

2017-2018

# The Figure Eleven

poetry, fiction, drama, criticism, and more

by Farber Hebrew Day School's  
Creative Writing Class





There was a nation of people  
Who lived on the edge of a circle  
And they truly believed in the notion of rotation . . .  
But you must always remember . . .  
Two people standing together  
Resemble the figure eleven

—from “The Figure 11,” a song from  
The Mother Hips’ debut album, *Back to the Grotto*

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The poems, stories, scenes, parables, proverbs, and all other pieces of writing in this journal came from assignments, prompts, and collaborations that took place in Farber Hebrew Day School's Creative Writing class during the Fall Semester of 2017.

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special thanks to Rabbi Noam Stein

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# POETRY (PART 1)

## Eleven Ways of Looking at a Cell Phone

### I: iPhone 6

A soft shield for a true love.  
Inside, a blank canvas, with the power  
of the world. Only to be wielded  
by the one whose thumb matches.

### II: iPhone7

Heavy to the hand and with  
just one touch the darkness  
turns to light and through  
the top of it you can see the world

### III: LG Track Phone

An endless field of anything.  
It looks as snow looks, but can look  
tiny and ridiculed, but wielding the power  
that allows me to wield power.

### IV: Samsung s7

A rectangle cube, with clear parts and holes,  
it looks to be fragile with a bright hypnotic screen,  
buttons and glass, with the key—these “humans?”

### V: iPhone 7

A small brick  
in which you can contact  
and learn  
the world.

### VI: iPhone 6S

A tiny box laced with gold,  
and trimmed with white,  
always connected with a string  
to a vertical encasing.

VII: iPhone 5

Something bright with color but black on the inside.  
The scars show the damage it's been through.  
Yet it holds such power in everyone's eyes,  
but for one it means most

And on their command  
the once-black insides  
are now bright with knowledge  
(and messages of love and hate).

VIII: Nokia

Strangely shaped solid,  
Won't stop screaming till it's held,  
They can spend hours there, speaking to it  
as if it's their best friend.

IX: S6 Edge

With its curved glass,  
it slides in my hands like a knife on butter.  
Its rectangular shape fits nicely in my palm.  
It has oddly shaped buttons throughout

as well as random flashing lights.  
It has a word on the top: Samsung.  
I think it may be a company.  
It is a very peculiar device. It seems very cool.

X: iPhone 7

A rectangle box  
that is glowing with light  
buzzes and rings every minute.  
The buttons on the sides seem to control it.

XI: iPhone 6S

The shape  
on the leg  
on the lap  
on the picnic table.

KEY—I: Herschfus, II: Jerusalem, III: Bluth, IV: Sigler, V: Silow, VI: Peterson,  
VII: Magier, VIII: Keyes, IX: Bass, X: Stein, XI: Talybli

**Two Hops a-Plenty** by Eitan Bluth

Two hops a plenty was the bullfrog's way,  
two hops a plenty was his to do.

Two hops a plenty each and every day,  
this is simply the bullfrog's due.

Two hops a plenty on a rainy passage,  
two hops a plenty through red streams.

Two hops a plenty on a lodging lodge,  
through *throughout* there seems to be a seam.

Two hops a plenty down a rocky downfall,  
two hops a plenty is a stain.

Two hops a plenty was one too many,  
one hop would not have ended the same.

## MARTIAN POETRY

### **In the Classroom** by Jacob Sigler

A flesh-covered creature,  
veiled in woven cloth,  
some light and some dark,  
with clear rocks over dotted orbs.

### **Squared** by Naomi Silow

A viewing square,  
you can see the world go by  
and wonder all you want,  
but you can never experience what happens  
on the opposite side;  
if you tried to, you'd die.

### **Plain** by Aria Peterson

With an off-putting color,  
it blocks from us the rest of the world  
and encases us  
with its perfectly vertical direction.

### **Fashion** by Yaffa Magier

They hide a prized possession.  
They come in many colors.  
Some are smaller than others.  
They are bound at the top but free at the bottom.  
They save everyone from embarrassment.  
But yet they can be hated.

KEY: Creative Writing Teacher, N212 Window, Farber Wall, Pants

**Colorless** by Yaffa Magier

A dark midnight purple outlining abstract shapes.  
Each shape different to the naked eye.  
Gibberish—but to the freed mind  
anything one can think.

Colorless, black and white.  
An eventless day, blurred images  
swamped together. Two lanky  
fishermen harvesting their prey.

Blood-red shield, guarding the face  
of horrified warriors.

Dark colors extravagantly painted,  
making sure no man sees the same picture.  
Judgment from faces on the right and left,  
yet nothing in the middle.

A crazed man tells his speechless story,  
yet his listeners are unamused.  
His hands tan and large.  
One might say Shakespeare in a haze of loss.

A view of a sea dark and deep  
with things that crawl and creep,  
colors dripping through their painted veins.

City thrives with colors, cut to short blocks  
but look together to keep the sky  
painted with droplets of rain  
mustard yellow and blue.

Mountains and warships splattered across  
a teal blue sea.  
Yellow spirits pop.

**Squirrely** by Eitan Bluth

Life is kinda boring and exciting  
all at once.

I want to do things.

I want to play.

I want to eat.

That's grey.

That's grey.

That's grey.

That's grey.

That's grey.

That's grey.

That's Tony.

That's grey.

That's grey.

Squirrel!!!!!!

I am peeing on the ground,  
and it brings me joy.

I want to do things.

I want to play.

I want to eat.

# FICTION (PART 1)

## Jumper Zero

by Jacob Sigler

It was 1995. The world was just starting to change. Everyone knew everything and nothing at the same time.

I'm the one on the inside. Some call me the invisible man. You see, I have this special "ability." I'm able to drop from someone's conscious mind to their subconscious without them knowing the difference. It's a gift and a curse—mostly a gift. Now, let me tell you about the best-worst day of a world you never knew existed.

It all started on a normal day. I was there in my black suit, black shoes, white shirt, and grey tie. Boring, right? Well, let me make it a bit more exciting. The black suit was filled with advanced experimental cell-reproduction micro-fibers that lent me the appearance of a body when I was out on a "trip." The shoes and tie—well, it was 1995, and I didn't want to stand out. I felt a \*beep\* on my hip and saw the name *Wendy Shearfield*. So, as I'd done hundreds of time before, I took three deep breaths and my mind fell through the time gaps and into this Wendy Shearfield's mind.

I fell into her conscious mind by mistake and was bombarded by millions of thoughts. They were shredding through me at millions of mile per hour, impossible to stop. I was stuck in her conscious, but it wasn't me. It was *being*, which means I had no pain, no sight, no hearing, no taste. All I had was my inner self to guide my being through her conscious.

All of a sudden, the thoughts stopped and I fell through to this realm of her mind where colors are feelings and everything perceived is an unfathomable mystery. Suffice it to say, it was not where I wanted to be, so I fell through many realms—all weirder than the next—trying to find my way to her subconscious.

Finally, I hit “the spikes.” That is just a term I use for the nightmare realm. That's where all the bad thoughts and demons hide, right before the subconscious. I very carefully slipped, though not hard enough to break open her spikes and make her have a surge of emotions too strong for a human body to handle. No, that would rip-slam her conscious mind, subconscious mind, and physical brain into one being, trapping her in her own brain and preventing her from ever being able to use her physical body again; she would never be able to die. She'd be living a literal hell on Earth.

The problem was that someone was trying to talk to my “skin,” which is just my suit with the whole fancy cell thing . . . not going to explain it again. So, my mind was being used at a fast rate, draining me. I realized I couldn't do this alone, so I thought something that was against everything I'd ever thought. I was going to have to break her spikes. I would use the surge of inner turmoil to throw myself into her “abyss,” which is just a word for the bottom of her subconscious, where I would use no energy and could figure out why I was called to her body.

Before I made such a radical decision, I paged “the head” with a 911. He or she—no one actually knows—melded the cerebrum. I asked it what I should do. And all it said was this: “People live and people die, but as a protector you shall never cry.

They could be sinners, they could be saints. You have to do your job with no complaints.” And all I could think was, “What a stupid, trite little preschool rhyme.” But I got the hint. Against my better nature, I broke open her spikes and sent her into a living hell.

I fell back into my skin and went to give a debrief. As I walked in, I was expecting quietness and sadness, but everyone was loud and lively and very happy to see me. I got to the debriefing room, and there was a letter that said this: “We are happy to inform you that you did not kill anybody today. You are actually just waking up. Allow me to explain. Someone broke your spikes 15 years ago, but we couldn't let you just die, so we put your body into an experimental state of hypnosis and paralysis. We were working on a mental experiment to see if the few “jumpers” like you could withstand the pressure of sometimes having to end it all. You were Patient Zero and a success. Thank you.”

**Now What?**  
by Yael Keyes

“At the end of the hallway, you’re going to turn left. Keep going straight, and you’ll find the lab,” Chandler’s voice says from my earpiece. “There’s another voice-activated lock on the door, but you should be able to override it.”

When I find the lab, I’m met by a big, glass wall. There’s a small retinal scan device, but I quickly zap it, and the lock blasts into pieces. “Whoops.”

“Will, you’re gonna set off the alarms!”

I flinch when Chandler raises his voice. “It’s fine. I’ll just destroy it.”

“Will!” He raises his voice again. “You can’t just destroy every—”

“Too late,” I say, “because I’ve already demolished it.”

Chandler sighs; I can practically hear him rolling his eyes. “Whatever,” his aggravated voice says. “Just steal the file. Then get out of there before somebody finds you.”

“I have invisibility, remember?” Even though he can’t see me, I disappear for effect.

I ignore his response and run into the lab. It’s massive—computers, gadgets, and machines everywhere. For a second I hesitate, thinking about what could happen once the organization gets their hands on these files. But then I think about my family’s lives being at stake. *I’ll just get through this—then they’re safe*, I tell myself. I speak into the comm. “I’m in.” I release a shaky breath. “Now what?”

## **The Determined One**

by Jake Herschfus

Ricky was a determined one, even though he was seen as a wild one by the rest of society. How could he support a family off of music? It was impossible. Nobody believed in him. They all said he would grow out of it. Ricky knew better than that. He had a switchblade attitude and a heart of gold, but most importantly raw determination. Constantly, he would be pestered by the hollow shells of life who had given in their ticket and accepted their bland jobs, jobs that put smiles on the faces around them but frowns on their own. They all said it was just the way of life and that Ricky would just have to accept it at some point. The thing Ricky could never wrap his mind around was how they all could go home and enjoy the product of others' dreams. They sat and rotted in front of screens portraying the dreams of countless actors. They sat in their cars and get lost in the music of others. What happened to their dreams? They didn't succumb to the world of desks and offices. They chased their visions and brought them to life. The hypocrisy of society was unbearable. It stung Ricky's mind like thousands of angry hornets. He had the overwhelming willpower to accomplish his plans, unlike so many others who simply gave up and watched their true selves slip away through their own fingertips.

Ricky decided to grab his life by the throat and take control. This was his life and his life alone. He would not succumb to the words that burned holes through the hope of so many others. Ricky was going to do it. Ricky was going to make it. Hell-

bent on world domination, Ricky picked up his sticks. Day in and day out he thrashed away at the surfaces of wood and bras, surfaces that fueled his energy. He would sit there for hours—the bloodstained drumsticks from the blisters ripped apart, the sweat soaked skins of all the blistering practice, and the tear-filled heart of all the negativity surrounding him. He would practice relentlessly, constantly perfecting new skills. With each beat, fill, and sequence learned he got one step closer to the sweet bliss of his dreams. Ricky knew it wouldn't be very long. He had it tattooed in his mind that he was going to prove everyone wrong. It was clear as angel-white snow. To others, it was murkier than the muddiest of puddles.

After a couple months, he entered the annual Guitar Center Drum-Off. This was his first year competing. Most contestants were shivering, palms dampened by sweat. Ricky however, stood there like a stone soldier. It was his turn to show off all of his hard work. The judges sat in awe. Ricky made it past the city finals, and he was off to the state finals. All others were crushed by Ricky. Off to the regionals, then off to the national championship. This was the most difficult and mind-torturing thing he had ever endured. It was a battle of the dreams between him and three other contenders. He did it. He won. Even Ricky himself was slightly shocked. Now Ricky knew that nothing could break him, that he would not crumble. With his winnings came the endorsements. With the endorsements came opportunities. With these opportunities came—success.

## Riding with Gatsby

by Eitan Bluth

“Would you mind moving, old sport?”

This is how my train ride with Mr. Jay Gatsby began.

“Not at all,” I said earnestly.

I don't know why, but there wasn't a way in the pebble-scuttled world that I could say no to him. For some reason, after shifting my luggage over a pen's length, I felt the need to talk to this linen-laden, modern Apollo. I think he picked up on this idea of mine and decided to ease the tension by starting us off.

“Intoxicating, isn't it? The way the sounds of the world echo off the walls of the train caboose and all?”

I didn't really know how to respond. “Indeed,” I gleamed, trying to match his Bogart-meets-Drew-Carey-like tones. “Truly phenomenal.”

Leering his smile toward me, he introduced himself. “Gatsby,” he said. “Jay Gatsby. I own the house just up there.” He pointed to a behemoth of a house; surrounding the mansion were fleets of sports cars, each one more sheened than the last. And beside the grounds was an unparalleled view of the sea.

“Surely, you could afford a more presentable train than this?”

“Well,” he jolted then paused, “you meet such fine passengers in a car like this—fellows and females alike.”

I asked him what he meant by that. Then he flashed his pearly white horses. “Well, I've met you, old sport, haven't I?”

From that moment on, I no longer felt that I was chatting with a stranger; now it seemed as though I had known Mr. Gatsby all my life. With the raise of his brow and the ever-so-slight adjustment of his tie, Mr. Gatsby spoke. "I think the ride is about to start, old sport."

"Indeed," I said. "Indeed."

## **Recognizing Your Own Body**

by Shua Bass

There are three stages in life: chaos, calm, and happiness. As life progresses, you start to divide the bad from the good, the hooks from the fish. But then you begin to realize that life will go around no matter the decisions you make along the way. Like a wheel of opportunity, you can watch it circulate but can't always choose your destiny. You will remember that you had the original three stages of life, and you will try to return to the normalities of your life. You will have small moments in life that make you wonder what you are even looking at. You will start to contemplate life with a new, profound perspective. And you will question and scream, but all the while, you will still be happy. You will want to go higher, to chase temptations, only to find that what you want you can't have. Your life will begin to divide even more until you are so confused with the stage of life you are in that you will contemplate life. You will imagine drowning, or crashing like a wave on the back of a ship. In the end, all of the confusion will drive you insane, and to cope, you will always need the drugs they prescribe. Your face will become so distorted that you will not even recognize your own body.

**The Badger**  
by Eitan Bluth

Once upon a day there was a badger. He was neither great nor underwhelming; Badger was simply Badger. Badger was alone. Badger was badgering his own badgering business when a peculiar fellow made himself known to Badger.

“A bowl of soup would help me through the winter,” said the fellow.

Badger being Badger, he was mildly curious about this, but not curious enough to look up. Badger gave the fellow his soup and left him on his merry way. Winds went by, and the night passed a hundred times more; Badger was on his deathbed. Before passing, Badger woke his eyes to see a peculiar fellow looking about.

“What would you most like?” asked the fellow.

Badger badgered for a moment, and, being Badger, badgered for another badger of his own.

“Very well,” said the fellow, and when Badger blinked his next blink, instead of a fellow, he saw his own badger beside him.

**Awakening**  
by Aria Peterson

August 12, 1808

My mama called me from upstairs. "Abigail, come! Please come now!"

I ran upstairs as fast as humanly possible, my dress getting caught under my feet. Everybody was already there, standing around her. She lay there, her eyes open yet glossed over. Her mouth lay closed. My mother sat beside the bed in the old rocking chair . . . the chair that had been used to breastfeed every baby during the day and rock them to sleep at night.

As I stood in the doorpost looking down at my sister, I remembered the days when we used to dance around the living room in my mother's clothing. Oh, how I loved being with her. Her warm nature could light up a room; she was loved by those who knew her and admired by those who didn't.

"When did it happen?" I asked, the tears beginning to stream down my face.

"She was waiting for you to come, but you were too late."

She covered her eyes and laid her head upon her lap. She began to sob. The terrible plague began to spread about a year ago. It was a foodborne illness. A slow, silent killer.

"Ahhhhhhh!" I yelled in anger. Anger with myself for not spending enough time with her through her illness . . . and at God for letting this happen to my best friend.

August 15, 1808

Today is the funeral. A very grim awakening. I put my most favorite black dress on and waited for my husband in the kitchen. I stared out the window and drank water, for I could not hold down any food.

My husband came downstairs and rubbed my shoulders for comfort. "I love you," he said, staring at me longingly.

It was as if he were attempting to look through me and into my soul. He sat beside me and cupped my hand in his, holding it.

"I love you too."

## **To Mourn and to Understand Mourning**

by Jake Herschfus

Attending a family gathering dinner in 1863, Katherine is sitting in a chair, distant from everyone else. Her sister comes to comfort her. Her mother, Angie, is sitting in another corner in the same state of despair. The mother's parents are there to comfort her. Their brother John is standing at the wall . . . angered, sad, and confused. Their father, the mother's husband, had just been killed in the Civil War.

The mother is sitting there thinking about the day she met him. They were attending a wedding and had hit it off instantly. He is the love of her life and still is. She remembers dancing with him in the field at the wedding. Those were such beautiful, peaceful times. Katherine and Angie walk out to get some air. They walk merely a half-mile from their house to stand at the lake. It is glistening with the blood of fallen soldiers. They embrace each other from the shoreline, gazing over the lake.

Angie has another flashback. She and her husband had left the wedding to go wander off to an orchard. They made love for the first time there. They were so in love. She remembers picking an apple off the tree, frolicking in the happiness she was not experiencing in the present.

Suddenly, she had another flashback. This was not the same as the others. This was the cruel face of the pointed-beard man who had drawn the last breath away from her love. She feels herself drowning in pain. She grabs her cheeks with her palms, feeling the world around her driving full force into a trip. The world

around her is so disoriented. The shadow of her husband lurking behind her fades into the abyss of the anarchic world behind her.

The day passes and tomorrow comes. It is today that Angie's beloved husband's funeral will take place. The empty faces of soldiers and their families come flooding in from over the horizon. They are all dressed in black. She doesn't even know them. All the faces are the same. For all she knows, they do not even have faces.

Her mind starts attacking her again. She feels the voices of everyone crushing her. She tries going to a happy memory, but she can't. Still dressed in her mourning gown, she sees herself holding her husband's dying body; his soul draining from it. She is embracing him—just holding him. She does not want him to go.

She feels herself drifting away from him, but not physically, rather spiritually. She sees her light, living skin drifting away from his dark, dying skin. This isn't right. It should be me drifting away into the shadows, she thinks, not him.

She comes to her daughter who is sitting in bed after the funeral in their home. She has come in to simply speak to her, but then breaks down crying at the edge of the bed in the chair she sits down in. Her daughter comforts her, reminding her that this is the cycle of life. She tells her things will be ok. Even though she is crying, she hears, and she understands.

## **The Devil's Respect**

by Mina Talybli

He had a corrupted young mind, he was heartless, and he never gave in to anybody. He never had a father, and his mom was a fiend. Yet his toxic mother always told him, "Dancing with the devil will cost you forever." He hung with the wrong crowd, the ones with pipes and needles, the ones whose eyes showed no soul. Slowly, that's what he became.

But the crowd he hung with didn't see enough of him, and they wanted more proof that he was cold-hearted. They told him to rape and kill people while looking straight into their ending eyes. As he did, he listened and followed in their footsteps; he danced with the devil.

The more drugs and crime he did, the more he got respect from the devil. One night, his crowd suggested raping a girl who was walking home, and as he had no choice, he did. Only afterward did he realize it was his mother, the one who had once given him birth. He cried out to God, but He wasn't there; only the Devil answered since he'd chosen to dance with him.

# SONNETS

## **Different Lanes** by Shua Bass

You make me pleased, but now I'm full of shame  
It pains me for the path I had to choose  
I cry when I am happy, smile through pain  
And yet you make secured hearts always lose  
We both moved on, in different types of lanes  
Crying mirrors reflecting back your smile  
Love is cut by every drop of rain  
We circle round and walk the empty aisle  
You are more special than these words that rhyme  
Thoughts of you will hurt, but I'll endure  
I cannot stay but I admit that I'm  
A lost man every time you say you're sure  
    Being with you brings pain in every way  
    But you're the reason that I smile each day

## **A Death Row Inmate's Last Farewell** by Jacob Sigler

I tried to keep them locked away inside  
I locked them up and stored them near and far  
The voices grew, but still I tried and tried  
I came back home but they said, There you are  
I do the things they say against my will  
They tell me, Cut your fresh skin till it bleeds  
It's all the same. The mission: lie and kill  
I know today I'll finally be freed  
This life's a joke, a cruel one at that  
There were the days before the voices came  
Why can't I travel back to *Cat in the Hat*  
My heart is bruised and both my wrists are maimed  
    Goodbye, farewell, I'll see you all one day  
    Don't trace my steps or you'll die on the way

**Trapped for Seven Years** by Naomi Silow

What even are the things he never tweets?  
He barely posts but mostly does for fame  
He never lets go of his bakery treats  
Wow, he's never even known my name  
He won't release the demos that he keeps  
Although a snippet would suffice for us  
I'm always hoping, praying that one leaks  
If only he would get hit by a bus  
His three white boxes should not make you cry  
Or a high note in a stupid song  
Or a floral suit, but yet we die  
And when his songs play, three fans sing along  
    I see him June the twenty-sixth next year  
    And I assure you, you will hear me cheer

**A Writer's Prison** by Yaffa Magier

The will to write with freedom sets us free  
The words all flow as if they are a stream  
We are forever fighting for the key  
For when confined we writers long and dream  
From prisons built by bricks and bars of rules  
We writers grab our "weapons," yet can't fight  
We're bound and locked, still forced to act like fools  
They say it's guidance and will be our light  
Our thoughts, they race like horses; lips stay still  
Ink pushed from our pens, this so called writing  
Though writers thoughts may flow, the page won't fill  
The royal kings of words are always fighting  
    One may wish to sip from writers' streams  
    And be set free; well, one can always dream

### **Kitchen Horror** by Aria Peterson

Its disgusting smell lurks 'round my kitchen  
I look around, but where's it coming from?  
I peer around the counter and I listen  
The sizzling seems much louder than a drum  
He's standing there about to flip it now  
The cheese continues oozing from the sides  
I feel it watching me. If I allow  
It to continue taunting, I'll get hives  
Its smell forever lingers in my nose  
I will always see him flipping it  
My fear is real, but now it never shows  
I long for it to leave me, I admit  
    Escaping it has not been like a breeze  
    I have shrunken from . . . grilled cheese

### **Double Digits** by Dena Stein

When I think of this day, it was like it was yesterday.  
The day was so much fun and great memories were made.  
This day was the day of my tenth birthday.  
I thought they forgot, so my cheer started to fade.  
Then I was told it was a special time,  
For a moment, my hopes were raised to the roof,  
Only to hear my brother found a dime.  
All I got was him shoving it at me as proof.  
Then I was in my room crying in sorrow,  
But soon I heard a shout from outside.  
With a sad face, I looked out the window,  
What I saw made me feel bad that I ever cried.  
    There was a big party just for me.  
    It was the best party there ever will be.

# PROSE POEMS

## Swimming by Aria Peterson

Today was colder. I woke up with my black feathers glistening in the sun. The cadaverous, white snow was blinding as I opened my eyes. I looked out at the horizon and saw the ocean, bright and blue reflecting off the sun. Glaciers floated upon the indigo sea as I saw others diving in the water, leaving a transparent stream of liquid behind them as they spout back up. Fish hanging from their mouths, they got on their bellies and swam back to shore to feed the children. I stood up, the snow crunched under my orange feet. Lacerating winds clouded my ears making it hard to hear as I waddled around. As the day grew old, so did my boredom. The sun never seemed to sink. Suddenly, I realized I was by the water. I began running to it. The world rushed by like a blur, then impact. Opening my eyes, I saw shades of navy blue. The water effortlessly glided against my feathers as I began to swim, about to spout back up. I had no desire for fish. My only desire was to enjoy the cold wetness the water provided. I realized I wasn't like others of my kind. I didn't swim for the hunt. I swam for the simplicity of the water and the grace of its movement. My boredom evaporated.

### **Fire** by Orly Jerusalem

As the maraca-like sound of the shaking box continued, the match rubbed against the box, making a scratching noise. The match snapped, creating the small sizzle sound of the fire slowly lighting. Then there were screams of fright at what sounded like a small crackling fire.

### **Matches** by Aria Peterson

She suddenly becomes aware of the smell of the matches, reminiscent of countless Friday night candle lightings and newly lit campfires. Its smell lingers in her nose. It's one her favorite smells. The warm, burning scent. The smell, an indication of the extinguishing of light. It still reminds her of cold winter nights, finding solace by her living room's fireplace as a child. Her longing to get closer to it, but her mom always telling her no. It still reminds her of warm summer nights, putting out the fire only to smell that one smell—one of her favorite smells. One that never fails to put a smile on her now aging face.

## **A Letter from the Age of the Selfie** by Eitan Bluth

In this world there are real problems. I don't just mean little things like voting or whatever; I mean for-real problems. So, like, listen—just yesterday, I was at Starbucks; I was checking my Insta and then some, like, guy, he said, “Excuse me, I think your coffee is ready.” I mean, seriously? Like did he want something or what? I honestly can't deal—like, that's so rude. Oh, and another thing—I was in my room one day DMing one of the Ryan twins (they totally follow me, it's kind of a big deal), and my crazy mom was like, “Babe, can you please help take out the trash? I threw my back out. I would do it myself, but I threw my back out.” I mean, seriously?!? Like, you have practically one job—being my mom. And if you already threw your back out, just take the trash out too. Anyway, I just wanted to “call attention” to the real problems, like ... how I feel ... ya know?

#TTYL #TTYN #hardlife #feel #deep

## **Second Person** by Naomi Silow

You were suddenly awake; you were aware of everything. You had an hour to get out of your house and into the car. You got ready and stuffed some last-minute things into your suitcase. You lugged an overweight suitcase down the stairs. You got into the kitchen to eat a bowl of cereal while waiting alongside your dad for your sister and mom. An hour later you were all ready to go. You ventured out onto the road, an hour behind schedule. Twenty minutes into the car ride, your mom became frantic, realizing she left her phone at home. When you heard this, you were baffled—how could someone forget their phone?

You were almost there when a gigantic FedEx truck drove up next to your car. Their blinker turned on, they kept inching closer and closer. Your dad was honking his horn like a maniac but it did nothing the truck was still inching closer and closer to your window. Your stomach was in knots as your dad quickly switched into the lane next to yours, not checking if there were any cars. You closed your eyes and when you opened them you were alive, untouched. Your heartbeat was still ferociously thumping as you let out a sigh of relief.

You were then in line holding the much-needed paper in your hand. When you gave it to the smiling man in a uniform he told your sister, dad, and you that it wasn't scanning. You all ran to print out new versions while your mom went on to the gate. Once the three of you were in line, your dad and you showed someone in a uniform your identifications. Then, your sister pulled out her

student ID. Apparently, that was invalid, so she was pulled away to be patted down. Finally, the three of you were at the gate, but you couldn't find your mom, and you couldn't call her. Your dad went to find her while your sister and you begged a woman in a uniform to keep the doors open. Your sister and you then walked into the plane and sat down apprehensively. But as you saw the last two people walk into the plane, you immediately recognized the faces. After you put on your seatbelts, something came on the intercom. "This is your captain speaking; we will be arriving at LAX at 10:00 a.m."

### **Matches** by Yael Keyes

The matches rattled against each other, the slight *swoosh* of the box sliding open. She shivered, holding her blanket close, trying to keep warm. She closed my eyes and listened to the quick strike of the match, the snap as the flames appeared. She could hear the warm crackle of the flame, bringing back memories of when her dad taught her how to start a campfire. She smiled at the thought, at the warm memories it brought back. She tried to hold back but a tear escaped as she wondered, *will I ever see dad again?*

### **Sizzle** by Dena Stein

They hear a small shift of a box moving and shuffling of little wooden sticks. They hear the scraping of the stick against the box. They hear the sizzling of fire in the air. Suddenly, they hear the loud scream from the whole class scared of the flames.

# LITERARY CRITICISM

## Borges

by Eitan Bluth

Few authors inspire admiration and confusion like Jorge Luis Borges. Borges uses his varied and complex stories to expound upon metaphysical questions, such as the nature of the universe and of human existence. His strong opinions and distinctive style leave many readers to either find great relevance in his writings or to only find pessimism and confusion in them. John Updike, however, finds something of a middle ground. He praises Borges's skill with language and bold ideas, but criticizes him for an apparent disinterest in the lives of human beings. Updike believes that Borges's fascination with incomprehensible concepts comes at the exclusion of an element of humanity, and implies that emotions are downplayed to the point that readers cannot relate to the stories. Updike, however, simply has not looked closely enough at Borges's work, for its main interest involves a very prominent aspect of the human experience. Borges does use his stories to explore abstract philosophical ideas, but his writing truly focuses on the human response to these ideas and the human quest to understand the mysteries of the universe. It is in this way that the "he" Borges refers to in many of his writings is a simplified version of his lack of understanding of himself, and the world around him.

# PARABLES

## **Liars Are Not Believed Even When They Tell the Truth**

by Jake Herschfus

There was once a boy named Jason. Jason would frequently come late to his classes. He would always cough up some excuse as to why, but this turned into a regular routine for him. He would often be called out for his fibs as the teacher was able to prove it otherwise. One day the boy felt really ill and was vomiting in the bathroom. Jason ended up 10 minutes late for class. His tardiness earned him a detention. This time no one would believe him even though this was the truth that he spoke.

## **An Act of Kindness Is a Good Investment**

by Jake Herschfus

There was once a young man walking down the street, when all of the sudden he noticed a small boy stuck on the edge of a balcony. He was about to fall off. Without even thinking, the man ran to catch the boy. Years later, the man lost his house to a fire. The once-small boy had seen it on his local news. The boy had now become an extremely wealthy man. The boy personally came to the man with a check that was more than enough for the house, and a warm hug. The man asked, "Why are you doing all off this for me?" to which the boy replied, "Don't you remember me? I am the boy whose life you saved all those years ago."

## **The Greedy Never Know When They Have Had Enough**

by Jake Herschfus

There was a wild wolf that walked through the woods. One day he saw an animal that had died. It was a fresh meal for the wolf! He was about to devour it when he noticed a little chicken. The wolf was delighted! Two meals at once! This was a delight. He lunged for the chicken, but the chicken saw him coming and flew off into a tree. The wolf, disappointed, saw that it was no use, and he went back to his carcass. Now, just as he turned around, a vulture swooped down and snatched the wolf's meal. The wolf now had nothing.

## **One Man's Trash Is Another Man's Treasure**

by Yaffa Magier

The sky a clear blue, the sun golden and glowing, all was good in the world except one little girl. Her once beautifully white dress was now grass-stained. She gazed into the mirror, tears rolling down her cheeks as the green streaks burned into her eyes. Broken from the state of horror, she let out a piercing shriek. Her mother burst through the bathroom door. The little girl cried and cried because her dress was no longer white. The maid's daughter, who happened to be walking by the bathroom door, saw the dress. She just stared, hypnotized by the unwanted garment. She looked down at the brown and gray smock she wore, and only dreamed of having that beautiful, grass-stained gown.

## **Don't Count Your Chickens Before They Hatch**

by Dena Stein and Orly Jerusalem

Once upon a time, Janet decided to go out and buy a lottery ticket. She got home and found out that only two people bought lottery tickets. She started jumping up and down from excitement. Janet was very certain that she would then win the lottery, so she went out and bought four Ferraris. The day the winner was announced she felt she did not need to check who it was because she was sure she would win. But later that day she was watching TV and saw that another person won. She was distraught and broke.

## **Look Before You Leap**

by Yael Keyes

There was a girl who was always sad. Always alone. When they would be training with the dragons, she would keep away from the others, staying as far as possible. Nobody knew why she was so sad, but no one bothered to ask. They'd all make fun of her, spread rumors, and call her names.

One day the girl was crying. She was tired of her classmates and their constant bullying. She decided she'd run away, escape with her dragon. She left a note telling them everything: what happened and why she'd left.

When the boy saw it the next day, he felt bad. He found out the girl who he'd been mean to had lost her whole family. He wished he could apologize, but it was too late. But from then on, he decided he'd ask before assuming things.

## **Slow and Steady Wins the Race**

by Aria Peterson

“Look at me!” she yelled from across the room, holding up the model she made in less than five minutes.

I looked down, sighing at the mush of clay lying on the desk in front of me.

“Next assignment, class,” said Ms. Newland. “I want you to take a new piece of clay and construct some sort of menorah.”

I sighed again. Only this time in frustration. Fine. I took a new piece and began to build what I thought was quite an accurate depiction of a menorah. Piece by piece I went, carefully scoring the clay and attaching every part. Occasionally I would look at the girl who could seemingly finish a project in less than five seconds. She was struggling as she slabbed pieces on top of one another.

“Look at me!” I yelled in excitement.

“Great job,” said Ms. Newland.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw the girl sighing at the clay lying on her desk.

## **A Penny Saved Is a Penny Earned**

by Aria Peterson

There once was a man who lived on the street. Every day he would sit beside it and hold up a sign that read *Homeless, Please help*. Every day he got more and more money, but every day he wanted more. “I don’t have to sit here anymore and pick up loose change,” he thought. “Instead, I’m going to sit in front of the mall—people are richer, so maybe I’ll get more money.”

The next day he went and sat in front of the two big doors that led into the mall. He sat for five hours and got over \$200. “I’m going to do this every day! No more sitting on the side of the road.”

Because the man thought that he’d get the same amount of money or more the next day, he went to the fanciest store he could find and bought himself a \$200 coat. Again, he was broke. “But it’s okay,” he thought. “Because tomorrow I’ll sit in front of the mall again and get more.”

So the next day he went and sat in front of the two big doors that led into the mall. That day he got \$10. Nothing more, nothing less. The next day, he sat on the edge of the street again, holding up a sign that read *Homeless, Please Help*.

# SOLAR ECLIPSE PROVERBS

Life is like a solar eclipse—one minute it's there, then it's not.

—Jacob Sigler

Life is like a solar eclipse—sometimes you need help to see the light.

—Yael Keyes

Life is like a solar eclipse—blink and you'll miss it.

—Eitan Bluth

Life is like a solar eclipse—even in the darkest of times there is a glimmer of light.

—Shua Bass

# DRAMA

## Driving to Friendship Circle by Orly Jerusalem

*Dena and Orly drive west on 12 Mile.*

Dena  
What are we doing at this Friendship Circle thing?

Orly  
I really really wish I knew!

*There is a pause.*

Dena  
Is it gonna be, like, with the kids?

Orly  
No.

Dena  
(quietly)  
Oh, ok. I think it's supposed to be like the blind museum.

Orly  
Actually?!

Dena  
Yeah, but not like . . . we're, like, going through and,  
like, not doing something either like hearing . . .

GPS  
Make a U-turn.

Dena  
We're not going to be able to hear, which I don't think  
is possible. Maybe we will put on, like, headphones  
or something.

Orly  
That's really weird.

Dena  
I don't know.

Orly  
(singing along with radio)  
"Ooh, look what you made me do . . . Look what  
you made me do."

GPS  
Turn right here.

Dena  
I've never . . . I don't think I've ever driven to West  
Bloomfield this way before.

Orly  
Today, when I went to my doctor, my doctor is in  
West Bloomfield; it was the first time I drove to  
West Bloomfield.

Dena  
Oh, well did you go this way?

Orly  
No, because my doctor is that way.

Dena  
Oh.

Orly  
Yeah, I went . . .

Dena  
I think we just passed Friendship Circle.

GPS  
Make a U-turn!

**Incentives** by Aria Peterson

Woman #1

You're so cringe-y. Like, what even are you?

Woman #2

No, I'm perfectly normal. Say it.

Woman #1

No.

Woman #2

What?!

Woman #1

No!

Woman #2

W-why?

Woman #1

Because it sounds . . .

Man in the Background

Please fill out your incentives.

Woman #1

Because it sounds like Ms. Darvis from  
*High School Musical*.

Woman #2

What're you saying, wow, you're really extra.

Woman #1

No, you're the one who's extra.

Woman #2

Oh what's it called—

Woman #1

Can I move your contact around in your eye?

Woman #2

If you wash your hands first.

Woman #1

But I don't want to.

Woman #2

Then you can't.

Woman #1

Wa-wa-wait, did you find out if your mom  
could take me home yet?

Woman #2

No . . . but I'll ask and let you know ASAP.

## FICTION (PART 2)

### Peril

by Dena Stein

I have many siblings and growing up I loved being with them. When I was younger I always sat next to my older brother while he was doing his homework. Sometimes I felt a little jealous and wanted some homework of my own. One day, when I was three, I decided that my brother needed some help so I took my pen and started drawing on his paper. Apparently, that was a bad idea. My brother, with a pen in his hand, took the pen and stabbed my ear. Pens might not look very strong but put against an ear can cause a lot of damage. My ear started falling off and was bleeding more blood than I have ever seen in my life. Quickly, my mom rushed me to the doctor before my ear came off completely. At the doctor I was given stitches on my ear to prevent it from tearing more. Afterward, my parents gave me a lot of presents, which made me think that maybe I should stab off my ear more often.

**Twisted**  
by Naomi Silow

She mindlessly stares into my cold, dark soul. She always tells her friends how much she loves me. She and I have had countless of amazing nights in her bed. I make her laugh and smile, I can also make her heart beat faster than a cheetah running. I can make her cry tears of joy and sadness. I don't always answer her questions, which makes her mad. I make her wait, but she and I both know that I'm worth it. When she has a bad day, she curls up with me and I make her forget the pain. And even though I have so much love for her in my heart, she's not the only one. Every girl wants me . . . even men want me. I guess it's just easy for me to connect to many people. And trust me, it's always beneficial. Even though I have many lovers, I don't think I'm ever good for them. It's hard to remember the last time I actually had a healthy relationship. When people are with me, I notice they forget all about their self-hygiene, friends, family, and food. They get dissolved in me. I guess no one can resist streaming unlimited shows and movies. Hey, the name's Netflix. Have we met?

## Spikes

by Aria Peterson

He trudged over the magical mountains of despair, searching longingly for someone to talk to. The man had been walking the world for years, in search of his treasure, and this time he felt he was close to finding it. His sunken-in face and waiflike body were an indication of his lack of food and water. He walked and walked until he could walk no more. He found a big cactus and slept under it. The next morning he woke up to find his entire right arm full of spikes.

“Ouch!” he yelled as he pulled out every individual spike from his arm.

Blood and pus oozed from every individual wound. He fainted at the sight of it.

He woke up the next morning, his head feeling as if it had been struck by a brick, and noticed his arm. He sat up against the cactus.

“Ouch!” he murmured in his remembrance of its many spikes.

His arm looked as though someone took a pen and played connect-the-dots with his wounds. It looked as though a constellation had been drawn on it, the wound closest to his wrist being the North Star. But he soon realized it was a map, and what he imagined as the North Star was actually just his destination. He woke up the next morning (this time with only two spikes in his left arm) and embarked on the very long journey to his destination with no knowledge of what he was getting himself into. Following

his makeshift map, he walked and walked until he could walk no more. Another meaningless year had passed. His legs ached from the miles he just endured, and his feet blistered from the ripping of his faux leather sandals. He sat down under a single tree, letting its shade cool him from the desert heat. He fell into a deep sleep.

“Sir?” he heard a voice say.

He sleepily rubbed his eye and sat up. A beautiful young woman stood before him.

“Hello,” he replied.

“I’ve been looking for you all my life,” she continued.

“Huh?” The man was in disbelief.

“I knew it was almost here. My treasure. It’s you, just like the prophecy said.”

He couldn't believe what he was hearing. He thought at least his treasure would have been some sort money, even maybe a life lesson or two. Something useful. Not a woman... He probably wasn't even close to his destination he thought.

“Here, please, let me help you up.” Her voice was smooth and sweet, and reminded him of home. She stuck out her arm for him to grab when suddenly he noticed her arm. Her arm had a map on it, one that looked like the exact reverse of his. He grabbed her hand and stood up.

“Um, what were you saying about a prophecy?”

“Come with me,” she took his hand and led him to a little hut nearby. Inside of the hut was a crate. The woman opened the crate, took out a tiny piece of parchment, and cradled it in her hand.

“Can you at least tell me your name?”

“Athena,” she replied.

“Athena, I’m sorry but I have to leave. This is not what I want.”

“But you cannot leave!” Athena yelled, “this is my destiny too.”

The man began to run out of the hut.

“Come back here right now! We are meant to be together.”

But the man continued to run, and he never stopped.

## **Razorblade Misfits**

by Jake Herschfus

It was finally here. It was the day he had always been dreaming of. Taz and his band, Razorblade Misfits, were about to play the biggest show of their lives. They were about to headline The Fillmore of Detroit, a concert venue that he himself had seen so many of his favorite artists play at. The time had come; he and his band were about to take the stage and play their hearts out to a sold-out audience of thousands. They were about to perform the songs they'd worked on for so long, the songs that they had put their blood, sweat, and tears into, perfecting them by grinding every little detail out of them and fine tuning them into absolute perfection. Now Taz and his bandmates were walking on stage, the air rich with the scent of rock n' roll, the smoke machines making it possible for the lights to pierce through the air yet giving the venue a beautifully eerie feeling. The pyro tech was gleaming with power. Their faces were now visible to the audience. Johnny, the guitarist, let a dirty roaring chord rip as Michael, the vocalist, howled into the microphone, "Detroit! How are you feeling tonight!" The sea of people thundered in response, cracked out of their faces on adrenaline and giving the band a contact high. Taz was looking over his gleaming Tama drum kit at the monstrous body of people that were before him. It was showtime.

## **Clowns**

by Dena Stein

My family is really weird—they wear really colorful clothes, have a ton of face paint on, and we have a huge tent in our backyard. They are not just any weird family—they are clowns. Every day my mom, dad, and eight siblings get up, put on their clown clothes, and perform for ten hours. That was the normal in my family. My family is like a pineapple—they look crazy on the outside but are pretty normal on the inside. Sometimes they could be really weird, but they are mostly normal.

In my family, your sixteenth birthday is the day when your duties of being a clown become permanent. My birthday is in a few weeks, and my family is starting to prepare me. I do not know if I am ready for that. I have the dream to become a doctor, which is not really an option if I have to become a full-time clown. But I feel that I have no choice because my family is depending on me, and they will be disappointed. I do not know what to do.

I was sitting in my room while my sister was teaching me how to do the perfect face paint when I had a great idea. I will go to the leader of all clowns and ask his advice on what to do. Unfortunately, I have to find a way to get there without my family seeing me, or they will ask too many questions. Quickly, I leave my house and start the journey to the other side of the fence.

As I am leaving my house, I find the perfect bear costume to disguise myself in. Soon enough, I find myself standing at the leader's door. Without me knocking, the door swings open, and the clown leader shouts, "Come in!" I run into the house and sit in

front of the leader and explain my problem. The clown leader is silent for ten minutes when suddenly he says, “Do not worry what other people think; do what you want in your heart.” Leaving his house, I have to figure out what that meant. I have to make the right decision.

When the day of my birthday came I knew what I was doing. I decided what I really want in my heart is to be with my family—not a doctor. The leader was wise; he knew what I really wanted—not what I thought I wanted.

**Distress**  
by Shua Bass

Pain. Pain was the one word that described his life. Mr. Poster. Mr. Poster was very sick and had been through a lot. He was never able to find a doctor or medication to help with the pain. Every day the pain got worse; his chest felt like a blacksmith was using a burning piece of metal and hammering it on the anvil of his chest. Every blow sent an immensely sharp pain throughout his chest, making it nearly impossible to breathe. Every blow—every breath—was more painful than the last. His head felt like an angry wasp’s nest whose inhabitants were attacking their victim. His stomach rumbled and exploded like an overflowing volcano. It got to the point where he would take Fentanyl daily just to get by. He was so stressed that he would take Ativan just to calm down. He was slowly deteriorating and saw no light at the end of his seemingly short tunnel. He decided he would go back to his home to live with his family, where he could be cared for in a more desirable way.

With the support of his family, Mr. Poster searched for new doctors who could hopefully crack the puzzle and cure him. He went to a new doctor who, like all the past doctors, ran Mr. Poster through a panel of tests. But unlike his previous tests and doctors, this one was able to find a cure.

A few years later, after many different treatments, Mr. Poster is finally happy and healthy; he walks down the street and smiles at the sun. When he is asked, “Can you describe how you feel?” he replies with the following: “Imagine if you lost a limb one

day and for years you were disabled and always in various types of pain, and then one morning it magically was once again attached to your body; that is how I feel!" No one can relate to the feeling unless they have been through the same hardships. This is the first time Mr. Poster has smiled and been happy in years. And it is all thanks to his new doctor who he needs so very much; he has given him his life back. He has given him something to live for.

**Crystal Ball**  
by Naomi Silow

She placed her hands on the crystal ball, her long fingers with her chipped blue nail polish wrapping around the sides. She started to hum a soft chant of some sort. “Yes, yes...” She broke her focus on the crystal ball and gazed into my green eyes, as though she was looking past my soul, like she was gathering every detail of my being. “Things have been rough for you I sense.” Yeah I guess that’s a way to describe it, “rough.” “But things will get better soon enough.”

There was a quiver in my voice when I asked her when that day would come. That day that I desperately longed for.

“Things won’t just magically get better. It’s going to be like growing flowers: give the seeds water, sunlight, and time; soon enough, a beautiful flower will bloom.” I could hear the wisdom in her motherly tone. It was as if she were my mother bringing my broken spirit back up again. Even though her words were not unfamiliar I could hear them in a new tune of an old song.

The soft light in the crystal ball slowly died out, taking my worries, insecurities, and failures with it. I walked through the curtains and out the door as if I were a new person, one that has been reborn, worry-free.

## Handled with Care

by Eitan Bluth

Once upon a time, there was a wake in a brown house. Remembering an old, kind-eyed man, there was no one in the house without a story to tell. This, however, was not to say every story shined so nicely on the man or the way he chose to live his life. There is a woman of dark hair and soft features; her story takes us back to a garden party. The man is walking, in one hand a mimosa, in the other a small blue box that hides a diamond ring. The man goes up to the woman; her dark hair cannot cover the sheen that the ring presents when it is revealed.

The next woman is one of non-obvious beauty. She stands adjacent to her whiskey sour as the man shines his blue box. She was once adjacent to the man. It is a dark sunset on a newly cold afternoon. The third woman is joined by her brother; the two of them are together picking fruits from a pampered tree at dusk.

The man approaches the pair and looks at the newly picked fruits from the pampered tree with envy. The fourth person looking back on the man is an accomplished tailor; from a distance, he sees what to this day he cannot be certain is the man—frightened and angry, alone, shouting out his demons on the boardwalk. The sky was blood.

Everyone who once knew the man—knew him, but in mere pieces. Bigger picture. There once was a man who loved a woman. They lived day to day without care, and they embodied whimsy in love. The man grew bored, however, as the pure joy he

felt with his girl melted into desire for something out of the ordinary.

Enter the dark-haired girl. Her soft features intrigued the man, and the black of her curls kept him at a distance. The man left the whimsy of his love and called upon his interest to entice the girl he could not quite reach. All the while, his love lay herself bare, choking on her own grief.

The man soon learned that the dark-haired woman could never truly be his, so he offered her a choice in the form of a small blue box. As he feared, she refused, and in that moment he looked back to see his whimsy, only to find her gone. As time ran by, the man grew old . . . and bitter.

On a fresh day, the man saw two children, a boy and a girl, picking apples from the land he called his own, tending to each piece of green the way he would treat his true love if she were there. Abusing his pampering? This angered the old man, and he howled at the children.

The old man, looking back on what he had done, not merely to the children but to a true love as well, brushed away the sand. Beside the beach on the boards that sprouted coral and sea foam, the man confronted his past, and as he had done to the children, howled at it. This time, though, his cry was not out of anger, but out of shame.

The man sought what he threw away all that time ago, and through groveling he found her—on her deathbed. The man pleaded with his love, “Please don’t pass.”

In her final moments, she spoke of forgiveness to the man, and he spoke of closure. The man could see her kind eyes, clear as day.

We go back to the now when the man has brushed off the world, and in his wake, he is visited by those figments of his past, the ones he has not now outrun but overcome.

In the end, the man reaches the one who overcame him. Together, the two had a love that embodied whimsy, and it was now handled with care.

**Mountaintop**  
by Orly Jerusalem

The year was 1810, and the couple had been trying to get pregnant for a while now. It was time for their monthly check-up and the couple was scared that this would be the appointment when their doctor tells them to just give up on having kids.

When they got to the doctor, he informed them that there was nothing else he could do for them. As the couple walked through town, it was made obvious to the townspeople that there was no more hope for this couple.

While silently and awkwardly walking home, the husband turned to his wife and saw her eyes slowly filling with water and her cheeks turning more red than the roses growing from the ground.

As the couple walked through the town, they approached an odd-looking house that they have never seen before. As they examined the strange house, they saw a little old lady wobbling out the door, wearing a little coat with more holes than actual coat. She continued to walk so slowly that a snail would be able to beat her in a race.

She finally approached the couple and with the little voice she had left she asked them if they could help her get her mail. The couple did so.

The old lady then asked them if they could clean up her garden. The couple did so.

The old lady then asked the couple if they could help her back into her house. The couple did so. The old lady then told the

couple to sit down. The couple did so. The old lady then asked the wife if she could wash her clothes for her. The couple did so.

As the wife was doing the laundry, the old lady asked the husband why his wife looked so devastated.

The husband answered, "My wife is always giving, but there is nothing else I can do to give to her."

The old lady replied, "Life is like a mountain; right now you are falling down it, but soon you will be climbing up it again."

It was right then that the wife returned, and the couple then left the strange old lady's house. The husband was very confused and bothered by what the old lady had told him but decided to keep it from his wife.

It was six months later that the couple was walking through the town and heard the quietest cry. The couple decided to ignore the cry and continue walking, but the cry kept getting louder and louder. They decided to follow the cry.

As they searched and searched to find where this cry was coming from, the cry kept growing. The couple came to a corner and saw that on the floor was something moving around wrapped inside of the blanket. They unwrapped the blanket and found a newborn baby.

The husband looked around to see if the parents of this baby were anywhere to be found. As the husband was turning around, he saw the old lady standing behind him. The old lady looked at him and said, "This is the top of your mountain."

**Escape**  
by Aria Peterson

I lie cold, shivering on the raft. I stare into the orange, lustrous surface in search of my reflection. But I see nothing—just a film of water over the surface growing larger and larger as I continue to sit.

I cling to the raft in search of warmth, but the water grows so cold it stings my skin. It begins to seep through my shoes, stealing the heat from my soles as fast as the wind from my face. My lips become purple, and my skin so numb it is a useless exterior. I try to scream, but all I can conjure up is a whisper.

I look up to see fields of gray clouds over the horizon. Shivering, I look around. I'm surrounded by an opaque blackness for miles. There is nowhere to go. Lost, unmoving, aimlessly floating on the water's surface.

Again, I look up, squinting, scanning the sky for something. Anything. At the end of an almost everlasting row of non-transparent grayness, I see what looks like a meadow of soft white clouds. I can almost make out a ray of sun.

Warmth fills my interior as I paddle towards it. The blue, soft water moves effortlessly through my outstretched fingers. The newfound sun warms my back, melting any existing numbness. Wiggling my toes, a smile materializes on my now pink lips. Out of the corner of my eye, I see something. Land.

A beach with soft-looking tropical sand, lined with palm trees. I struggle to get off the raft. A force of some sort seems to

be keeping me there. Some unnamed power has a hold on me, unwilling to let go of its grasp.

I slip off the side of the cold, glassy raft and push it away. Swimming to the beach as fast as I can, I look back. The raft is now just a tiny orange speck in a sea of indigo. I step onto the beach crunching my toes in the hot sand. The calming, melodic breeze whispers in my ears as I close my eyes.

A feeling of security rushes over me so tangible I can taste it. The roots of my past, present, and future collide, assuring me that this is my place—the place I belong.

## POETRY (PART 2)

### **The Real Lemonade** by Yaffa Magier

For love, one will do almost anything,  
for love is strong and can weaken the mightiest of men.

But bad love—love that is made from lies, abuse, force—  
bad love can cause the gods to fall.

Within love—true love—sacrifices are made,  
and the feeling thrives even when far.

Even though miles apart—always forever in mind and heart.

Last but never least, love will never be easy.  
But that's what makes it real.

Life never just hands you lemons; you have  
to fight a bloody war to get them, and only then  
will you have lemonade.

## **The Aquarium** by Mina Talybli

There was a kid who lived a cheerful life—  
see his reflection running in a diaper,  
bouncing off the aquarium.

In the black and white world  
with the black and white picture,  
two girls with a morphed-looking body and face  
shave their legs.

This was a little girl's favorite quilt,  
made and given to her by her late mother.

The mice-looking men were going to a gay ball—  
hand in hand they go to the extravagant ball  
with many different sights to see.

It's a black version of a potato head  
mimicking The Scream painting  
with a man listening closely to what he was screaming.

Back to the aquarium,  
but this time the living beings got demonetized—  
now they're killers and ruthless.

It's a panorama of an old castle,  
the left side is the past,  
the dark and rustic past you want to avoid.  
The right side is the present going to the future,  
the life you want to walk into, not run from.

This is a dream an old man is having.  
He is thinking of the time he fought in war  
while on a ship—  
rain, thunder, and lightning take over.

It's kind of like *The Wizard of Oz*.  
The path to your destination will be bright and yellow—  
going back is all dark and not where you wanted to be.

**To Bend** by Eitan Bluth

To love someone is to give a self,  
To hold one other, is to hold none else,

to play when bright, to drown when black,  
to rise from depths, one thing less to lack.

True to a friend, true as a friend,  
to be true in love is, when required,

to bend.

**Under Her Skin** by Yael Keyes

Arrows stabbing into a heart,  
Words get under her skin.

Broken inside, chaos running through her head,  
Whispering rumors about her all around,

Monsters telling her to give up, saying she's not worth it.  
Others act like royalty, but she feels lost at sea.

She hopes for a friend,  
Hopes for someone to set her free.

**New Rules** by Naomi Silow (variations on the song by Dua Lipa)

Surrounded by darkness,  
nothingness,  
and the questions in my head.

It's like my silhouette  
is incomplete.  
Feeling like the sand at the beach

that you used to love to feel  
in between your toes.  
But then that sand made its way

home with you.  
You don't want it, you don't want me.  
Breaking glasses, making myself crazy,

being the cliché sad girl  
everyone knows and loves.  
Writing down my thoughts

because that's the only thing that can save me  
from the memories and pictures  
rushing through my head.

Should I call him?  
Should I admit to myself  
that life is easier with him,

even if that means feeling insecure,  
scared, and powerless? No.  
I should not call him.

He only treats me right  
when he's not sober.  
I can't let him into my heart

when he is just going to  
break it  
and leave me stranded.

I won't be his friend,  
I won't be tempted  
by his perplexing tricks

that reel me in every time.  
And if I'm under him  
there's no way I'm getting over him.

I won't call him.  
I have new rules.

**G-d and His Silver-winged Angels** by Yaffa Magier

In the morning, I wake up  
to the sun gleaming into my windows.  
I go to sleep  
with the glow of the moon kissing me goodnight.

I sleep safe and sound  
knowing that I have a guardian angel  
watching me. With His strong, silver wings,  
he watches me.

Every day I wake up  
and put on a skirt and long-sleeve,  
high-neck shirt. I go to school  
and the first thing we do is pray.

I pray to my Lord that I should have  
the strength to believe.  
The strength to appreciate  
the little things.

I pray to my God for direction,  
and sometimes there is no answer  
and I find myself lost.  
But just because there is no answer

does not mean there is no one listening.  
As a Jew, my religion encourages me  
to always believe  
even when it seems hopeless.

It encourages me to question  
as a way to test my strength and character.  
And I do, because I know  
that my God and His silver-winged angels

will always be there, no matter what.  
I'm commonly asked, *Do you ever wonder  
what your life would be like if you were not  
a Jew?* And I am honest.

There will always be that question,  
but I could never see myself  
as anything but a Jew.  
It's my life. I have a Jewish name,

I go to a Jewish school,  
and most of my friends are Jewish.  
It's truly more than who I am,  
It's almost everything I am.