful spring



### Human Art Museum

admit to feeling broken
that sometimes it seems
that we have run out of Scotch tape
and resolved ourselves to go through life
holding our shards together
and warning others about our sharp edges
but someday,
my fragments will be remembered.
not for their apparent fragility
or for the tears that were the only warning
of how I might fracture but for the way they shone
in the most elaborate mosaic the world will ever see.
just because we break

doesn't mean we're broken.

# By: Anna Cardani

Poems

### Connectivity

we are not just people. we are millions of quickening hearts we are tears and starshine and buzzing crickets and flickering fireflies- we are old movies on scratched TV screens and the graphic tees that we don't need but buy anyhow. we are the brooks that you spy in the woods and dip your feet in we are the cheers when we do something right and the groans that come from staying up until 1 AM just to feel the quiet. we are burning cities and whispering towns and peaceful libraries and roaring stadiums we are sneakers against pavement and we are fumbling flying hugs between old friends. so never say that you are "only you" because you are made up of a billion days ten thousand hopes a hundred souls burning like wildfires- you are the whole world.

## Evolution

every once in a while I ask myself
am I still the same?
(because once
there was a girl
who believed every word
that those she loved spoke,
there was a girl
who had time to spare
on the fairies hiding in the tall trees there was a girl
who saw life
in such simple, easy terms)
and I don't know how I feel about the fact that
I know I'm not.

# People Flowers

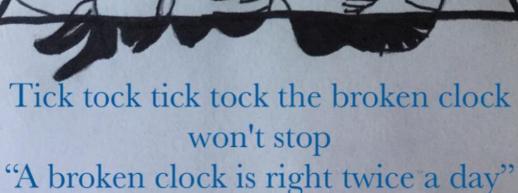
by Gabe Tetreault

How quaint We prance in a garden Of people flowers Who must be tended to And cared for How they must extend their necks and drink How they lift their leaves and breathe And how they open their petals To nibble on the sun How we stand rooted Waiting for our petals to be seen To wait to be picked and find A forever home to reside But if we don't find one If no one sighs at our petals The flower dies

# DIFFERENT

BY
ANONYMOUS

Art by Keira Holmes



they say
but are they really broken? I wonder
or just

running on a different time?

#### Failure:

Failure is a harsh feeling,
That we think, only we go through,
But why does it have to hurt so much,
If everyone else feels it too?
We treat it like a disease,
But it's really not so bad.
We learn a whole lot from it,
That actually makes us glad!

I don't know what the fuss is,
Why failing makes us sad,
Because without failure, there's no success,
Although that makes us mad.
But, don't feel that way,
Because more failure makes us wise.
Even though it doesn't seem that way,
Failure helps us rise.

Admitting it may be hard,
But it's better than any lie.
So pick yourself up,
And don't be shy.
It sounds quite daunting to us,
Mistakes that we keep making.
But when we keep on practicing,
The thought is not so aching.

So next time when you fail,
Think about this poem you read.
Because it's really not so bad,
And definitely not something to dread!
And keep on making mistakes,
Because that's what helps us grow,
No matter how much you fail,
Now, you will always know.





DY: MONYHOUS

AND AS TO SAY THAT, YOU START WHISPERING TO YOUR FRIENDS "THEY COMING OUT?"

"TRE THEY BI, PAN, GAY, OR TRANS?"

COELL, NO.

TH NOT COMING OUT

DIDN'T KNOW WHAT THIS WAS GOING TO BE ABOUT

TOTOTO COMMUNITIES AS A WHOLE? OR WHAT (1) AM?

TETERONORMATIVE OR NOT

YOU WILL NEVER FIND OUT

That is because The Never have to come out The AM NOT LIKE YOU

THAT'S WHAT TO DECIDED THIS WOULD BE ABOUT

TOW NO ONE HAS TO COME OUT

VER.

TT'S NOT IN ONE'S DUTY TO ANNOUNCE TO PEOPLE,

"WEY!

THE NOT CIS OR HETERONORMATIVE!"

OO NOT EXPECT SOMEONE TO SAY THEY ARE NOT LIKE YOU

DECAUSE IN THE END.

THEY HAY BE DOING THAT FOR YOU

COMING OUT

BECAUSE IT WILL HELP YOU

THOUGH IT MAY INCONVENIENCE THEM

OR MAYBE THEY ARE DOING IT BECAUSE

TAH

S WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THEM

TO PEOPLE HAVE TO COME OUT TO FRIENDS? (1)0.

OUST THEY COME OUT TO FAMILY?

OR GOOGLE YOUR IDENTITY AND TO GUARANTEE

THERE ARE ANSWERS TO THAT WHICH YOU SEEK

THERE ARE PEOPLE WHOSE IDENTITIES ARE LIKE YOURS

QUARANTEED

TETERONORMATIVITY ISN'T YOU? THAT'S OKAY

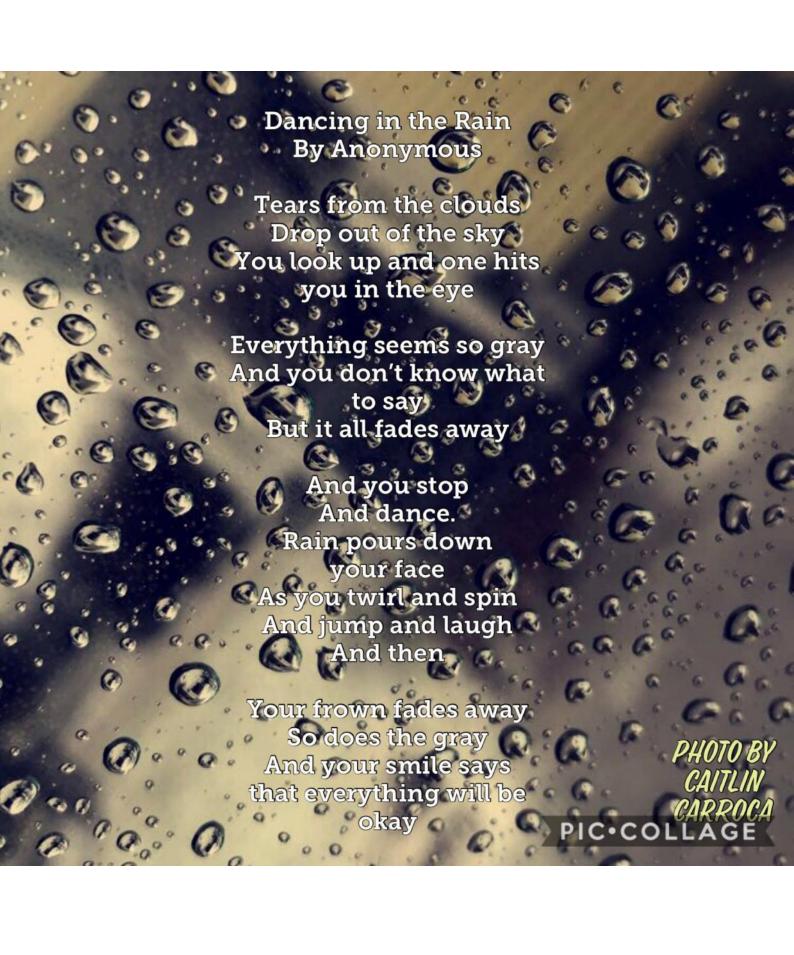
OT CIS?

@ood. Oor. Oou.

You are the best you.

OO ONE KNOWS YOU BETTER THAN YOU.

MND THERE ARE SO MANY PEOPLE WHO LOVE YOU. FOR YOU.



### A BIRD SITS IN A CAGE

A BIRD SITS IN A CAGE

A MAN SITS IN A CHAIR

THE BIRD SINGS

THE MAN YELLS

BUT THE BIRD IS HAPPY

HE YELLS LOUDER

THE BIRD HEARS BUT HE IS HAPPY

THE MAN HITS THE BIRD

THE BIRD DOES NOT STOP

FOR THE BIRD IS HAPPY

AND THE BIRD WINS

GABE T

Look at me Standing here At the edge of the earth, But beyond the cliffs I face a monster It stares at me with curiosity It seems to want a taste of my soul And asks me to do a task I can finish only now And so I reach out and give it my heart Filled with a thousand words A million thoughts A billion feelings And if it be folly to trust such importance To the enemy I ran from for so long The beast that I have nowhere left to hide from Who I cannot escape Is now asking for my stories But I look in his eye and see truth And mining the flesh of darkness and evil I let my heat go Into his throat

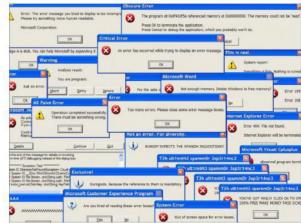
"The Terror of Errors" By Daniel Dupont

I play the game with all my might, I play it for the lore. But I crumbled into tears when I saw it: Said the website, 404.

I click right back to the site's home page, My happiness tied all up in a cage. But it was free when I shouted so joyfully loud, The sequels standing there, tall and proud!

But the hacker who took it down, Oh, I've had it with him! As soon as I enter the simulated sequel, I'll tear them limb from limb!

But another message popped up, That left me in perplexion. I face palmed as I read aloud, "No internet connection".





### Shivangi Das Gupta

### Daffodil

In the dry, rough grains of the soil,
A seed was planted.
No one sought after it,
No one thought to come after it.
But through the rain
And through the snow,
Even through creatures pouring atop it's home.

The little bud still burst out of Her shell one day,
Out alone with no one to play.
She swayed alone with the winds
And danced alone in the rain.

Until one day she bloomed !! And her beauty
Had an effect all around her.
Everyone stopped by her,
And everyone admired her.

But slowly, she came to a loss of age,
Her petals frayed and leaves decayed.
Everyone denied her,
And nobody stopped by her,
Yet the old flower wasn't disheartened.
She danced alone with the wind
And alone in the rain.
Until Mother Nature washed her away one day

Page

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### **Too Young**

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I tell them I'm rainbow

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But I know it all.

Non it a time By Gabriel Tobroanst

Mary may ra Back in Brisiness Late a about over with the nik and the aboats. Mam il a bime to mribe again Mons I have the cope turning And the meighter to mon my mind To A Time to aline one more Though you Mr. mindom That came into my life now With the dusting and tuning Of my clockwork creation Now anyone can look in And see what I've done Now I will be open to all he words running around And changing Until they suit me This clock will not remain silent anymore I will ring I will ring as loud as fate allowed musical explosion will never be locked away And I owe you a favor For your little games And the trivial magazine I thank you the reader and thank you creator For making this silly challenge I cannot say What I feel In such a short time But from my heart The bottom Where I thought there was no more light I'd Brato gina Chamba

Edited by: Kousthuble
PIC•COLLAGE

### Limericks By Ian Hurd

There once was a man who wrote limericks
The stress and the accents where average
His rhythm and rhyme
Were usually fine
All in all, he wasn't that good at it

The man known as the bard was a poet
His own poetic framework, you know it
The rhythmic parameter
lambic pentameter
That was hard, so the credit, I own it

Why do a lot of poems rhyme?
While some aren't even in time?
How 'bout I do both?
Are you now at my throat?
Or will I be okay?

### What Am I To Do

By Jasmyn Dua

I can't seem to remember
What I meant to do.
I walked up the stairs
And tripped on my untied shoes!

I think I tumbled down the stairs
But who really knows for sure?
Because the only thing I remember
Is going through a hospital door!

My vision is blurry, And I can hardly move. My left arm aches. Why? I have no clue!

All of a sudden I see a nurse
With eyes that are electric blue.
"Do you know the year?" she asks,
And I say, "1492."

"I'm afraid you're awfully wrong, my dear, That's when Columbus sailed the ocean blue. I think you have a concussion!" she exclaimed.

Oh what am I to do?!

#### The Joke

Plip plop

Ring

Pop

Whee

Blub

Blah

Bleh

That's the joke

I thought it was funny

Because you read that whole thing

Gabe

A Collection of Haiku By Gabe Tetreault

The men of the east Spoke of a quittance of earth That brought harmony

The breath of serpents

That kept us warm from the moon

But tore down the walls

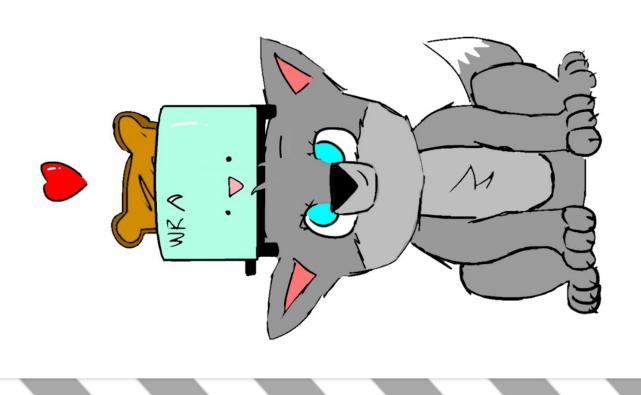
The tears of the carp
Which filled our body with content
But strangled the fool

The back of giants
Who fed us well and held us
But swallowed the dead

The breath of heaven
Who carries the days and months
But lifts our folly

The bones of the earth
Which we used for great purpose
But drove men quite mad



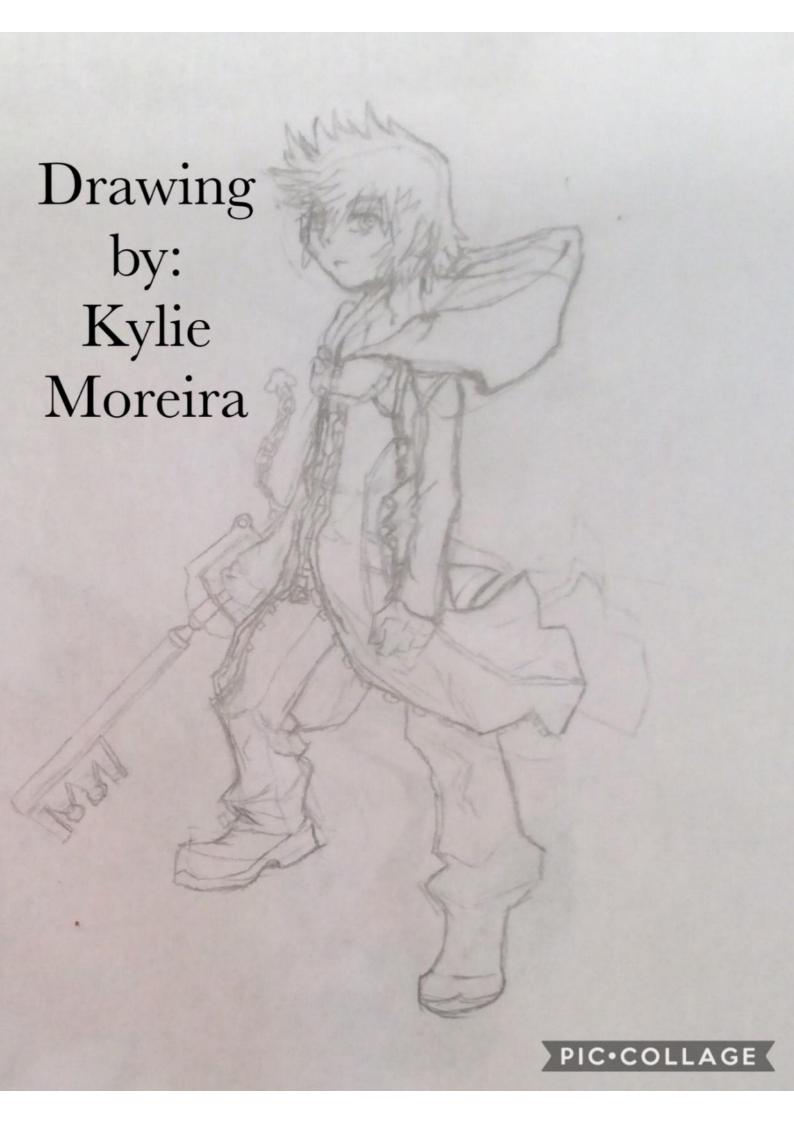


Pointe

Drawing by Keira Holmes

Keira

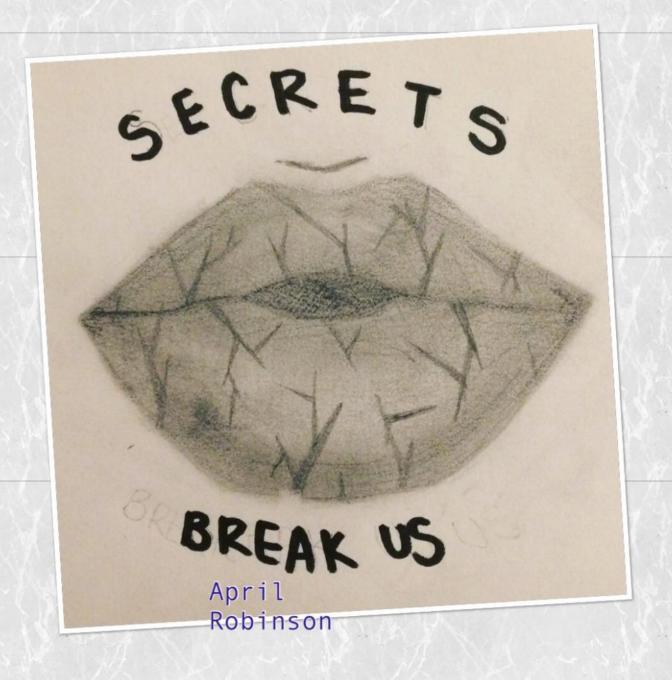








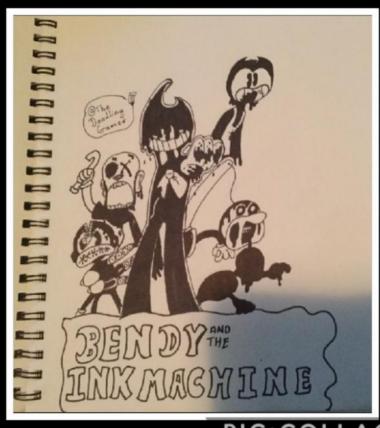






"Thanos" drawn by Iliana Spahiv

"Bendy and the Ink Machine" Drawn by Brian Pinto





### **PICTURES DRAWN BY BRIAN PINHO**







## STEVE NGKS

















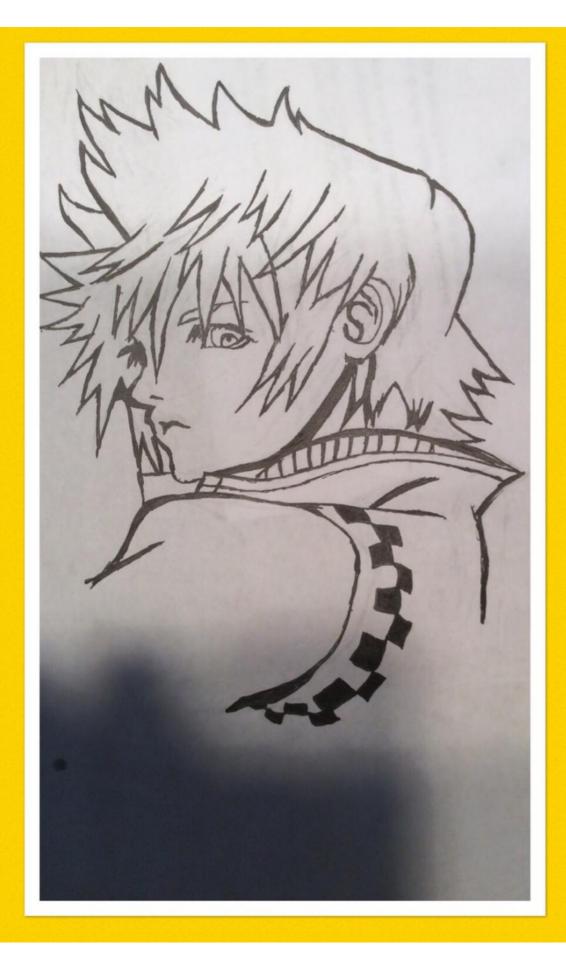


ZAGH COLLEY

#### **POINTE**



### KEIRA HOLMES

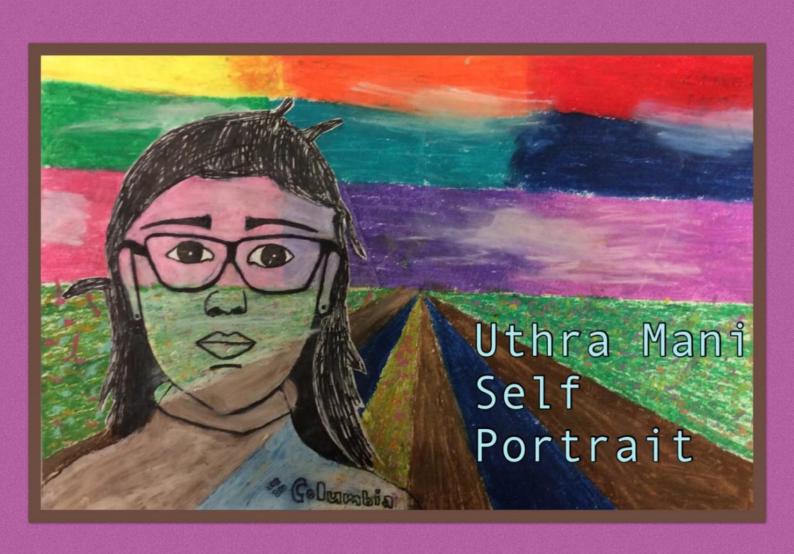


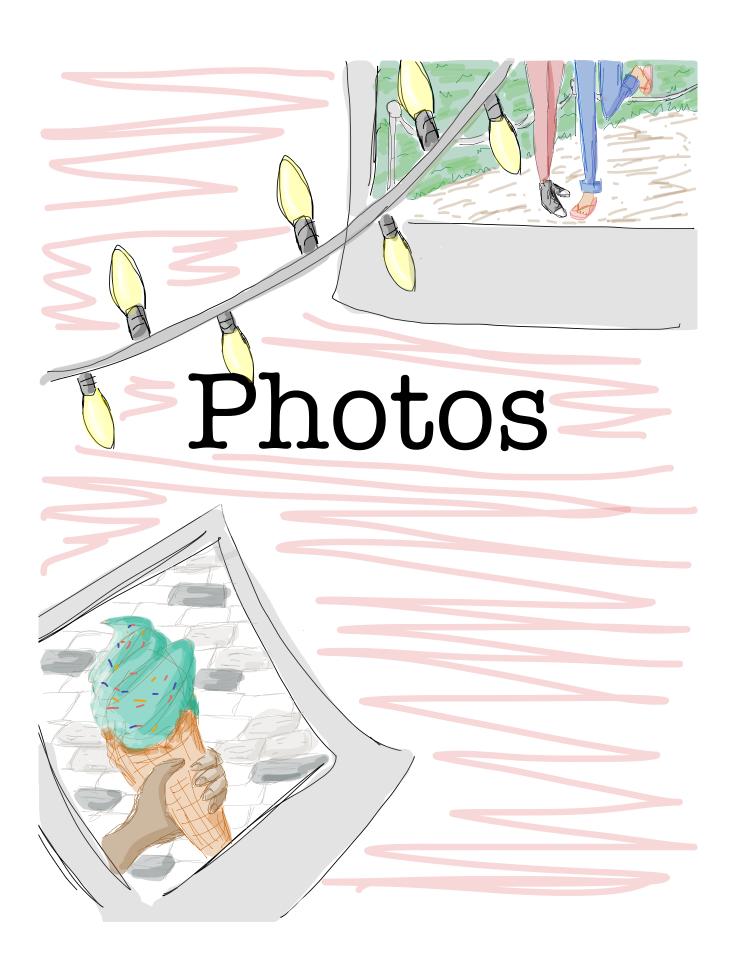
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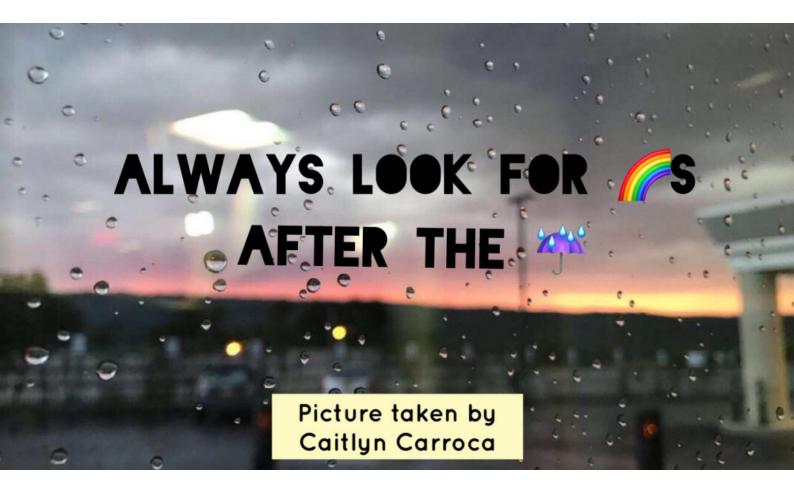
Drawing by Kyle Moreira















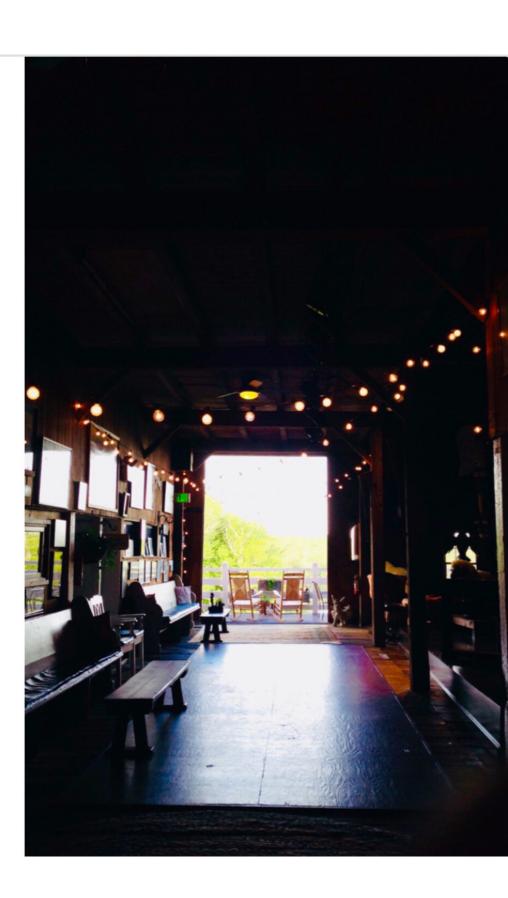


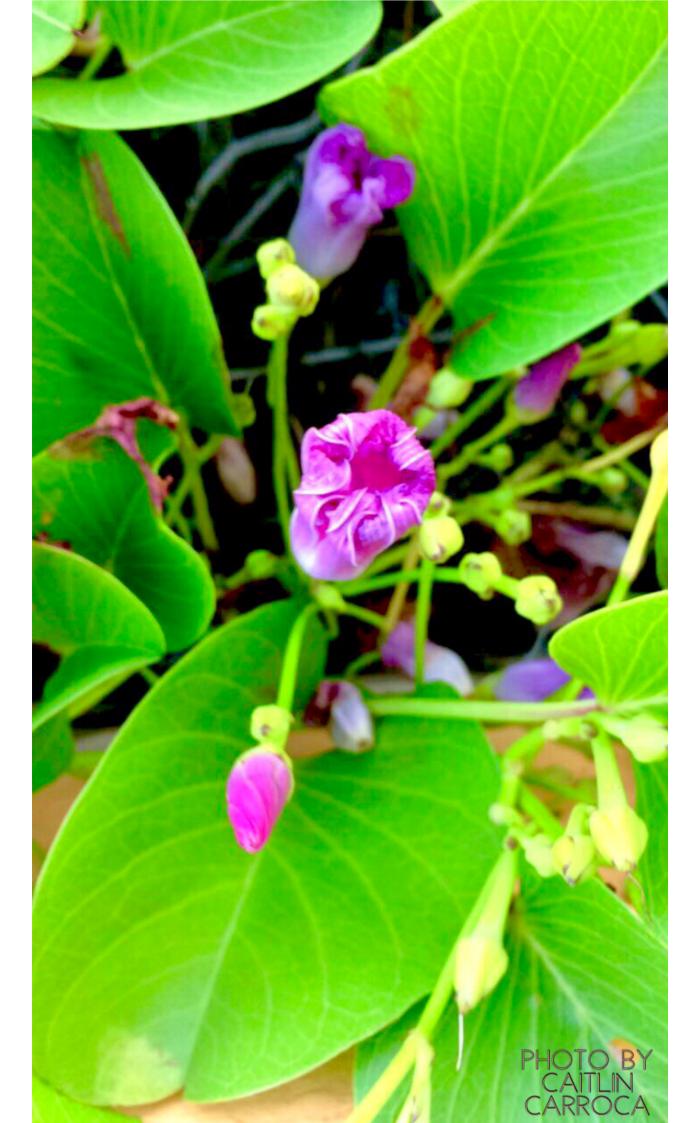
"DOGS DO SPEAK, BUT ONLY TO THOSE WHO KNOW HOW TO LISTEN."

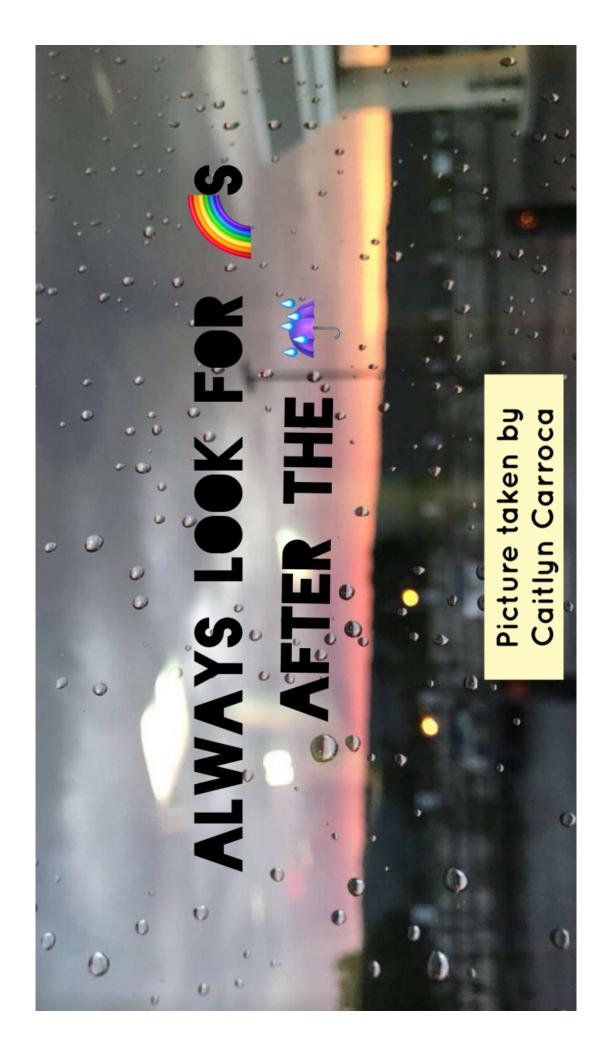






















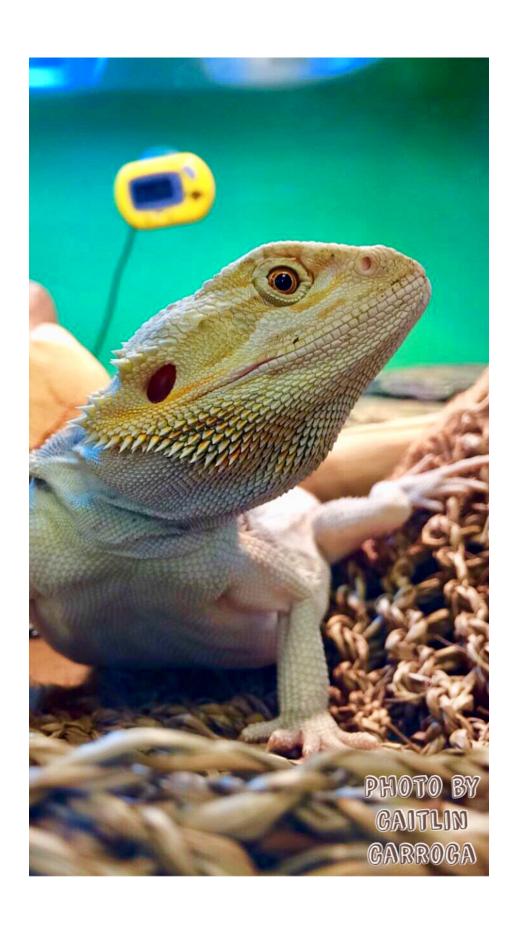




Pictures taken by Shalom Agape Dos Santos By Mary Jane Pratt



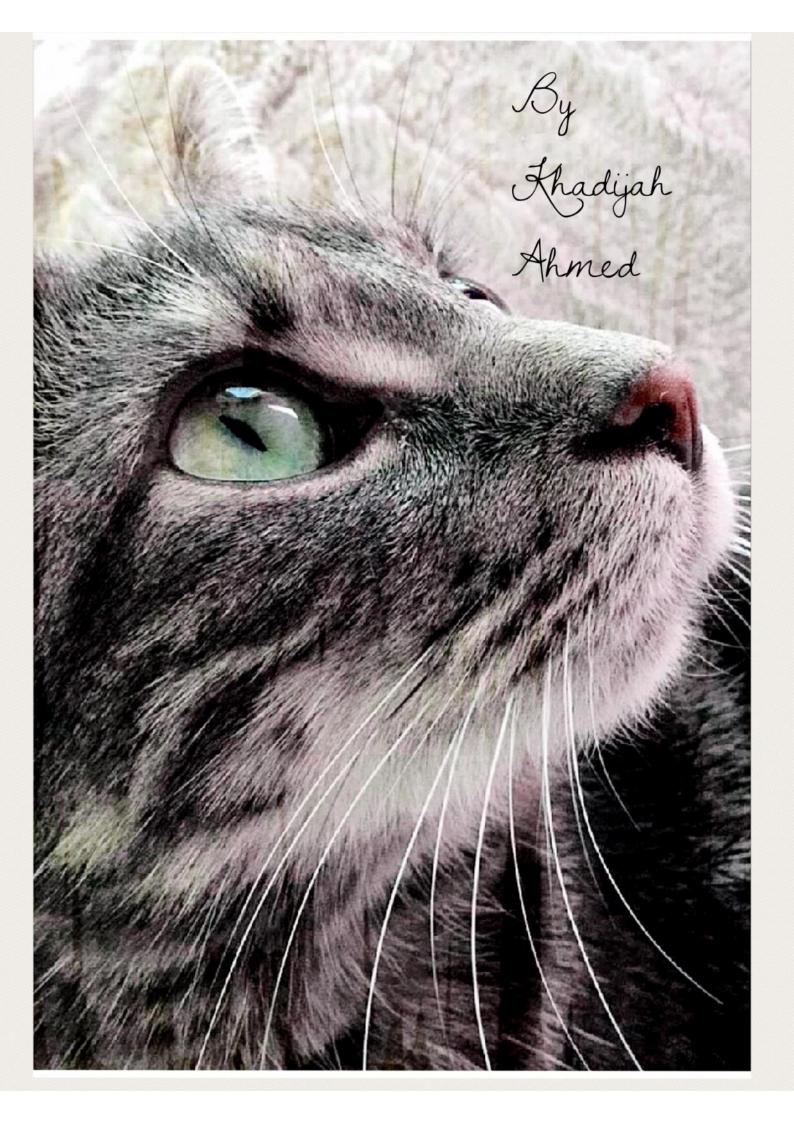
















# Drawings by Amaya valdez



Photos by Caitlyn Carroca









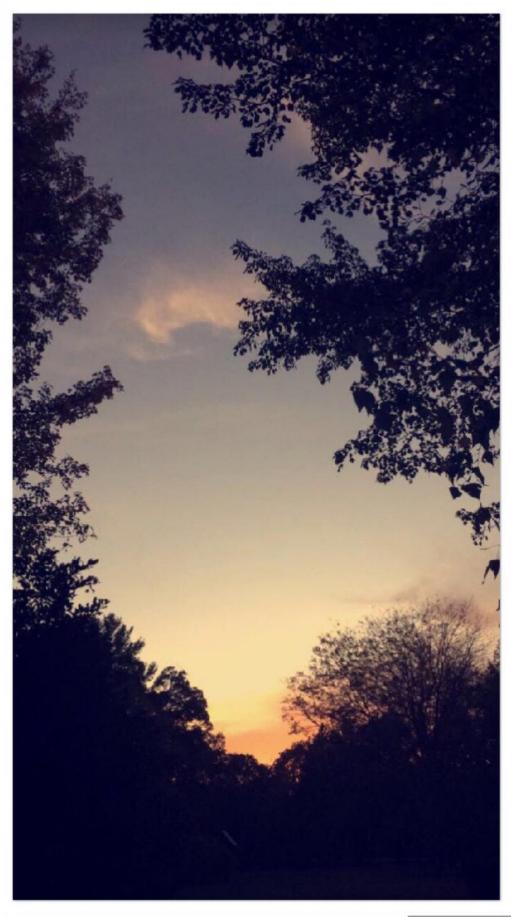
# PHOTOS TAKEN BY CAITLYN CARROCA













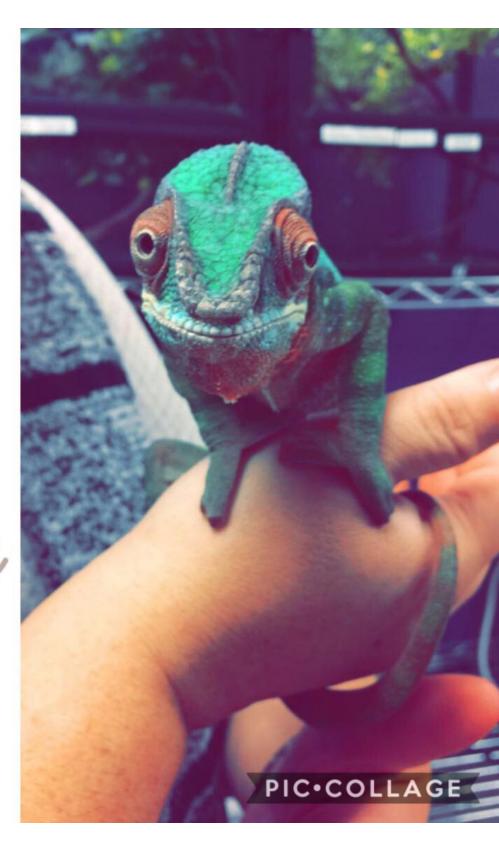
# Howers







Photo taken by Laitlyn Larroca



## CAT HOUSE



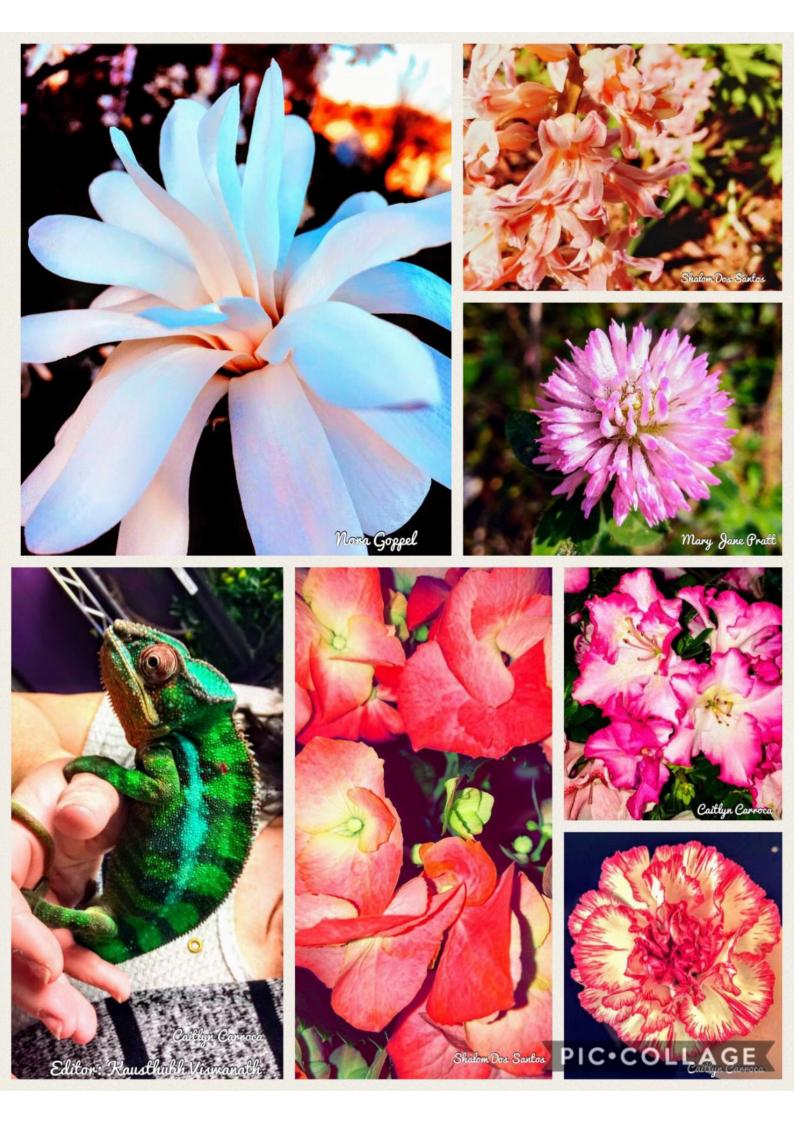
BY KHADUAH AHMED

PIC·COLLAGE



# Laitlyn Larroca



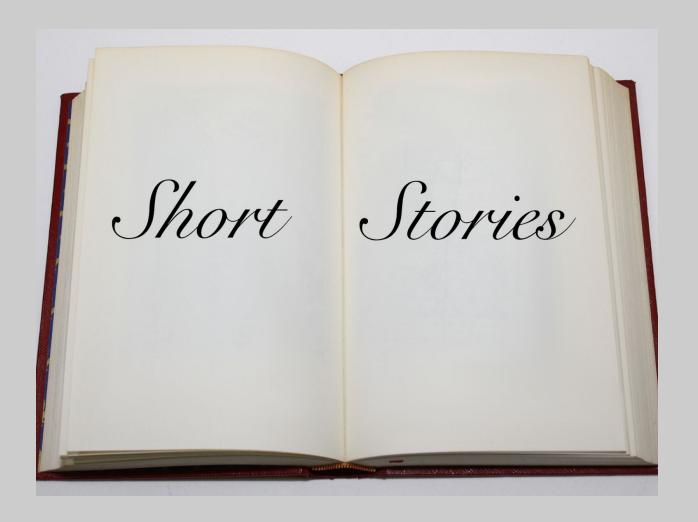




By Mary Jane Pratt







# Who Murdered Ariana Grande?

Dun dun dun, "Today on Abi news, we present Ariana Grande's death. She was singing her hit single at a concert, when suddenly she got shot with a bullet right at her heart and head, Ariana fell like a rock with no bones. We will be back after these fine commercials."

Becca looked at Stephanie and Stephanie looked at Becca, "This is a mystery we can solve," they said together.

The news came back on in five minutes and they listened really carefully, "And we are back, this death took place on Paisley island in Middletown."

Becca said,"Stephanie, we should go check out the concert stage there could be clues!!" "Great idea, we should go after lunch."

Two hours later they walked to Middletown and stopped at the Gregg stage. They walked inside and stopped dead. everywhere was bloody. *The news reporter didn't tell us that other people were killed too!* Stephanie thought.

Becca walked around and something silver caught her eye.

"Whoah, a pure silver gun!" Stephanie said obviously knowing that Becca saw it too, "Those are super rare in Paisley island!"

"I know" Becca sighed, "Whoever killed Ariana Grande must of been rich and a traveler. We should list everyone in this town and see who is most rich then we have a clear look of who could have killed her,"

"You're right," Stephanie said, "Now pick up that gun put it in the bag and let's head home."

They walked into the house and got paper, they listed everyone in Paisley island and narrowed it down to Bucky Mich, Kathy Nugget , Sally Hur, and Karen Oar.

Suddenly, they heard whispering out of the window, "Ya I lost my gun there, it was my rare one! ... ya it did cost 2,000 bucks, all that money just thrown away!" The girls looked out the window, then they snapped back in a flash.

"Omg that's Kathy! Stephanie whispered.

"I know," Becca said," She must be the murderer!"

Ya, I am going to the gun shop ... I NEED to get a new gun, ya I am going to kill taylor swift next Kathy said.

"We need to follow her," Becca said, making sure that Kathy didn't hear her.

"Ya... I gotta go see ya." Kathy hopped in her car and drove downtown.

"Run after her!" they yelled, and they burst out of the door, they ran as fast as they could, and called 911 on the way, and the cops met them there.

"You're under arrest," cop Andy yelled and took her to jail. Stephanie and Becca high fived and gave the gun to cop Bob. They walked out of the store and felt relieved that all of this was over.

The author of this story prefers to keep their identity unknown

### The Masked Murders

By Her

On 32 Brenard St, there lived a young man named Erwin Dougary. He was a young mask maker, the best of the best. He made many different masks. There were masquerade masks, Halloween masks, animal masks, and more! He lived in a two-room apartment above his shop with his wife, Clarice. But one day in late September he divorced his wife. She was furious. She cursed his name and swore he would regret it.

A month later, he sent her a mask. It was one of those half masks in the shape of a rabbit's head. It was the kind that folks wore at balls or masquerade parties. When she received the mask she was heartbroken. And over a span of a few days, she lay on her deathbed, dying of a broken heart. Her brother sat beside her when she passed, quietly loathing the man who broke her heart.

Days later, on October 3rd, four others received a mask as well. But they were all different. The first mask, which had feathers and had a beak-shaped nose, was given to Erwin's older brother Ryan. The second mask, which had pointed ears and narrow eye holes, was given to his younger sister Lydia. The third was given to his nephew Allen, which was in the shape of a skull. Allen was slightly uneasy about the mask but wrote a thank you to his uncle anyway. And the last mask, the most beautiful of all, was given to his new girlfriend Jeanette. It was a butterfly mask that was covered in bright colors and exquisite designs. All of the masks were a true work of art. But running through all four of their minds was one question:

Why?

They tried to look for answers in the note that each were given, but it didn't help them. It only said,

"I hope you like your mask. I made it special for you. It's a beauty, isn't it?

Yours truly, Erwin Dougary"

It greatly confused them, but they shrugged it off and continued with their days.

It was five days later and Erwin was cleaning up his shop when the phone rang behind the counter. He stopped what he was doing and picked it up. "This is Erwin Dougary speaking. How may I help you?" he greeted.

He listened closely to the voice on the other line. "Police? What's the matter? Has something happened?"

There was another pause. "What about Allen?"

He stood there in shock. His breaths started to get shallower and shallower each second. Tears welled up in his eyes. Shakily he replied, "Of course... I understand... I will come as soon as possible. Thank you."

As soon as he hung up the receiver, his legs gave out on him and he fell to his knees and exploded with the grief and despair. His unending tears rolled down his face and onto the floor. He mourned for what seemed like hours until he finally got up and faced the facts: his nephew was dead. Oh, how upset his brother must have been. But now he needed to go down to police station for questioning. He didn't understand why, but he was so upset that he just didn't care anymore.

When he arrived at the station, there were two officers waiting for him. They escorted him to a small room and began to ask him questions. They started with where he was last night. He only replies with, "At my shop."

They asked many other questions, and for each one he gave a simple answer. Seeing that the investigation was going nowhere, one of the policemen sighed and said, "We only ask you these questions because this was left at the crime scene." He took out a skull mask and slid it over to him.

Erwin took the mask and examined the front closely. "Is this...?" He started, looking up at them

"Yes. It is one of your masks. We're sure of that" the policeman replied. "Now, turn it over."

Slowly, he turned the mask over in his hands and stared wide-eyed at a message sloppily scrawled in black ink.

#### My, what a beautiful sight.

He looked up at them with a questioning look. "We don't quite understand it, either," the other policeman said.

"Well," he continued. "We've heard all that we needed to hear, Mr. Dougary. Thank you." Erwin nodded with a blank look on his face and got up and left. He was thinking, wondering. "I don't remember making that mask..." he muttered to himself. "But if it wasn't me, then whom?"

When he returned home, he immediately went to bed. "I'll go to see R,yan in the morning," he thought to himself as he faded into slumber.

But that next morning, Erwin woke up to the sound of the phone ringing. When he picked it up, he was given horrible news. It was his sister on the other line. Through choked speech she told him that even before she had the chance to console their brother that morning, he had supposedly already taken his own life. She told him that she had already notified the authorities and before she hung up she said, "He was wearing that mask you made him. That bird one."

This left Erwin extremely puzzled. "When did I make my brother a mask? I have never given my brother a bird mask, I'm sure of it!"

Then a sudden thought rushed into his head and he immediately called his sister again. As soon as she picked up he asked, "Lydia! Please, check the inside of the mask!"

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"What-? Why?"
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"Please!"

He heard her put down the phone. Then silence. And after a few moments of patient waiting he heard the phone being picked up again. Yet still there was silence.

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"Well?" he inquired. "Is there anything written there?"
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#### "My, what a beautiful sight."

It was at that moment that he realized that his brother had been murdered.

After the call with his sister, he sat down on a rickety stool near the door and started to think. "Obviously," he thought. "There is some sort of pattern here. But who will be next? Will there be someone next? When will the murderer strike? Who is the murderer?"

There were so many questions swimming about in his mind that he didn't notice that someone had entered the shop, despite him being right next to the door. But when the figure cleared her throat he snapped out of his thoughts. He noticed that she had unruly flaming red hair and sky blue eyes that stared directly at him. Something about her seemed familiar but he couldn't quite place what is was. "Are you the owner of this shop?" The woman asked in an almost fake-sounding voice he had ever heard.

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"Yes Miss, I am," he replied.
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"Then why are you dozing off on that chair?"

"I was just thinking."

"Oh "

He got up from the stool and helped the young woman look for a mask. She , then left and business continued in its usual slow way.

"People don't buy my masks anymore," he thought glumly. "Sooner or later I'll have to give this place up."

Suddenly, the phone started to ring. He stared at it for a moment, letting it ring. He was pretty sure he knew what he was going to hear next. He slowly picked up the phone. "Yes?" Business continued in its usual slow way. Suddenly, the phone started to ring. He started at it for a few moments, letting it ring. He had a feeling that he knew what he would hear. "Hello?"

He listened for a moment and took in a shaky breath. "So it was Lydia this time. Was she wearing a mask, mom?" He asked with a serious tone.

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"Yes." His mother said
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<sup>&</sup>quot;Yes," she replied softly.

<sup>&</sup>quot;What does it say?"

"Can you please check the back."
"Ok"

He waited a few minutes before asking, "Does it say 'My, what a beautiful sight'?" "How did you know that?" she asked suspiciously.

"This is the third murder this week. They have all been left with masks that I've supposedly made but that I have no memory of making or giving to them. And they always have that message scrawled on the back. And so far, whoever it was, they killed my nephew, my brother, and my sister. I only have my girlfriend left. And I'm afraid she is next," Erwin explained.

"I see."

The mother then hung up and went to the police and reported his prediction to them. So they called him and asked, "So we heard that you think that you know who is next. What is their name?"

He was slightly confused, but complied, "Her name is Jeanette Woodley." "Thank you." Then they hung up.

That night, an unsuspecting Jeanette was humming a little tune while cleaning her kitchen. But then she heard a knock at the door. She wasn't expecting anyone, so she didn't answer. But then she heard a knock again. So she peered through the peephole and she saw the police! She immediately unlocked the door and welcomed them in. "I'm so sorry!" She apologized quickly. "I wasn't expecting anyone and-!"

"It's quite alright, Miss. Woodley," one of the officers said.

"Though I am curious," she continued. "Why have you come here?"

But before the officers could tell her, a figure dressed in a black cape and mask crashed through the window holding a knife. It was a long, sharp knife with a carved handle. The figure attempted to stab poor Jeanette but their arm was grabbed by the policemen. But even when the police thought they finally caught the killer, they pulled out a little egg-shaped object and threw it on the ground. Puffs of smoke filled the room, and all the people in the room started to cough uncontrollably. When they finally opened their eyes, the figure was gone. The murder suspect left footprints, which the police hurriedly followed to the back of Erwin Dougary's shop. The black cloak, mask, and boots lay near the door. They bust through the door and heard a startled cry from the front of the store. As they started to search, a confused Erwin rushed into the room. "What-? What are you doing?! Why are you here?" He started to walk forward but one of the officers caught his arm.

"We have followed the footprints of the murderer to this shop and have reason to believe that the killer is either hiding in this house or that you are the killer," the cop explained.

Erwin was speechless. He was about to utter a denial when one of the officers shouted, "Hey! Look what I found!"

He held up a knife with a carved handle. A handle that had the same kind of carved handle and a long blade that the murderer was seen holding at the crime scene. They all stared at

the knife for a moment. And everything from there seemed to work in slow motion for Erwin. Two of the officers grabbed his arms and arrested him on the spot for a crime he did not commit. And all the while he kept crying and insisting that he had been framed and that he was not the murderer.

But no one would listen.

The next day he was put on trial and was accused of the murder of his brother, sister, and nephew and the attempted murder of his girlfriend. The case ended with the jury deciding that he was guilty and he was given a sentence of life in prison.

. . .

It has been two years since the murders of Allen, Lydia and Ryan Dougary and the attempted murder of Jeanette Woodley. And Erwin was staring into space in his cell when a guard said he had a visitor. It was Clarice's brother. But when he sat down and pick up the phone, he only said one sentence, an evil grin plastered across his face when he said it. The horrifying phrase that haunted his nightmares.

"My, what a beautiful sight."

# Why We Never Speak

by: Michael Ishkanian (and William Shi, editor and collaborator)

Hey, I know we haven't talked in awhile and I'm sorry for that. I've... just been busy, you know? With school, life, sports... it's a mess... I'm sorry, I hope we can talk soon. I love you.

-Joshua

#### Chapter 1

Let's start a few months back, during Valentine's Day: the big day for freshmen. Joshua König, König is German, for the record; it means "king". Although he has a name meaning "king", he's the least popular, poorest, and "weakest" kid in all of the school, so I guess you could called him a "peasant". Although his name means "king" he acts humble and kind to all, including the dirtbags who bully him. Those traits obviously show because someone asked him out. I'll get to that part later. Josh played soccer for his town league, he was friends with the best kid on his team; his name was Jordan O'Connor, a Irish fellow which happens to be his best friend. They've known each other since kindergarten and have been friends ever since. Jordan was one of the popular kids now too.He still hung out with Josh, only less often. Although this didn't hurt Josh it would be one of the deciding factors. I'll talk about that too later.

What was I talking about before? Oh yeah, Valentine's Day. For the past three years, he spent Valentine's Day sitting at the middle section of the bleachers writing or drawing the landscape. He had three different pictures of the football, baseball, and volleyball fields with the surrounding forest and fields. There's always something different about the sky every time he draws. Although simple, it's also confusing. One year there were people outside; the next year only a few. The year after that... none. It felt weird seeing no people out on the football field this year, there's always some amount of people out there, whether it's the cheerleaders or the football players. This time however, the picture was empty. He liked the quiet for once, he finally didn't have to draw dots on the paper to represent people, which may I say was a good thing. He had time to think about and reflect on his day and what he did.

His day went about as normal: go to class, take a leak before math, get thrown into a locker, then lunch, get yelled at for no good reason whatsoever, go to gym, then language, and then home.

"You get used to the torment", Josh said one day to Jordan.

Through all of Jordan's effort it got slightly better, but at the same time, Josh wished they didn't.

I'm not one to question his motives. I'm also not one to judge someone by their state of mind,

but what I can say is that a few words and "playing around" or "joking around" can go a long way. So don't be a jerk, your actions can have severe consequences.

#### Chapter 2

Where was I again? Oh yeah. Valentine's Day and love and crap. Sorry, I forgot my script. Well, Valentine's Day is when connections meet and hearts break, and people like Josh get ranked on. He was never very social outside of soccer, which made him a target for absolute bull. I was never that badly bullied when I was alive. The day went on as normal, go to class, take a leak before math, get thrown into a locker, then lunch, get yelled at for no good reason what's so ever, go to gym, then language, and then home.

But something unusual interrupted his usual schedule, a girl. Not just any girl, but a popular one, stopped him in the hallway that day. He was confused and nervous -obviously he would. Who wouldn't? If the most popular person in school wanted to talk to you it must be important, right? It feels like it's been years since Josh's first encounter with the popular girl, but in reality it's only been a few months or so; since December I suppose. Her name is Ava Haves. She's the prettiest girl in the school, brunette with dark brown eyes, thin, always wears her hair in a ponytail, tall -I swear she could play basketball- the other guys went into too much detail about her appearance -which I found odd: what else is there to describe a person? Although she's rich and popular and the most beautiful girl in the school, she seemed like she was real, not a piece of fabricated plastic made at the local factory. She actually had feelings and cared for people. Whenever Josh went to church he always saw her donating money, even though her parents told her not to. Not only was she pretty, but she was smart, athletic (she played soccer), humble, funny, and overall a nice kind person. In Joshua's eyes she was the most perfect person in all of the known universe. Other guys only saw her for her body, not her personality like Josh did, I guess that's why Ava liked him so much. Josh was a quiet and clumsy person, which didn't matter to Ava. She looked at his heart and his kindness rather than his flaws.

#### They were meant to be.

Where did I leave my script? Oh yeah right here, let's continue, when she called him over in the hallway. It was a week before the dance when she pulled him aside and finally asked him out. At that moment he just stared at her and cocked his head. He was immensely confused on why, Ava, of all people, would ask him out. Was it because she *actually* liked him or was it for a dare and she would dump him a few days later? He asked her if she had the right person and she said yes.

"You're the soccer star Joshua König right?", she asked with a smile on her face. He said yes, it was him and they began to chat. Ava's friends started to walk away or stare at him, disgusted, like, why Josh, out of all people in the entire school? He felt a bit self conscious and Ava picked up on the social que. She asked if he wanted to walk her to class instead of waiting around, he said yes. Along the the way they talked about school and how the daunting

Valentine's Day dance is coming up and how neither of them had a date, which is perfect for the situation. Josh was so surprised that she didn't have a date; *Who wouldn't want to date Ava Haves?* 

Before she entered the class for her second to last period class she *finally* asked him out. He stopped and just stood there. He asked why him out of everyone in the school? She explained why, apparently she liked him for a while but never said anything. Though popular, she was shy too. She found out that they both had many things in common, which she fell in love with. After her explanation he automatically said yes. Nobody would pass up a once-in a lifetime chance like this! He walked her the rest of the way to her class and parted ways (she went to honors Biology while he went to study hall for his last two periods of the day).

He was ecstatic for the rest of the day. He couldn't stop thinking about what he just heard and did. Let me remind you, he just talked to the most popular girl in the school and he just got asked out by her. He could hardly breathe once she left for Biology. He was excited yet nervous knowing that one of the popular guys will ask her out and that she will decline and say she asked someone else. Well guess what, it didn't happen like that.Instead one of the popular kids named Damian May, the captain of the football team, overheard the whole thing and beat Josh halfway to hell the next day in the bathroom. Josh didn't mind this time. He got what he always wanted: a date and someone that will play a major factor in his life very soon...

The floor was in full swing when Josh built up the confidence to ask Ava to dance. He wasn't very sure how she'd react but she wanted to and apparently she took dance when she was little. In other words, she was amazing at dancing while Josh kind of standing there. However, when the slow song came on, he knew what to do. He's seen enough romance movies (by himself, of course) to know how to slow dance. That moment felt like it lasted all night. That moment it felt like all the faults and all the rotten crap that happened in his life disappeared. He showed the school that he wasn't a loser, that he wasn't some random kid from Europe, or was an asocial nerd, that night, he was the king or "König", of the school. Josh and Ava went outside for a little bit to get some fresh air, the gym smelled of calone and testosterone: the scent of high schoolers. They sat on the bench in the common area and talked and laughed. Josh apologized for stepping on Ava's foot while dancing and Ava laughed it off. That night they really got to know each other. Unlike the dumpster smelling gym, the night air smelled like roses and euphoria. Hands down it's Josh's favorite memory.

Now, he looks at her through the mirror in his bedroom when he wakes in the morning. The magical mirror that lets you see the ones you love age while you're ageless and free, while they slave at work and at school, while you're free of work and school, while they feel pain and you don't. The one thing you can feel is the feeling of regret and hollowness.

Josh went to my boss one day and asked him a generic question all people ask Him when they die. "What will happen to my family?" "What will become of me?" "When can I see them?" After those questions were asked and answered Josh asked Him a pretty horrifying question.

Joshua's question was this: "God, will I got to hell?"

He asked this without a worry on his face and without second guessing it. I looked back at my boss and I looked back at Josh with awe, I've never heard someone ask that question, especially if they're already in paradise. I'll explain how and why Josh died later.

God said to Josh this, "No Joshua, you are not going to hell. You know why?" asked God. Joshua said, "I don't know why Lord, what I did was against the commandments. That's breaking a holy rule", said Josh. God hugged Josh and said, "My son it is not your fault for what you did, what matters now is you're safe, nobody can judge you, I love all my people regardless of their mental health. Those bullies can't hurt you now," said God. At this point Josh was in tears. God was one of the only people to accept Josh besides Ava. "I'm sorry about what happened to you my son", God said to Josh. "I know how you feel being rejected. I too was rejected and an outcast. But, I followed the will of my father and helped and cared for people and now I'm here at his right hand", God said.

Josh remembered what he read in the Bible and the stories about him and Jesus crucifiction, because of that people, like Josh, can be forgiven, which he was.

"I don't want my bullies to go to hell", Josh said. "They don't deserve it, I forgave them like I've been told. If it's okay with you, I'd like to give them a second chance", Josh said whipping away his tears.

God agreed and gave Josh a happy, approving look. After that Josh spent most of his days watching over and praying for the less fortunate and of course, Ava.

#### Chapter 4

Now, onto the hard part.

It's been awhile but I remember it graphically, too graphically. I've seen some pretty mess up and repulsive crap in my time, murder, homicide, overdose, rape, and even suicide... Life I've learned is really... up and shouldn't be taken lightly, especially suicide.

It was a few years after the whole dance thing and Josh and Ava are now Juniors, one more year till their Senior year of highschool. It was when finals came around is when he really started to break down. He had to study for seven exams, play soccer, babysit his little sister (who's fourteen), and try not to break down from all of it. Math and geometry were two of the biggest and hardest tests to study for going into his senior year which will be in four months.

Thankfully though, the bullying had subsided after Ava and Joshua provided sufficient evidence to the principle and the police about the whole bullying senecio. Although a controversial move by the police department, they decided to take the group of misfits into custody and would serve various sentences.

The week of the finals which were slowly, gloomingly advancing around the corner and was about to rear its ugly head. Unfortunately though, they couldn't have come sooner. The day of first final, history, it wasn't so bad as he was well prepared, day two: chemistry, three: biology, four: German (which he struggled on), five: English, and lastly: geometry and algebra. They gave students a few days to do all the tests, two school days exactly. People called the two weeks absolute living hell, it didn't that help people weren't prepared at all for the endeavor. The last two days of tests were the most stressful, sixty percent of students failed their algebra and geometry finals. Josh was one of them. His other grades for the tests were good, solid B+ on all of them but algebra and geometry, which he pretty much failed on. Not the lowest grade in the class but one of the lowest.

When he got the test grades back his teacher asked him to see him after school. The teacher's name was Mr. Galvin. He was Josh's algebra and geometry teacher. Mr. Galvin is a nice teacher. He doesn't have a temper and actually enjoys teaching, although his students can be annoying and disruptive most of the time. Mr. Galvin this time however, was surprised and worried about one of his star students. He rarely worried about Josh. He always was up to date in class and *never* got in trouble. Never.

#### Chapter 5

The day after finals, Mr. Galvin pulled Josh aside to speak to him. He asked Josh what was wrong and if he needed to talk to anyone, he was always available. Throughout the whole conversation Josh barely made a sound; he was thankful that someone actually saw what was wrong and offered help, but at the same time he didn't want help; he just didn't. The awful part is Mr. Galvin was like family to the Könige. He was actually being sincere and was actually willing to help Josh, which was surprising. Looking back on everything I can see why Josh would shrug it off and not trust him, but family is the only definite thing you have in your dark times, and your close friends.

Fast forward a couple of weeks and we're now a month and a week away until summer, or something like that; time flies when you're writing scripts all day. Anyways, it was the home stretch until the glorious two months away from school. Summer is supposed to be a time filled with happy memories, lemonade, and partying with friends from dusk to dawn. However, this summer will be filled with sorrow and grief. A few days before... well, before his death, I remember seeing him constructing a note; not just any note: his final note. He had tears in his eyes and a heavy hand when he wrote his note. It wasn't a happy time. The note went like this:

Hey, I know we haven't talked in awhile and I'm sorry for that. I've... just been busy, you know? With school, life, sports... it's a mess. To be honest, I don't like where I'm heading, what's happening in my life. This has absolutely *nothing* to do with you; if anything you and Jordan are the only people that have helped me and been with me in my life, and for that I can never repay you two. Whatever happens, whoever reads this first, I'm sorry, I hope you can forgive me.

I'm sorry, I hope we can talk again soon.

I love you.

"You're a good man, Josh. The only question I have for you is, why did you do it?"

"That... isn't an easy question to answer man. To be honest, I don't even know anymore, I don't even know if I made the right choice."

"It's okay son, it's okay. Whatever the reason was, it doesn't matter anymore. What really matters is that you're safe."

Although his note was short, and his life shorter, Josh was, and always will be, an amazing human being. A few days after he wrote his note, the town was in darkness and the only colors that showed were black and grey; the weather was cloudy and gloomy. Time seemed to stand still. A black hearse rolled by. However, there was something unusual about that gloomy day, a red rose was on Josh's head stone; nobody knows how it got there, or who even put it there. Rumor has it it was Ava, or Mrs. König. Or was it an angel, or the wind?

After the funeral Damian and his band of cronies were standing around the church parking lot after the funeral; everyone left besides Ava and the König family. When Damion saw Mrs. and Mr. König he broke down like a sprinkler in a rainstorm. He begged for their forgiveness and fell to his knees as if they were kings, as the last name implies. After hearing Damian's long, drawn-out speech, they reluctantly forgave him and his gang of peasants. Who's on their knees now? It's funny how the tables turn in such a short period of time. After Ava and the Köings departed, Ava got in her car and started to reminisce on the times her and Josh had. She remembers the first time the officially talked, how he was nervous about talking to her, but in a cute way; how they walked from class to class together, how they had their first kiss under the moonlit sky. Josh will never be forgotten not by his family...not by his peers... not by his bullies... not by Ava.

#### Author's Note:

Suicide is never the answer. Trust me: it isn't. There's always, *always*, people to go to. There's always people that love you, that care about you, that are *always* there for you.

I've used the semicolon fourteen times in this narrative. Let me tell you another story: a story about the semicolon. Let's start with the grammar definition: "A semicolon represents a sentence the author could have ended, but chose not to". In the aspect of mental health, the semicolon represents how one could've ended it all, but didn't. The semicolon represents a chapter in life that could've been ended, but didn't.

If you or a loved one has had, or is having suicidal thoughts, please contact the line below, thank you.

Suicide Hotline: 1-800-273-8255 https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org

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# Jordan

Bv: Will

based off of Michael Ishkanian's story, "Why We Never Speak"

I dedicate this story to Michael Iskanian, for whom I owe a million thanks.

\*\*\*

It was a sweltering, sunny afternoon. Jordan, drenched in sweat, jogged off the field. He waved over at Josh, who cheered enthusiastically from the bleachers, drawing, as always. They walked home, guzzling down their cups of soda.

"How did you get so good at soccer?! You *destroyed* that team! I saw the other team's coach trying not to cry when your team hit the double digits!" Josh exclaimed.

"I've told you this a million times before: my dad sent me to that soccer bootcamp of hell. I died inside. The end," Josh replied jokingly. His eyes shifted to Josh mischievously. "So... how was the dance with Ava?"

Josh choked and coughed violently on his drink, spilling it all over his shirt.

"H-How did you know about that?" Josh stammered, blushing.

"I was there, but since you two seemed so comfortable, I didn't want to disturb you two." Jordan smirked deviously, attempting to suppress a laugh.

Josh, now a brilliant shade of crimson and swarmed by butterflies, attracted to the soda on his shirt, murmured, "It was nice... but your teammates looked like they wanted to kill me."

"Ah. I see. I'm going to have a *nice, lengthy talk* to them when I see them."

"T-That's not necessary! Please don't! They'll kill me!" Josh pleaded.

Jordan, suddenly dead serious, said, "Look, you need to stand up to them. You can't just keep surrendering to them! Otherwise, all you can do is suck it up and endure the torment."

"I know," Josh muttered quietly, eyes downcast.

They reached Jordan's house. It was a poor attempt to be modest, as it stood out like a sore thumb. It was the only white house on a street of red-brick houses. Jordan liked it. It was almost like the house telling the world: *I'm not like you other houses, I'm going places, baby!* 

The AC hit at them like an arctic blast. They collapsed on the living room couch and Jordan blasted his playlist. Suddenly, the house was washed over with life.

"Dude, your playlist is like pop songs from like a *decade* ago! You need to listen to something new!" Josh complained, as per usual.

"You know I don't like the songs nowadays. They're just guitars, computer sounds, and a crap ton of autotune. Good singers now are an endangered species."

"I think *you're* an endangered species." Josh chuckled. "Someday, I will get you into to my music!"

"I'd like to see you try!"

"Oh I will!

I promise."

\*\*\*

## 7 months later...

Jordan was eating breakfast at the table with his family. Eggs and bacon, as usual. It was a bright and cheery day, with a slight breeze. Not too hot, not too cold: perfect!

Suddenly the phone rang. Jordan's mom bustled over.

"Hello? Um.. yes... Should I get him now?"

Turning to Jordan, his mother said, "It's Josh's mom. She sounds very upset."

"Hello Mrs. König?? Is something wrong with Josh?? Did the bullies get him again?" Jordan questioned ferociously.

"Honey, it's okay. Josh isn't suffering anymore."

"I knew Josh could stand up to those jerks! Thank Go-"

Then Jordan heard Josh's mom was fighting back tears on her end of the line.

. . .

Crash!

The phone slid out of Jordan's hand and broke on the ground. The world had frozen. There was a ringing in his ears. *No way. No way this happened. He wouldn't do that! Josh is stronger than that!* 

Jordan's mind raced with questions. He zoomed out of the house on his bike, his mom calling after him. It's just a joke. A sick joke. Yeah, just a joke. Just a joke. Just a joke. Just a joke. Just a joke.

When he arrived at Josh's house, he knew it wasn't a joke.

#### It was real.

What happened to your promise, Josh??

Two days after the funeral, the school addressed the students, calling out for people to report bullying.

"We will not tolerate this behavior. Bullying will not be taken lightly in this school! For as long as I remain here, I will see to it that school remains a safe and effective environment!" The principal pledged. But after a month. Things went back to normal. Bullying went on as usual... Nothing changed.

On a cool, dry fall day, Jordan found one of the bullies after school in the track field cackling and joking with his friends.

"That loser got what he deserved At least he had the decency to do the job himse-"

#### WHAM!!

me!"

Before Jordan knew what he was doing, he had punched the bully across the face. The bully staggered and fell to the ground. Jordan continued to kick the downed bully as his friends, calling for help, ran away. He kicked the bully over. And over. And over until the bully, curled up, broke down, sobbing and begging for forgiveness.

"I didn't know it would turn out like this. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Don't hurt

Jordan just glared coldly at the bully. Then he realized: it was Damian May. The one who sobbed and begged for forgiveness at Josh's funeral.

He wasn't sorry! It was just an act! That scum!!

As Jordan pulled back his foot, about to kick him again, the gym teacher rushed onto the field and pulled him back. He fought and shouted curses at the top of his lungs. Damian, bloodied and bruised, scrambled away. When the teacher let him go, Jordan fell to his knees, staring blankly at the ground.

I didn't save Josh. I'm not worthy to be called a friend. I let him die. I'm disgusting.

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After Josh's death, Jordan's life shattered. He spent many nights sleepless. His grades plummeted. He was suspended and kicked off the soccer team for beating up a student. He was outcasted after rumor spread that he beat up Damian May after school.

"Damian May? Captain of the soccer team, Damian May??"

"I heard he kicked him while he was down! He's mental!!"

"Shut the hell up, idiot! He's right there! Do you want to get killed!?"

"Let's go. I don't want to be in the same room as that psycho."

He was thrown off to the side, abandoned.

He slowly grew transparent. No one would even look at him.

This is what I deserve, isn't it? This is the price I pay for not being a friend, for beating up Damian, for living. One grey afternoon, trudging around in the school hallways, he bumped into a thin girl. She had bags under her glassy eyes. It was Ava. They both lifted up their heads and their eyes widened and their faces lit up very subtly when they recognized each other.

After school, they went to Josh's grave together. Heads bowed, they paid their respects. Then they crumbled at his headstone and hugged each other, as if they could seal away their broken hearts.

Breaking apart, Jordan sat cross-legged as Ava, bittersweet tears rolling down her cheeks, retold stories of her and Josh. The first encounter. The dance. The kiss.

She talked.

And talked.

And talked.

Talked about Josh, about the weather, about the future, about how she would've love see him, to dance with him again.

Them they just stared up to the sky. They sat, shrouded in silence in the drizzly rain. In the silence, their ears heard everything and nothing. Their eyes, wide, capturing everything and ignoring everything. Birds serenaded in the distance. Wind stirred the leaves of the trees. A butterfly fluttered by and settled on Jordan's head.

click

Suddenly, someone had flipped the switch in Jordan's brain. Tears started welling in his eyes. For the first time since Josh's death, Jordan didn't feel hate or confusion. He was tired of it. "I'm so sorry."

"Huh?" Ava, puzzled, asked, "Why?"

"I should've looked for you. I should have been at the funeral. I should have been there for Josh. Now he is gone," Jordan rasped. It hurt to speak again. He wiped his eyes with the sleeves of his shirt and stood up; the butterfly, startled, flew off.

"I promise that I will make sure no one will have to go through this. No one should ever experience what we're going through. Under my watch, no one will experience what Josh had to put up with. I will spread Josh's story and I will show you a bright and fair world," Jordan declared, gazing firmly at Ava.

"I promise."

In a meadow far, far away, a butterfly crawled out of its cocoon and took off into the big blue sky.