

A Journal for Young Writers

CAESURA



Vol. 1 2023



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Celebrating the First Annual Publication of *Caesura*

Greetings:

You are (digitally) holding in your hands the very first issue of *Caesura: A Journal for Young Writers*. This has been a long time coming. When we first announced the formation of the journal in the fall of 2019 we envisioned a glorious rollout in April of 2020. Well, we all know how that played out...

But now, the journal has arrived, and we could not be more excited.

Creative writing is such an important art and one that allows young authors to express their God-given talents in ways that honor their Creator and engage with the world around them.

We were very impressed with the selections sent in to us by teachers and students. In some cases, we had very difficult decisions to make about what was in and what was not. It was a very good problem to have.

Please enjoy this journal, please celebrate the talents of these young writers, and please, please encourage every young writer you know to keep writing and writing and writing—and then submit to us next year!

We want to offer a special thank you to all the writers (both those in the journal and those who did not have work published this year)—keep going, keep writing, keep reading. We want to hold your gifts up for all to see. We also want to thank all the teachers of English Language Arts who make creative writing a part of the curriculum. There are few better ways for students to invest in themselves and build confidence and stretch imagination than by writing a poem, story, essay, or play. Thank you for encouraging them.

This first journal is arriving a touch later than we had intended, but we are going to humbly suggest that it will be a good addition to your “Summer Reading.”

God Bless your summer and your writing,

The Editors of *Caesura*



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5th Grade Submissions

Lagertha

Roscoe Barnett of Trinity Lutheran School, Lombard

Lagertha, the big popcorn colored dog.
Fur fluffy like clouds.
Catches snowballs and barks at leaves falling,
Storms, rain, and snow.
Attacks water from the hose. Jumps and twirls.
Extraordinary cheetah fast. Chases mice,
snakes, bunnies, squirrels, skunks, deer.
Licks sweat from my hands and feetsies. Warm tickles.
Best friend, gives me cuddles and snuggles in my wet hair.

Wrigley

Sophia Foster of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst

Wrigley always loves to play
She likes to do this everyday
Her bones are always hard to find
Because she hides them with no mind
I love to play with her all day
Then when we are tired we lay

The Runaway Princess

Samantha Mueller of Zion Lutheran School, Marengo

Once upon a time there was a hidden kingdom, it was called the Lost Island of Animals (Yes, there were humans living there). The ruler was King George, and his wife was Queen Hannah. They had a daughter named Princess Leia. This kingdom was not like your normal kingdom with knights and war horses, but it was a peaceful place where all animals lived together in harmony. There were beautiful waterfalls and meadows there. Princess Leia loved living there, but she often dreamed of living a simple life. Being a princess and all, she had ladies-in-waiting who pampered her a lot. She didn't go to school, she had a tutor, and worst of all she only had one friend.

Leia wanted to live a simple life, so she ran away. Her plan was at midnight to put a 100 foot rope out her window, then she would hop on her horse, Midnight. Finally she would ride Midnight out into the woods and live with her only friend, Elli. It was 9:00pm.- getting nervous, 10:00 pm.- still nervous, 11:00 pm.- nervous and excited, 11:59pm.-almost time. Finally at midnight, Leia lowered the rope to the ground, climbed down safely, ran to the stables, and tacked up Midnight. She rode out into the night, and was gone.

As she rode into the darkness, Leia started thinking about what her parents would do when they found out that she was gone. Then she thought about what she would do when she got to Elli's house. Finally she thought about what her parents would do when or if they found her. She started to second guess herself if this was a good idea. Then she remembered that she was still riding Midnight. It was morning now, and Leia was wondering if her parents had noticed that she was gone. If they had, she thought, she probably would have herd scouts looking for her by now. Finally, she saw Elli's house!

Leia was SO excited her heart felt like it might explode! Then it hit her, what if they sent her back to the castle? Or what if they were not home? Either way she was scared, and a bit of a nervous wreck. When she got to Elli's house she jumped off Midnight, ran to the door, and started knocking. Finally someone opened the door, it was Elli's mom, Amanda.

As soon as Amanda saw that it was Leia she said, "Leia, what on earth are you doing out here?"

Leia replied, "I wanted a new life out here with you and Elli. Also, I got bored of being waited on hand and foot!"

Leia knew by the look on Amanda's face that she was too surprised to talk, but then something very surprising happened, Amanda said, "Hmm let me think..... Maybe."

Leia was almost about to scream! Then, she thought that people might hear her, so she just said, "Thank you, thank you, thank you!" She felt SO overjoyed. She could finally get to know what it was like to be a normal person!

Then she said, "Quick you have to hide me! Guards are probably after me , and I don't want to get caught!"

Amanda then said, "Come on in." When she came in she saw Elli, and ran over to her. Then she did something that she would regret, she did this without thinking.

She yelled, "Elli, I'm so happy to see you!!" Then about twenty seconds later, they heard a knock at their door.

Once they heard the knock they hid, because they thought it was a guard. " Is anyone home?" The voice outside asked.

"Who is it?" Amanda replied.

" I am one of Elli's friends, Jessica. Last week you invited me over," said Jess.

Then Amanda said, "Oh right I did, how silly of me to forget, come on in!" Right when Jess saw Elli they both started laughing.

It was 8:00am., and they were eating breakfast. Elli, Leia, and Jess were all talking. While Amanda was putting dishes away, Leia went to give Midnight hay and water. The stable was more like a small barn or shed, nothing like the big one back home. For some reason Midnight seemed happier in this little stable rather than the one back home. When she got back Jess and Elli were collecting berries, but Amanda said that it would probably be safer for Leia to stay inside.

Elli always loved to ride horses. Since Leia couldn't ride outside any more, she helped Amanda with horse and house chores. Even though Leia couldn't ride Midnight, Elli could, and she did. One day when Elli was riding Midnight someone must have thought that Elli was the missing princess, so they must have sent for the royal guard.

As soon as the guard found Elli, he knew that it wasn't Leia, but when he realized that she was riding Midnight he yelled, "Halt in the name of the king!"

Once he got closer he said, "Who are you, and what is your steed's name?"

Elli knew that she couldn't say their real names, so she said, "I am Emma and this

is Shadow.”

The guard then replied, “Sorry for the interruption, someone must have mistaken you for the missing princess.”

So with that Elli rode along the path until she was sure that the guard was gone. Then, she turned around and galloped back to the house to tell everyone what just happened. When she got there she quickly put away Midnight and ran to the house.

When she got there she was almost out of breath, and quickly said, “I... just saw... a guard... when I ... was riding, and he... asked if... I was ... the missing... princess!” Everyone was surprised, but this worried Leia because she knew that they would find her soon. Then she knew at that second what she was going to do.

Since Leia knew that one day her parents would find her, (after all, they were the king and queen), she knew what she had to do. She would cut and dye her hair. With a sad mind she cut her hair, from going down to her waist to only going to her shoulders. She dyed her hair so that instead of a light brown, her hair was a dirty blond. She even decided that she would change the way she dressed. All this was a huge change for her. She never even thought that she would get this far without getting caught. Leia really wanted to ride Midnight, so she knew that she had to change Midnight’s appearance. Midnight was an all black horse. Her main and tail went from black to brown, and her body went from black to light brown. They looked so different. Now Leia could ride Midnight and go to town.

While Leia and Midnight were changing their appearances, Elli was in the village getting food. When Elli came back she thought that there was a stranger and their horse, but then Leia told her what they did. Backing their knowledge on how Elli reacted when she saw Leia and Midnight, Amanda felt that it was safe for Leia to ride into town. When Leia found this out, she was so excited. She could now see how the townspeople were doing and, best of all, how her parents were doing. So, off she went into town riding on Midnight. When she got there the village was just as she remembered it. Just then, the king and queen were walking towards her! Then they stopped!

They stopped, and looked at her. While they were doing this, Leia was nervous. She knew that when or if she was caught, she would probably never get to go outside again! She was terrified! After what seemed like an hour they finally left, Leia was so relieved! She rode at a gallop all the way home, and told everyone about the experience she just had. When they heard they were super surprised! They couldn’t believe that Leia was almost caught, but her own parents didn’t even recognize her! At first they

were all very stunned, then they started wondering; would her parents recognize her?

They wondered if they would realize that the person that they’d seen was their missing daughter. They were still in shock during dinner, a very good chicken soup. No one had said a word. While they were sleeping Leia had a weird dream, it was her parents crying about what seemed to be like her. She immediately woke up and told Amanda what she was going to do, in a week she would go back home for good, after a conference with her parents about her freedoms. Then she fell asleep peacefully until morning.

When Leia woke up the next morning she immediately smelled the amazing smell of bacon and pancakes. She raced down the stairs, and to her surprise there was a party waiting for her! Then she remembered that it was her birthday, her 12th in fact. Elli and a bunch of other people jumped out from behind the couch, and yelled, “Surprise, Happy Birthday, Leia!” Leia was so surprised that she couldn’t speak. All that she could muster out was, “Thank You!” Elli knew, being her best friend, that Leia was really surprised and thankful. After a while everyone was laughing and eating pizza, cake, and ice cream. While this was happening, Leia was thinking about what her parents were doing. She thought that they were probably just relieved that they didn’t have to throw a big party. The time had come, Leia was going back to the palace today. She dyed her hair back to normal and made Midnight look normal too. Then off they went, back to their old life. Once they got there the king and queen came running towards her, and gave her a REALLY long hug. They brought her into the palace. After a long meeting she got to have friends, and go outside whenever she wanted. She kept her adventure close to her heart, but was happy to be home.

Red

Micah Jones of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst

Red is like the sound of a fire devouring everything.

Red is like the smell of a freshly picked flower.

Red is like the taste of hot sauce burning your tongue.

Red is like the feel of being energized and passionate about the day.

Grey

Valerie Kraus of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst

Grey is like the sound of thunder from big storm clouds on a rainy day.

Grey is like the smell of smoke from a warm campfire.

Grey is like the taste of the dull flavor of pulled pork with no
barbecue sauce.

Grey is like the feeling of the soft wool of a sheep on a cold day.

Philip's Combine

Lucas Ettner of Zion Lutheran School, Marengo

Philip lives on a family farm in the small town of Border Montana. Their farm is called Bacon family farm. The farm started in 1778. Philip was born on October 18, 1978. He is now forty years old. He still works on the farm with his family and friends. He loves driving tractors and combines.

“Come on Johnny!” said Philip.

“Ok I am coming!” said Johnny. Philip had just got a new John Deere S670 combine. They get in the combine and try to start it but it doesn't start. Philip gets so mad. He gets out to see the problem. There is a rat nest in the engine. He goes in but the rat bites him and he screams in pain. Then climbs the ladder and kicks Johnny out of the combine. Philip turns the key and it turns on and works.

Philip drives his combine down the road away to his parents and leaves Johnny. He leaves Johnny because he is mad at him. Phil is mad because the combine has worked every time. Philip has driven 10 times. He is really mad.

Johnny is sad because he wanted to ride but also happy. He is happy because he put the rat nest in the combine as a prank. But now he sees that what he did was wrong and he gets in his truck and drives toward Philip. He tells him to stop then he tells Philip that he put the nest in the combine and apologizes to Philip. Philip is now really mad at Johnny and he speeds away. But then he sees Johnny is sad and looks out his mirror and isn't watching and doesn't see the tree in the road. He hits and the combine rolls over and catches fire. Philip is flung out of the combine but thankfully Johnny was there and catches Philip. And they live happily ever after. THE END

Horse

Hadlie Wadner of Zion Lutheran School, Marengo

Everything was cold and bright at first, but mom was there so I could snuggle with her. Underneath me was long, yellow, stringy strands of something like hair. I would later find out that it's called straw. Once or twice a day a woman would come in bringing food to my mom. I remember a girl coming in too. She led me to a new room. She closed the tall, rusty door behind me, and opened a small slatted door to my left just a little bit. Then the room started to move! When the room finally stopped moving we were at a new place. It was all white, white furniture, white walls, white floor, even white desk and shelves! The girl (Hadlie) said "This is the vet office, right?"

"Yup" said her mom.

People in more white cloaks gave me syrups and other hard crunchy round flat circles. They weren't the best things in the world to eat. They stopped making me eat those horrible things. Now they started jabbing me in the hind- 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, five times.

Three weeks later we were at a place crowded with people and horses.

Hadlie said to me as she held onto my halter with her face close to mine, "This is an auction where you will find your true owner," she finished saying with tears glistening in her eyes. She put her index finger on my chest, as if to say your own owner, who will love you. Just then a young couple came up and Hadlie quickly wiped her tears away.

The woman said, "Honey, we have to get her."

"Okay we will try," the man replied, unsure of what he was getting into.

"We will try—we will get her."

"Ma'am, she will be horse 18," Hadlie told the excited woman.

"Okay, thank you!" she said with an excited squeal. I got auctioned at 250 dollars to the young couple.

When I left the auction I was with the young couple. I was so excited, I finally had an owner of my own! The woman named me Chesnut. We drove for a long time, to the point where I fell asleep. When we stopped we were at a nice, well-kept farm. The farm had a split rail fence lined with fir trees on the north, east, and west sides. On the south side there was a small gate and I could tell that the fence was white. East of the pasture was a small, one story cottage with white shutters and flower boxes on each window. A

white porch swing was on the porch on the south side of the house. Behind the house was the shed with a stall and a tack room big enough for one horse. I got unloaded and led to a stall with fresh straw, hay, grain, and water.

"Micheala, let's go to let her settle in."

"Okay Max" she responded. So I learned that their names were Micheala and Max. I sort of slept peacefully that night. To be honest I was cold, Luckily Micheala hung up a heat lamp the next day. It was so warm that night!

Today was horrible! I got shoed! I got my first set of horseshoes. I had to stand there and get fitted. It helped that Micheala was there giving me treats. I hope tomorrow will be better.

Today was even worse! I'm being trained to be ridden. Max put a saddle on my back, a bit and bridle in and over my head. A lunge line was attached to my bridle and a long whip followed behind me (It is never used to whip the horse). I have to move. I thought to myself. I walked forward. It's still following me. I trotted. Why is it still following me? I have to get away! I ran and it stopped chasing me. I slowed down, cautiously, then I stopped. I didn't want it to chase me again. Then the worst thing happened- Micheala handed the rope to Max and got on me. Micheala tapped me with her heels. I moved forward a little bit. She tapped me again. I moved forward and then I got the idea. Micheala wanted me to go forward and keep moving. When she taps me again I go faster. Then finally she got off, and took everything off. She put my halter on and clipped a lead rope on it, and put me in my stall. Tomorrow I will learn new things, I can feel it.

I was right, I learned to respond to the bit. After a year of training, Micheala took me on a trail ride. I'm highly sophisticated. I don't shy away from anything, so it was a great surprise when I shied at a rattlesnake. She got right back on and rode home.

Right now I'm in my stall and large, clumpy steps are coming around the corner. I thought that Micheala or Max locked the door? A tall figure stood in the doorway. It looked a little like Max but taller and heftier. The man came over to pet me. I whined and kicked the side wall. I kicked, bucked, and plunged and kicked again.

Micheala and Max came running in and Max yelled, "WHAT ARE YOU DOING, THIS IS PRIVATE PROPERTY!"

"I'm sorry, I wanted to pet the horse I used to own!" A high pitched squeaky voice said.

“Chesnut?” Micheala questioned.

“Yes, I dressed myself up on the stilts I got for my birthday.”

“So you want to pet Chesnut?”

“Yes please,” she said. As she hopped down onto the ground and pulled off the plaid shirt and jeans. She walked over to me. It was Hadlie! I neighed to her. She laughed and smiled at me. We neighed, laughed and reconnected.

“I wish mom would have kept you,” She whispered to me.

“We better get you home,” Micheala said.

“Okay,” Hadlie responded.

Three days later... “Chesnut, come, into the trailer you go.” Micheala and Max are tugging me into the trailer.

“All this trouble just to go on vacation,” Max muttered under his breath.

“You’re going to Hadlie’s,” Micheala said. I stopped tugging and pranced into the trailer.

“Well that went well,” Micheala said.

“Ya don’t say.” Max agreed.

On the way there I kept hopping on my feet. I started shaking the trailer. When I got out, I was so excited. As I got out, I stumbled. My foot hurts, bad. I try to stand and I can’t. Max is sitting next to me in the trailer. Micheala and Hadlie are hugging each other and silently sobbing. I call out to them as if to say everything will be okay. I try to go to them to comfort them but something or someone is holding me down. I look over and feel a sharp pain in my leg and shoulder. My shoulder hurts because the vet is giving me a shot. My leg hurts because I broke it. Max gets up and pulls down a tether, he straps it to one end of the trailer, lifts it over and onto me so it lays flat and straps it on the other side. Two little straps are connected to the large strap one goes down in front. The other goes down in back to keep me from sliding. Micheala, Max, and the vet climb into the truck. We started to move, when we stopped they put me on a stretcher and rolled me into a little white room, much like the one when I was a foal. The vets poked and prodded me some more then wrapped my foot and wheeled me out again. While they fastened me down, Micheala explained that I would have to stay still for several minutes while they hung me in a sling to help me heal my leg.

When we got home Max went into the barn for 30 minutes, then put me on a big wheeled cart and went into my stall. A strap hung down with a round strap attached

to that were two straps in front and two in back. Four straps were hanging down with round straps attached to that. Max and the vet clipped the big strap around my middle with the two straps on either side of my neck and back end. Micheala slipped my feet into the circular straps, then Max, Micheala, the neighbor and the vet pulled me off the ground about a foot. Then Micheala put my blanket on. Why, I’m really hot? Max put my bowls on straps so I could reach them. Last night it was really cold. I’m glad that Micheala put my blanket on. This morning Micheala put little foam strips under the leather straps. Then, Max dragged wood this way, tools that way and soon Max came into my stall with a shelf that held my water and food bowls. In the front there was a shelf with doors that lock that hold my food, meds, and things for my health. He screwed it to the wall.

Every day for the the next month, a vet came. He looked at my leg and sometimes poked and prodded. One day Micheala was crying, Max was hugging her and the vet was talking quietly to them. Max came over and lowered the sling and I stood on my own 4 feet! I tried to walk but the sling was holding me back. Micheala unbuckled the straps and set me free! I walked shaky at first then confidently. Max reached over and put my halter on. Michaela led me to the pasture then took off my halter. First I walked, then jogged, then I galloped. Micheala, Max and the vet looked surprised. For the rest of my life I lived happily ever after at Heritage Farm and Ranch.

Seasons

Ava Harrison of Trinity Lutheran School, Lombard

The breeze, so sharp as glass, in winter snowy ice
When the frost bites my hand, I feel a chill just right
 Soon it is Spring, I must say my goodbyes
 It's time for time to change, but it will come again
When the seasons change I like, for something so, so nice
 The warm and rainy chill takes my breath away
 I see the fog so light, it is like a daydream delight
 The puddles are just right for a rainy, splashy night
 It's time for Spring to end, and something new to begin
Time has changed, let's have some fun in the warm, nice light.
The nice light on my skin feels nice with an occasional nice kite
 It flies by in the wind, what a nice day for flying a kite
Night awaits, the evening comes, who knows what day will bring
 It's light out at dark what a light and joyful surprise
More fun time outside in the heat, but soon it's time for the chill
It's time for chilly let's play in the leaves and dance without any concern
 While we sprang in the house with a chilly fright
 It is dark, I see the stars, and I think to myself wow what a sight
 As I drift away into my dream of leaves and colors for life
Time has changed let's have some fun and sled away down the hill
Let's take some time to wish and wish that spring and summer will come
 Come soon, and dance away our dreary blues

The Last Green Leaf

Ariana Mehrazar of Trinity Lutheran School, Lombard

At the end of fall,
I do not have anything,
I can't present to you,
 even
 A green leaf!
I just want to write,
Or I just want to draw,
A tree full of Green leaves.
I know I will see you next year,
 Full of green leaves,
 but,
 I don't know why,
I missed your green trees a lot!
I saw in my dream,
you hanging from a fall tree,
 like fall leaves!
 My wishes,
 Not so far.
I saw a droplet,
As clean as my mother's heart,
And as beautiful as my dream.

6th Grade Submissions

Winter

Cody Burmeister of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst

Whoosh! Whoosh! Is the noise of
The wind on a Friday night

Sparkle Sparkle is the sight
Of the snow on Saturday morning

Sledding all day long
Singing joyful songs

Putting on a snow suit
Playing in the snow with friends

Drinking delightful hot cocoa
Sleeping under warm covers

Ode to Lego

Joshua Brotski of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst

The color variety
As colorful as the rainbow
The click as they connect

The variety of themes
Fun for all ages
DO NOT COLOR ON THEM

Create your own minifig
Sets are small, medium, and large
Many lego stores to visit
You buy, they sell

Variety of shape
Build anything you imagine
Be creative.

Rubber Chicken and His Boy

Caleb Shambo of Zion Lutheran School, Marengo

Hi, I am Bob the Rubber Chicken. Everyday I go outside and watch some middle school football. It is pretty interesting. I have seen some amazing catches by kids named Adien and Cannon but the best kid is my kid, named CJ. CJ is super good at football with one hand catches but one day I was left behind by CJ. I was really frightened. I did not know what to do. Then I thought, "No one is here, so I can go explore." So I went to this thing that looks like a jungle gym but it is twice the size. Then I saw some paddles of wood on a rope. Then I got up this thing that gets higher and higher the more you go up. Then I got to the pipe that was the size of a Volkswagen. I went down the pipe. It felt like going down a toilet pipe. Anyway it is still fun going down the pipe. Then I fell on the ground and I felt like I sprained my ankle, but I think I will be fine. Then out of nowhere it starts raining. CJ calls the rain the tears of God. I got scared and hid under the pipe. I feel hopeless. I feel like CJ will never come back again. Then an object suddenly starts walking towards me. I wanted to be invisible but I couldn't. I hope God protects me. Then, I started to see a human-like shape. It was CJ!!! I was so happy. I got picked up and taken inside the school. I was put in with the rest of the toys like stuffies. I was home and happy. I just hope this experience never happens again.

Dream House Flyer

Mikaela Knake of Zion Lutheran School, Marengo

\$315,000

445 Mellow Dr.

This house has a beautiful off-white wood plank outside, with smooth dark brown colored roof panels and white window shades. When you walk in you are welcomed in with a stunning kitchen with marble white countertops, white cabinets with beige handles and marble flooring. The walls are a very subtle off-white shade. When you are just about to enter the living room, the doors are a curved shape at the top like a half circle. When you get into the living room there is a massive, gorgeous fireplace and a giant window behind leading to the outside of the large yard. The whole living area is about 900 sq. ft. There is lots of room to play, set a nice large couch out to fit the room, and to invite others to talk or chat. Then, there will be a large staircase with black handles and a lace-like pattern. The upstairs has about three bedrooms and two bathrooms. The first bedroom is very petite and is about 300 sq. ft. with a large window overlooking the luxurious scenery of the lavender field. The walls are painted an authentic white color and a small LED light hanging above. Moving on to the second bedroom, it is a little bigger and is 350 to 400 sq. ft. With brown colored walls, and with a smaller window on the right and back of the room, and a hanging lantern as the light. Onto the last bedroom- which is the master bedroom, it is about 500 sq. ft. large and has a balcony leading out to the lavender field scenery. The balcony is large enough for two chairs and a mini table. The room itself is painted a classic white color and a small chandelier up top. The first bathroom is mostly all tiny glaucous blue color saturating it exquisitely. There is a large bathtub that is white with blue handles and a glass door walk-in shower, with a steamer, two shower heads and the same blue tiles, there is a floating sink with a giant square mirror with lights you can turn on and off around it. The very last bathroom has the same marble floor, and a charming skylight up top. It has a walk-in shower with very high pressure, steamer, incredible silver shower head, and an original, large sink with silver handles. After seeing all the inside of this spectacular house,

you can look into the back yard, and there is an enchanting flower garden with roses, lavender, and tulips, and big beautiful palm trees. That concludes this magnificent house! We hope you consider taking a tour, or taking the house!

Home

Angelina Iverson of Trinity Lutheran School, Lombard

The wind

The sun

The colors

It takes me to a familiar place

The place that reminds me of sunny evenings

The place where I feel at peace

It takes me home

Calvary on Ground Zero

Isabella Kucher of St John's Lutheran School, Lombard

I have told you these things, so that you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. A voice echoed in my head, saying the familiar Bible verse, while all I saw was darkness. Then, in a flash of light, I could see. People were running, shrieking, and sirens were wailing. Everything was moving so quickly that I couldn't focus.

Then, I could hear sobbing, and I turned to see a girl with long, light brown hair reaching towards... a cross.

"Avery, wake up!" You're going to be late for school!" I heard someone shout, and my vision darkened, and I could see myself... laying in bed, sweating.

"Only a dream," I sighed in relief to myself.

"Avery! Do you want to be late, when you're going on a field trip?" I could hear my mom yell from the kitchen.

"Alright, I'm up!" I yelled back in return. I rolled my eyes. My mom was always in such a rush. I stretched my legs, and rolled out of bed. Today the sixth grade class was going on a field trip to New York City, with a special, secret, surprise tour. No one knew what it was, except my teacher.

I was honestly excited, since we'd been learning about NYC in social studies, my favorite subject. But I don't think anyone else was, though. Maybe not anyone, except my best friend, Natalie. She was also a history nerd, which was partly why I liked her.

I slipped on my favorite shirt and picked out some jeans to wear for the day. I then washed up, ate breakfast, and rushed out the door just in time to meet the bus.

I panted, exhausted from the running. I found a seat right next to Natalie.

"You excited?" I asked her.

"So excited that I couldn't fall asleep! I've never been to NYC. I heard a kid the other day say that we might visit the Twin Towers!" Natalie said. Natalie, being the talkative person she is, babbled on and on about how excited she was, which I didn't mind. I tuned out for a few seconds at a time, making sure I didn't miss the important parts of what she said.

I had come up with this strategy for our math class, so I could get a good grade but at the same time have a few moments to daydream. Smart, right?

I felt a sudden panic as my daydreaming led to the thought of the dream I had last night. I shook my head fiercely, trying to get it out of my head.

When the bus pulled up to our school, Natalie and I piled out with the rest of the kids, then rushed to class. I stuffed my backpack in my locker and ran inside the sixth grade classroom right as the bell rang.

"Not...tardy!" I said, taking deep breaths. My teacher, Ms. Narden laughed. I always had a problem with being late for school, so I told my teacher that I could make a month streak without a tardy mark.

"I guess not, Ms. Bellman," my teacher smiled.

I sat down at my desk as Ms. Narden went over all the field trip rules, where we will be going, why we're going, blah, blah, blah. I zoned out until she started talking about the surprise.

"Our surprise tour will be revealed when we get to the city," Ms. Narden explained, dashing my excitement.

As my class lined up, I stood next to Natalie. "I call window seat," I whispered. Natalie laughed. "No fair. Then I get it on the way back."

If we come back, a dark thought sprouted in my mind. I'd been having that dream more and more often lately, all leading up to this day.

I quickly pushed the idea out of my mind. Today was going to be a great day.

The sixth grade class piled into the school bus, and luckily, I had found a spot at the back for Natalie and I. I sat in the window seat, and Natalie rushed to get the spot next to me. She jumped onto the bench, laughing.

The ride was long, as I expected, but at least it gave me time to clear out my thoughts. The panic I had of the dream still lingered.

"Avery... Avery!" Natalie shook my shoulder. "We're here, at the Twin Towers!"

I snapped out of my thoughts. My heart nearly leaped into my throat. I had never been inside the Twin Towers before, and since we learned about them in social studies, I knew all about them.

When our queue was out of the bus, we split up into groups of two with the chaperones, and I was with Natalie and her mom.

Ms. Narden pointed out which groups go to which tower, since she had booked tickets for private tours of both towers. Natalie and I were first going to the North Tower. As we headed inside, we were introduced to our tour guide, Rachel. Rachel was a taller lady, probably in her late thirties. She had short, coffee-brown hair, and lots of

makeup. She spoke in a know-it-all voice that got on my nerves.

Rachel led us into one of the two elevators in the North Tower, explaining that it takes about five minutes to get from the bottom floor to the top in the elevator. I started doing that zone-out thing that I do when I'm bored. But today whenever I did that, my thoughts would drift to my nightmare. It felt so... real. So real that I could still feel the pain in my ankle I had in the dream.

The elevator slowed to a stop, snapping me out of my thoughts. Once we were out of the elevator, Natalie and I walked over to the windows to look down at the city.

"This is floor 50 of the North Tower," Rachel said matter-of-factly. "From here, you can see the city quite well, but the view isn't as good as from the top."

"Is this as high as planes go?" Natalie asked, raising her hand.

"Actually, no. Airplanes usually fly much higher than this, over the clouds. Why?"

"There's a plane over there, flying just a bit higher than here, and it's coming pretty close," Natalie replied, with a hint of nervousness in her voice.

"Hmm, that's weird," Rachel said, rubbing her forehead. "Planes don't usually fly this low..."

We already know that! I screamed in my head. Rachel was very irritating.

Natalie's mom gasped. "It's heading toward us!"

I turned to look at the window just as the plane blasted into the building, a few floors above. Rachel shrieked, and ran off somewhere that I didn't bother to see.

Glass shattered everywhere, and I got a small cut on my hand, but it was quickly forgotten. Panic settled in my stomach as I realized this was what my dream was about.

I felt the heat of the fires breaking out across the building from shattered light fixtures. The fire gave an orange, cruel hue to the room, not making me feel any better.

I saw the body of a man who was killed in the plane crash. I stooped to look at him, horrified at the sight. It looked like nearly every bone in his body was broken. Tears dribbled down my face. I didn't know who this man was, but all the pain from the day made me cry.

It felt better, letting it all out.

"Run down the stairs, hurry!" Natalie's mom screeched, grabbing my arm. We scrambled to find the stairs, and we nearly leaped down the first flight. I didn't care about the pain in my legs; we had to get out.

Running was all I could think of. Whenever I stopped to catch my breath, the

screaming of people made me go on. The hard truth came out: the tower was going to fall, but I was not going to be stuck in it when it did.

I tripped and fell down the stairs. Natalie stooped to help me up.

"Run, Natalie!" I yelled. "I'll be fine. I can catch up." The truth was, I really couldn't. My ankle had gotten hurt from the fall, and I had a limp. The only other thing I could do was find a safer place to hide. I ran into the abandoned offices and found a sturdy, metal desk to hide under.

Then I heard another boom, and more shrieks.

"God, please save me!" I prayed aloud, nearly at the top of my lungs. The chances seemed impossible that I actually would survive this.

I waited for a while, smelling smoke. I couldn't run, because my ankle still hurt, and it started swelling up. I grimaced as I rubbed it.

I could see the building collapse around me, and I felt myself falling in midair, until everything went black.

I opened my eyes to see a hand reaching toward me, and a small light flicker. I knew whose hand it was, and all of a sudden I felt extreme peace wash over me. Then I heard a voice recite Revelation 21:4. *And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, and neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.*

The vision blurred, and I could now see my surroundings. I was covered in rubble, and smoke was everywhere. My shirt was ripped, and my jeans were black with soot. My nostrils were filled with a horrific scent. The scent of death.

Without warning, tears poured down my face, like a river. My face felt like it was burning up. I turned around, and saw two rusty beams connected, into the shape of a cross.

I let out a loud sob, from amazement or relief, I couldn't tell. My ankle still injured, I crawled my way toward the cross, and hugged it tightly. When I did, a huge rush of relief fell over me, and I let out a sigh of relief. All I wanted to do at that moment was to sit there, with all my worries washed away.

"There! I see someone!" I heard a gruff voice shout, and a dog barked. Three policemen came and surrounded me. I let go of the cross and leaned on it.

"Can you walk?" One of them asked.

I shook my head. "I hurt my ankle while running," I rasped. That was all I could say. My throat felt as dry as a rocky desert.

So they hoisted me up, grabbing me under my arms. I limped over to where I saw Natalie's mom, Ms. Narden, and a few of my classmates, all huddled around bodies.

I scrabbled toward them, and a few of my classmates hugged me tightly. I ran over to Natalie's mom. "Where's Natalie?" I croaked.

She paused for a moment. "Gone," she whispered, and pointed to one of the bodies.

I crouched down. There she was, dead still. I whimpered at the sight of her.

"We found her under a beam," Ms. Narden said.

I put my face on her shoulder. All my feelings were gone. Time seemed to freeze in place. For a moment, I thought that I was dreaming again.

"Don't leave me!" I sobbed. Rivers of tears flowed down my face, and I had the urge to scream at the top of my lungs.

Maybe I had screamed, because everyone nearby was staring at me, with sadness and empathy showing in their eyes.

"Look what this young lady found," a policeman said, carrying the cross I found myself by, and interrupting all the sadness and grief.

"Did you build it?" Ms. Narden asked.

I shook my head. "It was already there."

"It must be a sign," a person murmured. I looked around. There was a crowd gathering around the cross, which they already named 'The Ground Zero Cross.' Many people fell on their knees.

"Jesus was here," I whispered to myself.

And He always will be, I thought to myself. He protected me, and all of these people.

I smiled. And He'll be with us as we rebuild.

Where the Sky Ends

Sophia Garcia of Trinity Lutheran School, Lombard

The sky is a very large thing

As far as the eye can see

Don't you agree?

I can guarantee you can't see

The end but some people can

Comprehend the length

But I know math is not my strength

So I just think the path to figuring out is

Picturing how and now I know it depends...

Where the sky ends

7th Grade Submissions

Humans on Mars

Sophia DiBona of Zion Lutheran School, Marengo

Have you ever let your mind wander off into endless thoughts? I sure have and the one thing that I never stop thinking about is space. Have you ever wondered about space, maybe if there can be alien life or if we can live on other planets. That brings me to the topic of life on other planets no, not alien life, human life! We can survive on other planets and I'm sure of it.

First of all, Mars' surface is made up of iron oxide that has some effects on humans. Which may seem like a problem but not really. If you have ever seen an astronaut, you'll know they are covered from head to toe in space gear. Astronauts can't get affected as long as it doesn't touch bare skin.

Second of all, Mars has a thinner atmosphere and a cooler temperature at -80 °F but in some places it can get up to 68 °F. Now about the atmosphere. That is one of the reasons space suits were invented. When astronauts went to the moon they had an oxygen tank on their back. Although the moon and Mars have different atmospheres, the space suits stay the same. The water on Mars froze but we can survive off of ice. The body must burn energy to warm the ice into body temperature. The first crew of four astronauts were predicted to land on Mars in 2033. Human survival would require living in artificial habitats with complex life support systems

NASA just sent a new rover to Mars called *Perseverance* and it will be there for 5 earth years, which is about 2.5 years on Mars. This robot will collect a lot of data during its stay on Mars. The new high resolution images will be linked to a satellite, sending them back to earth.

Third of all, we have never discovered if Mars has living life after all. Which is why we are searching for any signs of life like microorganisms, living organisms, extremophiles, and bacteria. The human body is very different from these types of organisms. But if they can sustain life on Mars, it gives us hope that we can too.

In conclusion, it may seem a little crazy to live on another planet but I think it's possible. Space is endless just like your thoughts. There are so many possibilities living on another planet is just one of them.

A Waterfall

Vivien Johnson of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst

Some days I have nothing to write about
There it is again
A blank page staring right back at me
Challenging me to make the first mark
But I can't
My mind is empty
I can't think
I can't feel I have nothing
Like I'm in a little boat
Floating around in the middle of an ocean
Nothing for miles upon miles
Searching for something
Not knowing what
But knowing it is there somewhere
But where?
Where could it be?
There is nothing
But maybe, just maybe
If I could just dip a toe in
Too late
I fell in
Emotions
Thoughts
And Ideas
All hitting me like a tidal wave
They surround me
Pull me down
Deeper
Deeper
Deeper

And there
Right there
What was that?
I know there was something
There, there it was again
Just a glimpse
A glimpse of what I had written
Written from nothing
Words had just poured out of me
Spilled over and out
Like a waterfall
All the little droplets coming together
Joining together to make something
Something somebody might call beautiful

Even in the Darkness

*Vivien Johnson of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst
A found poem from the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Just like waiting for darkness to see the stars
Progress is never automatic
It takes tireless exertion
And passionate concern
It is not comfort or convenience
But challenge and controversy
It does not just take an occasional act
But it must be a constant attitude
We should take it with us
Anywhere, Everywhere, Today, Tomorrow
We are measured not on where we stand
But where on the staircase we go
Every step must be taken with faith
Faith that flows from the deepest seas
It is at that moment that we are transformed
Today we will encounter sacrifice and struggle
Tomorrow though we will fly in the air like birds
And swim in the sea like fish
Tomorrow we will not find perfection
Tomorrow we will find progress

I'm Going to Keep on Loving

*Vivien Johnson of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst
Inspired by "Brotherly Love" by Langston Hughes*

You are hungry for power
I get it, we all are at some point
Trying to rebuild a huge empire
Killing thousands in the process
You struck without reason
Your people are turning against you

The trust in you has been extinguished
The world is trying to make your wrongs right
Trying to bring peace back to earth
We are fighting for the freedom of the
People on the land you are trying to win back
You are taking advantage of all your power

But even with all the hurt you're causing
Even with all the lives that are forever lost
I'm still going to keep on loving
Because God says it's right
You may not care what I have to say but
Listen to this one little thing

I'm going to keep on loving

Savior

Vivien Johnson of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst

God's own Son came down to earth
The purest heart already at birth
Gifted to us from up above
Sent down to us out of His own love

A gift of salvation and eternal life
A world that will be perfect with no strife
Born a perfect soul, born a perfect man
All along God had a perfect plan

He didn't commit one single sin
But the people who doubted just had to win
The Messiah was nailed upon the cross
To all believers it was a great loss

But on the third day
An open door lay
Open to believers of all kinds
Open to believers of all minds

Now up above so many lay
All awaiting the wonderful day
When everyone they love may come to see
How great it is to be free

All this is thanks to God's only Son
Who fought against the darkness and won
That is why we celebrate this night
This night a Savior was born and brought us to the light

8th Grade Submissions

My Best Friend

Kathryn Anderson of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst

William, you're the person who I can talk to,
Who will judge me nonstop.
You're the kid I want to pester all the time,
And yet never let you go.

William, you're the brother that won't listen to me,
Who's too busy playing Roblox.
You're the kind of person who cares,
But never shows it.

And finally, you're my brother.
My brother, that gets my humor.
My brother, who's curious about everything.
My brother, with his adorable glasses.

My brother, who is my best friend.

Nail Polish

*Kathryn Anderson of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst
Inspired by Robert Frost's "Nothing Gold Can Stay"*

Nothing gold can stay,
Like the nail polish that chips away.
It goes on so fresh and clean and crisp,
But one mistake and it won't be bliss.
Trying to fix every imperfection
And going back again for every little section.
Dry, dry, dry, painting completely **done**.
Finished fingers get beaten up one by one.
Nothing gold can stay,
Like the bottle of your favorite color
It's ideal and exquisite, there is no other.
It wears away and slowly runs out
You're in a rush, no time to pout.
On your way home, you spot the bottle,
Slightly different shade, very same model
It'll all be fine in the end,
Even if a new color of polish becomes your friend.

Logan

Savannah Rueda of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst

A **L**ittle baby was born today
The little baby wants to play
The little baby starts to gr**O**w
The little baby starts saying hello
The little baby starts following you around
The little baby starts bein**G** loud
The little baby starts running **A**round
The little baby never falls on the ground
The little baby is **N**ow a toddler
He's no longer the small little boy
He s**A**ys he doesn't need help anymore
He no longer needs your help to pour
The toddler is growing up and abo**V**e all
He now knows how to throw and kick the ball
Now he's telling you that your not kicking the b**A**ll right
He no longer needs his night **L**ight
He gets rid **O****F** all the old toys
Because he i**S** no longer a little baby boy

Childhood Forgotten

Elisabeth Cami of St. John's Lutheran School, Chicago

She was a child forced to grow up too soon. She was full of hope, life and laughter. Now, she believes she is alone. Forever forgotten to the world. "I'm alone, aren't I?" She asked me one rainy day. As she sat on the windowsill, her eyes matched the dreary clouds in the sky. Grey, and watery. I tried to comfort her, but to her, I am a ghost. When I look into her eyes, she seems to look right through me. I can't help her. She is lost. I hate the feeling of being helpless, I wish I could do more. Every now and then she walks around her perfectly squared room. She drags her hand across the wall, looking for what I think is escape. The world broke, and she was stuck in the middle of it all. Now, all I can do is try to keep her here. She doesn't know it, but the only way the world can fix itself is if we fix her first. Why? Simply put, she is the key.

Poet's Clay

Josiah Kuehner of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst

A lumpy bumpy piece
Gray, lifeless, daunting
It's scary to start shaping
It's hard, it won't work
Poetry is like clay
At first, it looks too hard to start
It doesn't look like you can do anything with it
But when you start things happen
At first, it's messy and hard
What should it look like
But it gets better
The chunky lines smooth
Sometimes it comes out perfect
Sometimes it's terribly lumpy and drab
You mold it and work it
But it doesn't have to be perfect
It can just be there
It may be half finished
It may not be started
But it's there
Whether you like it or not.

Night War

Josiah Kuehner of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst

The knife carves a slice
The flesh burns like ice
The battle rages on
The killing goes for long

In the corner of a field
A soldier's dreams yield
To the dark depths
Embracing the deaths

Blood flows from wound
Cuts, burns, and bruise
The guns and violence
Stops in his head for silence
Remembering his kids at home

The loving wooden throne
Of the chair at the head of the table
Looking at his family fable
When the dreams leave his head
As he remembers how he left his bed

To fight a dirty war
That ruined the world's decor
Though the man's life is taken
There are still many who live
And breathe and cut and fight

To live the way through the night

The Second Coming

Josiah Kuehner of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst

The earth is still and quiet, as the night is dawning
Rumbles and quakes fill the skies with ashen rocks tumbling
The glory of God is seen through the flame with angels resounding
Jesus has come to take us home with trumpets sounding.

The holy army of the Lord Most High
Coming down to stop the devil's lie
And bring the followers of Jesus Christ
Into the heavenly holy light.

Across the nations from the East and West
Come, the four angels of the winds so blessed
The stairs to God in arching gold
And love and eternal life unfold.

God's perfect world will soon begin
with the love of Christ within
Then we his faithful servants aim
To praise His glorious name.

Yovolk the Woodsman

Josiah Kuehner of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst

Once upon a time, there was a woodsman named Yovolk. One day he went hunting and shot a deer with his bow. As he was returning he met a mouse and the mouse said: "Please sir, my family is hungry. Can you help us?"

Yovolk, a kindly man, pulled the loaf of bread he meant to have for lunch out of his coat and handed it to the mouse. The mouse looked with joy, "Thank you, kind man. I promise I will repay you!"

Now as the woodsman continued he was appealed to by a boar: "Please sir, my leg is broken. Can you help me?" Yovolk cut his walking stick in half and used his belt to splint the boar's leg. "Thank you, kind man. I promise I will repay you!"

When he crossed the stream a cry rose from the water: "Please woodsman can you help me? I'm stuck in the river." Yovolk looked to see a cow in the water, so he unstrung his bow, tied the bowstring to a tree, then threw the end into the water and pulled the cow out. "Thank you kind man. I promise I will repay you!" she moaned.

Soon as he neared his house a great white bear rose from the bushes: "Please give me that deer I beg of you. I haven't had a meal in weeks," he rumbled. Yovolk nodded and handed his kill to the bear. "Thank you, kind man. I promise I will repay you," the bear said as he lumbered away.

Now a year passed, and Yovolk could not find food until one day there was a knock on the door. On the mat were three large bags of rice, wheat, and rye, and on the ground was a scratched message "from the wood mouse clan."

Yovolk smiled, and as he began to crush the wheat to make bread there was another knock at the door. Now on the mat was a large basket of truffles (rare mushrooms considered a delicacy) with a note "from Boar."

As the woodsman was cutting the truffles for a pie there was a knock at the door. This time it was a barrel of milk with a note on the ground saying "from Cow." Finally, as he was churning the milk into butter there was a knock at the door. "From Bear" there were three baskets full of berries, nuts, spices, and roots.

When Yovolk was done he went to each of the animal's homes hailing, "Come friend, for I am having a feast in honor of those who have helped me in my time of need!" Then they all sat down to eat a meal of fresh bread, truffle pie, butter, berries,

nuts, jams, jellies, roots, and three duck Yovolk caught in snares.

The smell was so good that an ogre came down from the mountain shouting "I'll eat this meal and all who sit at the table with it!"

Now the animals would have none of this, so the bear stood up and clawed at the ogre's face, the cow kicked his chest, and the boar stomped on his feet. Then as the ogre stumbled the mouse ran up and bit his nose so hard the ogre screamed and scrambled back to his mountain cave whimpering. Then the food was eaten, and laughs were aroused, and the friends helped each other's needs forever. Their families grew up together into a great clan that loved and cared about every member of the clan. The clan's name was the Yovolks.

THE END

Our World

Nathan Lechman of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst

Why, our world, a fantastic place
Can shatter so quickly, like a glass vase
Where one should love each other
Love everyone like your sister or brother
But realization gets in the way
Human dignity wipes the good in the world away
War after war, fight after fight
Think of others who are suffering in the deep plight
We have to put others before ourselves and money
Humans should go together like bees and honey
I hope we get to live in a world where no one will mope
I just wish that I wish, I hope
That was the world God had in plan for us
"We love because He first loved us."

Sports

Nathan Lechman of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst

Basketball

I love basketball
It is my favorite sport
Love Chicago Bulls

Baseball

Baseball is so fun
Cubs are my favorite team
I swing for home runs

Soccer

I despise Soccer
I think it is so boring
I don't like running

Football

I don't play football
But I do like it a lot
I hate the Packers

Hockey

I cannot ice skate
Hockey is entertaining
I like when they fight

And One

Jonah Wilmot of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst

Shoot, score, and one
At the line for the shot

Shoot, score, one more point
On the defense

Run back
Defend

They shoot
We block

Fast break
Alley-oop
Highlight

Back on the defense
Run back

They pass
They shoot
They score

Up one
One minute

Inbound the ball
Run down the court

Dribble

Dribble
Dribble

Pass
Pass
Pass

Shoot
Rebound
Shoot

In the air
On its way
Hits the rim
Bounces up
Miss

Up one
Thirty seconds
On defense

Dribble
Dribble
Dribble

Pass
Pass
Pass

Shoot
In the air

Could win the game
If it goes in

Three points
One shot
Swish

Down two
10 seconds

Run
Dribble
Run

Pass
Shoot

Three points
In the air
For the win

Make it
Miss it

Play of the season
Play of the century

Closer
Closer
Closer

To the basket

Closer
Closer
Closer

Will we win
Or will we lose

Closer
Closer
Closer

Zero seconds left

Buzzer

Beater

Swish

SEMI-FINAL SHOWDOWN!!!

Hannah Burmeister of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst

It all came down to this moment
Would we go to the championship or not,
We had just finished the most intense game in our lives,
It ended in my least favorite way, a tie,
Coach asked who wants to be goalie in the shootout,
I stood there as tall as a tree,
The only one raising a hand,
Coach was filled with glee!

As I walked out on the terf,

S T O M P

The ball looked like it was a giant,

As nervous as I was

My mom is having a heart attack,

As she sees me put on the goalie jersey,

Me thinking am I capable,

If we lose I am blameable,

The first girl steps up,

She gives me a glare,

I give her a stare,

She....

S H O O T S

I....

B L O C K

As the next girl stepped up to the line,

My brain was like a vine,

The next problem started to build up,

My brain started to erupt,

Because what if they kicked it to the side,

I didn't know how to dive.
She..... S H O O T S
I.....B L O C K

The next girl was small,
Compared to the ball,
She looked intense,
And I had no defense,
She... S H O O T S
I... let it in
Mad describes what I felt,
But I was 1 for 3,
I was okay, for now.

We had scored,
So much more,
Than the other team,
But they were catching up,
It came down to this last shot ,
If they scored they went to the championship,
If we scored then we went to the championship,
She.....S H O O T S
I.....
I.....
I.....B
L
O
C
K

That was it
We were going to the championship,
NOTHING could stop us, not even a frown,
From that day on I will never forget,
The picture we had afterward full of sweat,

And that my team will be there for me always.

We had a party after the game,
The party was not at all lame,
Many, many friends I see,
Because we won!!!

When

Hannah Burmeister of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst

When you grow up
Be wise
When you fly away from home
Remember your past
When you crumble under the weight of the world
Never give up
When you fall
Get back up again
When your head is in the clouds
Don't forget to come back down
When you die
Salvation awaits

I Must Keep Going

Hannah Burmeister of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst

I must keep going
I can't give up now
When I am needed the most
I have to keep going
Because people count on me
I feel the weight of the world
Sinking me, hurting me
I can't breathe
But I must keep going
I shove my feelings down
To the deepest pit in my stomach
Nobody can know, nobody
But I must keep going
Go, go, go, never stop
Read books they say
It'll make you smarter
Am I not smart on my own?
But I must keep going
What do you want to do with your life?
I don't know, I am 13
13, Is what I am
So treat me like it
I cannot carry your problems
For I have my own
But I must keep going
I want to stay here
Don't make me go
High School is big
So big
Filled with mean kids

Who bully and are rude
But this school isn't
I must keep going
That's what I do best
I feel so much emotion
But I must keep going
The internet is bad for you
They say
It gives us support
The only constant
When you're not
But I must keep going
Homework is where I struggle
So many assignments, more, and more
We have a life
Does no one get that
But I must keep going
Society makes me sad
Starvation and carelessness
Homeless people fill the streets
No one cares, no one
People are suffering
But I must keep going
What's the big deal with money
Blinded by greed of a green piece of paper
With a president on it
But I must keep going
The government too powerful
Controlling us like dolls
We can't be tamed
We must keep going
Women's rights advocated
Heard, but not listened
Do you hear me now

But I must keep going
I have to prove myself
Over and over
Am I not enough
Do I not fulfill
But I must keep going
Over and over again
I prove myself
But the boys will never accept
Just because I am a girl
But I must keep going
Can't give up
Never give up
Never.

Clash of the Empires

Lucas Bauman of Zion Lutheran School, Marengo

Chapter 1

Proud Leistung¹

“The Elite stronghold of Festung was taken by our forces yesterday, sir.” Blutegel said with enthusiasm.

“Good, that’ll cripple the Elite armies in the North.” Allgemein replied. The entire room was filled with silence after the Emperor was done speaking. The room had an ecstatic feeling, the Elites have always been a pain for the expanding Leech empire. More than a pain, a mortal danger. The war between the Leeches, Elites, and Blobs has persisted for thousands of years. Everybody wants this horrendous war to end, only one empire will end it. Moments later all Allgemein’s generals started leaving the war room.

“Blutegel.” Allgemein said. “Sit down, I have new orders for you.” Confusion struck Blutegel’s face, but he sat down anyway.

“You and your forces will move onto the fortress of Twierdza, if we can capture that fortress that will halt the Elites from advancing to Faingneach, our fourth largest supplier of weapons and equipment.” Allgemein said as he pointed to the map.

“But my Lord, I would need ten thousand men, if not more to take the fortress.” Blutegel said as he sighed heavily.

“That is why I’ll give you thirty thousand battle-ready blue and orange soldiers, as well as siege machines and other weapons of war. I’ve already given two other generals the same amount of men you have for this attack.” Allgemein said. “If you capture this fort we will have access to the Elite capital of Gorod and what I mentioned earlier, but I want another smaller army to guard your flanks, can you do that?”

Blutegel took a big breath in, and out before speaking. “Yes my Lord, it will be done.” He then left the room, leaving the Emperor to think.

“If Blutegel succeeds in his mission the Leech empire will surely conquer Gorod, then we’ll send another army to Faingneach for extra defense.” Allgemein said to himself as he pointed to the map. “After all these years, the Elites will finally fall!”

¹ This is the first chapter of a larger manuscript Lucas Bauman has been working on. So far, it is over 70 pages long.

Blutegel was surprised that the emperor would want such an attack, the casualties would be colossal on both sides.

“Obshchiy!” Blutegel yelled. “I need to speak with you.” Obshchiy walked over to Blutegel with a puzzled look on his face.

“What is it sir?” Obshchiy said.

“The emperor gave me thirty thousand troops, it’s a lot but it won’t be enough to take Twierdza, it’s too well fortified.” Blutegel replied as he took his black helmet off. “How many troops do you have?”

Obshchiy didn’t answer at first, “I have ten thousand strong, and two hundred weapons of war.” Obshchiy replied.

“I need you and your men to protect our flanks, the fortress could call for backup if they need it.” Blutegel said. “Conquistare and Guerre are marching with my armies on Twierdza in a week.”

“Yes sir, my army will be there.” Obshchiy replied. Obshchiy walked down the hallway shortly after.

Blutegel put his helmet back on and headed outside to gather his new army. Once Blutegel was outside he was greeted by the other two generals, then he looked over the balcony to see sixty thousand Leech soldiers ready for battle.

“Blow the horn!” Blutegel commanded. Once he said this a guard blew the horn to call Blutegel’s army in. Around a few minutes later another thirty thousand battle ready soldiers could be seen marching up to the keep. The sound of steel boots could be heard all across the lands of Callipho, the soldiers wore black steel armor and were armed with pikes, swords, axes, and daggers. Once they were in conjunction with the rest of the army everything went silent, everything had stopped. Everyone was just waiting for the Emperor to make his grand entry, all the generals got in formation and the soldiers were waiting. A minute later the Emperor came out and showed himself to the massive army as well as the civilians that were watching. The civilians were cheering while the soldiers were chanting in unison in their native speech.

Once the emperor was ready to speak he raised his hands up and everything went silent, “Soldiers of Leistung!” Allgemein yelled. “Our Empire is growing more powerful every day, the Blobs in the West and the Elites in the North and East are severely weakened! We have taken many forts, blood has been spilled! Armor has been broken! Shields have been splintered! Swords have been shattered! Pikes have been snapped! We have lost many brothers, brothers that were our friends, brothers that were loyal

to the Leech Empire! We are fighting for one purpose, full control of this Good Earth!” Allgemein screamed with pride. Everybody was cheering and chanting, the soldiers were banging on their breastplates, waving their swords in the air, striking their pikes against the proud ground. The Leeches are a proud race, but only proud for their own. They don’t care what happens to other species, they’ll burn villages to the ground, they’ll maul on anything that isn’t a Leech, they’ll spill blood for a cause they think is right. “This week, the earth will be stained with the blood of the Elites! March to Twierdza! Leave none alive, devour them!” Allgemein screamed with pride. “To War!!” Now the soldiers were banging their breastplates even harder, waving their swords in the air more violently, striking their pikes even harder, and now the chanting could be heard across the lands of Callipho.

“There will be no dawn for the Elites.” Allgemein said. “Go to your armies, make the Elites suffer.” The generals quickly retreated to their armies and began to march on Twierdza.

Reader

Lily Ohm of Immanuel Elmhurst

“Reader”

I am a **reader**.

I know these books are only fiction but that does not stop me.

I say **only a few more pages** then I'll stop.

At first, I only see the page but then...

I hear the clip-clop of horses, the whip of a sword, and the flapping of wings.

I dream of becoming **an author** so I can spin tales of my own.

I attempt to understand the villain and reassure the hero.

I **cry over the death** of people in stories.

I worry about fictional characters.

I feel what the people are feeling.

I touch the **soft pages of my paperback** as the book comes to a close.

I wonder what it would be like to live in this **world between pages**.

I pretend to be my favorite character who has a happily ever after.

I wish there was no “the end.”

I am **Lily Ohm**

Shimmering Lake

Lily Ohm of Immanuel Elmhurst

The shimmering lake reflected my face

My hand reaches down to close the space

Between the water and me

The lake is lined with willow trees

A haven from the rest of society

Around me leaves fall showing the color variety

As I gracefully look down I see

A girl quietly deep in thought staring back at me

The long flowing hair that once rippled down my back

Is now blowing in the wind hitting my face with a smack!

Once the wind is tamed and all is serene

All I can do is look out and enjoy the scene

A Good Life

Elijah Seabaugh of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst

If people do not believe you can—keep going
If your not in the mood—do it anyway
If it has never been done before—be the first
If there is no light—make your own
If no one will do it with you—do it alone
If it has to be done—do it now
If something is impossible—do the impossible
If you are on the low road—find the highway
If you stumble on your journey—keep walking
If you can not find your path—create your own
If you are lost—make your way straight
If you find no way out—live through it

Christmas

Elijah Seabaugh of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst

Sitting on the couch
Watching the candles flicker
Listening to Bose go
“Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way.”

Walking with the dog
Watching the Christmas lights flicker on
Listening to the cold wind
Woosh flap woosh ding a-ling

Lying under the covers
Watching the snow flutter
Listening to my brother snort
Hunk teew hornk teew

Sleeping in the warm
Watching my dreams unfold
Listening to a repenting soundtrack
“Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way”

Who Did It?

Alexandra Harris of Trinity Lutheran School, Lombard

“Alright,” Mom said, “who did it?” The children looked at each other, whoever had broken that vase was going to get in a lot of trouble.

“I didn’t do it! It was him!” The youngest girl pointed to her older brother.

“No!” the boy protested, “I was reading a book!” The middle child looked around. “What about you?” He pointed to his older sister.

“Don’t look at me, I was in my room.” She shrugged. Nobody had confessed, and Mom was getting irritated.

“You’re all grounded until someone tells me who did it!” Mom walked away, disappointed in her children. The older sister turned to her younger brother, who was glaring at his younger sister.

“I bet it was you!” He said angrily, “You’re always blaming me for stuff!” his younger sister frowned.

“You’re just saying that because you’re guilty!” The younger sister argued. The brother and the sister were now arguing, while the eldest sat and watched.

“Let’s ask Dad, I’m sure he’ll help us,” the oldest child suggested. The three children went into the backyard to see Dad resting on a patio chair.

“Dad,” the youngest said, “someone broke a vase, and Mom thinks one of us did it.” Dad opened his eyes with a look of guilt.

“Really?” Dad said, looking guilty. “I wonder who could’ve done it? Well, anyways, back to resting!” Dad sat down, avoiding eye contact with his children.

“Dad...” the middle child glared, “did you break the vase?”

“Me? No, of course not.”

“Dad. Tell the truth or else we’re all in trouble!” The oldest said.

“Fine, yes, it was me, I broke the vase! But Mom can’t know!”

“You have to tell her!” The youngest whined. “Please!!”

“You know what?” Dad looked around, thinking. “We’ll blame it on the dog!”

“But...” the middle child started.

“Let’s go tell Mom the dog broke it!” Dad launched himself up from the chair, and briskly walked to the back door. He went into the living room and turned to Mom.

“I found out who broke your vase,” Dad began.

“Really?” Mom questioned, “Who?”

“The dog!” Dad said proudly and confidently. There was a long silence but was broken by a faint whisper from the youngest.

“Dad, we don’t have a dog.”

Jacob

*Nathan Horne of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst
Inspired by "Litany" by Billy Collins*

You are the screaming goat on top of the mountain
The laughing hyena in the barren valley
And the nails on the chalkboard in the silent classroom
You are also the pear tree that drops oranges on passersby

Unfortunately, you are not the graceful tiger prowling through the undergrowth
Or the majestic orca, leaping from the water
And especially not the Sphinx that towers over the desert ruling the sands
Because it's just not possible

But you might be the hairless cat yowling in the deserted alley
Or the blinded elephant stumbling through the savannah
Or the howling monkeys up in the treetops
Maybe even the whales that scream throughout the ocean

For I am the fish that slides through the water
Attempting not to get eaten
And I am the rat
That hides itself away from the world

But I am not the rooster that wakes every morning
Delivering its dreadful speech
You are the rooster and the goat and the hyena and the nails and the pear tree
And I am just the fish swimming through the river of life

The Way the Ocean Moves

Amy Smith of Zion Lutheran School, Marengo

The way the ocean moves, the slight brush on the soft tan sand,
The way the sand gets pulled, into the water, and turns moist with delight,
The way the sun reflects, and bounces off into the sky,
The way the sky is cloudless, telling us that it won't rain,
The way that the tide, glides in and out, telling animals to scurry, swim or move,
The way the white caps move, as surfers glide along them,
The way the footprints ease, into the moist, damp sand, and leave a mark that looks like
it will not last, but always remains deep in the ocean,

The way the ocean moves.

Feathers

Amy Smith of Zion Lutheran School, Marengo

Just take a look at one little feather. Now look at all the different types. You compare the differences, almost none alike. When you take your time you really can see the differences in each one. When you look at it almost no time at all, there is nothing to see, just blur and slight color if at all. Each one is the beauty of it belonging to male or female of every bird. A good thing to collect would be exactly that, good to share and compare. Soft and stiff, cold and warm, so many ways to describe them. Small and large, bright and pale.

Christ's Community

Naya Stathopoulos of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst

Christ's Community
Connected to Christ
because of His sacrifice
we were not led astray
in fact, He looks after us every day
no need to discuss
He died for us
God sent His Son, His only one
now we do not need to do what is already done

Noise from the Crawlspace

Autumn Bakley of Zion Lutheran School, Marengo

I pull my silver key out of my backpack, slid it into the keyhole and pushed open my front door. As soon as I walk into my house, I notice that the window is wide open, blowing the humid summer air into the house. I walk over and shut it so it's only open a crack. I plop down at the kitchen table and pull out my purple folder to start on my pile of homework. All of a sudden I hear a faint thumping. I turn around in a hot sweat, then I remember it's probably just Fuzzy, my cat, running around in the crawlspace. Somehow she always finds her way in. I pick up my pencil when I hear the thumping again, this time it's louder and it sounds as if someone is walking directly beneath me. This time, I am downright scared.

I run over to the home phone and dial my mom's number. I say it out loud so as to not forget it, "815-555-88...", I start to say with ease but then I hear the noise again and my voice goes to a whisper that I can barely hear. I say a little prayer that my mom picks up the phone, but it just keeps ringing, and ringing, and ringing.

"Hey it's Jen, please leave a message after the beep, thanks!" says the automatic voice mail in Mom's voice.

I take the phone off my ear in disappointment. I hear the unnatural thumping again and I get scared and worried all over again. I hear the beep on the phone in my hand and raise it up to my ear again quickly. "Hey Mom it's Millie, I'm hearing a strange noise coming from the crawl space and I'm really scared. Please call me back as soon as you get this, thanks." I say in a hurry. I try to get back to my homework but all I can hear and think about is the strange noise. Finally, I pull out some courage from deep inside me and I go get the baseball bat from under my bed. I grab a flashlight from the junk drawer in the kitchen and head to the coat closet. I flip the light switch on and I can see the door to the crawlspace at the back of the closet. I notice dried muddy patches on the floor leading to the crawlspace. I shiver runs down my spine and there is a churning in my stomach. I slowly make my way over to the crawl space door. I feel something brush my arm and I spin around frantically. I laugh, on edge, as I see it's just a winter coat. I turn around to reach down and I pull open the noisy latch to the crawlspace. As soon as I do, the noise stops, as if listening to me. I listen back but I don't hear it. I can feel all the hairs on the back of my neck stand up as I crawl down

into the space.

The only thing I can hear is my own breathing, and the sound of my beating heart in my eardrums. If anything or anyone is down here I wouldn't be surprised if they could hear my heart pounding out of my chest. I shine my flashlight around the crawl space but don't see anything. Then I spot them, muddy hands and footprints on the dusty floor. I follow them to where the crawl space opens up bigger, I can barely breath. I see a tattered blanket and pillow, and a few pieces of trash scattered around. I feel goosebumps rise up out of the skin on my arm, all the hairs on my body are sticking up straight. I turn around and scramble towards the door when I hear something. A small creak. I feel my face turn white, and I feel as if I'm about to vomit up my lunch. I turn around with the flashlight and baseball bat in hand, but it's no use. I know where the noise is coming from.

"What are you doing down here little lady?" Says a deep, scratchy voice that definitely isn't my imagination. A man with scaly white skin and black eyes in deep sockets, with scraggly white hair sticking out in all directions is staring back at me. Before I can scream he jumps towards me and presses a folded white cloth to my mouth, it has a strong smell of chemicals. I try to scream and punch but slowly my arms fall to my sides despite my protesting. Everything starts to become fuzzy and slowly my vision darkens at the corners. Then there is only a deep and wretched darkness...

The Specter

Kaylee Hutmacher of Immanuel Lutheran School, Freeport

The clock has been stuck at 3:07 AM for what feels like forever, but it has only been ten minutes. As I sit here in the middle of the living room carpet, I stare. My whole life, I have dreamt of going ghost hunting, but this wasn't what I was expecting. My friend is locked in the master bathroom upstairs, screaming until her throat gives out. I know my family's calling me, but my phone was thrown into a sink of acid.

Tick... tick... tick...

That clock is driving me insane. I stand up and grab the fireplace iron, smashing the face of the clock. I observe the glass as it flies out around me uncontrollably, but at least the ticking has stopped. I stand there motionless, still holding the fireplace iron. I hear heavy breathing behind me. I turn to see that figure which I call The Specter.

With a distorted and deep voice, it says to me, "My clock..."

Now knowing I have to get out as soon as I can, I rush up the stairs. With the same fireplace iron, I start smashing the door to the master bathroom, but when I finally get the door to break... my friend isn't there. The screaming stopped less than a minute before I just now broke the door, but where has she gone?

My whole body feels weak. I walk down the hall and see a tall mirror on the wall in front of me. I stand there. I don't recognize myself. My dark, tattered clothing is covering up the scars and scratches... My face is emotionless.

Tick... tick... tick...

How was the clock ticking? As I step down the stairs right now, I hear screaming... my friend's screaming... When I finally reach the bottom of the stairs, I see The Specter, but my friend is not there. The clock is back to normal, like I hadn't even touched it.

Tick... tick... tick...

The Specter smiles.

The Quaint Being

Kaylee Hutmacher of Immanuel Lutheran School, Freeport

Thy night is quiet while I ponder in bed,
Trying to nod off, but shalt be impossible.
Disturbing noises are just hopefully in my head,
And the blood in my sheets,
Not washable.

“THESE NOISES!”
I shouted into the night.
“THESE NOISES, MAKE THE NOISES STOP!”
When suddenly, all’s silent...
Leaving shaken up me in a fright.

Thy memories of the past,
They shall haunt me again.
When was the emotion... ‘happiness’ a thing?
And thy person who I depend?

Departing from the bedroom,
And coming out to the dark, gray garden.
A charcoal colored butterfly lands on a tree beside me,
Then flutters away like I’m some kind of burden.

“I’m no threat, thou butterfly,”
I whispered as it flew.
“Only a girl longing for a friend...
What about you?”

Then again, no response...
For it has already flown away.
As I continue deeper into this place,

I unknowingly start to stray.

The moonlight starts to fade,
And my mind’s playing tricks.
Thy night’s caving in on me,
And it’s something I can’t fix.

Trees rustle loudly,
Nothing around me’s rowdy,
And my hourly silence shall feel like minutes.
Trying to escape,
But thy urges still come for a visit.

A quiet forest is now where I am,
Shall I turn back or stay?
Quiet.

I hear something...
Now I start to run away.

As I cry out into the shadows,
And gasp air in for breath.
I now trip on something,
And all around feels like death.

I shall try to stand up,
But I now have no strength.
I’ve fallen deeper,
And thy path has much longer of a length.

Blood’s on the leaves,
The water beside me’s still.
Thy moonlight is now gone,
And my mind feels killed.

Thy demons call me useless,
Call me horrid,
And make my mood lower.
Thou angels try to come in,
But my mind's already taken over.

As I sit there with doubt,
I hear a little flutter.
Thy charcoal colored butterfly returns,
And resists the sudden breeze that makes me shudder.

"I'm no threat, thou butterfly,"
I whisper to it again.
"Only a girl longing for a friend..."
No truer words have been said.

Thy night is quiet,
Though my mind is loud.
I'm stuck in this deep depression,
With no way out.

"Stop playing with my mind!"
I started to shout.
With much strife, I scream,
"LET ME OUT!"

How did I get here?
Why can't I think?
My clothing's dirty and red,
And deeper into my mind, I sink.

Finally getting myself together,
I climb out of the deep.
I walk back to the garden,

Where there... I see...
That charcoal colored butterfly flies over to me.
Its shadowy color gets deeper,
And it seems more drab than it used to be.

"I'm no threat, thou butterfly,"
Again, to the butterfly I told.
"Only a girl longing for a friend."
Another breeze passes by, it's cold.

As thy butterfly stays near,
I hear a loud noise.
With fear, I run away,
And the butterfly stays with poise.

I enter thee house once again,
And not to my surprise.
In a mirror is my reflection,
With a distorted shadow not too far behind.

I climb into the bed,
And throw the covers over my head.
I can hear my breaths loudly,
Though rather I wish to be dead.

I hear growls in the hallway,
And I see shadows over my head.
I hope it will not find me,
And leave the way it came instead.

When no noise is heard,
I peak out from the covers.
Nothing is in sight,
But above me, something hovers.

There, the charcoal colored butterfly flutters.
The beauty to me is unreal.
Sure it's coat is drab,
But it's how I feel.

"I'm no threat, thou butterfly,"
For the last time, I say.
"Just a girl longing for a friend."
With that, it flew away.

Imaginary Friend

Kaylee Hutmacher of Immanuel Lutheran School, Freeport

She meant everything to me,
And would never, ever boast.
We used to spend the long nights singing-
"Cold" and "Lil Ghost."

I loved her so much,
But no soul could ever tell.
For she was completely invisible like a spirit-
Or the feedback of a casted spell.

We'd walk in the freezing cold-
Mostly during the night.
I'd put on a tumbling show for her-
Underneath the graceful moonlight.

I loved her so much,
But no soul could ever tell.
For she was completely invisible like a spirit-
Or the feedback of a casted spell.

At school she'd be in class beside me,
Would continue to listen along.
During recess, we'd sit by the shade tree,
Writing stories and songs that would feel-
Like they belonged.

I loved her so much,
But no soul could ever tell.
For she was completely invisible like a spirit-
Or the feedback of a casted spell.

Whenever I was sad or down,
We'd listen to the songs we loved.
She'd hold me close, no noise ever heard,
And those nights were forever profound.

I loved her so much,
But no soul could ever tell.
For she was completely invisible like a spirit-
Or the feedback of a casted spell.

Kayla

Kaylee Hutmacher of Immanuel Lutheran School, Freeport

In that universe I visit constantly,
Located in the depths of my mind.
She works at Ghost Avenue's Cafe,
And she's really easy to find.

I brought her to the park,
And we linger by the lake.
I show her my many lengthy poems,
And origami is what we made.

I bring her to where I'm staying,
And my friends stare at me strange.
They're surprised I brought this girl home,
And are in shock for a change.

Her brownish hair,
Her black, checkered clothing,
And her signature cat beanie.
She's kind of quiet,
And I don't mind it-
Her gentle self, it sets me free.

But she is not real,
And will never ever be.
I'm thankful for my real life people,
And for Kayla-
For in my imagination, she will not leave, I guarantee.

Fireflies

Kaylee Hutmacher of Immanuel Lutheran School, Freeport

The purple light of night,
The crescent moon much shown.

There is one tiny being-
That shows a graceful glow.

They're a symbol of the childhood,

My happiness-

Oh, so much more.

I feel myself when searching for them,

The light they produce-
It makes the heart whole.

Flashlight in hand,

The beautiful night sky,

And my solo, small soul.

That beautiful shine shall make me happy,

And have me feel consoled.

Those shy bugs-

Like the spirits, Shades,

Usually get away from me.

I'm a destructive giant in their perspective,

But I don't try to be...

Somedays I feel like those insects:

Scared and misunderstood.

Why was I created a human?

I should be that firefly-

Yeah, that would be good.

Just the Thought

Morgan Zumpf of Zion Lutheran School, Marengo

I met Ethan at lunch on the first day of my junior year of high school.

Charity and Cedric were holding hands and laughing at Asher's jokes; Axel and Dakota were listening to Asher, too, while stealing glances at and pretending they did not like each other; Asher was oblivious to everyone else while he cracked jokes and held Callie's hand; and I was enjoying myself while I watched them all. We all turned around to our other friend, Dill, who started talking.

Dill was in foster care and the most naive and caring kid I have ever met. There was another guy our age lagging behind him. "This is Ethan."

Ethan seemed to be staring at each person sizing them up. When he got to me, he just caught my eye and turned back to Dill.

"—sit with us?" Dill was saying.

"Why not?" Axel asked offhandedly.

Ethan glanced at me nervously before sitting on the seat to my right.

I turned back to Asher, waiting for him to continue his stand-up comedy routine. It was as if there was no interruption.

The bell rang, so we all split off, and I went down a different hallway by myself since I was the only one of us in this math class.

I was sitting at a desk in the front row when Ethan slipped into the desk next to me. He smiled at me when I caught his eye and put his hood up. I just rolled my eyes and wondered why he would sit in the front row if he was not going to pay attention.

"Can anyone solve this equation?" the teacher, Mr. White, asked. He must have thought Ethan was not listening, too, because he called on him. "Ethan?"

"Twelve," Ethan said in a bored voice.

"Yeah." Mr. White looked astonished.

I could not believe he got it so fast. I had figured it out just seconds before him. Usually, it took others minutes longer than me.

We all met up outside the front doors.

"Whose house?" Dakota asked.

"We went to mine yesterday," Dill said.

"It's Axel's turn," I reminded them.

“I can’t,” Axel said. “My mom’s...busy.”

“I can do it,” Ethan said. “If that’s okay.”

“Yeah, whatever,” Dakota said. “Meet you guys there at three. Text us the address.” With that, she walked off.

“I’ll give you all his number,” Dill assured us.

“See you later, then,” Charity told us.

Axel and Dill opted not to come because the two of them had a big project in one of their shared classes.

Most of them showed up at three, but I had shown up a little earlier since my brothers were driving me crazy.

“Hey, Victoria,” Ethan said when he saw me. “Come on in.”

“Sorry I’m early, but my brothers were annoying me,” I apologized.

“Oh, it’s fine,” Ethan assured me. “It’s boring here.”

He was definitely being humble because he lived in a mansion.

“If you don’t mind, uh, why does your family do so well?” I asked hesitantly.

“My dad is Dan Walker,” he said.

I choked on my water. “Sorry?” Dan Walker was a famous environmentalist and philanthropist.

Dakota, Charity, Cedric, Callie, and Asher showed up a few minutes later. We talked for a couple hours, but most of the conversation was about Ethan.

“My mom’s coming home soon, and my dad should too,” Ethan informed us.

“What do they do?” Callie asked.

“My mom’s getting her college degree because she wants to be an author and my dad is Dan Walker.”

My friends and I hung out at Ethan’s house for a few hours longer; Ethan was much more interesting than I assumed he would be.

All my friends left gradually, and before I knew it, I realized I was the only one still with Ethan.

“I guess I’ll go, too, then,” I told him. His eyes looked a little sad.

“Oh.... Okay. I’ll see you tomorrow, then,” he said.

A few months had gone by, and Ethan and I became almost inseparable. We went

through all our normal classes in the morning, but at lunch, Ethan was acting weird.

“Guys, I have to tell you something.” We all just looked at him, waiting for him to continue. Ethan was never this serious. “About a year ago, my mom told me she wanted me to go on an exchange program to Athens, Greece. I signed up for it and kind of forgot about it. Well, yesterday, my mom told me I’m leaving on December first.”

“That’s in one month!” Dill said.

Everyone looked shocked and devastated, but Charity, Dakota, and I made eye contact. I couldn’t think about anything but the fact that the best friend I’ve ever had was leaving.

“How—how long is it for?” Axel asked.

“Through the end of the year.”

I suddenly couldn’t hear or see anything but my own thoughts.

“—excited, Ethan?” Asher asked.

“Well, sure. It’s a really amazing country, but the thought of leaving you guys is killing me.”

“Ethan, you’ll see us next year! Focus on the positive,” Callie advised him.

At that point, I got up and left. I told them I had to run to my locker, but when I got there, I just turned and went to the bathroom as I teared up.

Dakota and Charity burst in together a few minutes later.

“Oh, gosh, Victoria! What can we do?” Charity asked.

“I’m fine, guys.”

“Oh, please, Victoria Carter,” Dakota scolded her. “The guy you’re in love with—”

“Wait, wait, wait. What?” I exclaimed. “In love with? I am not in love with Ethan Walker! He’s my best friend, and I just can’t stand the idea that he isn’t coming back for the rest of the year!”

Dakota and Charity glanced at each other in resignation. “Okay.... The guys you hang out with always leave you,” Dakota amended.

“Who are you talking about?” I demanded.

“Jonathan!” Charity and Dakota exclaimed in unison.

“What do you mean? He still goes to school here,” I questioned.

“He started ignoring you after he became a senior. You were depressed for weeks!” said Charity.

“Was not, and we only drifted apart,” I contradicted. The bell rang.

“Come on,” I summoned, avoiding further argument, “Spanish.”

Luckily, Ethan was in our Spanish class too, so Dakota and Charity could not continue their bombardment.

Over the next two weeks, nothing changed. I do not know what I wanted to change since I was worried about the biggest change I could imagine; Ethan's departure to Greece. Though we had only known each other for three months, I could not imagine my life without him. I still retained that I had no feelings whatsoever for Ethan whenever Charity and Dakota started on the topic. Though they wanted to prove their point, they did not mention our disagreement to any of the boys or Callie, lest the word got back to Ethan.

I was still in denial. I could not face the fact that he was leaving for the rest of the year. Though I was in disbelief about Ethan's departure, there was something else I was starting to accept.

Ethan and I had decided to hang out and work on English homework under our favorite tree outside Ethan's house. The essay we were writing took much longer than I would have hoped. I was losing my nerve to tell him. The sun had started to set by the time we finished.

"I have something to tell you," he said, before I could confess.

"Oh, okay."

"I decided not to go on the exchange trip," he continued.

I tried to hide my excitement in case he was disappointed. Surely he did not decide to stay. "Oh, why?" I asked in a neutral tone.

"Didn't want to go," he shrugged evasively.

I took a deep breath. "I have to tell you something, too," I said. I tried to look as confident as I could, but there were butterflies in my stomach. He just looked at me. "I like you."

He looked surprised for a moment, but then, he smiled. He put his arm around me and we sat there in silence, just watching the sun get replaced with the stars.

Funeral

Lillie Bramwell of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst

A single drop of water can turn into an ocean,
Saying goodbye is more than one motion,
Silence louder than 17-year cicadas

One after another, you can't handle one more
I have to be there for them, though my heart is sore
goodbye...

Halloween

*Lillie Bramwell of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst
Inspired by "Litany" by Billy Collins*

You are the crisp wind flowing through the autumn leaves
The pumpkin guts on the newspapered table
The web of beauty and the month-old candy jar

You are not the light in the jack-o-lantern
Or the hot apple cider in the crockpot, and
You are certainly not the orange and purple lights,
You could never be the orange and purple lights.

For I am the moon on the water,
The sweater on the chair,
The cup of coffee with pumpkin spice, and
The steam coming from the blown-out candle

I am not the dog bathing in the sun
Neither am I the cat in the window.
I will never be the month-old candy in a jar,
You will always be the month-old candy in a jar.

We together are the smell of apple cinnamon,
The soft rain on the front porch, and
The pumpkin mug full of nutmeg coffee
The cabin in the woods

But we are certainly not the itchy costume,
Or the barking dog.
We could never be the pouring rain,
Flooding the street; no school

We together are not and never will be the sun in the orange leaves

Nothing Young Can Stay

*Lillie Bramwell of Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst
Inspired by Robert Frost's "Nothing Gold Can Stay"*

Nothing young can stay
Small clothes were given away
Growing up too fast
Childhood didn't last
Giving up your youth for others
You have your Father, not your Mother
Something more you've tried to find
Try and have an open mind
Others kept their youth tucked to stay
Yours an open box, others taking it away
Giving away flowers, just as your willpower
Your youth is deteriorating by the hour
School starts with 2,220 potential new friends
You didn't ask for your 14 to end
Something more is your childhood
Moving on can sometimes be good
The past is just an hour
The future is your power
Find your youth and hold it tight
Nothing young can stay overnight



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