

Purple On Grey

Premiere Issue
Vol. I



2016-2017

Culture

The 6th grade journalism class has chosen the theme of our literary magazine cover art to be culture. We know that our school has a very diverse student body and we wanted to acknowledge that in our magazine. Since our school is new, it's history has just started.

Over the years, it's traditions and stories will form, and every person that attends will leave a mark on the school. We, as the inaugural class, will be the first to leave an impression upon this school. Our GALA culture will be defined by these traditions and histories, as well as the people that will come, and the people that are

- *Purple on Grey* Journalism

Class

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What Comes Between Us

Paloma Lee-Spera

Dear Amber,

I miss you so much! I wish I hadn't moved here. Life without you is unbearable. I can't seem to make friends at my new school, and the teachers are super strict. I think the kids here don't like me because I'm too fat. I wish you were here. I'll see you soon at my birthday. I'm hoping for a credit card. There are only a few kids here who have them, and I think one would be my ticket to popularity.

How are things back at Aldin? I miss it a ton. Has Josh finally admitted he likes you? He's so cute! I heard Mrs. Derston retired. That's too bad. She was such a great art teacher. I hope they find a good replacement. See you soon!

*Xoxo, your BFF,
Evie*

Dear Evie,

I miss you so much too! I hope you make some new friends soon, but don't forget about me! Just kidding! On a more serious note though, you are not fat! You are beautiful! I know it sounds cheesy, but you are!

Also, no, Josh has not dramatically proclaimed his love for me, like we joked, but I'm still waiting. They still haven't hired a replacement for Mrs. Derston, though, so we have a free period instead of art for now. More time to flirt with Josh though! Can't wait to see you again! I can't believe you're turning 14 now, and I'm not going to be 14 for like, forever! Miss you!

*Love,
Amber*

Dear Amber,

Too bad about Josh. It's so obvious he likes you but he's so shy. Hope they replace Mrs. Derston soon. Though you'll lose valuable flirting time, you'll have art! I would die without it. The art teacher at my new school isn't as awesome as Mrs. Derston, but then again, no one is. He's my favorite teacher anyway, and he says he loves my drawing style. He hung one of my pictures on the board today, and this popular girl, Cindy, gave me such a look. It was hilarious. I just tried not to giggle. (I didn't do a great job.) Guess that ruins my chance of getting with her group. I'm thinking of joining a club to make friends. I'm considering either art or newspaper. My mom wants me to do math, but I told her that's NEVER going to happen. I hate my new math teacher. I think she's a witch. Anyway, she hates me. I think she flunks me on purpose. That reminds me, I'm flunking 2 classes! My mom was so pissed when I brought home my first report

card. She's making me get tutoring. It's not my fault that I started the semester late and have to catch up. See you in 4 weeks!

Your friend,
Evie

Dear Evie,

Can't wait to see you! I'm sick right now, so I'm missing school. I have the flu, but I do get to stay home all day and drink hot cocoa, which would usually be good, but it's Valentines day, and I had to miss school because of it, and the worst part is that Lane told me that she saw Josh with a special valentine addressed to me, and that he looked really sad when she and Helen told Mr. Gilsbury that I had the flu and wouldn't be there.

By the way, Helen is a new girl in our class. She joined a little after you left. She moved here from California!!! Can you believe that? She said she came from Berkeley, which she says is really pretty. I want to go so badly now. She's super cool, and pretty, and everyone wanted to be friends with her, but after we were made partners in science, she became friends with me! I'm kind of popular now because of it. It's weird. All the guys are suddenly drooling over me. Josh still hasn't said anything yet though, and it's so annoying. I mean, if all the guys I don't like have the guts to tell me they like me, why can't he? See you in 3 Saturdays! I got you a present I think you'll like.

Miss you a ton,
Amber

Dear Amber,

I'm really happy for you- that you're making new friends and everything. Also, the guys always drooled over you, you just didn't notice! Things aren't going as well for me over here. The guys make fun of me, and so do the girls, but I mind the guys less. At least they do it to my face and laugh at my jokes. The girls all titter quietly to themselves, making it obvious that I'm not in on something. I joined the art and the newspaper committee, and wanted to join the yearbook committee but that's where all the cool kids go, (that and the dance and cheer team, but I could never make my body do that kind of thing) and they said that I couldn't join and then gave some lame excuse about being overcrowded already, and that to be in you had to sign up at the beginning of the year, but I know that's not true, because they let this annoying skinny, curvey, blonde girl named Lindsey transfer from choir, and then later she said to me- and I quote- "Try losing a few hundred pounds, and maybe they'll let you in." Can you believe that?! I need to make some friends and fast, otherwise it might just be you, Lane and Naomi coming to my birthday party!

Wish you were here,
Evie

Dear Evie,

Gosh, your life sounds awful right now. I wish I could be there to fend off those bullies. I hope your school life gets better. Did you start your tutoring sessions? I hope the classes are getting easier. By the way, I was looking on line or "surfing the web" (that's what Helen calls it.

Isn't that just so California?) and I saw this ad for a "Youth's art contest". I think you should enter. Since you're joining art club, it seems fitting. Also, the winner gets 500 dollars! Wouldn't that be awesome? I can send you the link over email. By the way, do you want to just start emailing instead of writing these letters? I know we agreed to be pen pals, but wouldn't email just be faster?

Anyway, you shouldn't listen to those mean girls. Also, whatever you do, don't try to start a diet. It's so unhealthy for you, and most don't work. If you want to lose weight, go to the gym! If you find a good local one you could make some friends there. Can't wait to come over to your place next weekend. Next time, let's organize a "meetup" (Helen calls play dates "meetups" isn't that so cool?) at my place, and I can introduce you to Helen.

*Xo,
Amber*

Dear Amber,

I think we should stick to letter writing for now. It seems so much more formal and sophisticated. Email's fine for unimportant stuff, but it's more exciting to get a letter in the mail every few days than getting a message in your inbox. By the way, thanks for sending me the link. I'm entering with a piece that I've been working on. I'll show you it this Saturday. Also, it turns out you, Naomi and Lane won't be the only one's at my party! I met this other girl, Charlotte, in Newspaper, who's also kind of chubby like me, so we hit it off right away. She plays violin and is pretty quiet at first, but once she warms up to you she's really sweet and funny. I think you'll like her.

How's the Josh thing going? So far I don't have a crush at my school, but there's this one kind of quiet, nerdy boy in my math and history classes who I think likes me. Lane emailed me last night and told me that he asked you out, but you know Lane. She's sweet, but sometimes she... exaggerates. I can hardly wait for Saturday! Can't wait to fill you in on all the details about school.

*Forever your best friend,
Evie*

Dear Evie,

Your party's probably already happened by the time this gets to you, but yeah, Josh asked me out!! Can you believe it!? It's the best thing that ever happened, and my mom is the worst. I said yes immediately when he asked me out, of course, but my mom said she had to meet him and everything before he took me out! I was so embarrassed, but Josh was really sweet about it, and my parents loved him. Helen is helping me pick out a dress, since she's up to date with all the newest fashions. He's taking me to some movie and fancy restaurant, and all the other girls are so jealous. He asked me out in front of the who class, and Veronica looked so mad when he did. She hasn't talked to me since, but it's only hurting her. I'm even more popular now that Josh and I are dating. We're the first kids in our class to officially be "going out", but my money's on Brian and Aubrey going out soon, and

I'm pretty sure that out of the guys who all like Helen (did I mention she's super gorgeous) I think she'll start dating Aidan.

I'm so excited to see your new art piece. It's sure to win the contest. You're such a good artist! See you soon. I miss you and wish you were here to experience all this with me. It's really kind of exciting.

Love from Chapel Hill,

Amber

Ps. Can't wait to go to Durham! Elijah told me the food there's really good.

Dear Amber,

Thank you so much for those new, sparkly blue high tops. They're so cool! I love them so much and can't wait to show them off at school. All the popular girls are going to go ballistic! None of them have shoes as cool. Some have heels, but these are far cooler. Also, I've finished the art. I've used a blend of acrylics, charcoals, pastels, water colors, and colored pencils. I think it looks really good and I'm really proud of it. There's a picture of it enclosed. If I win, I'll finally have something to boast about, I'll finally really be cool! I can't wait. I'm worried that I won't win though. My entire art club knows about the contest and if I don't win, I'll be letting everyone down. Also, there's this really gossipy girl in Art that would probably spill the beans to the entire school about my losing, and I'd forever be known as the girl who lost the art contest. How embarrassing would that be?!

By the way, I think I'll try to join some kind of team sport (read: my mom is forcing me to join a team sport) I'm considering soccer, but honestly, my problem is my weight. Don't worry, I didn't take what Barbara said seriously, but I do know that I can't be the "fat girl" on the team. That would totally suck. Any tips for losing weight? (I mean besides dieting?)

Also, it's soooooooooooooo awesome that Josh finally asked you out. After all the years of crushing on you he finally got the courage to say so. That's so sweet! I'm so happy for you. Also, on that note, I have a crush. I know it will never work out because he's super jockey and popular, and I'm me, but his name's Will, and he's totally cute. He definitely doesn't like me, but I'm hoping that if I lose a few pounds and join the soccer team (which he's on! Yay!- The team's co-ed. The school can't afford two different teams for boys and girls) he might notice me!

Love ya,

Evie

Ps. Did Elijah end up going to Duke? Maybe I can visit him sometime.

Dear Evie,

Will sounds totally crush-worthy! What does he look like exactly? I want to know all the deets. (That's how they say "details" in California, according to Helen) Also, Josh and I went on our first date!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! It was so romantic- just how I imagined it to be. I wish you could be here now in person so we could giggle over his texts together. On the losing weight note, Helen tells me that back in California men eat a lot of eggs to stay strong and fit. Maybe it will work for you? She says sometimes they even eat them raw! Yuck! Also, try cardio sets. I found a video tutorial on line that I can email you.

But Evie, seriously don't try dieting. It's really bad for your health. Don't think I didn't notice at your party when you said no to cake. Cake! In all the years I've known you, you've never said no to cake. All you ate that day was a few leafs of lettuce from a caesar salad! I know I sound like a broken record but just don't do it. Eat your heart out! It doesn't matter to me how much you weigh, and your true friends shouldn't care about it either. I really care about you and your health, and for your sake, don't diet.

*Love always,
Amber*

Ps. Elijah decided to go to UCLA. Guess what- he also invited the whole family to come out! I'm going to LA!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Helen is teaching me how to act there. She's also teaching me how to flirt with the local boys. Apparently they're really cute. Just because I have a boyfriend doesn't mean they know it!

Dear Amber,

Please don't get mad at me for saying this, but I've found a good sort of "diet" for myself. Working out only made me lose 1 pound, which really isn't enough. I've found that just eating and then spewing it all up works really well. I've already lost 5 pounds! Don't worry, I don't feel sickly at all! In fact, I feel great! Again, don't worry, it's only temporary. After I lose 15 pounds I'm going to just start working out at the gym every other day. I really have to impress Will with a skinny body, because rumor has it that he likes a girl named Avery, who's a cheerleader and is really fit and beautiful. I want Will to like me, but at the same time I feel like it's kind of a lost cause. Do you think so too?

Anyway, on a lighter note, I made the finalist list for the art competition! Isn't that amazing? I'm going against 7 other kids, and they're going to be tough competition. You can see all the artworks on the competition website, and theirs is going to be hard to beat, but I'm confident. I miss you so much. Is there a time that I could come over? I'm free basically always because I have no social life whatsoever. Hope to see you soon!

*Yours truly,
Evie*

Ps. You'll have to send me pics from LA! I totally wish I could come.

Dear Evie,

No. Just no. Please. I'm begging you. Stop right now with your "diet". Do you know what it's called? Bulimia. It's so bad for you. As your best friend of 12 years I'm asking you. Please stop. I wish I could kill every bully in the world who's ever made you think that you're at all fat. You're not, and from the bottom of my heart, please Evie, don't do this. If Will is good enough for you, then he won't care about how much you weigh. If he does care, then he just lost a chance at the most amazing girl in the world. Please stop caring so much about your weight. If no one else will try to stop you, I will. I love you so much Evie, and I can't stand you doing this to yourself. I will do anything in my power to get you healthy and confident again.

*Your Loving Friend,
Amber*

Ps. I saw the competition website. The other contestants' art is nothing you can't beat.

Dear Amber,

Guess what, I've made two new friends! They're also really skinny and semi-popular. You'd like them. I'm not really friends with Charlotte anymore because my new "cooler" friends didn't like her. By the way, their names are Adrika- she's Indian, and has really pretty skin and highlights in her hair- and Daphne- she has naturally curly golden brown hair- and they look a little like you in body type at least, but you all have different hair and skin colors. I can't wait for you to meet them. Maybe we could all meet each other at Ardey's- the corner store where all the cool kids meet. I've been there a few times now and no one's been out right mean to me! I'm finally fitting in! I've lost 12 pounds already, and I joined the soccer team, and guess what? I'm not the fattest kid on the team! This dumb little geeky/nerd girl named Alison. Ugh.

Adrika and Daphne are also on the soccer team as well as the swim team and they're on the yearbook committee! Maybe this means I'll have a decent yearbook picture for once! I still wish you were here, my new friends are great, but it's nothing like you. Miss you!

Hugs,

Evie

Dear Evie,

I'm really happy for you! It's great that you're making new friends, but I still insist that it's not because of your new found weight loss, but because you just have new confidence. You've always been a likeable person, but you lacked the confidence to put yourself out there. I still wish you'd stop your diet, but I'm glad you're more happy with yourself. Also, guess what- Josh got me a puppy!!!!!! It's so cute. He's a little bichon frise pup that I named "Marshmallow". I can't wait for you to see him! Josh is so romantic. I wish you hadn't left. All the romance and action started right after you left! I was right, Brian and Aubrey did start going out! Brian totally copied Josh though, he also asked her out in front of the whole class. I hope Will will ask you out soon. Those pictures of him you showed me at your party are so cute! You have good taste in men.

Your bestie,

Amber

Dear Amber,

OMG! Your relationship with Josh sounds awesome! I wish someone would get me a dog! Even if it wasn't Will I'd start dating him. By the way, I'm getting pretty good at soccer. Coach Rolan moved me up to the advanced team- where Will is!!!! Right now I've been working out and doing my "diet", because I just found the best hamburger place in town and I couldn't live without eating there. Adrika and Daphne also took some really cute shots of me, and since Adrika is one of the yearbook's photographers, she said she'd put them in! Finally! You know how all yearbook pictures of me are always bad.

I've also made another new friend- Carmen. She's really nice and smart, and reminds me of you. Also, my parents are arranging a camping trip with all my friends, so you'll get to meet them! You could also bring Marshmallow so I could see him. I want a dog so badly but my parents won't let me get one because Dad's allergic.

See you soon,
Evie

Dear Evie,

I'm really worried about you. I think you're taking this "weight thing" too far. I'm glad that you're happy, but this won't be good for you in the long run. I'd love to come on that camping trip. Please send me the date and campsite. Also, I can't bring Marshmallow along because he's kind of an "inside dog" (aka, the only time he goes outside is to pee and poo), but I can bring pictures.

Also, guess what? Josh and I went on a second date! We went to a movie together, then met up with Brian and Aubrey at Hanley's. It wasn't as classy as our first date but it was way more fun. I hope someday we'll be able to double date- you, me, Josh, and Will!

But seriously, Evie. As a person who truly cares about your well-being, please stop your diet, and if you won't listen to me, listen to someone else.

From,
Amber

Ps. Have you found out who won the art contest yet? I'm positive you'll win, but I'm itching to know for sure.

Pps. Lane says hi.

Amber-

I can't believe you did this to me. You are an awful friend and an awful person. Things were just starting to look up for me! The popular girls didn't whisper behind my back as much and some of the nicer ones even nodded at me in the halls- acknowledging my existence! Will even looked at me at soccer practice and asked if I'd want to be on his team for practice! You ruined everything! Everything was going great! I'd lost 32 pounds! I know it's more than I said I would, but things were going great! I can't believe what you did. The worst thing in the world. You told my mom!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I remember seeing the two letters in the mailbox that day. I thought it was weird that one was addressed to my mom instead of only the usual one for me, but I just gave it to my mom cluelessly. It just proves how much I trusted you! And then imagine what was in that envelope. A copy of the letter I'd sent you and a note explaining things! I thought those things were supposed to be private! I despise you so much right now. You are so heartless! You didn't even think about my feelings with all that stuff about Helen, and I kept quiet, unlike you! You don't care a bit about my feelings and I'm done being friends with you. Now I'm being homeschooled. Homeschooled! Any social life I might have had is down the drain and it's all because of you! I don't even know why I'm writing this. Bottom line is I hate you, you're the worst friend in the world, I hope I never see your ugly face again, and GET OUT OF MY LIFE!

Your former friend,
Evie Longstache

Ps. I hate you so much. Clearly you care more about California, and boys and your life than mine. We are not friends anymore.

Pps. A heartfelt, sappy apology letter from you won't make this any better. We're over.

Years later, Evie and Amber had both graduated college. They both had jobs. They both had husbands. They also had new addresses, so Evie had no idea how Amber tracked her down, but one day in July she was looking through her mail, separating junk from important when she found a letter addressed to her. She thought it was strange, for most mail was addressed to her husband, with the occasional holiday card from her mother. The return address said "Amber Lievley". She opened the letter, read the opening line and her tears wet the page.

Dear Evie,

You knew me as Amber Agdale, but it's still me. Recently, I found a box with our correspondence from our teenage years, and tracked you down purely to say I'm so, so, sorry. I was an awful friend. I hope you realize that telling your mother was only my way of trying to protect you, but the way I went about it was wrong. I hope that you and your family are well. I followed you all through high school, and until college, when I finally lost track of you. I wanted you to know that I still view you as a friend, no matter what regards you hold me in. I miss you, and I hope you can forgive me. I apologize for all the things I ever said or did that hurt you. I'm not asking you to suddenly love me again. I realize that that sort of thing takes time. I am however, begging you as a friend to not remember me when you're a hundred years old as the awful friend who ruined your middle and high school life. I still remember you as an amazing person and I know that you remembering me the same way is much more than I can ask for. However, if you could find it in your heart not to loathe me, I would be forever grateful.

Sincerely,

Amber Lievly

Ps. I know you won that art contest. I offer you a long overdue congratulations.

Dear Amber,

I still love you. Your act- intervening in my crazy "diet" was the truest act of friendship you could have demonstrated. I realize that now, and that I am the one who should apologize to you. You are and always have been an amazing friend. In all the years after you, I still haven't found a better friend, or even a friend equal to you.

Thank you, now and forever onward,

Evie Rudley

Butterflies

Zelda Moriwaki

“OH MY GOD, HE KISSED YOU!?!?!?” Lana shouts loud enough to shatter the ears of anyone within our solar system. My face heats up, and I stare at my dark denim shoes. “It’s not like we’re together or anything,” I mumble, but she just rolls her eyes.

“So Ash, when am I gonna meet your boyfriend?” She asks, seemingly unaware that she’s embarrassing me in front of everyone.

“One, Max is NOT my boyfriend. Two, please don’t act like my mom and interrogate him.”

“I’m your best friend, it’s my job!”

I just laugh, shaking my head. Then I see him. He’s sitting on a park bench, with his hands in his pockets. I flush again, and Lana follows my gaze. With a mischievous glint in her eyes, she grabs my hand and drags me towards him.

He watches with amusement until Lana plops me on the bench next to him. Then he coughs, which sounds suspiciously like a laugh.

“Did you just *laugh* at me?” I raise my eyebrows.

“Wouldn’t you love to know?” He taunts, grinning.

“Yes! I would! Tell me before I cut your head off!”

“Why are you so violent? I’m your boyfriend, you’re supposed to actually like me!” Max wipes a fake tear off his cheek.

I don’t respond. I’m too busy watching Lana pretend to swoon and mouth *I told you so!* How the heck does she think that’s romantic?

“I’m gonna give you two some personal space,” she says, winks at me, and walks away.

Neither of us speak, and he stares at me with a small smile. Finally, he asks “what are you doing right now?”

“Umm, talking to you?” It comes out like a question.

“Well, not anymore. Now you are going to come with me to get frozen yogurt.” He grins and we cross the park, to where shops line the street like lace. A bell jingles as I push on the door, and we browse the flavor options.

“Okay, that’s \$8.99,” the man behind the counter informs us. I dig through my wallet, but all I have is a one dollar bill. I really need to go to the bank. I show it to Max, who just shrugs.

“It’s fine, I’ll pay,” he says, handing the man a credit card.

Minutes later, I’m devouring chocolate mocha yogurt sprinkled with Oreo™ bits. Max leans over and brushes his thumb over my nose. “You had some chocolate on your face,” he explains, but he doesn’t move away.

My heart beat is so loud it awakens a cloud of butterflies in my stomach. When he finally pulls away, a part of me is disappointed.

He takes a huge bite of his frozen yogurt and gags. "Dis tastes like rotten eggs!" He yells, his mouth still full of dairy.

"Next time, don't order amaretto froyo!"

I giggle until it becomes a roaring laugh and I have a pounding headache. Max glares at me.

"You think this is funny?"

"Oh, I know it is," I assure him once I've calmed down. My heart starts hammering again though, when he tilts towards me. His eyes travel my face, lingering on my lips. He doesn't seem so angry anymore. My breath hitches in my throat as he gazes at me.

"Is this funny?" he murmurs, right before his lips meet mine. I wrap my arms around his neck, trying to close the little distance between us.

When I finally leave the park, it's dark out. "Bye Ash!" he calls as I turn towards St. Kilda street. I smile, lightly running my fingers across my lips.

"Bye Max," I whisper to the silence.

A Day Without A Woman...

Eleanor Renfrew

March 8th, 2017 was a day without women. The world fell into panicky chaos without it's strong leaders and ambitious role models.

The world was a complete mess. Some kids couldn't go to school because there were no teachers to teach them lessons. The feeling of comfort that came from having a home was completely gone without a female's love and support. There was no Statue Of Liberty to represent liberty and freedom for America. In other words, the world had a total meltdown and all hell broke loose. Work in many hospitals, science labs, courts, schools, and more wasn't getting done because they didn't have a strong women to lead them.

The world even sounded harsh without a "delicate" little girl's voice to cheer you up when you've had a bad day, but to then inspire you to do more. Men were realizing that they could never go a day without a women, because they would never get anything done.

The world didn't have the scent of a sweet perfume instead it was a scent of strong deodorant and greasy hair. The day was pretty much long, sad, and miserable without a mother's love saying "It's okay sweetheart" or even the long boring sounds of her lecturing you about how to take out the trash when you've done it wrong. There were no lives being born either which totally threw off the system of how often a baby was being born in a certain time frame.

From that day on everyone realized they needed a woman in their life.

The Post Office

Helen Torres

Ashley and I were at my house since she decided to stop by and stay for a while. It was around the time when my mother would make me run some errands of hers. Always around 4 or 3 o'clock she would sent me to do errands usually is to go ask for some sugar from our neighbors.

Ashley and I were currently playing Bingo since we had nothing else to do. Ashley kept on winning for some odd reason like she always wins except for checkers I always win that game.

"Ashley why don't you let ME win for once??" I demand frustratedly.

"Why don't YOU let me win at checkers?" she retorts.

"Fair point," I admit, nodding my head.

My mother's knock on the door interrupts our bickering.

"Ariel? Can I come in?" my mom asks from outside.

"Yeah mom we're just playing bingo," I answered, opening the door for her. My mother held a letter in her left hand and a banana in the other.

"Ariel, I need you to take this letter to the post office," she said urgently, "It's very important! Please don't ask any questions I'm in a hurry because the post office closes early today."

"Okay, Okay. I do have to ask though, why do I need a banana, am I going to mail that as well?" I asked with a giggle.

"No Ariel, it's a snack for you to eat," my mom said. "When you come back, I need you to do your essay which might I remind you, is due tomorrow," she continued, while handing me the banana and the letter.

"Well okay then I'll be back in 5 minutes" I called, walking out of the room while Ashley followed me close behind. While eating my banana, we walked and out of the corner of my eye, I see the post office

"Race yah, "I challenge, before sprinting off towards the post office. On my way, I tossed the banana peel in a trash can.

"As if," Ashley replied back, her eyes gleamed with old mischief.

As Ashley tried to catch up to me, I saw the blue mail bin and I stopped running and slipped the letter in.

She panted, her blond hair glistening with sweat, "Sorry Ariel, but I have to leave! I gotta go home before dark, luckily my house is across the street!"

"Alright bye. See you later!" I called before I began to run back home to my room where I opened my computer and started to write my essay.

However, when I got home I immediately saw the old pictures hanging on the wall of my dad before he died. Instead of working on my essay, I began to sob. Those photos brought back so many memories, all the happy times I had shared with him. I soon forced myself to stop moping and get back to work, but by then, there was no time.

The next day, I hurried off to school, without realizing that I forgot to finish my writing. Ms. Myerson, my high school english teacher, walked in. Her glossy brown hair draped her sunflower patterned dress. "Please turn in your essay," she instructed as she sat down at her desk.

"Did you finish it?" whispered Ashley. Today, she wore a light layer of blush on her cheeks that accompanied the freckles that splashed her cheeks.

My face paled, "Ummm..."

"You didn't do it," Ashley said, a little too loudly though.

Ms. Myerson looked up from her computer, "What was that?"

My cheeks turned pink in embarrassment. "I didn't finish my assignment," I muttered loud enough for Ms. Myerson to hear.

"Why didn't you finish?" she asked softly.

"Because I was with..." I responded stuttering.

"With who? So I'm guessing that this person didn't finish their work either"

"Don't be a snitch Ariel" whispered Ashley.

"If you can't tell me then you and Ms. Robinson will be going to detention again" yelled Ms. Myerson.

"Great... Now we have detention again", I reply with a long sigh..

"Wonderful", Ashley muttered with a eye roll.

Last Week of My Life

Genesis Harris

Today is the day...the last week of my life to be exact. I need to figure out something to do that will probably change history. Or have people remember me. However, what would I do? I suffer from a Brain tumor and I want to make t

his the best week of my life before I die, which is expected to be next week.

Maybe I can sky dive or scuba dive or just-just...something creative. However, I can't do such a thing because of my brain tumor. So maybe not something extreme but epic i guess I was thinking on what to do until I thought of the dumbest but funnest idea ever, but first I need to think of what to name it. How about the DBFBP, the DBF is "dumbest but funnest" but we will talk about the B and P later or you'll figure out. Now I have to go to the post office and buy some stamps and the grocery store to buy some bananas.

My life has always been a pain because of. My family getting divorced, me getting cancer, and getting bullied at school for being bald and nerdy, however my parents have always told me to be strong so I'm carrying that thought with me wherever I go. Also I want the rude people and all the bullies to remember me for doing such a project. Anyways I'm at the post office getting stamps and about to pay at the register.

"Hey little one, why are you getting stamps?" The post office worker asked me with a smile.

I didn't know what to say but I didn't want to be rude.

"Well I'm getting stamps," I responded in confusion.

"Ok. Well, be safe," he said as we both walked away.

When I was done buying stamps, I went home and started researching on my mom's computer. I was on it all day, trying to see if anyone had done my idea. Surprisingly, no one had done it. So, I got the bananas and started putting stamps on them, then put them in the post office. There were boxes all over the neighborhood, and I waited until the mail picker....upper person came and picked them up.

Depending on how far the person is away from you it would take about 3 days for the mail to get to the people. So I waited for three days hoping that I wouldn't die by then and I didn't so on the 3rd day I waited for the mail person to come and she delivered them to the WHOLE ENTIRE NEIGHBORHOOD. This was amazing and I never knew you can mail food so this was a game changer for me. On the news people will hear my name and always remember me for mailing bananas to the whole Swellview neighborhood.

Fake News

Jade Statshin

“MEGAN!!” David Dulling yelled from the newsroom.

“I’m coming Mr. Dulling,” replied a young woman with a heavy british accent as she rushed in from across the office. She had large brown eyes, and her auburn hair was tied tightly into a neat bun.

“You’re late and it’s your first day on the job as a reporter here at The Global Print,” Mr. Dulling noted disapprovingly. “And not to be rude, but you forgot my coffee.”

“Here,” Megan said, handing her boss a cup of coffee. “Black with no cream or sugar.”

Mr. Dulling let out a satisfied grunt before he addressed the other journalists, “Now listen up and listen good, because I’m only gonna say this once. This young lady, fresh out of college, is your new co-worker. Her name’s Megan Ames. She’s from England, if you were wondering why she sounds funny,” Mr. Dulling joked. “Thank you for your attention. Get back to work.”

“Sir... what do I do? You haven’t assigned me a seat,” Megan asked politely after Mr. Dulling turned back to his desk, evidently having forgotten her presence.

“You can sit over there, the empty seat far in the corner,” He directed before thrusting a sheet of paper in her hands. “This paper has a list of stories to choose from. Choose a topic, research, and write.”

Megan nodded to her boss then walked down the aisle of desks before sitting down. Then at her new desk she took a look at the paper. There were a shortlist of 6 events to research on, but only one story stood out to her. *Post Office Robbed of its Packages. The robber, only armed with a book.* With her choice in mind she turned on her computer and got started.

She found it quite hard to find information about her topic, as for some reason, there wasn’t any news about it. It was like the event hadn’t even taken place. After a total hour of searching the web, Megan was really upset with herself. She ALWAYS got the job done, but this time she couldn’t. She decided to tell her boss about the matter at the end of the day.

“Mr. Dulling. I’m very sorry to interrupt you, but there is absolutely NO information about the topic I’ve chosen!” Megan fumed, her voice tense with frustration. “The web makes it look like the event never took place!!!”

“That’s because it didn’t!!” Mr. Dulling burst out loud, laughing along with everyone else.

“I’m sorry sir, I don’t understand,” Megan said, confused, and still . “Did you make up the story?”

“Of course I did!! Well actually, it was John who came up with the story,” Mr. Dulling gestured to a young man who was working in the front of the room. “Sorry let me explain. It’s a tradition here to give the newbie a fake story to research on.”

“Seriously? Was that really necessary? ” she asked. “Does this mean that buying you coffee is a joke too?”

“No. The coffee part is real,” he said. “Anyways, tomorrow's when the real work begins. Go home. Get well rested. You're gonna have a lot of work.”

Megan nodded before heading out the door but she stopped when she heard her boss.

“Would you mind bringing me a banana along with my coffee? I get really hungry at work!” he called to her as she closed the door behind her.

“Who knew I'd be researching fake news on my first day?” Megan whispered to herself as she headed out of the office.

The Worst Day of My Life

Jillian King

Beep Beep. Another dm from Instagram. Don't they know that I'm in school right now? I can't wait until this class is over. Finally, the bell rings, and I run out of the class, into the bathroom. Great. 32 missed calls and 4 missed texts from Zelda and her crew.

"Elle, you smell like a monkey" -Zelda

"Fishy Elle you look like a boar. HAHAAHAHAHA" - Jackie

"Your such a dork"- Mal

"You need to shut up. You look and act so stupid. Loser" -Summer

Great another text. What now Zelda? Oh wait, it's not Zelda ... it's Matthew . Great. Just great.

"Hey loser, you brought my lunch money today? And if I catch you looking at Noah, you're gonna have to give me your lunch money for the next four months."

OH.MY.GOSH. I can't believe that this is happening right now. First, the Z Squad is making fun of me, and now Matthew is forcing me not to look at Noah anymore. How did they even get my phone number in the first place? Ughh. They just walked into the bathroom. How am I going to get out of this now? I held my breath and made sure the stall door was locked.

"That girl Elle is so annoying. She is always like " Hi Krystle, can we be partners?" or " Hey K, how's Noah? Does he have a girlfriend yet?"

"And she doesn't know that I payed Matthew to scare her away from Noah for the rest of the school year," I hear somebody say.

I am so mad my face turns red like a fire. I can't believe the girl who called herself my best friend, the person who knew that I liked Noah, and purposely tried to scare me away from him, and gave the most popular girls in the whole school my phone number so that they could make fun of me. She is a backstabbing friend, that's for sure!

"I know right. I mean doesn't she know that he's my boyfriend? Hasn't she seen us kiss at lunch before?" said Zelda.

" Ugh, let's go before we starting smelling like dead cats," taunted Summer.

After they left, I burst out of the bathroom stall I burst into tears and ran all the way to the back of the cafeteria and cried until there was no more water to in my eyes. As lunch ended I saw Krystle, Zelda, Noah and the Z Squad walking out the door. Zelda turned and kissed Noah right in my face to make me jealous. They all walked away except for one, Noah. He stood there staring at me like I was an alien or something. As I turned to get up he started to walk towards me. I started running so fast I didn't even see the trash can and I fell right into it head first. It seemed like I was going through a black hole filled with trash.Filled with wrappers, glasses, braces, bananas and others things I don't want to know. It felt like it was forever when

someone finally pulled me out of there and as I turned around I saw flashing lights from all around the cafeteria. I scanned the room looking for Noah, when I find ex best friend, standing there laughing and taking pictures of me. She doesn't see me looking at her and as I start to walk away she ran up to me like she cared and said in her fake "I care for you" voice

"O.MY.GOSH. Ellie what they heck happened to you. You look like Steve the Dweeb threw up on you" she said trying hold back her laugh but was letting some of it out.

"Krystle, you don't have to act fake. I know you were talking about me with the Z squad. Are you a part of the bully group now?"

"What are you talking about? You used to talk about me with Branden and all of them so it's time for payback. You can't even tell anybody my secrets because they were all fake" she said so loud that the whole cafeteria heard it. I was so embarrassed that my face turned red like a tomato. I ran to the janitor's closet so fast and didn't even check to see if anyone is following me. Honestly, I really didn't care anymore. As soon as I got in the closet and closed the door I heard a click. Then laughing. Another click on the door. As I tried to open the door I realized that I was stuck. I started screaming and crying my heart out. Outside the door I heard Krystle saying

"Now you can't backstab anyone else like you did me. I hope you learned your lesson. HAHA" she said. At this point I didn't even recognize my best friend anymore. As I sat in the janitor's closet starting to smell like stinky feet, I heard a click. As I got up I heard the door open and in the doorway it was..... Krystle. Great. As I looked at the clock I saw it was already 8:30.

"Why are you here?" I said to her.

"Look, the Z squad told me to do those things and I did them because you know how much I want to be popular. Also, now my crush since 9th grade broke up with Clare to be with me, how great is that!!!"

"Really. So you bullied me just to be popular? I'm sorry ,but I can't be best friends with some like that."

"Fine. if you want to be like that " she said and pushed me into my own locker.

The next day I starting screaming asking for help. While I was leaning up against the door of my locker someone opened it and I fell. As soon as I got out of my locker I ran out of school and back home. I went to the backyard and hopped the fence and ran away. They never found me.

Journey to Ellis Island

Natalia Castillo

As I see the light of the morning sun shine through the curtains, I start to realize *today is the day I go to America.*

I pull the sheets off my body and jump out of bed as my Auntie approaches me.

“Daniella, today is the big day! You’re finally going to reunite in America with you parents,” my auntie asked, but I knew something was wrong.

I feel a pang of sadness in my heart, she was not going to accompany me on the long journey.

“Are you ready?” my auntie asked.

“You’re coming to America right?” I asked, ignoring her question. “How long are you going to stay here in Italy?”

“Do you have your suitcase all packed up and your clothes ready?” My auntie asked once more.

“Yes,” I said, looking into my bag for reassurance. “All I packed was some money, a bottle of water, a journal and pen, some stamps, an envelope, and my favorite pillow.”

“Well you better hurry up or you are going to be late, the boat leaves in 20 minutes.” My auntie said. It was the first time I realized the glistening tears that streamed down her cheeks. She could tell I was upset that I’ll have to let her go, and I could tell she is too.

10 minutes passed and I was ready to board the boat. I gave my auntie one last hug and off I went onto the boat.

“Excuse me can you please tell me which class I’m in?” I asked, hoping the man spoke my language.

“Yes you are in first class at the top. You better hurry on up there young lady,” he advised, before continuing, “The boat leaves in five minutes y’know.”

As I hurried up to the first class section I hear the boat’s engine getting ready to take off. My journey has begun. I ran to the deck of the boat and waved bye bye to my auntie.

"Bye I will miss you!!" I cried out to my auntie who was on the sidewalk looking at me from afar.

As soon as I was aboard, I looked for a place to sit for my 4 day ride to Ellis Island. "Hopefully I didn't forget anything at home or i'll be in big trouble" I whispered to myself.

By nightfall, my spirits began to fall. I soon realized that I'll miss my auntie while I'm gone. At least I get to live with my mother and father in America.

Suddenly I heard this noise coming from the loudspeaker "All boarding is now closed ,please head to your class, ship is departing in one minute,again all boarding is now closed ,please head to your class, ship is departing in one minute."

Two days passed and nothing very exciting happened,just waiting and waiting for time to pass to reach ellis island so I can get this journey over with.Only one and a half more days until I get to America.

Another night passed and I began to feel bored. There was absolutely NOTHING to do on the ship, and not to mention, it got me sea sick too. I *did* do things to cheer myself up though. I dreamt of going to college and getting a degree there. Then get a job as a teacher when I'm 16. I know it's silly, a girl wanting to go to college, but it's my dream. Until then, I plan to live in New York with my parents and hopefully soon my auntie will be able to join us in America.

I heard the honk of the passenger ship and men from outside my room shouting that were was only 3 more hours until I get to Ellis Island. Finally, I've been anticipating hits moment for so long, ever since I had the opportunity. I took a breath and stepped through the wooden doorway.

I walked up to the desk and they asked me, "Can I see your papers and can the doctor check you."

I took the crumpled white sheets out and handed it over. "Here," I mumbled. My heart was pounding, I was afraid that they were going to keep me here.

"You are all ready to go to america just go down these stairs and the boat will leave soon," said the doctor.

This is probably one of the best days I've had first I'm all clear to go to america and I also got to see my parents.

There is Always Faith in Friendship

Poema Hernandez

Dear diary,

diary, I will tell you the worst school year ever at Stevenson Middle School (worst year for me). The year started off with knowing what advisory you are in. I ran to school with tons of excitement of my first day of middle school and went to the office. Just to find my name under the list of the worst 6th grade teacher ever! Mr.Grey. My older sister Danielle warned me about Mr.Grey. She said she had him for history period and he was so boring and gave mountains of homework. I have heard from Danielle's friends that every time you don't do the homework, you will have detention for 3 weeks. But I decided not to believe her. I thought it was just an old folk's tale about him.`

The bell rang as I ran to classroom 604, but apparently the bell I heard was the late bell. I walked inside the class and put my head down because of the embarrassing situation, Mr.Grey looked mad, everyone looked at me like if I just killed someone, and the only seat available was a desk with a squeaky chair in front of the teachers desk. It turns out the "old folk's tale" about Mr.Grey giving overboard punishments was true. Many kids ignored the piles of homework that were given and faced it. Of course, my class never won the homeroom of the week (was determined by class with least detentions).

About three weeks after, fliers started going around the school hallways. I overheard the conversations of the popular girls talking about going to the mall and salon to get themselves

styled for the perfect look. I started to head to the pick up area from my school and saw my mom pulling up. I ran to the car(so the chances of the whole school seeing my old beat up car and laughing) just to hear my mom say,

“ You are getting your braces today! Start doing your homework so you won’t have piles of it late at night!”

Great. My mom acts like if I am going to look soo pretty with a face filled with red acne scars, a pair of ugly cheap glasses, and some braces? Why won’t she reschedule the appointment till after picture day. Yes. I remembered that I get car sick while doing homework in the car and always end up throwing up.

“Mom can you please take me to the mall and the salon on thursday to have the perfect look for picture day?” I asked my mom, crossing my fingers for a yes.

“ No sorry. You already have plenty of good clothes and you always look beautiful!” my mom replied to me as she kept on taking sips of her iced coffee.

“ Yeah like if I don’t have clothes from goodwill and don’t have acne.” I murmured.

The next day, our P.E coach visited the classrooms to do P.E uniform fittings. She always was a loud speaker so she will blurt out the sizes. I was very scared because I am very obese and from what I saw from my desk looked extremely tiny for me. Of course, the rest of the class could fit into it and I couldn’t. My teacher called up my name and gave me an XXL in kids. I tried on the shorts and there was a tearing noise. I blushed and my coach blurted out,

“Well I guess XXL won’t work. Just bring red shorts and a black shirt.”

I felt super embarrassed. My face got really hot as I sat down on my chair. Not only I didn’t fit into an XXL but I teared up the shorts! That is so not fair why didn’t they order adult sizes? Now I have to wear logo less cheap goodwill red shorts and black t-shirt. Ugh I wish I can be like my

7th grade sister. Fit, perfect, cheerleader, popular, pretty, and blonde! At least she is the only person who is nice to me on earth. Her friends are the ones who make her exclude me!

Picture day came. Of course, I forgot that it was the day. My hair was down and puffy and I had just came back from P.E . I had my P. E uniform on (the plain black shirt and shorts). My braces started to hurt and I made a painful face.

"Can... can I retake??" I said as I was walking off the ugly background my mom chose for my picture. He ignored me. Probably I said it too quiet.

Class pictures came. Brittany (the bratty popular girl) opened her package and glanced at the picture. She was sitting in the back of the room with her group of bratty friends and pointed to somewhere a on the page. They started to laugh soo hard then all the kids in the class,(except me) ran to the group and joined the laughing. I walked slowly to the group to the back of the group to see of what they were laughing at. I took a glimpse and saw the picture. They were laughing at me! I came out horrendous! Terrible! I took a small glance to Brittany's photo and she came out absolutely perfect! Her nice silky brown hair was in a perfect high ponytail, her green eyes sparkled, and she had the perfect smile! I ran to the restroom and started to cry. I looked both ways in the hall. I saw Eric (my crush) getting things from his locker meanwhile everyone was heading to class as the bell rang. I couldn't help it but cry more. I texted my mom on my ugly old cracked flip phone and lied that I didn't feel good. Five minutes later my mom picked me up. I ran upstairs to my small bedroom that was meant to be a closet and cried. Later on we picked up Danielle. She had a bouquet of red roses and I asked her "Where are those from?"

After that, I got the worse news ever. It turns out that Eric is dating my sister. That is why he is soo nice to me! I thought he was just being nice to be a good friend but all he was doing all this time was just for my sister. When Danielle took a seat in the car, she handed me a cheerleading tryout flier and smiled at me. It was a relief. The school's cheerleading routines look very simple. I probably can make it (I have had some experiences in school cheerleading at my elementary school). So far I had tried out. I felt like If I did very very good. But Becky declined me and accepted stupid Clair. She doesn't even know how to do a cartwheel!

What happened

Someone found Alisa's diary in the school. Alisa doesn't know who it was but someone in the school, has a hold of her diary and her secrets. That is why Alisa couldn't finish.

Becky's side of the story

Dear Diary,

Today me and Payton are hosting cheerleading try-outs. I am so excited to see who is good enough to be in our team! I went to Payton's house yesterday and she said she wants girls in the team that are popular, good looking, and fit. I thought her rules were stupid. I tried telling her that a true cheerleader that deserves to be on the team should be kind, a good team member, and has good technique. But she ignored me and acted like if she didn't care. I shrugged and said bye to her. Today at school I was hosting the try- outs. Alisa came up to me and said if she can try out. But stupid Payton was around. Payton came up to me and said, " Eww. Why did you let Alisa try out??? She is not going to make it no matter how hard she tries! First of all, she is not fit, not pretty, or popular! So please! Stop being such a sweetheart

and motivating all of the unpopular girls! Just please stop or I will kick you out of the popular girls and the cheer squad!"

"But I am the captain of the team! A co- captain can never kick out the official captain of the team!" I said as a tear was going to come out of my eye. I stormed out the gym and called my mom to pick me up. I personally think Alisa did amazing! She was on count and had a lot of energy. Payton told me who she wants to pass, it turns out that Claire, Diana, and Chloe made the team. Those girls were the worst at cheerleading but I couldn't help it. I was too afraid of Payton.

Dear Diary,

Today at school I decided to confess to my friends that I don't wanna be in their dumb squad anymore. This is what they said,

Payton: WHAT!! You can not leave or no one will like you. Don't you wanna be popular?

Me: I don't care! You guys always tell me what to do and make me look like a bully to others!

I am tired of this!

Yay! I am officially out of their group. But later in the day, I got the worst news ever.

"I am breaking up with you. We are over." Jeremy said as I started to burst into tears.

"But...but why???" I said as I looked at Jeremy's bored face as he was talking to me.

"It's just that you are not in the popular group and you make me look like a fool when I am around you because NO ONE will want to hang out with me because you're not popular anymore so STOP ASKING QUESTIONS!",and stormed off.

So that's what happened. The next day, of course there was rumors about Jeremy asking Payton out for the upcoming dance. I was completely heartbroken. I am now a loner at school and everyone hates me from all the rumors Peyton spread about me. I've been sitting alone at lunch today. Until I noticed that Alisa also sits alone. Her sister Danielle is nice. So maybe she

is nice to. I went up to Alisa and sat next to her. I was right she is very very nice! We started sitting next to each other at lunch every day together and became very good friends. We left all of our struggles behind and moved on through the years. Of course, we both didn't have anyone to go to the dance with. I invited her to my house, missed the dance and had an awesome weekend sleepover. I always thought I will have no friends for the rest of the year. But there is always faith in friendship.

My Journey To Ellis Island

Katie Cruz

July 7, 1892

I am afraid. It has taken a lot to get me to admit that to myself-or at least write on paper. It took tears and sickness and trials and... yes, and death. But I am here now. And I am afraid.

You know, dear journal, I almost feel better now, after writing that down. *I am afraid.* Something about writing things down is therapeutic...or maybe it's just the feel of the charcoal stump in my hand that makes me remember home. That makes me remember the touch of the grass, softer than a baby's skin, and the feel of sweet solid land beneath my bare feet. It makes me remember the pure summer air and the breeze playing in Saoirse's beautiful hair and the sound of her giggling laugh, the sound of a child that life has not dragged down yet.

But I'm being a fool. Funny how distance turns nightmares to fairy tales.

Is it more painful to know that your family loves you, yet sent you away, then to know your family hates you and sent you away? I'm not sure. All I do know is that every time I allow myself to remember that I am going to America, not on my will, but on theirs, I feel a strange sort of pain in my chest. It's a contraction, a twist, that makes me feel like my heart is being slowly wrung out like a day-old dress in the laundry.

But to the point. Shall I describe my journey? I imagine that in my version of happily ever after, I read this to Saoirse in a field of soft grasses and yellow wildflowers and laugh and say, oh, how young and poor we once were! And if that reality was true, then I shall record the events of my journey for her. And if it can't be true, well, I can pretend, can't I?

It began with a ticket. I remember the smug, condescending looking on that horrid woman O'Brien's powdered, horrifically tight-skinned face as she said, "Even though you're MY slave, you'll be traveling steerage. Which means you're going to Ellis Island." She squinted cheekily as she waved it in all it's cheap glory in my face. "Can you read?"

I steamed self-righteously. "Thank you, Mrs. O'Brien," I had said, forcing my face into a plausibly demure expression. "I do believe I can read, but I appreciate your concern in the finer aspects of my education. And slavery is abolished in America at the moment. I think the correct term is 'indentured servant.'"

O'Brien froze, her face blank, blank, blank. The calm before the storm.

And it came. SLAP! My cheek stung and a single drop of blood welled. It slowly dripped down the porcelain of my face to my chin before staining my chemise with a tiny splotch of crimson. A scarlet tear.

“Do you understand what indentured means, girl? I means you must pay me back. Unfortunately, your family’s sum is so large that a lifetime of labor won’t do. I’m being merciful, girl. You should be groveling at my feet. Talk back again and you’ll be on a boat back to Ireland.”

I pretend to be suitably humbled. Truly, I fantasize about punching her bony crooked nose through her thick skull and into her pea-sized brain.

“Apologize,” she hissed.

“Apologies, Mrs. O’Brien.”

“Madame,” she says smugly, brushing of her hands as if I were something too disgusting to make physical contact with and quite possibly contagious.

My blood boiled.

Fast forward the tragic goodbyes, the actual tears both Saoirse and I shed for each other, the long, long, long, trip to the docs, and the even longer line, and I was on a boat headed for America. More specifically, for New York.

When I arrived, I found my way to my bunk, which was, according to the blasted ticket, #00084. The sheer number of zeros before the 8 was enough to have me shaking in my boots, but I didn’t. If there was one thing I had ever learned, it was to never show fear. Better cover it up with a smile or a joke or a snarky comment, better hide it from the world and from yourself until it seems so insignificant that it vanishes.

Unfortunately, my fear never quite seems to go anywhere.

I dropped my bag onto my bunk with a *thump* that became an enormous *CLANG!* from the rickety, creaking metal posts. I remember, all at once, feeling the fear come flooding back all in one. Bending down with a sigh, I rifle through my one dress, heavy and pleated and green and awful, my one hat, felted and not quite as awful, my scarf, my gloves, my boots, my brooch, and my...

Pennywhistle.

Blonde hair, fair skin, watering blue eyes that were exactly like my own, wind on the docs as the horn of a boat tolled. *Keep this close, my Oonah*, she had said, *and remember your Saoirse, your baby sister, when you play.*

What am I doing here what am I doing here why the bloody hell am I here please get me out of here please-

“New?”

A dark-haired girl stood, illuminated in the doorway.

“Yes, obviously,” I snapped back, shoving my whistle back into my bag. *Don’t show fear, Oonah.*

The girl raised a single eyebrow high before letting it fall. She plopped down in the bunk opposite of me, which was plainly hers. Her single trunk was placed at it’s foot, looking battered and distinctly secondhand, and a deep red coat unlike anything I had ever seen before was laid out carefully on the covers.

“Afraid, us all,” the girl with the red coat said softly, gently. I stiffen, and straighten my spine. *Afraid, hm? I’ll show her.*

“Angelique Romero.” She pauses, waiting for me to reply.

"Oonah Quinn. I'm 14."

"From?"

"Ireland." I mimed handcuffs. "I'm indentured," I said. I reach into my pocket and jangle coins.

A pause. "*I soldi. Manette? Schiavitù... ohhh,*" she said, cheery demeanor dissipating in a flash. "Slave."

"No, it's fine! And it's indentured servant. *Ní féidir liom gá do trua,*" I mutter in quiet Irish. *I don't want your pity.*

"Hmmm." She swings her legs onto her bed, spreading her threadbare skirts along the bed. Angelique is tall and thin, with gaunt cheeks and startling, dark eyes. At this moment in time, I just wanted her to leave me alone, alone to touch the last memories of home that currently were firmly latched in my trunk.

Angelique turned out not to be as awful as I thought. She was persistent, jabbering away and asking questions and, quite frankly, pestering, until I finally opened up. She told me stories of her halting English about her brother, Leo, how he ran and jumped and played and always asked so many questions (family trait?) and how he was just absolutely amazing, and I told her tales of my darling Saoirse, how she would giggle and twirl and braid my hair into a twisted crown and decorate the auburn swirls with daisies. Oh, to the beautiful children, how we missed them so!

That night was a terrible storm. The wind howled, lonesome and long, and the floor jolted and rocked, leaving us clutching the walls and each other. Seawater dripped steadily through the crack in the wall. Plop, plop, plop.

"It's the city beneath the waves," I say, teeth chattering, packed in tight. "The three maidens are testing our courage."

"No, Oonah! Jupiter is angry," Angel refuted in her thick accent, knees pulled to her skinny chest.

Around us, the world collapses, crumbles... The air reeks of bile and rats, and vomit joins seawater in puddles on the floor. The air reeks of human and vermin urine alike. Every person on boat is doubled over, spewing their dinner, green and in pain. *Seasickness.*

We huddle together, brought to each other in fear and pain and yes, hope. Too much hope for two lonely girls alone with the dark, dark sea. Too hopeful for two children pretending to be woman, pretending to be strong. Too much hope for the doomed.

But we are hopeful. And we are afraid.

"We must hope. For our children," I say.

"*Essere coraggioso, e bellissimo guerriero. Essere forte per me.*" she whispers, pulling her head from between her knees and looking at me.

Be brave, beautiful warrior. Be strong, for me.

But am I strong? Can I withstand the wrath that is sure to come?

No.

I am weak.

Forgive me, Angelique. *Forgive me, Saoirse.*

The night is eternity.

So there it goes. My trip, dear journal, to the Island of Tears. Truly I hope the next time I open these pages, it will be to read you to a fair-haired child in a rosy glen. Oonah and Saoirse, Saoirse and Oonah. Oh, and Angel and Leo. They deserve a happily ever after more than I do.

But if we all got what we deserved, the world we be a very different place, wouldn't it? Perhaps Ms. O'Brien would be surrounded by filth instead of me. Perhaps Angelique would live in a palace of gold.

Perhaps I wouldn't even be here at all.

I steamed self-righteously. "Thank you, Mrs. O'Brien," I had said, forcing my face into a plausibly demure expression. "I do believe I can read, but I appreciate your concern in the finer aspects of my education. And slavery is abolished in America at the moment. I think the correct term is 'indentured servant.'"

O'Brien froze, her face blank, blank, blank. The calm before the storm.

And it came. SLAP! My cheek stung and a single drop of blood welled. It slowly dripped down the porcelain of my face to my chin before staining my chemise with a tiny splotch of crimson. A scarlet tear.

"Do you understand what indentured means, girl? I means you must pay me back. Unfortunately, your family's sum is so large that a lifetime of labor won't do. I'm being merciful, girl. You should be groveling at my feet. Talk back again and you'll be on a boat back to Ireland."

I pretend to be suitably humbled. Truly, I fantasize about punching her bony crooked nose through her thick skull and into her pea-sized brain.

"Apologize," she hissed.

"Apologies, Mrs. O'Brien."

"Madame," she says smugly, brushing of her hands as if I were something too disgusting to make physical contact with and quite possibly contagious.

My blood boiled.

Fast forward the tragic goodbyes, the actual tears both Saoirse and I shed for each other, the long, long, long, trip to the docs, and the even longer line, and I was on a boat headed for America. More specifically, for New York.

When I arrived, I found my way to my bunk, which was, according to the blasted ticket, #00084. The sheer number of zeros before the 8 was enough to have me shaking in my boots, but I didn't. If there was one thing I had ever learned, it was to never show fear. Better cover it up with a smile or a joke or a snarky comment, better hide it from the world and from yourself until it seems so insignificant that it vanishes.

Unfortunately, my fear never quite seems to go anywhere.

I dropped my bag onto my bunk with a *thump* that became an enormous *CLANG!* from the rickety, creaking metal posts. I remember, all at once, feeling the fear come flooding back all in one. Bending down with a sigh, I rifle through my one dress, heavy and pleated and green and awful, my one hat, felted and not quite as awful, my scarf, my gloves, my boots, my brooch, and my...

Pennywhistle.

Blonde hair, fair skin, watering blue eyes that were exactly like my own, wind on the docs as the horn of a boat tolled. *Keep this close, my Oonah, she had said, and remember your Saoirse, your baby sister, when you play.*

What am I doing here what am I doing here why the bloody hell am I here please get me out of here please-

“New?”

A dark-haired girl stood, illuminated in the doorway.

“Yes, obviously,” I snapped back, shoving my whistle back into my bag. *Don't show fear, Oonah.*

The girl raised a single eyebrow high before letting it fall. She plopped down in the bunk opposite of me, which was plainly hers. Her single trunk was placed at it's foot, looking battered and distinctly secondhand, and a deep red coat unlike anything I had ever seen before was laid out carefully on the covers.

“Afraid, us all,” the girl with the red coat said softly, gently. I stiffen, and straighten my spine. *Afraid, hm? I'll show her.*

“Angelique Romero.” She pauses, waiting for me to reply.

“Oonah Quinn. I'm 14.”

“From?”

“Ireland.” I mimed handcuffs. “I'm indentured,” I said. I reach into my pocket and jangle coins.

A pause. *“I soldi. Manette? Schiavitù... ohhh,”* she said, cheery demeanor dissipating in a flash. “Slave.”

“No, it's fine! And it's indentured servant. *Ní féidir liom gá do trua,*” I mutter in quiet Irish. *I don't want your pity.*

“Hmmm.” She swings her legs onto her bed, spreading her threadbare skirts along the bed. Angelique is tall and thin, with gaunt cheeks and startling, dark eyes. At this moment in time, I just wanted her to leave me alone, alone to touch the last memories of home that currently were firmly latched in my trunk.

Angelique turned out not to be as awful as I thought. She was persistent, jabbering away and asking questions and, quite frankly, pestering, until I finally opened up. She told me stories of her halting English about her brother, Leo, how he ran and jumped and played and always asked so many questions (family trait?) and how he was just absolutely amazing, and I told her tales of my darling Saoirse, how she would giggle and twirl and braid my hair into a twisted crown and decorate the auburn swirls with daisies. Oh, to the beautiful children, how we missed them so!

That night was a terrible storm. The wind howled, lonesome and long, and the floor jolted and rocked, leaving us clutching the walls and each other. Seawater dripped steadily through the crack in the wall. Plop, plop, plop.

“It's the city beneath the waves,” I say, teeth chattering, packed in tight. “The three maidens are testing our courage.”

“No, Oonah! Jupiter is angry,” Angel refuted in her thick accent, knees pulled to her skinny chest.

Around us, the world collapses, crumbles... The air reeks of bile and rats, and vomit joins seawater in puddles on the floor. The air reeks of human and vermin urine alike. Every person on boat is doubled over, spewing their dinner, green and in pain. *Seasickness*.

We huddle together, brought to each other in fear and pain and yes, hope. Too much hope for two lonely girls alone with the dark, dark sea. Too hopeful for two children pretending to be woman, pretending to be strong. Too much hope for the doomed.

But we are hopeful. And we are afraid.

"We must hope. For our children," I say.

"*Essere coraggioso, e bellissimo guerriero. Essere forte per me.*" she whispers, pulling her head from between her knees and looking at me.

Be brave, beautiful warrior. Be strong, for me.

But am I strong? Can I withstand the wrath that is sure to come?

No.

I am weak.

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