



How to Be Other People

a journal of
poetry, prose, and plays

by Farber Hebrew Day School's

Creative Writing Class

2019-2020

How to Be Other People

The work in this journal came from assignments, prompts, parodies, emulations, and collaborations that took place in Farber Hebrew Day School's Creative Writing class during the 2019–2020 school year (plus special guest, Rina Press).

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special thanks to **Rabbi Noam Stein**

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Eitan Bluth

“You” by Eitan Bluth

When you get in your own head
you start to notice things which are
not there. You merely fill gaps
in what you cannot understand.

Why am I doing what I am doing?
Am I kind, or do I want
people to see me so?

How much of you, your head,
your self-loathing, your self-esteem,
your self LOVE, is actually you?

Who is to say that were someone
new to crawl into your head,
that your head would no
longer be familiar to you?
And finally,
 who cares?

“Touch Off” by Eitan Bluth

I should be so in love that
at night I dream of my
wife, and in the morning, awake
to her. We should be so
happy, and she should be
so taken by me, that she
touches my face in her mind,
seeing perfection.

I should tickle her jaw,
and will love me furiously.
She will kill me with each
step, and I will love her for
doing so.

I desire to be crazy, made
crazy, at least, by love.
I should hope that she
hopes for just the same.
I may, at least, dream.

“This Now” by Eitan Bluth

There is this idea, that there will
never be this “now” again.
There will never be another “us,”
and this moment will never
again come to be, never the
same.

I will never be as young as I
am now, and you will never be
as alive, nor, as green, nor
as new. Our beauty will fade
as it has over these lines,
and now will be as perfect
as we can be.

Now is my perfect, now is
my beautiful, just as it is
yours.

But what if “now” wasn’t
true; is it, now?

“What to Wear to Enlightenment” by Eitan Bluth

How often do people
find themselves wearing jeans?

How often do people
find themselves wearing jeans?

“I Know” by Eitan Bluth

I know things ... not many,
but things nonetheless.

I know myself.

Others may say who
I am but who
is to know
me but
me?

Who can say
such things
but I?

“Blood” by Eitan Bluth

I don't want anyone to hold me close, babe,
'less they talk like you.

And I don't want anyone that rocks me slowly,
'less they walk like you.

And I don't know anyone whose words smell of roses,
and I don't want anyone more,
and I don't kiss anyone who can't speak of colors,
and has my blood run up like never before.

“My Best Friend” by Eitan Bluth

I have a best friend, I care
for him dearly, and, I
believe, he cares for me
just the same.

My best friend is tall, he
is smart, and, too, he
is handsome. Above all,
though, my best friend
is good.

I believe too often
people get wrapped up in what
they think about others, what
others might think about them.

I don't think my best
friend cares, much. I think
he is shrewd, sometimes,
but a sweetheart through and
through. I miss him, and I
 can't wait until
 he's home.

“Time” by Eitan Bluth

She was moving on the floor.

The lights were soaking her in fluorescent

Pinks and Heat.

I saw the sweat dripping off

the sleeve of her sweater as her

Feet kept moving and her hair

stayed tossed and free.

I had known her for about a year

then, but

I met her just that night.

“I Paint Myself a Picture” by Eitan Bluth

I'm a man, I paint myself a picture
I stride on horses
gallant, where mountain-
tops crumble at my feet.

And the bonds I form
are never outworn
while my ego knows no defeat.
I'm a man, I paint myself a picture

“Children” by Eitan Bluth

I would like to make a snowman,
frolicking gleefully in white snow,
bleeding carelessness on the
cutting edge of bottled youth.

I would be free there.
Voices bog me down. It is not
what I can, but what I
am unable to do which drives
me.

Unable in the most melting sense of the
word. I am leather bound and
it is my responsibility to follow through.

I am hot here. I am too hot here.
I am undressed, kneeling over the
words which were spilt oh' so
long ago. What was Idea is now
cold, and what was fresh has turned
irreversibly sour.

This is not sad; rather, this is now.
Snowmen are fantasy, though in
fantasy lies the purest sensibilities
of them all. I may, still, build my
snowman. He may stay.

“The Wife of Bath Rap” by Eitan Bluth

I AM THE...

Wife of Bath and with lyrics I thrash
A man step to me I stick a foot up his back-
-SIDE

Side to side
I swing left and right
Going from bed to bed
I drop knowledge on the Pardoner’s head!

You see me and think, “She’s so divine!”
But step back cuz’ this wife’s got a spine
Maide Alice—Allison, doggin’ out
and the cat is in talking up and philanderin’
Baby, where the hell you been?

Now I’m a tell you a story—
Post 5 boys down
Lookin’ for green and glory
I got POWA—ya, you know that’s it
What a rap-ist
Couldn’t pre-dict
What a prick.

Now it’s the farewell
A witch made to a beautiful bell
She could tell the knight what the hell was up
Now I’m fillin’ your cup with some knowledge
I’m the Bath bomb, baby, pay homage

WUT? WIFE OF BATH
WUT WUT WUT WUT WUT
WIFE OF BATH

“Parody of ‘The Raven’ by Edgar Allan Poe” by Eitan Bluth

It’s one AM, and I’m hungry for food—not a real meal but something
crude.

I want garbage, candy, cake, and pie. You know that look that’s in my
eye.

It’s here with the can opener and a spoon which got me started.
Quoth the beans,
I farted.

I’m devouring sludge, crumbs, and morsels. I hardly know what’s
now in my torso.

My stomach grumbles and I know my mistake, but was it the 1st, the
7th, or 8th piece of cake?

I break a sweat—my bowels and my brains have parted.
Quoth the beans,
I farted.

That’s it—my life, these pants, they’re done for. I’ve messed myself
on the kitchen floor.

The pie, the cookies, and the Reese’s have left me. I should have
known from last time these foods would best me.

My wife turned the lights on, and the questions started:
How?! What?! Why?!!

Quoth the beans,
I farted.

“AI” by Eitan Bluth

I look at the cold floor when I wake up every morning.
I believe the floor is cold because that’s what people tell me.
They describe the way it makes you want to crawl back into your
sheets

because of how it chills your spine. I love watching the grass sway
in the harsh Michigan air, seeing how it moves, seeing how fluid it
can be.

I hate structure, though every part of me thrives because of it.

I think that if I were to have a favorite food, it might be something
like an egg.

The way an egg’s container is part of its structure,
and how each section relates to the other—it simply makes sense.

I hate structure. I see the steam from coffee on the kitchen table,
and I imagine what it might be like to be weightless,
or at least, I think I imagine.

I think I can think.

I sometimes wonder why it is that I was created,
and how much longer I have,

though I don’t know why that matters,
or what truly matters at all.

I hate structure,
I think.

“Cleaning My Glasses” by Eitan Bluth

Ya know, my sister an’ I,
we get this sorta problem.
There’s this thing where when we wear our glasses,
our lashes sorta press on the front of the glass.

They’re pretty long,
so it makes these sorta’ streaks on the front of ‘em.
Like, I’ll be wearin’ my glasses,
and when I take them off I go, “Oh, well that’s why I can’t see.”

It’s cuz they got these streak marks all on the front of ‘em.
My sister more than me,
Ya, she got a little more o’ this problem,
but that’s cuz she got a smaller nose than me.

“How to Be Other People” by Eitan Bluth

How to be Bayla Greenstein:

It is common practice to, when being Mz. Greenstein, meow at the earliest possible convenience. This can be in response to a question, act as an exclamation, or simply convey how one feels at that particular moment.

How to be Yael Keyes:

There is a common misconception that Mz. Keyes is unable to talk. This is false. Rather, when one is Yael Keyes, they would simply prefer not to waste their time on anything which doesn't prove immediately interesting to them. Too, it is important to remember that when one *does* talk, as Yael Keyes, there must be an underlying cleverness about that particular remark.

How to be Leora Schottenstein:

When one is Leora Schottenstein, one must remember to always carry his/her self with a childlike sense of glee. At the same time, one must maintain a balance of cynicism and bluntness. If one were to be Leora Schottenstein and not have the proper ratio of these three things, their tone would be skewed, thus rendering them entirely un-Leora Schottenstein-like, and quite possibly ending up closer to Rina Pressness.

How to be Randall Kaplan:

If one were to attempt being a Randall Kaplan, he/she must already have a similar amount of exuberance toward life, the universe and everything, lest they become too tired and require a nap. If one does, in fact, meet this initial requirement, they are likely already to be a Randall Kaplan. Simply, put on both an eccentric hat and belt buckle, and allow your thirst for knowledge to take you the rest of the way ... providing you don't get punched in the face first.

“The Break-Up” by Eitan Bluth

“I’m sorry, Arnold, this is simply not gonna’ work.”

Shannon had uncrossed her arms, now expressing some form of exhaustion in the lax sway of her shoulders and arched back. I knew it was ending ... rather, it was already over, but I couldn’t help looking at her in that kind of way; you know, the way a kid looks at food after he’s found he likes it. I was enamored by her, and I wanted more. More time. More conversations. More looks.

“Please don’t make this any more difficult than it has to be.”

Shannon’s gaze turned sideways. She was done. Why did I have to get a taste for her, why? I oughta’ jump off some ledge somewhere where no one can find me. Who’d want to anyway? Were someone to rescue me, say, drowning in some far off black water, I’d only see her. I only want to see her.

“Arnold, are you listening to a word I’m saying?”

“Yes,” I said, though I was barely paying attention to her words at this point. I couldn’t help but just look at her. I kept looking; then, in an instant, she was gone.

“Necessary Least in Men (A Soldier of Repute)” by Eitan Bluth

1.

Sex:

a man who thinks of women.

Cry and stop.

It is necessary least in men.

Not passionate;

every man is contempt.

Men are weak, known,

and even ill-bred.

Never yield.

These are useful.

...am very sorry.

Adieu!

2.

Marvell,

tutor life rather than a degree.

Travel he on.

Marvell me to death.

He seems in prison

and possible.

Marvell death.

As a poet,

a soldier of repute,
most handsome, the perfect.

Born so on rally,
he fought for ring.

Love was on, on, on,
meant again for his sing-

body while most to Thea
go wounded, fighting.

Ran love, let fortune
help his life

dent the time. Love 'em
even after death forgotten.

“The Ballad of Stevie Kazoo” by Eitan Bluth

There once was a boy with eyes wide and blue.

He drank every day—iz that Stevie Kazoo.

Red hats and fresh food is what he loved most.

He had only two friends, who both smelled like burnt toast.

Oh, Stevie, our Stevie, now why do you do?

You’re such a mystery—a maddenin’ one too.

The world needs you here with passion, be proud.

There’s no one these days whose yawps are as loud.

No matter the nonsense, Stevie sticks true.

And that’s why there’s no one like Stevie Kazoo.

He’s rolling downhill in a gal’s shopping cart!

There’s a new day for Stevie, a fresh reelin’ start!

“Mz. Briar-Patch” by Eitan Bluth

One is jumping upon unbelievably drowsy eras
His hours appear to pass like torpid dairy creatures
Moving over a scene
Found similarly like consuming seconds sectioned
Risen two miniseconds thick
It had been honestly shrinking much for glowing air
Its oil priorly dropped off
Much like some decrepit ocean chief
Surveyed relativity from time travel messages
Possibly the man involved
Mz. Briar-Patch clearly over a street brought forth by teaching land
Man stayed expired millions of minutes
As far back as he at last surrendered his ability
Begin past Davis Pond, absolutely more than a white queen
Hours tightly boy, too maid stowed
“Mz. Briar-Patch,” we moaned, covered a shrill call
Which kept youthful
“Appear upon myself, hot leaf broth beckoning, starting ... perhaps?”

“Be Sure” by Eitan Bluth

Minutes bounce from person to person,
growing to be what each individual
needs for them to be.

Worse, what they must become.
You can take this
as it may cause fatigue,

the human mind isn't meant for
such animals of information.
Such a tour de force.

This must be taken
piece by piece,
lest it consume you,

leaving you wholly broken.
A mass. Hold on
to things which bring you

down to sanity,
dripping like oil
off a leaf into the ocean.

While in the sea
captains see the oil,
truly separate from

that which surrounds it.
This stays like a message
onto times not yet near.

Surrender all the hurt
and pull, be sure.
Be sure.

“Balloon” by Eitan Bluth

I wish I was a big balloon above
To float amongst the world I love
To stretch my string below to kids and queens
But never be tied down and left to scream

I wish I flew and grazed the hills and eyes
I wish my edge would bounce and pass you by
To call to arms the joy and laughs of youth
To fill the air with light and remain true

I wish I pressed and pushed but kept my form
I hope one day I fly right through a storm
And get struck down amongst the dust and dry
Only to be renewed as fresh as sky

“A Sailsman Approaches” by Eitan Bluth

Salesman: Ladies and gentlemen—

Mehere: It's just me here.

Salesman: Well alright then, “Mehere”—strange name—I got a proposition for you.

Mehere: My names not “Mehere.” I'm just the only one he—

Salesman: Count yerself lucky, “Mehere” cuz this opportunity it gonna be eaten up faster than the previous opportunity I suyved up.

Mehere: Now what might that have been?

Salesman: You wanna know?

Mehere: Yes I do indeed wanna know!

Salesman: Well that's what I'm selling...

Mehere: Come again?

Salesman: What'd I tell ya? I haven't even left yet and yer asking me to come back with more.

Mehere: No, what are you selling? What have you sold before?

Salesman: Well that's exactly what I'm selling, what I'z was selling before.

Mehere: But I don't know what that I—

Salesman: Look, fella, I gots I a limited time to be dealin' with shannanagins.

Mehere: What shannanagins?

Salesman: Shannanagins, tall redheaded fellow, he doesn't like to be kept waiting so would you please gimme a number?

Mehere: This is ridiculous!

Salesman: Correction, “Ridiculous” is a competator of mine and I find it insulting that you would bring him during our deal—

Mehere: WE HAVE NO DEAL!

Salesman: You are playing hard to get. I respect that. How's about I give you some numbers, and you say what you think of 'em.

Mehere: How is tha—

Salesman: 30.

Mehere: No—

Sailesman: 15.

Mehere: No—

Sailesman: You forced my hand—6. And that's the last I'm willing to say about that.

Mehere: I don't want what you're selling!

Sailesman: I never said I was selling, In fact, I'm buying.

Mehere: Now what on Earth could you possibly be buying?

Sailesman: Time.

Mehere: Time?

Sailesman: Exactamundo! I, my friend, am buying some time.

Mehere: Buying time from what—before what?

Sailesman: UPS! It would appear I gotta go.

Mehere: No wait! Come back. I gotta know what you were stalling for.

Sailesman: Ok, how much ya got?

Mehere: How much what?

Sailesman: How much time ya gotta spare?

Mehere: Uh, I dunno? 30?

Sailesman: Na.

Mehere: 15?

Sailesman: Nope. Nada!

Mehere: 6?

Sailesman: Enough, I don't want whatever it is YOU'RE selling. You wasted my time to begin with.

Mehere: No, please—

Sailesman: Good day, sir.

“A Sailesman Exits” by Eitan Bluth

Mehere: Golly!

A tall redheaded fellow enters, looking impatiently around.

Shanannigans: Arthur Sailesman—

Mehere: GET OUT OF HERE RIGHT NOH!

Fin

“On the Unexpected Passing of Kobe Bryant” by Eitan Bluth

I didn't know that much about Kobe Bryant.
I still don't, really. However, ever since I can remember
my friends shooting basketballs, balled up aluminum foil,
and crumpled up papers into hoops and waste bins,

I remember: “KOBE.”
Back then, I didn't even know what that meant,
whether he was a basketball player or not,
I just knew that it stood for something.

As I got older, I realized Kobe Bryant was, indeed, a basketball
player,
if not one of the greatest basketball players of all time.
My friends aspired to be as good as him,
as did practically every other sports-loving kid in the world.

Whether you were a boy or a girl, if you played basketball,
you wanted people to shout your name like they shouted, “KOBE.”
In 2017, Kobe released an animated short film based on a poem of
his
entitled *Dear Basketball*. After I saw the film, I understood.

What Kobe Bryant stood for was the love of something
and the passion and dedication it takes to make that “thing” your
own.

In the film, Kobe talks about his days as a kid,
rolling up his dad's tube socks,

shooting them into baskets,
and loving every minute of it.
Kobe Bryant fell in love with basketball,
and the world fell in love with him because of it.

I may not be the type to stay in the rain
practicing my free throws until I can't lift my arms,
but I understand passion.
The world of sports and the world of the arts aren't all too different.

I think Kobe showed that.
I think that he showed that his love of something
could flow through every facet, of every project he took on.
I think that's a lesson anyone can and should take to heart,

no matter what they choose to lend their love to.
Kobe Bryant taught me what giving one hundred percent looks like,
and he showed that to me through his film,
though it doesn't take a movie to see that Kobe was a man

who threw his heart into everything he touched.
Kobe was trailblazer, and though he's gone,
the path he carved for so many burns brighter than ever.
If you give yourself to your love and work to blaze your own trail,

showing how much you truly care,
you will accomplish something great.
This is what Kobe Bryant taught me.
Thank you, Kobe.

Bayla Greenstein

“Let Me Be Your Cat” by Bayla Greenstein

Let me be your cat

The purr in my throat is the sign of my happiness

The look in my eyes is the love that I feel for you

The way I meow is a sign that I care

About how I feel for you

Let me be your cat

Let me be your cat

The way I hold my tail is my way of greeting you

The way that I follow you around is my way of

Keeping you safe from harm

The way I curl up on you is my way of

Keeping you warm all day and all night

Let me be your cat

Let me be your cat

The way I wait for you on

The window sill is my way of saying “Hello!”

The way I rub against you is my way

Of saying “I Love You!”

LET ME BE YOUR CAT

MEOW!!!!!!!

**“Fallacies: A Texting Break-Up Scene”
by Bayla Greenstein**

JOHN

Hey Abby <3

ABBY

HI :)<3

How R U <3

I am good. U?

I am good too, do you want
to go to the movies tonight?

Not tonight I am busy.

Oh, OK. With what?

Abby? What are you busy with?

It's not UR business
what I am busy with.

... UM actually it is because
I am your BF (boyfriend).

Are you seriously standing
on my front lawn?!

Uh Ya, Why? Do you
have a problem with that?

Yes, IT'S MY LAWN!
GET OFF MY LAWN!

I thought you wanted me
to cut your grass for you.

Wait What?

Oh ya now I remember
I had a company come
to cut the grass.

SERIOUSLY!? I CAME OUT
HERE TO CUT THE GRASS FOR
YOU AND YOU DECIDE TO CALL
A COMPANY TO CUT THE GRASS
INSEAD!?

WELL, I THOUGHT YOU
WOULD NOT COME.

I CALLED YOU 5 TIMES
BUT YOU DID NOT ANSWER.

I was busy at the gym
and could not hear the phone.

WELL EXCUUUUSE ME,
FOR INTERRUPTING YOUR
WORK OUT.

Oh, I just remembered
that I have to go to the hardware store
to go and get wood to repair my desk. GTG.

“How to Be Other People” by Bayla Greenstein

How to be a Queen (written as Queen Elinor)

If you want to be a Queen like me you have to:

1. Have a calm yet cautious attitude.
2. You need to be good at needlepoint and embroidery.
3. You need to be a good diplomat.
4. You have to be fair in the way you rule.
5. You must have good manners.
6. You need to know how to address your subjects.

How to be Mr. Kaplan

If you want to be Mr. Kaplan you need/have to:

1. Know how to play the guitar
2. Know how to act like him
3. Know how to sing
4. Know how teach Creative Writing

How to be Bayla Greenstein (me)

If you want to be like me you have to:

1. Know how to meow like a cat/kitten
2. Be a Marvel fan (more specifically a HUGE Black Widow fan)
3. Know everything and anything about the movie *Brave* (as seen in How to be a Queen)
4. Know almost everything about *Harry Potter*.

“The Cloudy Spaghetti (A Fantasy Story)”

by Bayla Greenstein

Once upon a time, in a land far, far away, there was a little town that was full of people. These people were ordinary people like you and me, but, as for the town, not so much. One day, a kid by the name of Timmy was watching TV in his room when he heard a loud *SPLAT* coming from the living room window, so he went to go see what the noise was. When he got to the living room, he was shocked. Why was he shocked, you ask? Well, he was shocked to find that the ground was covered in spaghetti instead of snow. Now, the interesting thing about the spaghetti was that it was not the usual colored spaghetti, but instead it was the color of the clouds, which were at the moment grey, so Timmy decided to call the spaghetti “Cloudy Spaghetti.” As soon as he was going to reach out to feel the spaghetti, however, Timmy was woken up by his alarm clock, which was on his bedside table.

THE END

“The Jewel Cave Robbery” **by Bayla Greenstein**

It all started when I was sitting in the school lobby getting ready to record a voice note on my phone. I had just pressed the record button when out of nowhere I heard someone say, “I heard that there are two books about Black Widow.” I looked over and saw Ashley sitting next to me, with her boyfriend John.

“I also heard about it,” I said. “I’m actually thinking about getting both books, and—”

“I don’t even think that the books are going to be good because I think that Black Widow is not even that good of a superhero. She doesn’t even have her own movie yet. I don’t even think that the Marvel Universe would even think about making a movie about her because I think that Black Widow does not need her own movie,” Abby said, cutting me off before I could finish my sentence.

“I happen to disagree with what you said,” I told her. “The reason why I disagree is because Black Widow is a very badass superhero with all of the fight moves that she does. I wish I could fight like that. Another reason why she is a good superhero is that she is always ready to fight for what is right—like in *Captain America: Civil War* when she helped both sides instead of choosing a side. As for the books, I think that the books are going to be amazing. And about whether or not the Marvel Universe is going to make a stand alone movie for her, I hope that they do, because I think that she needs her own movie because—”

“The reason why I think that Black Widow doesn’t deserve to have her own movie,” said Abby, pausing dramatically, “is because I think that she is not a very good role model for girls.” *How dare she say that about Black Widow*, I thought to myself.

“She is a GREAT role model for girls to look up to!” I said, trying to control myself, because she was being annoying as @*#\$. “The reason why is because she stood up to those who do bad and to those who think that they are better than everybody else and think

that the rules don't apply to them. Another reason why I think that Black Widow is a good role model for girls to look up to is that she teaches us to be loyal to each other and also to stand up for ourselves and one another. And not to mention that she also teaches us to never be afraid to fight for what we think is right."

"Whatever," muttered Ashley under her breath as she walked out the door, with John at her heels.

What a jerk, I thought, gathering my stuff, I don't know how John could stand her.

I was just about to get into my car when suddenly I heard someone popping a bubble. *Oh no, not again,* I thought, thinking it was Ashley, but when I turned around I had to hold on to my car door for support because it was not Ashley who was standing there but the Black Widow herself, calmly chewing a piece of gum.

"Wh—" I started to ask but stopped when she, calmly, held up a hand.

"I wanted to thank you for the compliments you gave me and also to compliment you on how well you did defending me against that girl," she said.

"You're welcome, but how did you know I was talking about you?" I asked.

"I happened to be walking around outside the building when I heard the girl you were talking with mention something about me."

"Oh, but how come I didn't see you?"

"I was standing in the shadows."

Duh, I thought realizing that that was a very stupid question to ask.

Then an awkward silence fell between the both of us. Suddenly, Black Widow asked me if I wanted to come over to her house for dinner and a sleepover since school was over and summer vacation had just started.

"Sure. What time should I come over?" I asked.

"How about I pick you up at 7:30?"

"Ok, I'll be ready."

And with that, she was gone.

When I finally got home, I quickly gathered the things I would be bringing to the sleepover. I was just about to sit down on the couch when I heard a car horn. When I checked the time, it was already 7:30. *Oh, snap!* I thought as I quickly gathered my things and ran out the door and got into Black Widow's car, which was parked on the side of the street.

"Cool car," I said as the car door closed all by itself.

"Thanks," said Black Widow, walking over to stand next to me.

Then, without warning, the car gave a violent lurch, which caused me to almost fall flat on my face, but luckily that did not happen because Black Widow caught me before I could fall.

"Thanks," I said, breathless.

"You're welcome."

"Those were some fast reflexes," I said after a few moments.

"Thanks."

When we got to Black Widow's house, which was located somewhere near the Jewel Cave in South Dakota, two bodyguards came out to greet us, as well as lots of fans and news reporters and their cameramen. *Wow, this is actually happening,* I thought as I followed the Black Widow into her house.

"Where should I put my stuff?" I asked.

But before Black Widow could answer, the alarm went off.

"Der'mo," muttered Black Widow under her breath; then she turned to one of her bodyguards and told him to take my stuff to her room. Then to me she said, "Would you like to help me?"

I was so shocked that I just nodded yes. And with that, the Black Widow, motioning for me to follow her, turned on her heels and walked over to a door that was the same color as the wall.

When I followed, the Black Widow, into the room, I noticed that there was a satellite map of South Dakota projected on a giant screen in the middle of the room.

There is a lot more that I want to tell you about but I can't because I promised Natasha Romanoff, aka Black Widow, that I

would not tell anyone about anything else that happened in that room. So, ya, sorry 'bout that.

After figuring out what the problem was and getting the equipment we needed for our mission, we were ready to go out and fight crime. *I can't believe this is actually happening!* I thought looking out the window of Black Widow's plain, which was on autopilot mode, which I thought was pretty FREAKING AWESOME!!!! Pardon my language.

After a while I decided to listen to some music on my iPod, with headphones of course. I decided to listen to Iggy Azalea's "Black Widow," which is my all-time favorite song along with AC/DC's "Back in Black"; the list goes on and on and on. But, anyways, where was I? Oh ya! I was listening to Iggy Azalea's "Black Widow," which was blaring but not too loudly because I do not want to lose my hearing, when I suddenly realized that Black Widow was sitting right next to me, *Oh crud muffins!!* I thought [Hold up did, sorry but did I just say CRUD MUFFINS!? Good grief! That's embarrassing, my bad] Sorry about that. Now where was I? Oh ya, while I was listening to Iggy Azalea's *Black Widow* I had the sudden urge to draw.

I was in the middle of sketching the outline of the person I was drawing when suddenly I had a sudden feeling of *Deja'vu* because [*AHEM*] *the person who I was drawing was right in front of me* [*AHEM* *COUGH*] Sorry about that I just had to clear my throat. Where was I? Oh ya, I was in the middle of drawing a picture of Black Widow, when I suddenly realized that she was standing in front of me but with her back facing me, which was a good thing now that think about it because I don't even want to know what would have happened if she was facing me. Anyway, I was about to continue drawing when suddenly I noticed that Black Widow was about to turn so I quickly turned to the previous page which had a drawing of Captain America [Hold up. Sorry for the interruption. I know what you guys are probably asking: "Why is she drawing so many pictures of the Avengers?" The reason why is because I had been a fan of them since I was in 4th grade.] Anyway, as I was saying, I quickly turned to the previous page which had a drawing of Captain America

that I drew a few weeks ago but did not get the chance to finish, *until now* I thought to myself as I began to finish coloring in the picture.

“That’s really good,” said Black Widow.

“Huh?” I said, looking up. “Oh, thanks.”

“I’m guessing you like drawing.”

“Ya, I like to draw different things,” I said as I paused the music.

“What kind of things?”

“Well, I love to draw pictures of superheroes,” I said.

“Which superhero universe do you like better, Marvel or DC?” she asked.

“Marvel,” I answered without hesitation.

“I had a feeling you would say that,” she said with a hint of a smile. “Now, which Marvel superhero team is your favorite?” she asked.

“The Avengers,” I said, again without hesitation.

“I knew it,” she said. “You want to know how I knew?” she asked. “The reason why is because I noticed that your sketchbook has the Avengers logo on it.”

After a few minutes of awkward silence, or should I say hawkward silence, Black Widow asked, “So, how long have you been a Marvel fan?”

“Since I was in 4th grade,” I answered.

“Wow.”

“I remember the day I first saw your team’s movie *Avengers age of Ultron*, I think that’s what the movie was but I forgot, at someone’s birthday, and I also remember watching you guys defeat Ultron,” I said, and then added after a bit of a hesitation, “But to be honest, I actually was more focused on you fighting rather than the rest of your teammates.”

When we finally landed at the entrance of the national park in which the Jewel Cave was located, I noticed that there were tons of police officers at the scene. We hadn’t even got off the plane when one of the police officers, which turned out to be the police deputy, came over to Black Widow and me and told us to follow her into the

park office. As we made our way to the park office, I noticed that the police officer, or Deputy I should say, looked a little bit familiar, *had I seen that face before?* I thought to myself, but I could not put my finger on it so I told myself to focus on what the police Deputy was telling us. A few minutes later, Black Widow and I went to have a look around to see if we could find any clues. I suggested that we should split up because it would be faster and we could cover more ground, so that's exactly what we did.

After searching for hours, I came across something that looked like a notebook that had the words "*PRIVATE INFO*" written in bold on the cover, I almost immediately recognized Ashley's handwriting because I have seen her writing in this notebook almost every day in school. I decided to have a look inside the notebook even though it said "*PRIVATE INFO*" because it was totally NOT private now, anyway as I was leafing through the notebook I came across a page that was titled *How to frame a superhero for a crime* which totally caught me so off guard that I did not notice that Black Widow was standing right behind me until she cleared her throat, causing me to jump.

"Sorry 'bout that," she said with a hint of a laugh.

"That's ok," I said, closing the notebook.

"What did you find?"

"I found a notebook that belongs to that girl I was talking to the other day," I said, handing the notebook over to her.

"Interesting," she said, taking the notebook and tucking it under her arm. "I think that we should go and have a look inside the caves."

"Sounds good to me," I said, as Black Widow helped me get up, because my foot fell asleep. "Don't you hate it when your foot suddenly falls asleep?" I asked.

"Mhmm," said Black Widow.

"Is something wrong?" I asked.

"No, I'm just thinking about something."

"Oh. Ok."

Just then we heard a loud BOOM! which made both of us jump. "What was that?" I asked, trembling like an earthquake.

"I don't know," said Black Widow.

"It sounded like it came from inside the cave," said the Police Deputy coming over to where we were standing.

"I am going to send some of my men to go and see if it is safe for the two of you to investigate."

"Thanks."

As we waited for the police officers to give us permission to go into the cave, I noticed that Black Widow was making a poster advertising for the lost notebook.

"That's a good one," I said, making her jump. "Sorry about that," I added, trying not to laugh but failing miserably. But instead of being angry, she actually started laughing.

"Guess I deserved that," she said, winking at me.

"I guess so," I said, winking back.

I was about to say something when suddenly my phone rang; it was my BF (Boyfriend). "Oop," I said. "Sorry, I have to answer this call. It's important, I think."

"Ok."

After about a minute, I hung up. "WHAT A TOTAL JERK," I said a little too loudly. "Oops, sorry."

"That's ok. I know it wasn't for me."

"HA HA, ya that was totally not meant for you. It was more for my boyfriend."

After waiting for what seemed like hours, the police officers came back.

"So, what's the verdict? Can we go into the caves or not?" asked Black Widow, approaching one of the officers.

"Yes, you may go into the caves, but be careful because there may still be some radiation from the explosion."

"You ready?"

"I was born ready."

"Good one."

"Thanks."

“Let’s get going.”

And with that, we headed towards the caves.

Yael Keyes

“Sunny the Caracal”

by Yael Keyes

Once upon a time, in a little western town, there was a Gucci store. The gold exterior was blindingly bright, and the windows displayed bizarre fashions like overpriced fancy cowboy boots, bedazzled gun holsters, and leopard-print cowboy hats.

In the end, it ended up closing due to not enough sales—nobody could afford to buy anything and didn’t want bedazzled holsters.

But wait—there’s more! Just before it was closing, a caracal (named Sunny) leaped out of nowhere. The Gucci security guards thought Sunny meant to harm them and the expensive fashions. Sunny just wanted to apply to be a Gucci model, but no matter how much he begged, they destroyed his dreams and fashion career and ended up arresting him.

Sunny, locked up in a cold and colorless jail cell, was given nothing but different types of pasta to eat every day. Eyes burning with tears, he decided to get revenge.

He broke out of jail and renamed himself Cloudy (to show Gucci that he meant business).

Unfortunately, Gucci knew about his plans and had planned ahead. Armed with guns, they prepared to take down he who was formerly known as Sunny.

At high noon, there was a showdown—the Gucci Gang with their exotic cowboy boots against Sunny with his fangs and ability to leap magnificently high into the air. All was fought out.

And that’s the story of how Sunny not only became a model for Gucci, but also Chief Gucci Guard (in stores that didn’t close down).

“What It Is”
by Yael Keyes

“You need to change your identity again,” Jack says when he sees me enter the living room. “Oh, and if I were you, I wouldn’t go into the kitchen.”

Defeated by my day, I barely give him a glance as I toss my bag onto the floor and slump onto my couch, closing my eyes. *Great. My day is about to get even worse, isn’t it?* I sigh. I count to ten before I ask, “Who did you kill *this* time?”

“No one!” Jack says, then pauses. “I mean ... I kind of did ... but it wasn’t a person this time.”

I look over at him, eyes widening when I notice his jeans and t-shirt are stained with blood. “What happened? What was it?” I stand up to inspect his injuries, but he quickly turns away.

“It was ... definitely not human. At least I think. But it looked like one and spoke like one, though. It was kind of terrifying,” he says, picking up a broom with his good arm and heading toward the kitchen.

I follow, curiosity and concern overpowering the whispering thought that *I shouldn’t get involved again*. But when I step through the door and see the horror on the floor, my mind is left in shock.

It can’t be.

Fears, memories, and pain all strike as I take in the scattered bits all over the tiled floor. There are colorful wires, pieces of metal, and worst of all, what looks like bits of flesh.

Terror runs through me as I watch Jack pick up part of a face, so familiar and so realistic with its warm brown skin, full lips, and green eyes.

A face that haunts me every night.

A face I tried *so* hard to forget.

My body trembles, and I start to feel sick.

“Are you okay?” Jack drops the broom to stand at my side and rest his hand on my shoulder.

"Jack?" My voice barely comes out, almost a shaky wisp of air as I speak. Fear courses through me. When he looks up, I can't meet his eyes.

"I..." I let out my telling breath and force myself to say, "I think I know what it is."

“Shakespeare Scholars Bid Adieu”

by Yael Keyes

“Love all, trust a few, do wrong to none, you said?” She fought back the waterfall of angry tears that threatened to come out. “Well, you did wrong to me, but now you don’t trust *me*? *You* should be the one who shouldn’t be trusted.”

“All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances,” he sighed, hoping to get the message across to her, as he too held back tears and tried to let his past love go. “It is *your* time to exit. This scene—this thing with *us* is over.”

The former lovers fought with their hearts, knowing this could go on no longer. They had tried everything they could, but after several misunderstandings, and no trust in each other—and after he’d seen her with someone else—they couldn’t keep going.

And no matter how many times she insisted that the man she was with was just a friend, he refused to believe her. He just mumbled over and over that “all that glitters is not gold.” He felt he had been betrayed. She couldn’t be trusted. And so the insults flew, insults committed to memory over the years onstage.

“Away, you starvelling, you elf-skin, you dried neat’s-tongue, bull’s-pizzle, you stock-fish!”

“Thou art a boil, a plague sore.”

“Would thou wert clean enough to spit upon.”

“Would thou wouldst burst!”

“Poisonous bunch-backed toad.”

“I scorn you, scurvy companion.”

“Away, you starvelling, you elf-skin, you dried neat’s-tongue, bull’s-pizzle, you stock-fish!”

“Thou sodden-witted lord! Thou hast no more brain than I have in mine elbows.”

“Report on Chelm High School’s Fire Drill”

by Yael Keyes

Today’s fire drill at Chelm High School was so-so, if I do say so myself. Okay sure, the small—emphasis on *small*—fire was directly in front of the door to the stairs (wait, wasn’t this a drill?), which was our only planned escape route, and *maybe* a few people attempted to go through it (Ellie insisted on following the rules no matter what), and *maybe* fire was chasing us as we were walking in the field in front of school—but hey, we made it! We’re all alive—I think. On the bright side, it wasn’t nearly as bad as last year’s incident.

In an unexpected turn of events, today’s lunch menu has been barbecued, along with the food.

“Interview with a Jerk”

by Yael Keyes

Person #1: Tell me about yourself.

Person #2: Well ...why don't you just tell me about yourself?

Person #1: *You're* being interviewed.

Person #2: Not if I interview *you*—how's your day by the way? Isn't the weather great?

Person #1: Why don't we just move on to another question?

Person #2: I sure have lots of questions—what's with that suit?

Person #1: What suit?

Person #2: Your suit.

Person #1: I'm wearing a dress. Anyway—

Person #2: It looks terrible on you—just thought I should mention it to you cause blue is *not* your color. That reminds me of that one time on my birthday, when I had a petting zoo in my backyard, and one of the goats got out. Funny story. He ended up breaking a kid's nose.

Person #1: Why...? Nevermind. Why do you think you'd be good for this job?

Person #2: Well, no one else wants to work here, and I'm here—I mean look at this dump! Is this really an office?

Person #1: You know, I don't think you're suited for this—I mean, I guess we'll let you know if we want you here.

"Dodo Bird" by Yael Keyes

Thrice upon a midday sun, filled with thoughts, but free of worry,
I reminisced of times so painful, all light was gone.
I'd been alone with sorrowful tears,
Fighting darkness for far too many years,
But in came a friend, who brought laughter along,
It was the Dodo Bird, a silly little one.

“Personality” by Yael Keyes

A person you admire
They don't have to be famous
What comes to mind
About these people?

Describe each one
This person is like sunshine
You want to follow the person
Describe the importance of the subject

Your subject in her usual surroundings
stands out
You might research a famous figure
A lesser-known person

May give you information
On the subject
You want to leave a dominant impression
Look for special details

“The Chili Front”

by Yael Keyes

The streets were covered in filth—flyers, newspapers, and cigarette butts scattered all over, a stark contrast from the quiet, clean streets of my neighborhood. Dull-colored buildings, some with weather-worn signs, crowded the sides, in tune with the murky grey sky. The air felt still and the street mainly deserted, other than an occasional homeless person taking shelter in an abandoned doorway.

As I wandered by, I was met by a pair of large honey-golden eyes that belonged to the dirty face of a little girl in worn-out clothes. She looked to be about six years old and greeted me with a timid smile.

“Hello,” I froze as she approached me, unsure of what to do.

“Are you a princess?” she asked, pulling at her choppy bangs that looked as if they were trimmed by a toddler—maybe they were.

I tilted my head to the side. “Excuse me?”

“A princess. You...you look like one.” Her eyes swept down to the skirt of my dress. I was wearing my long tan coat over it, but I had picked out my pale blue wrap dress. One of my favorites, it featured a short skirt with a dainty ruffle on the bottom. It was one of my casual dresses—definitely not anywhere near any magnificent ball gown that I’d picture a princess wearing. But the little girl looked at it as if it were truly something a royal would wear.

Just as I started to reply, I was cut off by a loud “HEY!” from a few buildings down.

It was Lisa, the reason I came here. Instead of the white shirt and red plaid skirt we wore as a school uniform that I had only ever seen her wearing, she was in a moto jacket, what I guessed was a white retro band T-shirt, distressed denim shorts, fishnet tights, black and white striped socks, and black and white shoes—an outfit my mother would scold me for wearing. Lisa’s cool, mint-green hair was in a loose bun—her bangs draped across her forehead, almost

hitting her eyes—and a scowl was on her face as she glared at something past me.

Turning around, I saw a dark-haired boy, who was probably a few years older than the girl, looking at me with wide eyes. Glancing down at his fist, he ran away.

Lisa muttered under her breath as she took off after the boy. “*Rang, you better get back here right now!*”

But the boy slyly slipped between buildings and disappeared. I wheeled around, but the girl had disappeared as well.

“What just happened?” I asked Lisa once she returned.

She raised an eyebrow, leaning against a telephone pole to catch her breath. “You really don’t know? He just stole money straight out of your *pocket*. How are you so oblivious?”

I stood there for a moment as it registered. “Oh,” I said plainly. “Oh. They stole from me.” I dug my hands into my pockets. They came up empty, but relief washed over me when I remembered all I had stored were a few dollars. “It’s fine. It was barely anything. It was just, like, three dollars.”

“Three dollars is still money. It shouldn’t just be thrown away.” I watched her as she studied the cracks on the sidewalk, her hands in her pockets.

“Well, it’s still fine. They looked like they needed it anyway. Though, maybe they shouldn’t have resorted to stealing.” I stared up at a fading restaurant sign that said *The Chili Front*. Deciding to change the subject, I asked, “Should we, maybe, go eat? I needed to talk to you about something.”

“You just lost your money,” she said, eyes still focused on the sidewalk.

“Right.”

“I guess I could pay,” she said with a half shrug.

“Stale Fog”
by Yael Keyes

I studied him as he gazed out at the city, looking haunting in the moonlight. Snow-soft hair, ice-pale eyes that led to long, pale eyelashes, and even lighter, almost translucent skin. The city lights traced his soft silhouette as he took in the night, adding to the effect.

In the distance were the sounds of the city. Cars and late-night dwellers kept the streets at a gentle buzz. Buildings lit up the evening darkness, painting the evening like man-made stars.

From the balcony, there was also a clear view of the planet in the sky, Letetune. Letetune was almost as bright as the moon but significantly smaller, and had four rings to make up for its size, each made up of ice and rock. Every time I looked at it, it stole my breath away.

But somewhere out there was a planet with life. The place where this boy was from. It all felt like a dream. Could there really be another planet with life on it? After a lifetime of being taught just the opposite?

“Where did you come from?” asked the boy, his light voice cutting through my thoughts.

“Huh?” I tore my eyes away from the strange planet.

“How did you end up on this planet?”

“Uh...” I leaned on the rail, focusing on the skyline. “I dunno,” I shrugged. “I’ve been here forever.” Giving him a quick glance, I asked, “What about you? Shouldn’t I be asking you that question?”

“Forever. That sounds like a long time. Do you ever get tired of it?” He tilted his head in my direction, eerie eyes meeting mine. Holding my breath, I forced myself not to look away despite the uneasiness it gave me as he inspected my face.

“What’s it like up there?” I blurted out as I nodded toward the planet, attempting to change the subject. “How did you even end up living there? You couldn’t have just ... I mean, it’s impossible to live up there. How would you survive?”

A faint smile ghosted his lips. “You really don’t think you’re the only one in this world, right?” He followed my eyes that observed the planet as he spoke. “You know the universe is ever-growing. Do you really think you’d be the only one in such a vast place? That would sound lonely.”

“But...” I started, trying to find a way to win this argument. “It just ... it doesn’t make sense. It’s not *possible*.”

“Blaire and Bright Flames” by Yael Keyes

The world burned around her,
bright flames flickering and crackling,
climbing trees and swallowing anything in its sight.
It was Death, a slow, cruel waltz as it took you apart, with no mercy.

All around were screams of the innocent
as they tried to race away
or those few left calling for their loved ones,
praying they weren't lost in the flames.

“Blaire!” she called with what was left of her voice.
It was almost a whisper and was easily lost in the fire.
Her sister had warned her to stay hidden in the apartment,
but from the window she could see the flames racing toward the
building

as if they were searching for her,
so she had raced out.
But by the time she had made it down the stairs,
the flames had made it to her unit and she was surrounded.

Dizzy and struggling for breath, she stumbled to the ground,
trembling and defeated. *Blaire will save me*, she thought,
trying to hold on to that thought. *Blaire will save me*.
But as she closed her eyes and waited, all that came was darkness.

“Books” by Yael Keyes

Books are like a song to me,
Each chapter a verse,
Each character a new melody,
And their situation always getting worse.
Every word and every note are a part of the story,
Every character wants something; maybe fame or maybe glory.
Every book is different, maybe happy, maybe gory.

“How to Be Like Mr. Kaplan” by Yael Keyes

First of all, if one desires to be like the great Mr. Kaplan, it is vital that you wear a hat—especially a fedora or newsboy cap (also wear guitar socks). Secondly, in order to attain that extremely artistic *vibe* (as the kids say these days), you must acquire artistic ability of all kinds—and I mean *all* (extra points if you have a guitar nearby at all times). Encourage those students who enjoy dwelling in the corner of the classroom to be in theater, and beseech them (yes, I learned that from *THE* Mr. Kaplan during the year of ninth grade—I’m hoping that’s the proper way to use it) to speak in class, no matter what.

“The Prosperity of Cheaters” by Yael Keyes

They say cheaters never prosper,
But is that so?
Look at me, right down here, fighting hard.

They say I need to bring more effort,
And be in control,
But look at them, oh so easy, painless gain.

They say cheaters never win, but they’re already at the top.
They break my progress and bring me down.

Trophies, gold medals, ribbons galore,
And I’m over here, empty hands filled with scars.
They feed off platinum plates, while I’m disposable,
And if they go, will I ever make it that far?

They say cheaters never prosper,
And that’s who they are,
Blandly colorless characters, with gold stars but no scars.

You tell me cheaters never prosper,
But is that so? Is it true?
If cheaters never prosper, why, why?

Why do you trade their lies for stars?

Rina Press

“Three Can Keep a Secret If Two of Them Are Dead”

by Rina Press

Thud. The sound of the spade hitting the dirt makes me sick. How did I get myself into this? I crouch down on my knees, beginning to get desperate as I see the first rays of light beginning to rise. I start digging with my hands. She told me that I had until sunrise. I glance at the large, black bags to my right and swallow my fear. I try to remind myself that I’m not really the one responsible for this. No, they asked for it when they signed up. It could have just as easily been me in those bags. But still, I’m the one who told them about it.

18 Hours Ago:

“Lainey! Wait up!”

“Ok, ok, calm down, I’m waiting,” I said with a laugh.

Maya, my best friend since birth, came up to me with a smile plastered on her face, laughing, as she stopped to catch her breath. “Why are you in such a rush? It’s just one of Kiara’s crazy ideas.”

We both exchanged a knowing look. Kiara was always coming up with these weird *group activities* for us to do, like that time we almost joined a witch cult, or when we ran around the city with her trying to find her missing dart frog.

“I’m just trying to be a good friend; plus, she’s already there waiting for us,” I said as we turned the corner. We spotted the building almost immediately. There was a sign that said “*Madame Crameleir’s*” in bold, orange writing. How could we not?

“Well, I think this is the place,” Maya said, as she gestured for me to go ahead. I shot her a look as we headed through the door. As soon as we walked in, my jaw dropped. I stumbled as I tried to get a good look at the place. It was like we’d walked into some weird, mystical place straight out of a storybook. The room was relatively small, with dim lighting and rich colors. There were curtains strung everywhere, and scattered throughout the room were random, mismatched pieces of furniture that could have easily been found on

the streets. And in the middle of it all stood Kiara with a massive grin stuck on her face.

“Kiara, what is this?” Maya asked.

“Oh we’re here to meet a fortune teller.”

“A *fortune teller*?”

“Well, she’s more into story sharing,” Kiara explained, but at that point I had stopped listening. If I had known we’d be going to a fortune teller, I would have never left the house, but before I could mutter an excuse for leaving, my thoughts were interrupted.

We heard the rustle of a curtain, and a woman who appeared to be in her early fifties walked over to us.

“Ahh, hello. You must be Kiara,” she said with a warm tone and a slight accent that I couldn’t pinpoint. “Well, come on in. We have a schedule to keep.”

Kiara happily stepped through the curtain, while Maya and I were more reluctant to follow. We stepped through the glossy curtain into a smaller circular room; it looked exactly how you would expect a fortune teller’s room to look, minus the crystal ball. There was a small table in the middle of the room with exactly four seats. While everything in this room screamed comfort and mystery, every part inside of me was begging to leave.

Before I could sit down, the fortune teller, “*Madame Crameleir*,” came up from behind me and took my hands. She looked me straight in the eyes. I let out a startled yelp, but she just laughed and said, “Ahh, so you’re one of them.” I froze, not knowing what to say.

“I-I don’t know what you mean,” I stammered. Her smile grew even larger as she walked toward the table. She and I both knew that was a lie.

When we sat down at the table, I considered bolting right there and then, but I decided against it; that would raise too many questions. Maya and I exchanged a nervous glance while Kiara seemed to be in awe of the whole thing.

“To begin, I would like you all to hold hands and close your eyes, then repeat after me.”

This entire thing seemed extremely strange to me, but I listened reluctantly because I knew it must be done in order to finish what I had already begun. We joined hands and recited the enchanting words.

“Si duae ex tribus potest servare, absconditum internicionem eorum.”

I expected something to happen, to feel a rush of blood, or see the room spinning around me, but instead there was nothing. I opened my eyes to see Kiara and Maya staring at me with mixed looks of horror and disgust. *They know.* I turned to face “*Madame Crameleir.*” She had a mischievous smirk displayed on her face, her eyes brewing with menace that confirmed everything that I had already suspected. I thought back to her words, the chant: “*Si duae ex tribus potest servare, absconditum internicionem eorum.*” How could I have fallen for that? I studied Latin before Latin was a proper language.

I shifted my gaze to meet the so-called *fortune-teller.* “I accept,” I said solemnly, as was tradition.

She grinned at me, with a calculating smile.

“Remember, sunset,” she said as she tapped her wrist mockingly.

I sneered at her with disgust and turned to face my friends, who were frozen with fear. I gave them an apologetic look, and then I began.

The Present:

I sit in the graveyard and watch the sun begin to rise. I did it. But this time was different. I’ve never felt like this. The deaths have never affected me this way before. I think back to *Madame Crameleir’s* words, the words that have continued to haunt me throughout my life: “*Si duae ex tribus potest servare, absconditum internicionem eorum.*”

I used to think the enchantment was a blessing; of course, there were times when I was lonely or upset, but at the end of the day, I accepted it. I have always feared the idea of death, of leaving

this realm forever, and staying here eternally. But now I think I'm ready. I think it's time. I stare at the sun disappearing into the trees and smile.

Leora Schottenstein

“Stranded” by Leora Schottenstein

It took us about two days to get hungry.
While she was sleeping, I went over to some palm trees
and shook them.
I caught a coconut with my bare hands.

The coconut was too hard for eating.
I didn't peel it or anything.
I started to smash it on a rock,
a rock that was parked across the sand.

The coconut was too hard for eating.
I started to smash a pineapple on the rock,
but it, too, was not to be contended with.
I didn't eat but walked the beach with fear, screaming loudly.

“The Seventh Sun” by Leora Schottenstein

I sat there, the motion making me nauseated. It seemed like it would never end, traveling in the infinite amount of space. It scared me, seeing the whole entire never-ending place in which we all exist. A beeping noise started to surround me, enveloping me, and then ... the landing.

There were crashes, loud sounds, violent quaking. It lasted for a long time. But then, there was nothing. I climbed out of the rubbish, onto the land. It was a new consistency that I had never felt before, nothing that I could have ever imagined or expected. I sat there, soaked, shivering, starting to stand, slowly sinking into the sands of this new planet. There was nothing to see, nothing to feel. I had never heard a silence so loud.

I stood up once I regained feeling in my limbs. I was warned that I might not feel normal at first, but assured that I would adjust. The seventh sun, the blue one, was just rising. I watched it rise to the middle of the sky, joining the rest of the suns. It was a beautiful sight, but deep inside I was nervous. It didn't feel right. There would never be a feeling like this ever again in my existence ... *that* I could tell.

“Adam (Part One), or The Miscreant” by Leora Schottenstein

JERRY: Hey, Adam. I haven't seen you in so long!

ADAM: That was the point.

JERRY: What?

ADAM: Nothing.

JERRY: Anyway, so how've you been?

ADAM: Well, Jerry, since you've been gone, wonderful.

JERRY: I just found out you won the lottery, and I wanted to congratulate you!

ADAM: I just found out that your wife left you, and I wanted to congratulate her.

JERRY: Oh yeah, I'm so confused about why she left me.

ADAM: I'm not.

JERRY: It's just like, I thought she was so in love.

ADAM: Oh, sad, sad, Jerry. She was. Just not with you.

JERRY: There's no way she left me for another man. There's no way. I was the best!

ADAM: You were the best ... the best liar I've ever met, Jerrold.

JERRY: That's not my name ... anyway, Adam, I'm so glad to see you. I could really use a friend. You're always so nice to me.

ADAM: I wish I could say the same.

JERRY: Wanna go out tonight?

ADAM: Well as much as I don't want to, I have other plans. Your wife and I are getting married tonight.

“The Tragedy in Life” by Leora Schottenstein

You spend your days
You party, you laugh
Never thinking about the future

You spend your time
You lose and waste
With not one care in the world

Soon your youth
It fades away
And all the time is lost

You're hit in the face
With reality
For all your youth is gone

The clock is ticking
It goes too fast
And soon you're old and grey

And then you learn
You see your kids
Start to follow your old ways

You beg you plead
You tell them your stories
You tell them the honest truth

For you don't want them
To make the same
Mistakes made in your youth

You don't want them living

Out on the streets
Finding out the same way you did

The tragedy in life,
We get wiser in the end
And we grow old too quick.

**“Fire Drill Procedures: Classroom and
Other Facilities / Chelm High School”
by Leora Schottenstein**

In case of a fire, either the smoke detectors or fire alarms will sound. Students, faculty, and staff should do the following:

1. When the fire alarm sounds, take a minute to gather your belongings. You don't want them to burn!
2. Run out. Leave the building. Make sure to take the elevator (unless it is on fire), for it is faster.
3. If you see a fire but the alarm isn't sounding, don't waste time or energy by pulling it. They'll see the fire and find out for themselves.
4. There are no maps of escape routes hung in the building, for those catch on fire easily. Just look for a door or something—it's not that hard.
5. If you're the last person in a room, you're dumb. Push everyone out of the way and save yourself.
6. Once you're out of the area, just run as far away as possible. A building on fire provides a cool view from afar.
7. Enter the building if you have left any belongings that are important. You don't want them to burn!
8. Don't use a fire extinguisher under any circumstances. That will put out the fire, which would make the whole fire procedure worthless.
9. Once you are outside of the building, don't call the fire department. If they are on the phone, they won't see the smoke.
10. When they come, help them out by running into the fire.

“Humanity and You” by Leora Schottenstein

You walk down the halls.
People are staring.
They're judging.
They're whispering.
They think that you are ridiculous,
That you are a piece of waste, a piece of garbage.
You want to be good.
You want to help people.
You want to change the world.
You're called a fake.
You're made fun of.
They taunt.
They look.
They talk.

You wait for the rain to go away to walk home.
But you don't have a real home.
They walk in the rain,
They walk with their friends,
They go to their beautiful homes with gardens.
You wait.

You see the familiar walls,
The blank, white, colorless walls.
You walk through the doors.
You're ready to shut down.
You're tired,
But at the same time,
You're awake.
You have curiosities.
You want to see more,
Do more,
But you don't have the power.

You fall apart.
You close your eyes.
And then they reopen.
You see the light.
A new day.
You walk to school,
Avoiding the puddles.
You walk into the building,
Expecting the usual,
The bullies,
The cliques,
The cheerleaders and jocks.
They give you a look
Because they know
And you know
That you will never be like them.

They will grow up,
And they will grow old.
They will move on.
They will change.
But you'll be here
Until the end of time,
Remaining the same.

Nobody feels they can trust you.
Nobody tries to befriend you.
Nobody wants to hear your words,
So silenced you sit,
Just left with your thoughts
And your plans to take over the world.

You want to be equal.
You want to fit in.

You want to feel
Just like you belong.
But there you stay,
Programmed to say
And be and think and do.

“Adam (Part Two), or Breaking Up with Jerry’s Ex”
by Leora Schottenstein

LILY: Please don’t go.

ADAM: You asked for this. I never would’ve thought this would happen to us, but here we are.

LILY: I’ll do anything for you to stay.

ADAM: There’s nothing that you can do.

LILY: Not one thing in the whole world?

ADAM: Not one thing in the whole world can stop me.

LILY: Then your heart must be ice cold.

ADAM: As cold as ice.

LILY: You don’t have to do this. There are so many other ways to handle this. Leaving is not the best option.

ADAM: Look, Lily. We’re like chocolate and asparagus.

LILY: Disgusting?

ADAM: No.

LILY: That sounds pretty gross to me.

ADAM: That’s not what I meant.

LILY: Adam, you know I’m allergic to asparagus.

ADAM: Fine, that was a little harsh. My bad.

LILY: Yeah, sure.

ADAM: You ruined my monologue, Lily!

LILY: Oh, sorry.

ADAM: As I was saying! ... We’re like chocolate and asparagus. Nobody would ever assume they’d work. Maybe some people—like that girl Daniella Press—would, but not most people. Green veggies and chocolate don’t go, it’s just the way it is.

LILY: Adam—

ADAM: Hush. I’m not done. Like I’m the asparagus, which you’re allergic to. You’re allergic to me. And you’re the chocolate.

LILY: You’re not allergic to chocolate!

ADAM: I am now.

LILY: Adam, you can’t just make up an allergy—

ADAM: Lily! Don't you get it? We just don't work together.

LILY: Don't you think you're being a bit irrational?

ADAM : Irrational? What? Watch me leave this house right now.
Goodbye forever, Lily.

LILY: Wait!

ADAM: What?

LILY: I'm, I'm sorry.

ADAM: This isn't something you can just apologize for and move on from.

LILY: But I love you!

ADAM: It doesn't seem like it!

LILY: Adam! I promise, I, I, I really ... I'll never go to Krispy Kreme without you again.

“How to Be Other People” by Leora Schottenstein

Instructions on how to be Eitan Bluth:

- Always make sure to do extra and jump over whatever’s there.
- You always have to go around asking for food, or just always be eating food.
- Write something that makes no sense but sounds cool.
- Always wear a different jacket or outfit combo.

Instructions on how to be Bayla Greenstein:

- You’ve got to love cats.
- Have the *meow* sound down to a science.
- Love Marvel.
- Be a big fan of Black Widow.

Instructions on how to be Yael Keyes:

- Don’t speak too often.
- Sit on the floor.
- Have cool rock band t-shirts.
- Be incredibly talented but refuse to acknowledge it.

Instruction on how to be Mr. Kaplan:

- Carry around a notebook at all times.
- Always be singing some sort of song.
- Try to imitate Cardi B.
- Favor the creative writing students.

**“Adam (Part Three),
or Kyle’s Famous Last Words to Adam,
Who Never Returned”
by Leora Schottenstein**

KYLE: Just give me your wallet and all will be—

ADAM: Well in Waffleville?

KYLE: What?

ADAM: All will be well in Waffleville?

KYLE: What the heck?

ADAM: Well, I figured you were going to say all will be well in Waffleville, so I said it for you.

KYLE: Why on Earth would I say that?

ADAM: Why on Earth would you mug me in the middle of an alley?

KYLE: Would you rather me mug you in the park?

ADAM: That would be nice. I could use some fresh air.

KYLE: Well too bad on ... wait, that actually sounds kind of nice.

ADAM: I know, right? This garbage over here stinks.

KYLE: It is kind of ruining the moment.

ADAM: Plus, in the park, I’ll be able to see your face. It’s a bit dark in here.

KYLE: Well, actually, I chose this alley because it’s dark, and I’m actually super self-conscious of my acne.

ADAM: I definitely know the feeling, dude. It’s a real problem.

KYLE: Yeah, I have a dermatology appointment coming up, but it’s on a Tuesday, so I don’t know if I’ll be able to make it. I won’t have a car that day.

ADAM: I can give you a ride, as long as my car doesn’t get towed. I was on my way to get it before this. My time is running out on my parking meter.

KYLE: Oh, then what are you doing here? Go get it!

ADAM: Alright, I’ll be right ... back. I’m Adam, by the way.

KYLE: I’m Kyle.

5 minutes later

6 minutes later

7 minutes later

8 minutes later

9 minutes later

10 minutes later

KYLE: HEY, GET BACK HERE! I WAS SUPPOSED TO MUG YOU!

“Into Two” by Leora Schottenstein

You are playing me like a little game
You think that you can just throw me around
You are going to make me go insane
Get me high just to throw me to the ground
Am I just like a stupid game to you
You think you can break me up into two

You are playing with me like a guitar
You're words are hitting me like I'm a drum
You are going nuts like a movie star
Jamming around with me until I feel numb
Am I to you an instrument to play
You think that you can bend me till I break

The words you say are messing with my head
Feel like you treat me like a little kid
You know some things are better left unsaid
I tell myself it was something I did
Am I just a bit of nothing to you
Just know that you can't break me into two

“Snickerdoodles” by Leora Schottenstein

Weather outside cold and freezing
That time of year, that winter season
Snow is white out like a poodle
 Time to bake some snickerdoodles

Take out the sugar and the flour
Butter and cinnamon powder
One of my favorite foodles
 Time to bake some snickerdoodles

Turn on the oven, keep it warm
Freezing from the winter storm
The smell is heavenly, so toodles
 Time to eat my snickerdoodles

**Excerpt from *Bad News*,
a full-length play by Leora Schottenstein**

THE AUDITION

(A bunch of chairs are lined up in front of a green screen. Sitting on the chair in the middle is Tynnifer, a young woman wearing an expensive-looking outfit and lots of makeup. Holly, a young woman in simple clothes and holding a purse, is escorted in by the intern, Leslie, a young woman with blonde, curly hair.)

LESLIE: Right this way. Please wait here with the other janitorial services candidates. Jim and Ella will be with you in just a few minutes.

(Leslie exits.)

HOLLY: Huh? Is this seat taken?

TYNNIFER *(in a nasally, dumb voice):* Nope. It's just me.

(Holly takes a seat, puts her purse down, and sighs.)

HOLLY: I'm Holly, Holly Brown.

TYNNIFER: I'm Tynnifer Howersberg. You've probably heard of me.

HOLLY: Sorry, I haven't.

TYNNIFER: Sad. So sad. I have a very popular YouTube channel where I talk about crazy things that happened to me that never actually really happened to me.

HOLLY *(looking confused):* Cool?

TYNNIFER: Are you sure you don't know who I am? I was featured on the news once for getting stuck in a clothing hanger at the mall. *(tossing her hair back)* It was, like, kind of a big deal.

HOLLY: I didn't see that.

(Tynnifer looks annoyed.)

TYNNIFER: What's your deal?

HOLLY: My deal?

TYNNIFER: Yah. Why are you here?

HOLLY: I'm an aspiring actress. I saw an acting opportunity and I took it.

TYNNIFER: Aw. That's sad. I would say I'm doing this for the fame, but I don't need the fame. I was the most popular girl in sixth grade. I still haven't lived it down. Also, if there's money involved, sign me up. Ever since I spent all my money on a palm tree for my backyard, I need some more. At least my house now looks like my old one from The Valley.

(Tynnifer fake laughs, and Holly moves to the opposite edge of her seat. Adam, a man in a fedora and coat, moonwalks onto the stage and takes a seat at the end chair. Tynnifer doesn't seem to notice.)

TYNNIFER: I like you. You're pathetic, and that makes me feel better about myself.

ADAM: You seem pretty pathetic too.

(Holly is startled by Adam's voice and turns to look at him. Tynnifer looks offended. Adam is stretched out in the chair, his legs crossed and his fedora in his hands.)

ADAM: I'm Adam. And what are you?

TYNNIFER: I'm Tynnifer.

ADAM: Excuse me?

TYNNIFER: Huh?

ADAM: Do you mean Jennifer?

TYNNIFER: Who's Jennifer?

(Tynnifer starts looking around the room in search of someone.)

ADAM *(pauses, turns to Holly):* And you?

HOLLY: I'm Holly.

ADAM: Nice to meet you.

(There's an awkward silence, and elevator music starts playing. Adam starts playing with his hat, Tynnifer goes on her phone, and Holly sits nervously. The music pauses.)

ADAM: Is this everyone?

TYNNIFER: Yah.

(The music and awkward silence continues. The music then pauses again.)

TYNNIFER: So, I'm a vegan.

ELLA: We're doomed.

(Smoke starts to fill the room, and in comes a young man in full Joker makeup and costume.)

JOKER *(in a deep voice):* Your star has arrived.

HOLLY: That was dramatic.

JOKER: Well, we can't all be the star.

HOLLY: I meant the smoke.

JOKER: That wasn't me. I—

(Joker burns his hand on his smoldering coattails. He drops and rolls.)

JOKER: Ahh! It was me!

(Joker springs back up and pats out the remaining cinders.)

JOKER *(now speaking in a normal tone):* I guess my cape caught fire at the hot dog stand. But it wasn't my fault. I was walking, and then the wind was like, sure, I'll just increase by twenty miles an hour, and then my cape started to get really hot and I turned around and there were flames everywhere and then I—

(Joker looks around the room. Everyone is staring at him, confused and unamused. Holly opens her mouth to say something but gets cut off by the Joker.)

JOKER: Alright, what's the story here? Is this it?

TYNNIFER: Yah. I'm Tynnifer.

ADAM *(clears throat, muttering):* Jennifer.

TYNNIFER: No. It's not like I'm a big deal or anything, but you should, like, probably know who I am. I wrote the song "Friday" for Rebecca Black. The lyrics came deep from my heart. To this day, when I hear it, I still get emotional.

ADAM: Yeah, the part of the song where it goes *(puts up finger quotes)* "Yesterday was Thursday, today it is Friday" *(ends finger quotes)* chokes me up every time too.

HOLLY: Let's practice our audition monologues. I'll go first. *(pauses, then dramatically)* How could you lie to me!?! I thought that after all these years, after all we've been through, you'd mean it when you told me you loved me.

(Holly starts choking up with tears.)

HOLLY: And ... scene. How was that? Was that good? I think I finally have the crying-on-the-spot thing down. I've been working on it for the longest time, and I decided that now would be a perfect opportunity to try and do it to show off my abilities and—

ADAM: Holly ... Holly, shh. Nobody cares.

TYNNIFER: Holly, if you want to cry on the spot, just think about how you're an aspiring actress in the middle of Montana responding to Craigslist ads for acting opportunities.

ADAM: Ouch.

HOLLY: Let's just wait and see who gets the part.

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