

TEENS! MIND.

Volume 1, Summer 2020

**LIFE IN LOCKDOWN:
CORONAVIRUS STORIES**

ORIGIN POETRY

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

CONFLICT DRAMA

THANK YOU!

The students of the
Professional Performing
Arts School and
the Anderson School
extend our love and
gratitude to the
essential workers and
health care professionals
who have worked tirelessly
on behalf of all
New Yorkers during the
Covid-19 pandemic.

THE ARTS AROUND US

BY LAUREN WOOD

Films are told with images
the photos painted gold.
Plays are told by actions
that make characters act bold.

But stories, are told with words
that make the fluid language sing,
A tune to bind all glory
by speaking extraordinary things.



Cover Photo by Paulo Silva on Unsplash
Piano photo courtesy of Lauren Wood

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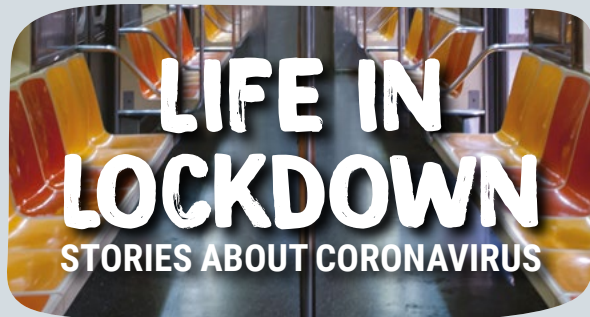
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CONTRIBUTOR BIOS



ANASTASIA EROKHINA lives in Brooklyn, New York and just finished tenth grade. Growing up, performing arts always made her happy. She loves writing with a passion. “I used to think it was so difficult and annoying but I have recently discovered that it is one of the ways I cope with my emotions,” says Anastasia. “I write them all down. Everything I am feeling in the moment may be difficult to juggle, especially for a person like me who has difficulty speaking about what is on their plate, so I write and I write until all my messy thoughts are down and out for only the paper to see.” She is also a singer and expresses her emotions through lyrics and loves relating to the text of a song, and even tries to write songs based on how she is feeling in difficult moments. “This class has not only taught me to be more open in writing, not be afraid to make mistakes, but also how to structure any piece of writing,” she says. Anastasia adds she really enjoyed this experience and being in a group of supportive, young writers. “I would like to thank all the students I worked with, hearing their different thoughts in their writing was amazing. I also want to thank Lisa for giving me the opportunity to write and give me feedback for all the work I did.”



ANAHIT INDZHIGULYAN lives in Whitestone, New York. She spends most of her time lost in a book, which is probably why she enjoys writing, she says. She’s a rising junior vocal major at the Professional Performing Arts High School in New York City and has travelled all over the world, taking part in multiple music competitions. She is passionate about music and making others happy.



ELENA GHALET is a writer and singer at the Professional Performing Arts School in New York City where she’s a member of the class of 2022. Writing and singing are the most important things in her life. “My whole life I’ve struggled with talking about my problems or feelings out loud,” she says. “Writing is my way of expressing myself without feeling judged or pressured—it’s my escape from all the outside noise.” Singing and digging deeper into song lyrics help her “really understand the true meaning of what the artist is trying to express.” Whether writing a story or a song, she says, “I can write about anything I am feeling, thinking, or wanted to do. I know I can learn from each story.” Writing and music, “help me love myself, before anyone else can. It helps me to be my best self.”



IAGO MACKNIK-CONDE just finished 7th grade at The Anderson School in Manhattan. He lives in Park Slope, Brooklyn, with his parents and his two siblings. Iago’s writing explores different topics and genres, including poetry, memoir, critical essay, fantasy and humor. He is the Ned Vizzini Teen Writing Prize winner for Middle School Poetry (Brooklyn Public Library, 2020 Teen Writing Contest) and the National 7th Grade Winner of the 2019 Student Essay Contest hosted by the National World War II Museum. He has also received Gold and Silver Keys from the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. When Iago is not writing, he likes to act, travel and play RPG games.



LAUREN WOOD lives in Bronx, New York, and will enter her senior year at the Professional Performing Arts School in the fall. She loves the performing arts and how it all starts on paper. “It is a wonderful feeling when I can craft a whole new world with just a pen in hand,” she says. “Sometimes, our everyday lives get chaotic. Especially now, when the world is facing the Covid-19 pandemic, which is why I strive to write everyday.” Writing is something that brings her joy. “Writing for me is an escape. When things get hard, all I have to do is click a pen and everything is magically solved. Of course, the real world is very different, and yet, things that seem impossible in reality suddenly become possible on paper: People who mysteriously vanished from your life come back, a failed career turns into an adventure, and maybe even a worldwide sickness finds a cure.” Above all, Lauren strives to stay positive: “There is always hope, and for me that hope comes from a little purple pen and a blank sheet of paper.”



NYLA ROBOTHAM is a vocal major from Queens, New York at the Professional Performing Arts School where she’ll be a junior in the fall. In fifth grade, she read her first dystopian novel and has never stopped. The book inspired her to begin writing short stories in the genre. She writes as an escape from reality. “In the realm of creativity, there are no boundaries or limits to what you can put together,” she says. Nyla has been training in musical theater for four years and training in classical singing for a year. She is passionate about all forms of music and making the most of her high-school experience. She also enjoys photography, painting, gaming, traveling, science and swimming.



RACHEL FORD lives in Queens, New York, and is a proud member of the Black Student Union as a rising junior at the Professional Performing Arts School. She focuses on expanding her mind in her own way. She likes to read, but loves writing. She writes from her experience because it’s what she knows best. When it comes to reading, she enjoys Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*; Stephen King’s *Mr. Mercedes*; Raina Telgemeier; Adam Silvera’s *They Both Die At The End*; *The Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels; and other writings. She hasn’t focused her energies on one specific genre because, she says, “sticking to one just isn’t fun.”



SAMANTHA ORTIZ lives in Washington Heights, Manhattan, and pursues the arts as a rising junior at the Professional Performing Arts School. In the fifth grade she was a finalist in the “Young Playwrights Inc. 2015 Write A Play! New York City Competition.” In addition to singing, dancing and acting, Ortiz loves to spend time with her family and friends.



SARAH VALENZA is a drama student with a passion for many different art forms, and member of the class of 2023 at the Professional Performing Arts School in New York City. She loves baking, fashion, art, acting and writing, and she attends several acting programs both in and out of school. She is very imaginative and likes to try new things and get different experiences with the hope of finding her niche. Sarah uses her artwork, family, pets and life experiences to inspire her creations, whether they’re in the form of writing or not. She also keeps a collection of photography, fashion and artwork to help her come up with new ideas, or to which she can refer when she has a creative block. She hopes to find success in something she is passionate about and inspire other people to do the same.

FROM THE PUBLISHER, MARGARET B. HUNNEWELL

I founded The Know, formerly The Knowledge Project and the national Children's Creative Writing Campaign. I also produce animation, dance, theatre, motion pictures and other media. For me, stories—and how you tell them, write them, sing them, dance them and make them—are an extremely important part of our American culture and freedom. Our stories help us communicate with other people in the world. We should all strive to do it well.

The students at the Professional Performing Arts School have been part of each transformative stage of our organization. They've done projects guided by artists and writers whom our team brought together in order to challenge them with professional expectations, build confidence with the business and money-making part of the creative world, and share experiences that could get them where they want to go in life. The last time I was at PPAS, student teams fleshed out and pitched an idea to a panel of media executives and story developers. The winning team pitched a sitcom. The prize? We all wrote it, produced it, performed in it and taped it. Principal Keith Ryan served as Executive Producer, Ms. Teri Gindi worked lines with the actors; and I was the Producer of AQUA 14.

In 2020 the podcast team submitted their work to an NPR competition. Ms. Lisa Chambers, the writer and editorial expert guiding the zine, opens doors for talent to excel and write well. Creating content for Teens Mind deepened the knowledge and abilities of nine young writers and made a legacy vehicle for them to continue, or for other students who join them, to write as well or better.

FROM THE INSTRUCTOR, LISA CHAMBERS



When the *Writing From Experience* class began, on February 25, 2020—my first venture into teaching and a requirement of the MFA/Creative Writing program I'm enrolled in at Goddard College—I told the students who'd signed up for the after-school program that we were all in this together. Writing is a continual learning process and everyone is entitled to a rough first draft. The idea is that by practicing the art, and learning the craft of creating a narrative story—whether it's

fiction or nonfiction, poetry or prose—and by sharing our efforts, reading others' works, and revising, revising, revising, our writing will improve.

None of us had any idea that halfway through the 10-week course, the coronavirus would dramatically alter each of our lives and push our course out of the classroom onto videoconference. But what could have sunk the course instead became a unifying, creatively charged period for us all. The nine students whose work is represented in this magazine showed up, put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) and produced remarkable stories—writing from their own experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic.

I want to thank Anahit, Anastasia, Elena, Iago, Lauren, Nyla, Rachel, Samantha and Sarah for their courage in sharing their thoughts, feelings and words with me and, now, with the readers of this zine. Thanks also to Meg Hunnewell and the Knowledge Project, and Teri Gindi and PPAS for making this course and *Teens Mind* possible. Writing from experience is so important in these fraught times, and the more young people who lift their voices and share their stories, the more hope there will be in the world.

Photo by Sam Rebelein

TEENS MIND.

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Teens Mind is published by The Know, a 501(c)(3), which collaborates with the writing and media communities, field experts, and educators to produce innovative interdisciplinary initiatives and literacy programs. We are communication specialists providing young people with knowledge and a set of skills and competencies that enable communication, spoken and written, in increasingly diverse ways and with increasingly diverse audiences.

THE
KNOWLEDGE
PROJECT

FAILURE IS THE FRIEND I NEVER GOT TO KNOW

BY LAUREN WOOD

Failure is the friend I never got to know.
So many days spent working, I never took the chance
To step back and see the invite, that Failure wanted to dance.
A twisted day and dance it was when I finally had the fall,
Full of discord and of loss; I was a failure to them all.

My friends, family, and even myself would see me forever bound
To a rope from up above, where I would never reach the ground.
But, when all else left and turned their back, one person stood alone:
The friend I had but never knew would be there like my own.

It held my hand and took me back to the place where I fell,
And told me to look past the walls that were my moral cell.
With that help, I had the key to open up new doors,
And see the truth that stood alone amongst all the holy wars.

To fail is a blessing that's been called a curse.
It greets you every day and sees you at your worst.
Though it's not polite to take its awful hand,
It will be far more unpleasant to never know its demands,

For those who dance with failure shall gain a graceful gift:
The knowledge that no other will give them a glorious lift.
And all those who shun it, and never heed its call,
Will one day find themselves locked up behind their own fearful walls.

For Patience is a virtue I sit with every day
With Courage, there to greet me as I lead the way,
To walk past all the others who have seen me grow.
It's all thanks to Failure, the friend I will forever know.





COLOSSAL

BY IAGO MACKNIK-CONDE

I am from mechanical pencils,
From Coca-Cola and Cola Cao.

I am from the cramped apartment on the hill,
Disorganized and messy, holding me snug like a
worn favorite sweater.

I am from the saguaro cactus in the Sonoran desert,
Colossal and unyielding, above its spines grow the
most glorious flowers.

I'm from leaving champagne to the Three Wisemen, and
from feeling fiery passions.

From Mamá and Tati;
I'm from short tempers and all-absorbing inner worlds,

From Dios mío and para quieto.
I'm from looking to science for the answers, and getting
to the bottom of things.

I'm from Scottsdale and A Coruña
Tortilla de patata, empanada

From the great-great grandfather who fought for his king in Cuba,
And his son who survived the sinking of his ship under enemy fire,

The storage pod in New Jersey,
Holding the ceremonial saber from the first and the high
school diploma from the second.

JEANS OF DENIM

BY LAUREN WOOD

I am from the jeans of denim,
From Levis and little stores.
I am from the open halls of white,
From columns lined with printed drapes and
rooms that hide away from light.

I am from the many fields of painted flowers
that reflect the colors of the sky.
I'm from the TV screen and bowls of yellow treasure,
From mama and papa's first found love.

I'm from the echoing laughter and
ever-present mischief,
From "don't eat that!" and "oy, vey!"

I'm from the sound of church bells that
ring out on Sunday mornings.

I'm from my father's land and raised in
mother's arms filled with a golden honey,
wrapped in a golden bread,
From the warmth of music that played
from the family mouth,

The blurred vision beneath my father's brows.

I am from these written memories that all
play within my mind, serving as a Guidance for
when I cross the finish line.

Photo by Jim Witkowski on Unsplash

HAPPINESS IS...

BY SAMANTHA ORTIZ

I am from scripts
From pointe shoes and music.
I am from the highest point in the city,
Loud, festive, a never ending roller-coaster.
I am from chrysanthemums,
and their bright splashes of color.
I'm from waiting till midnight to open presents
on Christmas Eve and laughter all around,
From Ortiz and Nunez.
I'm from the family game nights
and staying up late watching movies.
From "make sure you are always heard,"
and "remember, you're the oldest."
I'm from thanking God every night
for my health and happiness.
I'm from my island the Dominican Republic,
Arroz con habichuelas, Pastelitos,
From the time my family and I went on a Disney Cruise,
The love and inspiration I get from my grandma.
The pictures on every shelf in my house,
they hold our memories and true forms of happiness.



SUNSETS AND CHILDISH DREAMS

BY ELENA GHALEB



I am from photos on the walls,
From laughs and sunsets.
I am from loud neighbors and quiet neighbors,
And a newer home with bricks and many floors.
I am from a garden whose bright colors light up the path.
I am from many childish dreams and many real ones.
From Karla and Pierre,
And from Gladys and Karl who came to find better rights.
I am from kindness and hard workers,
From generosity and love.
I am from grilled foods and spice mixtures.
From a safe neighborhood, with a lot of action and places nearby.
I am from the moments where I have spent my life.
I am from a happy home.

DO OPPOSITES ATTRACT?

A DRAMA OF CONFLICT

BY NYLA ROBOTHAM

SASHA: *Female, teenager, confident, out-spoken, headstrong, from deep in the Bronx*

NOAH: *Female, teenager, shy, desperate for popularity, the opposite of Sasha; lives in the Flatiron district*

TIME: *Late, around 11PM*

PLACE: *Outside a ballroom*

AT RISE: *Sasha runs out of the ballroom after an embarrassing scene.*

NOAH: Sasha! Wait!

SASHA: I actually cannot believe you.

NOAH: What do you mean?

SASHA: You have no clue?

NOAH: If I had a clue I would answer.

SASHA: *(Slowly raising her voice)* You brought me to this...

NOAH: ...Gala? Do you guys not use words like that in the Bronx?

SASHA: *(Stunned)* You are absolutely unbelievable.

NOAH: What? I thought we were joking?

SASHA: Was it a joke for you to bring me to your school's dance as an "ethnic" item?

NOAH: *(Stunned)* What?

SASHA: You want the popularity, I get it. *(Pause)* But do you really have to put me on the line?

NOAH: *(Baffled)* What do you mean Sash?

SASHA: Those boys, they told me all of it. They said that you bragged about having a friend who isn't rich—a black one. You spoke all about it.

NOAH: That's not what I meant—

SASHA: And you all made a deal. *(Pause)* You bring me to this, and one of your choice goes on a date with you. Little did you know, your hoodrat friend is smarter than this.

(Soft, but painful) That's what you call me, huh?

NOAH: *(Flustered)* This is a misunderstanding. I wanted to take you!

SASHA: *(Soft)* Don't lie. *(Slowly getting angrier)* You are so blind to the world that does not exist around you. I cannot believe that you would dare lend me out to people I don't know just for your pleasure. I was scared and alone while you were off making out with some guy in the corner.

NOAH: Please let me explain.

SASHA: There's nothing to explain. We clearly don't fit into each other's worlds. Let's just leave it off here. Maybe you'll learn how to treat your friends of nine years after this. *(Pause)* I wish I never met you at that school interview.

NOAH: That was you?

SASHA: Yeah, I turned that school *down* for you.

NOAH: No. We met at the subway.

SASHA: You can't even remember how we met! It was a school interview that we were the top candidates for, but there was only one spot.

NOAH: And we chose to still be friends after I got the spot.

SASHA: They offered it to me first.

NOAH: So, you're saying—

SASHA: I could've had your life. The lavish school, the rich peers, all of it. But I thought it was better suited for you. But, you've turned into what I never wanted to be.



GROWING UP

A MOTHER-DAUGHTER DIALOGUE

BY LAUREN WOOD

It's daytime in a GIRL's room. There is a fixed bed with stuffed animals lying on the blankets. There are several framed photos of a man and his family on the dresser next to the bed. On the floor we see boxes with various labels.

A moving van can be seen through the bedroom window.

MOM is packing up the GIRL's clothes. In one hand is a box labelled "Goodwill."

GIRL walks in holding a teddy bear.

GIRL: Mom, what are you doing?

MOM: Well, you have outgrown most of these and we just won't have room in the new house for extra things. Why don't you start to go through your dolls and pick out your favorite ones? Anything you want to get rid of can go in this box.

GIRL: But I don't want to. Who will give them as many hugs as I will? How do I know if they'll be safe there?

MOM: Sweetheart, I'm sure wherever they go they'll be happy.

GIRL: You mean like Daddy?

MOM: *(Controlled anger)* Well, your father seems to be happier without us. You're a big girl now, and you still have his teddy.

GIRL: *(Appearing stronger)* No.

MOM: What was that sweetheart?

GIRL: I...I don't need Teddy. I'm a big girl now.
(Girl grabs the box from mom's hands and carefully holds Teddy. She gives him one big hug before placing him in the box, not looking away from the bear and moving as far away from the box as possible.)

Dad would have wanted me to give it to someone who needs it more.

MOM: I'm so proud that you are thinking that way, it's very generous of you. *(Pause)* Well, I'm going to go in the other rooms and get more things to donate, if you see anything else you don't want just put it in the box.

(Mom leaves box by the door of the bedroom and walks away.)

(Girl looks through the doorway making sure no one is around before running to the box to pull out Teddy. She holds the bear in front of her for a moment before pulling him into a tight embrace.)

GIRL: I love you Daddy, even if mommy doesn't.



Photo by David Zhou on Unsplash

ZOEY & MABEL

A TROUBLED-FRIENDSHIP PLAY

BY SARAH VALENZA

ZOEY: How nice of you to leave my dress out. Look at all the lovely rips, can't wait to have to clean up the cat's throw up.

MABEL: Yeah you're welcome 'cause it's not like you don't put the caps back on my super-expensive markers after using them.

ZOEY: Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't realize that you were the one who paid for those markers.

MABEL: Maybe I could afford my own markers if you didn't leave my wallet unattended to go flirt with some guy by the bar.

ZOEY: You know there's this drink called alcohol and it makes you a bit distracted.

MABEL: Oh, really, I never knew.

ZOEY: It was really smart of you to leave your wallet with a drunk girl.

MABEL: You know with me being a psychic I could easily predict that you would take a hundred more shots when I was just going to grab my flip-flops.

ZOEY: You know what another bright idea was, wearing a pair of six-inch heels.

MABEL: Right because you were so against me wearing them.

ZOEY: And how they fit your Incredibly tiny feet.

MABEL: Would have it been better to cut off my heel instead of going to the car Zoe...or should I say Cinderella?

ZOEY: Yes, cause that's how the book went.

MABEL: Listen I'd love to stay and chat but sadly I've got other things to do.

ZOEY: Oh, how unfortunate... (*Mabel walks away*) Bye to you, too.



RULES THAT PEOPLE TEACH US

BY LAUREN WOOD

The tune singing in my head is not what's transcribed on the paper beneath my fingers.
Numbers, letters, and words I can't comprehend but pretend to understand to get another
Letter on a Proper Piece of Paper Parents put up on the wall.

My ears are stuffed with headphones meant to make my brain comply
With a teacher's voice that's drilling useless dribble that makes my comrades cry.
But the song inside is speaking with words only I can hear,
Building up a rhythm to my heart song which I hold dear.

While eyes are glued on teaching screens, my fingers start to strum,
They vibrate my whole laptop on the desk that's not for fun.
Nails start to join the melody and play along with the noise
Until my whole body starts to tremble with a long overdue joy.

The pounding beat is pouring forth after I've made my finale test.
Logged out from all my "learning," yeah, 'cuz that was what it's all about,
For life is not a letter that you can get in school.
It's a sound that's sung by heart, that plays by your own rules.



Photo by Thought Catalog on Unsplash

THE GREATEST GIFT

THE YEAR MY FAMILY SURPRISED ME WITH THE BEST CHRISTMAS PRESENT EVER

BY ANAHIT INDZHIGULYAN

It was January 6th, 2015, Armenian Christmas in the Indzhigulyan household. It was far from quiet and very cramped. All you could hear was a symphony of different conversations clashing together, and forming one coherent boom of voices. Family was scattered everywhere, sitting left and right in any chair or seat they could find, the only prominent thing in the room was the wildly decorated tree in the center of all the commotion.

At one point, most of my family went to our new apartment on the fourth floor, leaving my brother and me alone on the second floor. Ara and I played around with our new toys without a care in the world. Soon enough, everyone came back down excluding my dad. My mom called for Ara and me, and told us our dad wanted to see us upstairs. My bubbly young self decided to take the stairs, rather than the elevator. In the staircase, I was jumping for joy thinking about the possibility of getting a puppy. I'm not sure why, but I had this strange feeling in the pit of my stomach, and an oddly familiar voice in the back of my head said one simple word, "Puppy!" I even asked my brother if he thought we would be getting a puppy. He looked at me like I was crazy.

We got upstairs and nothing special really happened. I ended up forgetting about the thought of having a puppy. The three of us returned downstairs, and everyone had a camera shoved in my face. I was overwhelmed and confused to say the least. I felt as though everyone knew something I didn't. Everyone had this same look plastered on their face, as if they were wearing the same mask—they had this look of expectation that is still hard for me to describe. I knew they were waiting for a reaction out of me, but I wasn't exactly sure why.

I felt that same, strange feeling in the pit of my stomach, and that same voice in my head screaming "puppy!" So I did what any little girl would do on Christmas, I looked under the tree. What I saw brought tears to my eyes. I saw the cutest little fur ball in the distance. I ran up to it screaming, "*I knew it!*"

I held her tightly in my arms and instantly fell in love. She was small, fragile almost, and dressed in the cutest little red dress covered in hearts.

I had wanted a puppy for as long as I can remember. The second I saw her, it was like love at first sight. She is a shih tzu and yorkie mix. We couldn't figure out a name for her for the longest time, until I suggested Ella. Ella was the name of my first pet ever, a turtle. Everyone really liked that name and decided that it fit her perfectly. And that's the story of how Ella the shorkie changed my life forever.



KEEP ON ROLLING

REMEMBERING A MOTHER-SON TRIP TO WARSAW

BY IAGO MACKNIK-CONDE

My feet are planted on the pads of my Segway and my hands are glued to its rubbery handles, but I'm flying. Passersby snap photos of me, and excited children gasp in Polish as I speed past, feeling the wind on my face. The smell of nicotine from the pedestrians' cigarettes fills my nose, but lasts only for a second as it dissipates into the crisp afternoon air. Our Segway tour of Warsaw is drawing to a close, and our guide has allowed us to roll around Pilsudski Plaza to make the most of our last few minutes on wheels.

"Hey Iago, how about we do one more lap?" my mother says, rolling past me.

I smile and follow her, the sound of my wheels grinding on the concrete tiles. "It's rare that it's just the two of us," I think, "because I'm the oldest of three siblings. But this trip is special, and I get to be with my mom in Poland all by myself."

The Pilsudski plaza is a mostly empty, gray-tiled space, sprinkled with a few large monuments. My mother and I swerve to get to an ebony black staircase leading to the sky. Neither of us can make anything of it, so she looks it up on her phone. "Apparently, it represents the collapsible staircase that people use to board a plane. The sculpture commemorates a plane crash that killed many Polish people," she says. I notice the flowers spread around the base of the monument, and I feel a knot in my stomach imagining the lives that were lost.

"Iago, let's go check the other end of the plaza," my mother says, and I agree with a sense of relief. We roll to the next monument, a bit faster than

necessary, and I think back to the time when I was little, and my mom pushed my kiddie car while I pretended to drive it.

We lived in Arizona at the time. I remember the towering saguaros and the vast blue sky turning to red at sunset. My mom would push my car around the neighborhood at the edge of the desert. She was always careful to give the jumping cholla cactuses a wide berth, pointing to the jackrabbits we scared as we passed. I feel

sad for a moment that I no longer get to enjoy kiddie car rides with my mom, but her voice brings me back to the present.

"Iago, go stand next to those mannequins while I take your picture," she says, heading to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. I follow her gaze direction and see two life-size action figures in combat gear flanking a marble coffin. I approach them, still on my

Segway, and almost fall off when I see one of the dolls blink. They're actual people!

"Mamá, mira, they're real!" I say. My mom laughs when she realizes her mistake, but the soldiers remain perfectly stone-faced. She takes my picture quickly while the troopers stare ahead with cold, harsh glares.

Having my mother to myself for what seems like the first time in years feels amazing. I can finally get a word in edgewise without being interrupted by my brother or my sister. I want to savor every moment, not just because our trip is ending soon, but also because I know that this stage of my life will conclude shortly, too. Sometimes I can't wait for what comes next, but

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seems like
the first time
in years feels
amazing.**



other times I dread the change. Can't we just take a breath and cruise along?

We loop around the plaza a few more times, rolling side by side and admiring the architecture around us. Then I zoom ahead on my own one last time, taking it all in. Finally, our guide calls us back to the center of the plaza and retrieves

our Segways. The tour is over now, and climbing down from my Segway after three hours rolling feels like learning to walk again. We start the trek back to our hotel room, completely exhausted but happy about our adventure together.

Things will continue to change as I get older, but I know that my mom and I will keep on rolling.

THE PINK ELEPHANT

A LIFE LESSON LEARNED EARLY

BY SARAH VALENZA

When I was around 3 years old my family and I went to Disney World. It was my first time going, so I was incredibly excited. I was too little to go on most of the rides, yet my sister was older so she was able to ride more than I. I ended up spending a lot of my day at the park waiting for her with the hot Florida sun beating down on me. At least I had plenty of Mickey ice cream bars to cool me off and make up for the pain I endured.

After what felt like years of patiently sitting outside, I finally got to enjoy the Dumbo ride, where we had waited in line for an hour. At the time I had a preference for everything pink, so, of course, I only wanted the elephant with the pink blanket. The whole time I was waiting in line I stared down the pink elephant, just dying to go on the ride.

When we finally got to the ride, we were among the last people to be let on, which meant the pink elephant was already taken. I gave the kid in the pink elephant the dirtiest look ever because I was not ready to give up the elephant that quickly. My mom tried dragging me to the yellow one but I was very stubborn and would not ride any of the other elephants.

My father, who couldn't go on many rides since he easily gets nauseous, had to take me off the ride. I was seething with anger, all my buttons had been pushed. To pay back my parents I decided to throw a tantrum in front of everyone, and then proceeded to hurl myself across a bench some lady was already sitting on—and I pretended to die.

For some reason, my father believed I had actually fainted, so he started yelling my name. Yet, soon enough, he found out I was alright because I had opened one of my eyes to check if he was still there.

Three years later we went back to Disney World and went on the Dumbo ride. This time, though, I didn't care about the color of things. Again we ended up being the last people to get on the ride, and the elephant that was still available ended up being the pink elephant. So, I guess I got what I wished for, I just had to wait a bit longer.



Photo courtesy of Sarah Valenza

WRITING FROM EXPERIENCE: SIX-WORD MEMOIRS

“The skyscrapers took over the cacti.” –*Iago Macknik-Conde*

“Love is fake, it’s never lasting.” –*Sarah Valenza*

“I’m quiet, the silence is deafening.” –*Anahit Indzhigulyan*

“Know my worth before I’m destroyed.” –*Anastasia Erokhina*

“No matter what, I will succeed.” –*Samantha Ortiz*

“They never did find my note.” –*Lauren Wood*

“Sometimes happy, sometimes sad, always loved.” –*Rachel Ford*

“Musician in a family of doctors.” –*Nyla Robotham*

“Driven, just not by a car.” –*Elena Ghaleb*

A photograph of the interior of an empty subway car. The car features rows of orange and yellow plastic seats. Metal poles and handrails are visible throughout the car. The floor is dark and reflective. The text "LIFE IN LOCKDOWN: STORIES ABOUT CORONAVIRUS" is overlaid in a large, white, distressed font across the middle of the image.

LIFE IN LOCKDOWN: STORIES ABOUT CORONAVIRUS

Photo by Kit Suman on Unsplash



FLEEING COVID

ONE FAMILY'S ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK

BY IAGO MACKNIK-CONDE

BROOKLYN TO PHILADELPHIA

March 15, 2020

Two important things happened today: First, my dad was able to rent a small U-Haul two days earlier than anticipated. Second, the Department of Education announced that classes were suspended for a minimum of two weeks. The pressure to leave the crowded city is mounting. Even though only one or two people have died of Covid-19 in NYC so far, we know from our family in Spain that the crisis will only get worse. My parents decided we should join my grandma in Canton, Georgia, while the chance that any of us is infected is still low.

As soon as the decision was made, we got to packing. The rusty U-Haul sat in front of our apartment building, hooked to our SUV, while the whole family labored. My father stayed downstairs organizing all our food and supplies, while my mother, siblings and I went up and down our four flights of stairs dozens of times, while the sun sunk lower and lower into the horizon. My parents, my brother and I took care of the heavy lifting, while my little sister carried

lighter items like cereal boxes and paper towels. We finished loading around 8 p.m., and after each of us paid one last quick visit to our upturned apartment, to gather last minute necessities and use the bathroom, we left Brooklyn behind.

One serious complication is that our SUV has been dying for about a week. It's a pretty old car, bought right after my sister was born, and my dad keeps saying that we have a 50-50 chance of making it to Georgia before it breaks down for good.

So far, we've made it to Philadelphia, with our car's engine rattling and sputtering the entire way. Everybody was exhausted from packing and loading, and I've never felt so grateful to see a Springfield Inn. We sleepwalked to the lobby, checked in, and trekked to our room taking the stairs, to avoid as much human contact as possible. My dad went ahead of the group, armed with Clorox wipes, and disinfected every single surface in the room before he allowed the rest of us inside. Even so, we were careful to touch as few objects as possible before we went to bed.

GREENSBORO, NC

March 16, 2020

Today we spent all day on the road. More than 10 hours driving, with only two bathroom breaks. Each stop was a huge endeavor, having to disinfect meticulously every single surface, including door handles, light switches and faucets, before being able to use the facilities. Every time we ate a snack or touched our faces, full disinfection was again required. For the last several hours in the car, screaming was commonplace. Everyone was on edge by the time we made it to our second Springfield Inn, this time in Greensboro, North Carolina. Then



Photo by Miltiadis Fragkidis on Unsplash



my dad went ahead once again and disinfected our hotel room thoroughly before the rest of us could collapse inside.

CANTON, GEORGIA

March 17, 2020

We dragged ourselves out of bed for the last segment of our trip, apprehensive of another day of driving ahead of us. We were especially worried that the car would not make it, now that we were so close. On top of that, my parents have become paranoid every time any of us kids chokes on a sip of water and coughs up a bit, or if they hear the most minimal snuffle. The worry is that one of us may have been infected with no or few symptoms, and expose my grandmother, who is almost 79 and in a risk group. For now, after watching us like hawks for days on end, they seem reassured that

none of us is infectious at present.

I napped for a little bit in the car, and when I woke up, I saw skyscrapers for the first time in two days, which meant we were in Atlanta at last. I could almost taste my grandma's food, but we hadn't reached our destination yet. Some 20 minutes later we arrived at my grandmother's house, warm and cozy, in the suburbs of Canton. Our car made it after all, but is unlikely to ever make it back to Brooklyn.

Grandma welcomed us from the window, but none of us approached her until we disinfected ourselves one last time. Only after I showered and changed out of my travel clothes was I finally allowed to hug my grandmother. We are home at last, or as close to being home as we'll be until we can travel back to New York. Nobody knows when that will be.

MY WONDERFUL DAY OUT

A MINDFUL CONTEMPLATION

BY LAUREN WOOD

The warm soft surface beneath me supports and comforts my every waking thought. I'm surrounded by a purple ocean full of lavender, love and home.

The light breaks in from a crack in the closed blinds rousing me from my slumber. Specks of dust float down from the air and onto my pillow as I stare up into the single light ray that has penetrated the darkness in my room. Staring up at the chipped surface of the chalky ceiling, I picture how my day will unfold, starting from the moment I choose to open my dreary eyes. The days seem longer, as time all but stops. The only way to keep track of the outside world has been the light and sound from my closed window. The hours lag on, as I have nothing to do but sleep.

But alas, things can't last forever. I will finally step out of my thousand-foot prison today. The world around me is still utterly asleep. The only sounds coming from the birds chirping outside my window and the subtle sound of snoring that has drifted in from the other bedroom.

I have awoken quite early today (10 a.m.). For someone who has slept till 2 p.m. for the past two weeks, this is an accomplishment.

I roll out of my overly messed up bed. I can't remember the last time it was washed, but the overbearing scent of lavender stress-relief spray that has coated the sheets makes that thought less daunting. I painstakingly attempt to rid my body of sleep. Slowly rolling out my joints till they make an audible pop. I hope my body will forgive me once I have some food.

Moving over to the kitchen I grab a small orange and the large iced-water pitcher from the fridge. Pouring myself a glass, I sit down and start

peeling the orange.

As much as I want to savor the sweet taste of the ripened fruit. I can't help the anticipation that builds within me. Slowly pushing my fingers to raise the slices of fruit to my mouth faster.

I did this. I got up this morning like I would on a school day, got myself food, and soon will be out in the world, even if it is just for a short walk.

After finishing my small morning meal, I get dressed and grab the keys to leave the house.

I don't know why, but I just stand at the door. I stay that way for a solid minute. Taking one last look inside the apartment, I savor the silence. Letting it soak into me like a warm bath. Pulling the doorknob I exit my home, going down the all too familiar hall, turning left at the corner, then walking down the stairs.

Unlike the apartment, the stairwell echoes with the sound of my eager feet hitting the concrete stairs taking me down to the lobby. The doorman isn't at his post as it is still too early.

Finally entering the lobby, I look out through the clear glass windows and see the park across the street. My body doesn't need a command to know that the park is where I will spend my wonderful day out.



Photo by Yuya Murakami on Unsplash

SIXTEEN AND IN QUARANTINE

A RITE OF PASSAGE: INTERRUPTED

BY ANAHIT INDZHIGULYAN

On Thursday, March 12th, my whole life turned upside down. That was supposed to be a good day. I had everything planned out, but it seems every time I plan things out they always go the opposite way. I was midway through choir when my chair started vibrating: My phone was blowing up with messages from my panic-struck mother.



I took a moment to step out of class to check my messages. I was surprised and overwhelmed with the information I was just graced with. I was told to leave class with my best friend Elena, and go home immediately. Honestly, I was thrilled at first, because choir was dragging on and felt never-ending. It wasn't till I got home that I noticed the seriousness of the situation at hand.

The Coronavirus cases were climbing dramatically, and I was at great risk, traveling to the city everyday and taking public transportation. I didn't know this would be my last time in school for a while. I was supposed to go to my writing class that day, and see the school musical. Never would I have guessed I wouldn't be able to do either of those things. I was really worried for my

loved ones, but there was one thing always on my mind. I know this is going to sound very selfish, but I was mainly worried about my sixteenth birthday. Sixteen, crazy to think about it. I'm old enough to learn how to drive, I'm old enough to do a lot of things. But the one thing I wanted to be able to do was postponed—my Sweet 16.

A lot of events I was supposed to attend were either cancelled or postponed. I was supposed to go to a Billie Eilish concert; I was supposed to sing at Carnegie hall because of a competition I'd won; and lastly, I was supposed to have my Sweet 16.

It is, honestly, crazy and difficult times we are living in right now. I would be lying if I told you I wasn't scared for what's to come. I just know that we all have to work together and be there for each other in these difficult times—with the modesty of social distancing in mind, of course. We shouldn't look at this quarantine as a bad thing, but instead take advantage of this extra time on our hands. We should use our time wisely, because time is one of the greatest gifts. Do the things you've been pushing aside, spend time with your family, and even learn something new. Even though we're stuck inside we can still have fun.

I spent my birthday the best way possible; if I could go back, I wouldn't change a thing. I spent the day with the people I love and admire the most, making memories that will last a lifetime, and even Facetimed my extended family. Yes, some things are going to be cancelled or moved, but you have to stay positive at all times and use your time wisely.

A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

FINDING PEACE AMID THE CHAOS

BY ELENA GHALEB

My cell phone rang and I answered. It was my mom. “Hello, your dad is on his way to get you. Get your books and leave immediately. The numbers have increased dramatically and it isn’t safe anymore. Get all your books, get in the car and come home please.”

I didn’t know how to react to all of this, because just hearing this made me nervous. I got butterflies in my stomach because I didn’t know what was going on. I went up to my locker and grabbed my books.

It was just a week later and I had already started to miss my friends, sitting at the lunch table, seeing the smiles on their faces, and laughing with them. And waking up every morning, smelling the fresh morning grass, and feeling the wind blow through my hair. Every time I went outside, I immediately changed my clothes and put them in the laundry to get rid of any germs. I used masks, gloves and hand sanitizer any time I touched something, washing my hands for 20 seconds.

Hello, My name is Elena, I’m 15, a sophomore in high school, and I am living through a very big moment in history. New York is shutting down because of the Coronavirus pandemic. It is complete chaos, people are rushing to grab the last things on the shelves in the supermarkets. No one has a single item to spare, because everyone’s fear is so strong. The lines are so long, it’s as if they are giving things away for free.

My family is also living in fear of this dangerous sickness. Our concern is high because this sickness is reported to be very dangerous and my grandma is living with us. I don’t want to take any risks and

go outside, but it is getting boring staying inside everyday with nothing to do. Of course, my sister and I have been trying to keep each other busy by playing cards and binging TV shows, but it still is frustrating. I am starting online school next week, but to be honest, I’m scared that I won’t be able to keep up with learning all the material on my own.

I can’t believe it, my mom let me go outside to walk to the park. I got to feel the fresh air through each inhale and out through each exhale. I had to bring Clorox wipes, hand sanitizer, and latex gloves to use the swings. I was willing to do anything because I wanted to go out and have some fun. I was a little nervous to go to the park because of social-distancing rules and the high amounts of people who are usually there. Luckily, there was no one there and we were able to be six feet apart and still have a good time.

I noticed a man sitting on a bench in the park looking down at his phone. I went to throw out my gloves and the man turned his back facing me. I realized that this is because many people are in fear of this virus and don’t want to take the chance of getting sick, which I can relate to. As I was walking back home, I noticed people walking down the streets with masks, gloves and staying far away from the person in front of them.

It’s so weird to be living like this. Not being able to go outside, see friends, and living with constant fear of getting the virus. So many thoughts were going through my head on my walk home, which allowed me to clear my head.

I started to journal all of my feelings, knowing that what we are going through will be in history textbooks in the future.

CORONA: THE POPULATION REDUCTION

A QUARANTINE DIARY

BY RACHEL FORD

MARCH 16, 2020

Hi, my name is Greyson Rise. I'm not sure when you're reading this, so I'm never going to say good morning, good afternoon/evening, or good night to you (assuming you're okay with that). As you're reading this you'll realize it's my journal and that I'm keeping track of what has been going on around me these past few weeks while stuck in quarantine. I have titled my journal *The Population Reduction* because it's the reason I, and practically everyone in the world, is stuck in quarantine. I would tell you more about my reason for calling it that, but we can discuss that later.

MARCH 17, 2020

Hi again. Sorry, I left you hanging there yesterday. I figured I would ease you into my worldwide epidemic—at least the one in my neighborhood. I'm going to start off today by saying that, holy

cow, am I bored! Like, I literally want to go outside and stare into the beautiful abyss, with that one solid black color, yet I seem to see galaxies with a lot of purple, and I rarely do that, that's just how bad I want to get out of my home.

I'm here with my dad while my mom is at work. My dad loves to talk and have long- (excuse my language) ass conversations. Don't get me wrong, I love my dad from the bottom of my heart to the top...but can he not see that I'm doing my h.w., or that I'm busy being in my/the zone? I know he means no harm; I understand that he likes having someone to talk to, especially when he can relate to them in ways he can't with my mom. Still, the conversations let me know that he'll always have my back and that he will go to the ends of the earth for me, so those conversations are really reassuring when I can't do my writing assignments or when I have an anxiety attack.

MARCH 18, 2020

Hi. I just keep leaving you, don't I? I'll attempt not to... Anyway, today will be more about what happens outside. In my home, I live on the floor right below the last. I'm surrounded by other apartments and houses filled with babies and little children who love to make hella noise during the day. The children's scream of fun and happiness reminds me of those black and white horror films where 99 percent of it was just a typical pretty blonde girl screaming, falling and running.

I don't understand why their parent(s) and/or guardian(s) would still let them out when the news insists everyone stays home, and stays at least



Photo by Marcus Paolo Prado on Unsplash



six feet away from other people. That reminds me of the movie *Five Feet Apart* starring Cole Sprouse and Haley Lu Richardson. I didn't watch it but I saw so many trailers that I feel as though I did. I know it's about these teenagers with the same disease, and they have to stay six feet apart, but they're in love, so they take off one foot and well... you can do the math on that one.

But back to the children. I understand they want to play, but play inside not out. Maybe their parents are tired of them playing inside because they make too much noise, or they make a mess. I get that they don't want their children to be stuck

inside and not know that there is another world out there to explore. Either way, at a time like this with all the population reduction, (which in my words means that this virus was put out into the world to "reduce"—hint, hint!—the population, and that's what's happening) no one should be out, especially little kids because of how young and underdeveloped their bodies are. Even though the virus could take anyone....

As you can see I'm beginning to write more and more every day, but that's only because my dad is starting to leave me alone without me asking him to (again I do love him).

THE VIRUS

CONTAGION AND REALIZATION

BY SAMANTHA ORTIZ

I step out of the small drama studio where I had class. I can feel the sun hit my face like it's giving me a kiss on the cheek, nice and warm. It's March now, so winter is slowly evaporating while spring fully blossoms. In front of the studio I see a gray car, and my cousin waiting for me. I usually don't have someone waiting after class, but this week my cousin has been driving me because my mom doesn't want me to ride the train to school or home because of all of the germs and the coronavirus spreading. I step into the car not knowing that it will be my last day going to school.

On the way, I talk to my cousin about a lot of things, as we do when we normally meet up. We are pretty close, so we get along well and we enjoy each other's company. We talk about how the virus is spreading and all of the precautions we have to take. I knew that staying safe and healthy was a serious thing but I didn't expect things to go very far.

On the highway, I see the water right next to us, glistening as the sun hits it. It is such a beautiful thing but it doesn't really faze me because I am expecting to see it everyday after school. We finally arrive home and I step out of the car. It would be my last time breathing fresh air (but again I don't know that).

After I take a shower, eat and do my homework, I start to plan my outfit for the next day (like I always do), but my mom tells me that I will not be going to school because she wants me to rest. She says if I'm tired all the time, then my immune system will start to suffer and I will have a higher chance of getting sick. So, since I would not be going to school the next day I take Tuesday as a relaxing night. I won't have to wake up early because I'm going to school the next day. It makes me sad that I'll miss a day of school because I am

really looking forward to the nice weather.

I wake up the next morning, Wednesday March 11th. It's pretty relaxing here at home. That night, my mom tells me again that I will not be going to school for the next couple of days, until the whole virus thing calms down. I protest with anger and rage because I don't think she's being serious, until she says, "That's my final decision!" I go back to my room and turn on the TV.

Could this get any worse? I shrug it off, thinking I will see my friends on Monday, but on Sunday the mayor says he is going to shut down all New York City public schools because of the amount of

cases in the city. At this point I get truly upset. I didn't want to stay in my house any longer. I already miss the sun hitting my face, and I miss seeing the water glisten near the highway. I miss the cool breeze that ran through my hair. It's spring and I'm already missing out. I want to take walks because it just started to get nice out, but now I can't because my parents want me to stay home 24-7. I feel trapped, like I'm in a safe I don't have a

code to and there is no way out, but I understand why we have to take these precautions.

My mom and dad left around 6 p.m. that night so they could get some essentials for our pantry and home. My little brother and I stayed home with my grandma and we had a good time. She stays with us because we don't want her to stay alone when something like this could affect her the most. It was already 11 and my mom and dad finally came back. When they opened our apartment door I saw a bunch of grocery bags and a cart full of food. We usually use this cart for special events to carry stuff, but I realize that a big event is happening in our lives right now.

We are going through history and we don't even realize it.

"I feel trapped, like I'm in a safe I don't have a code to and there is no way out."

ANGRY WAVES

THE COLORS OF QUARANTINE

BY ANASTASIA EROKHINA



The waves were angry the past few days. She was sitting in her four-cornered white bedroom with French windows wide open, reading a book she had found in her attic. As she put down the utopian book by her freshly squeezed orange juice she dazed out the window watching the waves beat each other up. Athena was her name, she was the most Greek girl in the neighborhood yet she really wasn't; she was Italian at heart.

She watched the horrors her Italian hometown had to go through and wished she were there with her whole family for moral support, but no, her parents had moved her to Greece at the age of 5. Athena grew up by the rich blue waters but wished she could taste those freshly baked cannolis that filled the air with sweetness and happiness—oh, only if she could be there right now!

Athena started stressing so she grabbed her

canvas, paint and brush and started to express her emotions. Today she wasn't reaching for her usual palette of pastels and bright colors. She took out the palette she never used: dark, deep colors that she seemed to resemble at the moment.

This month she was supposed to enter her art competition but thanks to coronavirus and quarantine she could not do that. Her dreams had been crushed and she didn't know how to act. Still, sitting there watching the waves get stronger and stronger, roaring like a hungry lion, her painting got more intense.

She wanted to travel all of Europe, but now that was ruined as well. She was tired of painting, so she picked up that book again and started reading. What she thought to be unrealistic became the most real thing in the world.

Athena then realized, this is it, this is the end of the world.

LONG TIME, NO SEA

A VIRAL HORROR STORY

BY SARAH VALENZA

I sat at my bedroom window looking out on the beautiful crystal sea. It didn't seem that bad at first, just a couple of months of being bored, but now my house is like a prison. Before, I could occupy my time with work, but now it's summer. I had so many plans; this was not the summer I imagined.

My friends told me to use my free time to do my hobbies, but my only hobbies are collecting seashells, surfing and Dungeons & Dragons. I can't do any of those things now! The beach is what makes Hawaii so beautiful, but now everyone shuns it. Maybe if I sleep for long enough I'll wake up to see my mother again and everyone will be playing on the golden sand. Then we can go travel the world like we planned, surf the seven seas together.

Things might be better if I had my mom around. She's been hospitalized for months. It wasn't even like she went for a swim, she simply had her feet in the water. But now she's tied up to a bunch of tubes, stuck in that cold dull place. Before we could call each other but the line snapped by my house two weeks ago and they still haven't sent anyone to fix it. They blame it on the virus but it's clearly an excuse. So now when she has someone deliver food or groceries to the house she will sometimes ask them to also tell me something or give me a note, that's how we have been communicating.

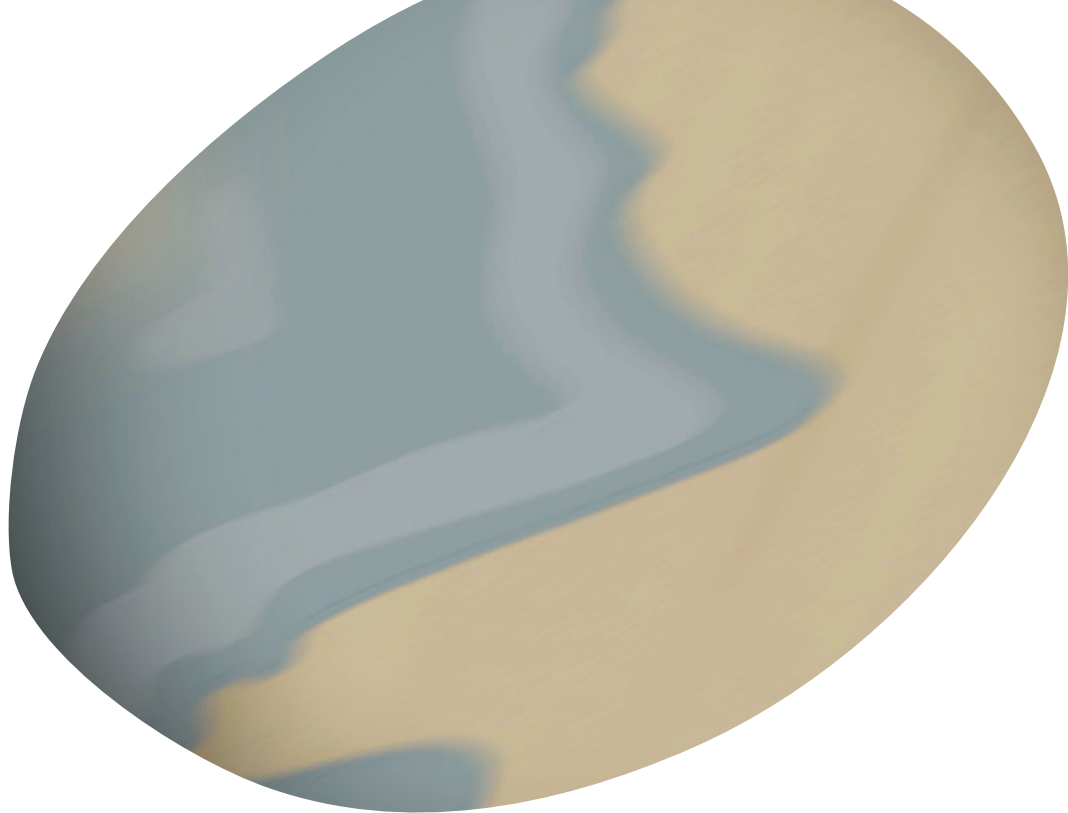
I think I'm going out today. I mean, what's the harm really? At this rate, it wouldn't make a difference. If I don't go on the beach I'll be fine, and barely anyone goes out anymore, especially since everyone's so scared of getting in trouble. But the officers aren't patrolling anymore. Even if

I did get sick, at least I could be by my mother's side. I'm doing it! I can't stand being in here for another second.

I quickly threw on my flip-flops and headed out. When I opened the door I paused to take in the fresh air. I stared into the beautiful sunset that faded from bright orange to creamy yellow and then blue. I could hear the little myna birds singing. I never loved nature as much as I do now—to think I took this freedom for granted before, being able to go out is like a privilege.

I decided to go to the park since nothing else would be open. When I got there, I saw a huge chain-link fence with a sign saying that anyone who entered would be fined. I walked around each corner of the park and didn't spot a single officer. I debated whether or not I should go in or go back home. After a while, I built up the courage to go inside. Then I realized it was going to be very





difficult to climb the fence in my flip-flops. As I climbed, my shoe started slipping off my foot but I was able to quickly stop it from falling.

Again I began to worry a cop was going to find me. My palms became sweaty making it even harder to climb. When I got to the top, I realized the metal of the chain was left open so I had to bring my arm and leg over the other side so I wouldn't get cut. Even with my effort the chain still ended up ripping my dress. Eventually, I made it. Nothing could make me turn back now.

I immediately went to the swings, which usually, when I used to come, would be packed with kids waiting for an available swing. Now everything is empty; it's like a ghost town. I quickly became bored so I decided to talk a walk down the bike path. As I walked, I realized there were a ton of animals in the park, beehives everywhere, birds of all sorts, even a family of deer down by a group of trees in the meadow. The park had turned into a forest.

Soon enough, I ended up near the dirt-filled sand that led to the sea. I froze. All of a sudden it felt like something took over my body. My feet started dragging me down to the water.

**I froze. All of a sudden
it felt like something
took over my body.
My feet started dragging
me down to the water.**

I wanted to stop, or at least scream, but I couldn't. Everything became hazy. And then all I saw was black.

When I woke up I was facing a cool white wall. I turned to my side and saw a lady sitting with a note pad. She said something to the other doctor across the bed but I couldn't really understand because she was wearing a mask. Then she asked me if I was

feeling okay, and what my name was. I told her, and then she asked if I knew someone named Margaret Miller. That was my mother.

Eventually, I was able to transfer rooms, and now, laying right beside me, was my mother.

Strangely, I felt happy despite the pain. I was happy to be beside her. I lay there for awhile waiting for her to wake up, and when she finally did she started sobbing. I couldn't hug her like I wished, so I grabbed her hand in mine as if to tell her its okay you don't need to worry any more, I'm right here for you.

We stayed like that, our tears flooding the sheets. If I had to spend the rest of my days trapped, I would rather be with her than anyone else. She was my closest friend. I know that one day this virus will pass, so now we can fight this virus together.

A TRIP TO LONDON

BEWARE LYING TO YOUR GIRLFRIEND, YOU MAY REGRET IT!

BY ANASTASIA EROKHINA

The 4 a.m. flight to London was boarding. Benny, 25, and Gen, 22, were crossing the Atlantic to finally meet Benny's parents and see his hometown, since they just got engaged about a week ago. Living in America was hard for Benny because he was always homesick, a mommy's boy. Gen seemed really excited to be visiting his family, a little too excited.

They boarded the plane and took off. Just three hours into the flight from the Big Apple the plane started trembling, like Gen does on a daily basis after her fifth cup of a coffee. Benny started panicking.

"Gen! Gen! Wake up! We are gonna die! We are gonna die! Oh lord have mercy on me please. Oh, god damn it, wake up!"

Gen, being the hibernating bear she is, didn't respond to Benny the first minute until she finally yelled, "What do you want Benny?"

"Do you not feel the plane shaking? We are gonna die sweetheart. They just made an announcement that we will be landing on water but it is not guaranteed we will make it on the lifeboats," Benny said in a trembling voice. Everyone on the plane started panicking, some cigarettes were put out while some were lit up, since everyone was having a nervous breakdown.

"Oh lord what did I do to deserve this?" Gen mumbled to herself as she reached for her handkerchief in her white Céline Vipiana bag to wipe her tears.

"I would rather jump," Benny pointed out the window. "Jump with me! See we are almost on the water. I wouldn't want to die on a plane full of strangers."

"Are you crazy? I am not gonna jump, risking my life when we still have a chance of getting on a

lifeboat," Gen whispered angrily. She stopped for a second and seemed to have a mood switch.

"You know what I'm gonna say it Benny," Benny was terrified and impatient.

"Yes? What? What is it?"

"I'm pregnant," she said looking down.

Benny started forming the biggest smile and had tear droplets forming in his honey-colored eyes.

"But...it's not yours, Benny," Gen said as she started crying. "I'm sorry."

Benny's smile faded away and he said in confusion, "Oh, I think I'm gonna faint. We are about to die Gen—die!—and you are telling me that you are pregnant with another man's baby? How could you? How...?"

"I swear I don't know how this happened, hun. Please forgive me and go on the boat with me, please," she begged him.

"You didn't know how this happened? That's what they all say. What a fool I am."

Ben was turning red and felt unsteady. The plane started shaking even more and people had their oxygen masks on. Benny started standing up.

"Please put on your mask," Gen said. "We will talk about this later, just please sit down."

Ben took out his suitcase and pulled out a gun, pointing it straight to his head.

"Please no! Stop it! Stop him," Gen yelled.

Benny ran to the emergency exit, opened the door and shot himself out the plane falling into the deep, dark Atlantic waters.

The passengers were in shock and Gen was traumatized. Everyone, including Gen, ended up getting into a lifeboat and taken by a ship to London.

As it turned out, Gen had only ever slept with Benny, so she was never actually pregnant.



She had found just three days before they left on their trip to London that Benny had been cheating on her for four months. Gen saw this plane crash as a perfect opportunity for him to lose it and commit suicide, since he tried to do that multiple times in the past, so she knew that was his weakness. When he got jealous he hurt

himself, or at least tried to. This way, Gen wasn't a murderer but just a poor widow who lost her fiancé to suicide.

Gen felt no guilt, even though it was hard for her to watch someone she loved die. But she was glad he was gone—and burning in hell for lying to her.

UNDER THE SURFACE

BY NYLA ROBOTHAM

Below the illusion of a peaceful, rural home, spies in their headquarters are finalizing their plans. A coup is being put in place to rid the country of this totalitarian rule. Voices of disbelief envelop into a clamour because of what they are about to execute. If a single thing goes wrong, the sentence is death for treason. With the vision of a better future, Command gives the signal. Almost as if the clouds are divulging their cover, they foretell the calm before the storm. Ominous clouds gradually lurch across the land, like a warning for those unknowingly in the eye of the storm.

A figure of small stature begins to leave the room as the plan commences. The thought of liberation was emotional to her. She walks outside and finds comfort in the serene and empty environment, it leaves her alone with her thoughts. Someone soon follows and sits next to her.

“You ran out quickly,” the male voice begins. “I was beginning to get worried that you were having second thoughts.”

She looks over at him, disapprovingly. “You know I’ve dedicated everything to this, why would I back out now?” she states.

“Well, we have to get to the first location, so your pondering time needs to be quick,” the boy says from a distance.

“Alright, you don’t have to rush me all the time, Ryder,” she says, chasing after him.

“I know, but it’s fun, Eden,” he sighs.

The pair climb into a vehicle and soon arrive in a city. They walk through the streets as if they were ordinary citizens. They arrive at the financial building and plant an explosive. They position it in a place where there will be no civilian casualties, but severe damage to the building.

Their first order of business is to wound the economic flow to the government. If they were unable to supply their lavish lifestyle, they would accidentally reveal some weaknesses. As the pair puts the final touches on the bomb, Eden reflects on what this dictatorship has taken from her. She has no freedom of speech, her parents are reduced to atoms, her lifestyle of opportunity and flexibility are no more. She was forced to be a slave to the system they put in place.

Eden and Ryder finish and increase their gait. The last thing she thinks about before igniting the device is her parents. She picked up where they left off.

They began the fight for freedom—and she is determined to finish it.

The assignment for this story was to write a descriptive scene based on the photo at right.



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