



# TORNADO ALLEY

The Literary Magazine of Dover High School  
and Dover Public Library

VOL. 2: SPRING 2016



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Dover High School  
and Dover Public Library  
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# Table of Contents

## **Advisor's Note**

*Liz Strauss, Teen Librarian, Dover Public Library*

## **Senior Editor's Note**

*Natalie Caswell, Grade 10*

## *Poetry*

Popcorn Flowers <i>Nathan Rafter, Grade 11</i>	1
The Lovely Gray <i>Katie Hanslik, Grade 11</i>	2
Solitaire <i>Willow Cox, Grade 9</i>	4
Traffic Lights <i>Katie Hanslik, Grade 11</i>	6
I Close My Eyes <i>Willow Cox, Grade 9</i>	8
Writing, Never Stop! <i>Nona Wherley, Grade 6</i>	9

*Art*

Burma <i>Samantha Wallick, Grade 11</i>	10
Lilies <i>Katie Hanslik, Grade 11</i>	11
Find Me <i>Samantha Wallick, Grade 11</i>	12
It Has to Have a Title <i>Francesca Velentini Alguire, Grade 7</i>	13
Red Fox <i>Emily Summerson, Grade 6</i>	14
Afternoon Indulgence <i>Samantha Wallick, Grade 11</i>	15
The Keepers <i>Eryn Noelle Basnett, Grade 8</i>	16
Fright Night <i>Samantha Wallick, Grade 11</i>	17

## *Fiction*

The Imprecision of  
Perspective 18

*Natalie Caswell, Grade 10*

Never Hungry Again 22

*Nona Wherley, Grade 6*

The Fire Lily 25

*Eryn Noelle Basnett, Grade 8*

The Bet 37

*David Caswell, Grade 7*

## *Nonfiction*

Victory! 40

*Nona Wherley, Grade 6*

Middle School 42

*Francesca Valentini Alguire, Grade 7*

On Growth and Vulnerability 46

*Katie Hanslik, Grade 11*

Acknowledgements





## **Advisor's Note**

By Liz Strauss

*Teen Librarian, Dover Public Library*

Working on *Tornado Alley*, last year's experiment, has been full of surprises. This year, we have variety, we have color, and we have talking polar bears.

I admit, as the deadline for submissions drew closer, I was nervous that we wouldn't have enough content to print a magazine. Leave it to our awesome Dover teens to surprise me. I suddenly found myself with twenty-two submissions from eleven creative teens in grades six through twelve. We had so much content that I thought we might need a bigger magazine.

As I continued to work on this project, a team of not two but five editors was on hand to help me make the tough decisions. Katie Hanslik, last year's senior editor, returned to help select poetry, nonfiction, and art. Newcomers Nona Wherley, Kayleigh Kail, and Aryal Freeman, also donated their time to help the library pick out which submissions would make it to the final product.

Finally, this year's senior editor, Natalie Caswell, one of last year's writers, helped me put it all together. From giving me her thoughts on the cover image, the font, and what order submissions should be placed in, to the final rounds of

editing, Natalie was always available to help make this magazine better.

I'm truly grateful for this year's excellent group of teen editors, writers, and artists who filled this magazine with variety, color, and, yes, talking animals. It has been a joy to see their talents come together.

I hope this edition of *Tornado Alley* holds some pleasant surprises for you, as well. Enjoy!

## Senior Editor's Notes

By Natalie Caswell

*Grade 10*

Storytelling has been ingrained in human society from the dawn of our existence. From charcoal strokes on cave walls to colorful images on huge screens, stories have taken on various forms to change and inspire us. The poet Muriel Rukeyser artfully said, “The universe is made of stories, not atoms.” Stories are found everywhere, from religious accounts of creation to narratives told in less than one hundred characters on a social media platform.

The pieces in this magazine tell different stories, through words or images. They are stories to entertain, to inform, and to make us think. The pages will provide a delightful respite from reality and hopefully carry on the integral human tradition of storytelling.





# Popcorn Flowers

Nathan Rafter

*Grade 11*

Popcorn flowers bloom in the meadow  
Buttery rain falls from the heavens  
A salty wind blows through the air  
And stray kernels still haven't popped

# The Lovely Gray

Katie Hanslik

*Grade 11*

I watched the clouds pile up,  
And I thought of you  
Because you were always like that,  
Layered so thickly, only part of you exposed;  
Gray and sad, but with those patches in-between,  
The blue splotches that smiled at me  
That promised love,  
That made me fall in love with you;  
But the more I knew you,  
The more the shades of gray became beautiful;  
Off whites and pale lavenders and dark charcoals,  
Your colors merged into the lovely mess  
That is you;  
And I came to love the gray  
As much as the blue;  
And you told me that one day,  
With my help,  
Your grayness was going to scuttle away  
And I could see the sky, clearly for the first time  
And naively, I believed you;  
And smiled and held your hand,  
But the longer I wait

And the more blue seeping through  
Only to be blotted out again,  
It makes me think,  
That maybe your sky was never meant to be clear;  
**Maybe, I'm not supposed to wash it clean**  
But to love the dullness  
That is really not dull at all now I see it;  
And maybe, even when your sky is blue  
Some calm day,  
**Maybe I'll miss that gray;**  
And maybe, just now and again,  
A few clouds—not white ones, but ones that carry  
The rain and the storms I so love—  
Will drift on past,  
And block my sun for a moment,  
**And I'll smile at them;**  
Because you make gray look lovely, my dear  
And perhaps you were always supposed to.

# Solitaire

Willow Cox

*Grade 9*

He saved her from this place,  
The house that was so dear.  
Brought down its promised ace,  
Left mettle instead of fear.

Her weary soul was troubled,  
Heart and hair in knots.  
Countless mistakes were doubled,  
But she let it go in slots.

“**Like money and sharp edges,**”  
She listened as they sang.  
“**For paper cuts like wedges,**  
**And both shards and glasses clang.**”

Her happiness was a lie,  
A charade dark as night.  
Achieving company was to buy,  
**Indeed, loneliness is humanity’s blight.**



Enter a boy with summer's eyes,  
And a voice like April's rain.  
He held at bay hope's demise,  
And made a disheartened girl sane.

Emerge a girl with the Sun's smile,  
And deep scars from the past.  
The pair stepped off the house's tiles,  
Toward reality's light at last.

# Traffic Lights

Katie Hanslik

*Grade 11*

The traffic lights scream at me:  
“Wake up, you’re not living!”  
You’re just driving, city to city  
Never knowing where you’re getting  
Or why you’re going;  
The lines on the road keep rolling,  
So many miles under those tires  
But I haven’t stopped because I can’t;  
My soul will burn with a restless fire;

I cannot sleep; it’s gone too far;  
I kill my dreams inside this car,  
And peel away the layers that make me fake  
Only realness left, I’m now awake  
But the lines keep blurring—  
I can’t stop myself—  
I’ll slip away, until there’s nothing left  
Or save me, I have time to kill  
And to kill it together would feel better,  
Because you know how it hurts to die alone...

Then, those two pale lines have merged into one;  
And it's getting darker, just the edge of the sun  
Peeking over the hills that rise in the distance,  
And the silence slaps like ringing in my ears;  
Who am I then?  
Who are we all,  
When we lose ourselves?  
... We're no one. We're far from here.

And so I sink into this obliteration—  
I'll rise again, can't resist temptation—  
But for now, I'm gone, I'm specks of light  
Playing in your line of sight;  
I've melted into darkness, to dance  
With the stars in the dim of the night,  
And you're here with me, too.

I've slipped away, there's nothing left;  
So save me, I have time to kill;  
And to kill it together would be better,  
Because you know how it hurts to die alone.

Don't leave me to kill it alone.

# I Close My Eyes

Willow Cox

*Grade 9*

I close my eyes: it is too much to see.  
Unknowing slaves in chains of gold.  
They hold fast to the links—believing they are free,  
But they are simply things to be bought and sold.

I close my eyes: something is not right.  
It is too fake and cold and bitter.  
They blink against the artificial light,  
While the world blows it away like litter.

I close my eyes: the pain of a thorn.  
A daisy turns green for the rose.  
Turmoil begins, diamonds are torn,  
**And quartz grows Pinocchio's nose.**

I close my eyes: to shy from pride.  
Above fire, old dreams softly turn.  
**I ran from being the devil's bride,**  
Leaving a beautiful gown to burn.

# Writing, Never Stop!

Nona Wherley

*Grade 6*

Notebook pages fill,  
Flowing across the pages,  
Inspiration comes.

Letters in my mind,  
Exploding like fireworks,  
Writing on the brain.

Soaring through the air,  
On my train (or plane!) of thought  
Ideas push me on

Pen ink spills,  
Flowing, exploding, flying,  
Writing, never stop!



Burma  
Samantha Wallick  
*Grade 11*



Lilies  
Katie Hanslik  
*Grade 11*



Find Me  
Samantha Wallick  
*Grade 11*

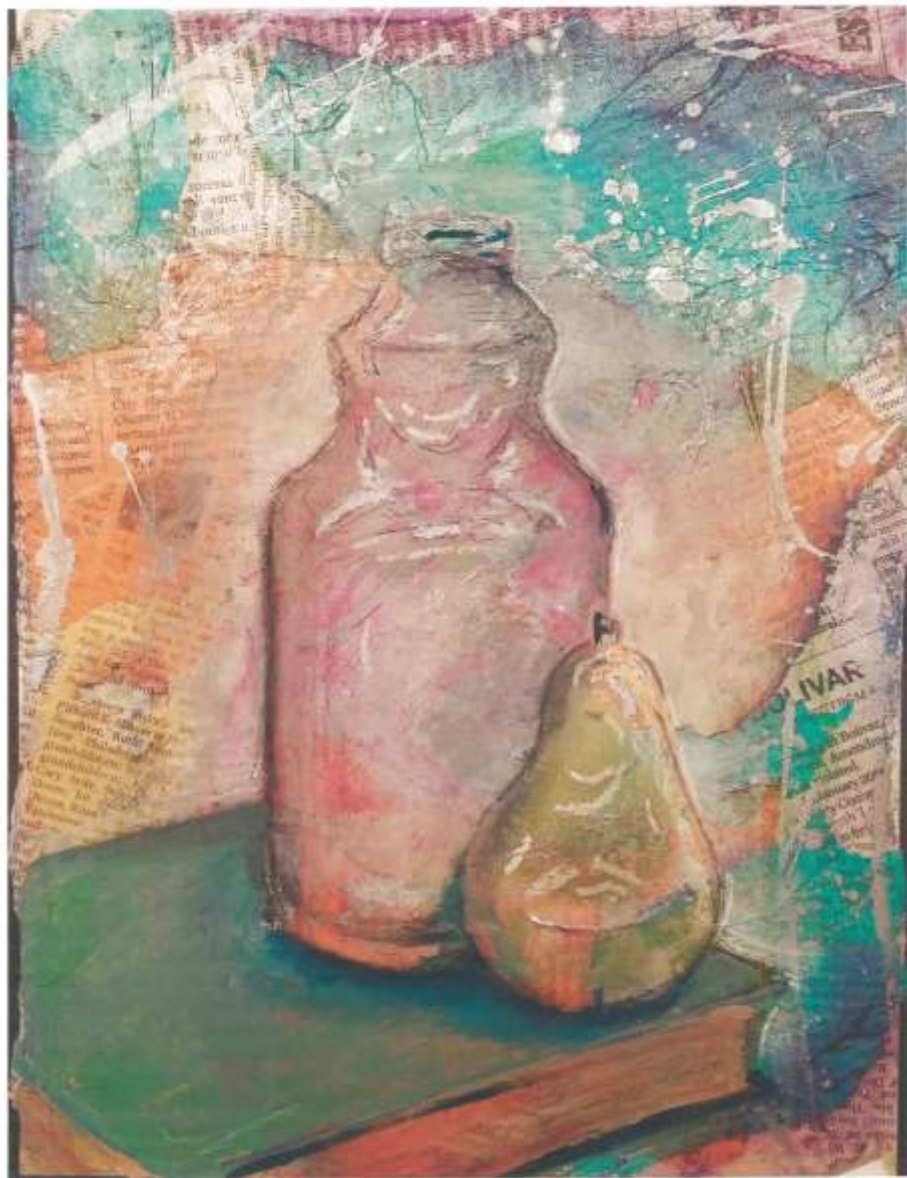




It Has to Have a Title  
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*Grade 7*



Red Fox  
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*Grade 6*



Afternoon Indulgence

Samantha Wallick

*Grade 11*



The Keepers  
Eryn Noelle Basnett  
*Grade 8*





Fright Night  
Samantha Wallick  
*Grade 11*

# The Imprecision of Perspective

Natalie Caswell

*Grade 10*

“I don’t understand how you prefer winter over this.” Jack stretched an arm out, gesturing to the sunbathed field he sat in with his girlfriend Marilyn. It was an unusually warm March day, and they were taking advantage of it.

“I don’t know,” she replied, absently flipping through the pages of her book. The flipping of the pages sounded like the fluttering of bird wings. “There’s just something romantic about it: warm coffee sipped in a quiet cafe, sparkles covering the pavement, bundling up in clothes.”

“Speaking of clothes, you still haven’t returned my Browns sweater. The one you borrowed at the Johnny Cash concert.”

“You never asked for it back!” He could hear the smile in her voice as he looked out over the field. Groups of people mingled, some chatting, others silent. There was a sense of anticipation in the air, a controlled excitement. It reminded Jack of the atmosphere before the concert began in the fall. All had watched the stage eagerly, and Jack clutched Marilyn’s hand as she stood on her tiptoes, trying to see the empty stage.

He tilted his head back, letting the warm breeze ruffle his hair. Legs stretched out, he breathed a sigh.

“If I could do away with winter completely, I would. Everything is ugly and cold.”

“That’s not true. It can be beautiful,” she said softly. The image of her appeared in his mind: chestnut hair spilling down her green pea coat, earmuffs covering her ears, cheeks stained pink. Jack’s lips twitched.

“Yeah, I suppose.” He wanted to hold her hand, but didn’t, instead plucking blades of grass and twisting them between his fingers. Soon he heard the scratching of her pencil, solving problems with her brow slightly furrowed and lips pursed. The school year was quickly reaching an end, but Jack left his books untouched on the ground next to him.

“Senior year went by so fast,” he commented.

“Yeah,” she said. “Life seems to be charging ahead, with no means to stop.” She snapped her gum and flipped a page. He could almost smell it—the minty flavor of the gum she chewed every day. Jack swallowed hard and looked across the field, wrapping a grass blade around his finger.

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Marcus sits in his truck with the windows rolled down, listening to some pop artist he doesn't know through bouts of static. He has been sitting for almost an hour, waiting for his dad to finish. He alternates between drumming his fingers against the wheel, rubbing his whiskered chin, and checking his phone.

Finally, after his stomach growls for the third time, Marcus gets out of the truck. He slams the door and walks through the gates, stopping before he passes any gravestones.

“Dad!” He calls, hands cupped. He can see his father sitting next to a gravestone in the distance. “It’s time to go!” His dad doesn’t move, and Marcus briefly wonders whether he remembered to turn his hearing aids on this morning.

Marcus sighs and walks toward him. He doesn’t want to be here—it is far too nice of a day to be sitting in a graveyard. “Jack!” He tries again, stepping off the cement path and between the gravestones. He stops before he reaches him.

Jack is mumbling to himself, sitting next to his wife’s grave. Marcus suddenly feels intrusive, uncomfortable in the way one would be in the presence of strangers’ intimate conversation.

He can’t remember his mother, Marilyn; she died when he was about three. His parents were on the way home from a Christmas party when the car slipped on the ice and his dad



lost control. Their station wagon slid into a ditch, and his mother died instantly from head trauma.

“Dad... it’s time to go,” Marcus says, staring at the back of his father’s bald head. He pats the pocket of his jeans, a nervous habit from when he smoked and would keep a pack of cigarettes there.

His dad is a private man, and Marcus rarely receives glimpses of the true person inside him. He doesn’t know why Jack insists he drive him to the graveyard each week. Every time he just hobbles through the gate and gingerly sits next to the marble gravestone. Not crying. Not leaving tokens or flowers. Occasionally mumbling something, always staring into the distance, over the gravestones and the field beyond.

Marcus doesn’t know his motive—a love that has lasted all these years, guilt, or perhaps an obligation. Perhaps it isn’t even a choice for him, to visit was a duty of repentance. Marcus doesn’t know if Jack blames himself for the death, but after all Marcus doesn’t know much of anything about his father—and doubts he ever will.

His father’s frail shoulders lift and lower in a sigh too quiet to hear over birdsong, and he begins to move. Marcus helps him to stand, one hand on his elbow. Jack’s rain jacket crinkles while he straightens, and he brushes some grass blades from his pants. He nods at Marcus, and together they slowly walk back to the truck, silent and stuck in their own heads.

# Never Hungry Again

Nona Wherley

*Grade 6*

I lumbered towards the icy water hole I'd dug, hoping some seal would pop up for one last snack before my long nap—or hibernation. I walked over to Ms. Polea, my polar bear friend, for one last chat.

“Oh, hello, dear! Having cubs again, correct? I did last year. Was hungry for months, you know, because the ice melted early, of course! Nothing better than fresh seal in ice!”

“I know, not eating for months isn't my cup of tea, but it can't be helped. Of course, I'm not hungry while I'm hibernating. Normally afterwards a nice fresh seal or two would fill me right up. Since the ice is melting earlier and the seals are getting away before I wake up, I had been nervous.”

“Hadn't we all? I am wondering why it melted early...”

“A friend of mine, really smart bear, had been traveling and said it was from a volcano.”

“A volcano! My oh my!”

“When it exploded, it made all the earth warmer by two degrees. So now the ice melts earlier, and the seals aren’t trapped by the ice by the time we wake up from our long winter’s nap. The seals swim away before we can catch and eat them. Last year was terrible, I was—”

“Oh, I know, all of us gals were. You don’t need to tell me! Frankly, that’s why I’m not having cubs this year! You will be hungry, you know.”

“Actually, I’ve been wondering about that, and I think I know what to do.”

“Oh, do tell, dearie! What is it?”

“It’s nothing, really... ”

“Just tell it. Plain and simple, how I like it. Go on, go on!”

“Well, I’ve been thinning out the roof of my house... ”

“But, you’ll be terribly cold with a thin roof!”

“I wasn’t finished. It’s just in one spot, above where my head’ll be. Much thinner than the ice, you know. So... ”

“Oh, I see! It will melt first and wake you up! That was smart of you. I should have thought of that. Well, it’s just about time to start hibernating. See you in spring, before the ice

melts. Bye!”

“Bye!”

I stretched my legs and ran back to my cozy cave of snow where I would hibernate. I walked around for one final inspection and filled the door with snow. The sun shone in the thin spot and made it much brighter than the normal inky black. Turning around to get comfortable, I laid down for my **winter's nap**.

... 5 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> months later (2 weeks earlier than usual)...

Aahh! I stretched out, and saw the icy blue sky above greeted me. It had worked! I dug through the door and got a sealy snack. Not hungry anymore! Eating my seal, I happily thought about how we would never have to be hungry again.

# The Fire Lily

Eryn Noelle Basnett

*Grade 8*

The pain surged up my arm, racking every vein, every muscle with a burning fire. I grabbed my wrist with my free arm to try to squeeze out the pain. I needed something—anything to lessen the fire tearing me on the inside. Stinging tears blinded my vision, and a sickening buzzing in my ears signified that my body was going into shock. Alina burst into the room at my cries for help, but I squeezed my eyes shut to try to block the unconsciousness creeping up to me. I fell on my knees, crying from the inferno in my arm. Multispectral spots danced across my vision, and my breathing became a voluntary chore. I was about to give in to unconsciousness until suddenly the pain dissipated at the arrival of a bittersweet force rushing through my traumatized arm. I tried to gasp for air, but it came out more like a choke of relief, and I opened my eyes, instantly regretting the decision as the light bored its way into my brain. Hovering above me was a terrified Alina. My eyes were burning from the overheated remains of the pain trying to leave my body through tears, but I forced them open to scan the damage that was expected to have been done.

All that was there was a scarlet line in the shape of a flame etched into my arm.

My eyes widened so far I thought they were going to fall out. But something... something about it was so—powerful. And why wasn't I afraid?

I carefully flexed my fingers to see if they were operable, but instead, a satisfying rush through my muscles sparked a tiny candlelight flame on the tips of my fingers. I jumped and stuck them as far away from me as possible, but I couldn't take my eyes away from the fire.

Did I just do that?

Poor Alina was quivering in a faraway corner now, her eyes pleading that she didn't see what happened.

It wasn't real. It wasn't real. It wasn't real.

But it was real.

I forced myself to shaky legs and flicked my extremely sore wrist on instinct, killing the flames. I leaned on an elbow on the nearest table, panting from the tremendous effort when something caught my eye.

The book.

“Where is the lily?” I rasped, horrified at my own voice.

Unable to trust her voice, she hauled a shaky finger towards

the floor, where the book must have fallen during the scenario. I lunged at it, the leftover burn still tingling at my cells. When I had a hold of it, I started flipping aggressively until I reached a paper that stood out from the orange-yellow stain.

The lily was still there.

I caught my breath at the sight of it.

It was a deep red-orange with vivid purple specks and swirls, and it was easily the size of a dinner plate. But something about it was so... breathtaking. Awe-inspiring.

Powerful.

I gently plucked the paper-thin, pressed lily from its soiled paper and held it up to the light. The markings were shifting at my touch. In surprise, I leapt back. I took a few deep breaths until I looked at it again. Confused, I squinted at the lines to see if I was seeing straight.

I was.

There was a hidden message on an unidentified flower in the middle of who-knows-where in the middle of a jungle.

The message must have been pretty good.

I looked at the markings, which had now become words. Real

words. After reading them, then re-reading them, I finally came up with a vague clue:

Oh, mortal man, this world untouched,  
You make our people sing.  
Your courage has amounted to much  
So to you a gift we bring.  
The Fire Lily, bold and bright,  
To make a lantern in the night.  
Follow its light to a world so bright,  
And find it to begin a new day.

Fire Lily? Is that what it was?

“What does that even mean?”

“It means that your arm caught fire, and it’s fine except for a freaky tattoo. Aren’t you at least concerned?” Alina’s voice cut me from my thoughts.

Was I concerned? You bet I was.

But I straightened up and held the flower to her.

“What does that say?” I asked.

She stared at it, but after a few minutes closed her eyes and shook her head.



“I can’t read it. It’s just gibberish.”

I stared at her in disbelief, then back at the markings, which were very much words.

“But I can read this.”

She snorted. “Yeah, just like you caught your hands on fire not long ago.” Her voice was quivering.

“I don’t—understand,” I muttered. I reached to put my hand on her shoulder, but she jerked away.

“You’ve changed, Alina—ever since you found that lily. And I don’t want any part of this.”

She rushed away crying before I could do anything about it.

“Alina! Wait, please.”

The only answer was my own echoes.

I crumpled on the floor and started crying out of fear and pain.

Then something clicked.

That lily.

I stormed up to it and grabbed it and glared at it.  
It was so easy to just tear it up and end this whole mess.

And I was just about to until a rough hand placed itself on my shoulder.

I whipped my head around, expecting to see Alina, but instead there were two women.

Instinctively I backed away.

“Who are you?” I demanded, although the fear in my voice didn’t carry any threats.

The one in the front pulled back her rust-colored hood, revealing messy auburn hair and two gray eyes, one covered with an ominous eyepatch.

I was toying with the idea of threatening them with a fire.

She looked at my twitching hands from her distance and smiled, amused.

“There is no need to be afraid of me,” she said, sparking a flame in her own outstretched palm.

My heartrate spiked.

“OK, no need to scare her,” said the other cloaked figure,

casually throwing back her midnight blue hood. Her long dark braid cascaded down her back, which was beautifully paired with her blue-black eyes. The only thing that threw me off was her pointed ears. But before I could ask, she took her cloak off completely and folded it in her arms and pushed the woman in front of me away.

“This is a rescue mission, not a Freak the Poor Kid Out Day.” She draped an arm across my rigid shoulders, and said, “My name’s Adrian. And that over there,” she pointed to the annoyed figure, “is Hestia.”

“What do you want from me?” I asked. “I’m nothing special.”

Adrian’s sad smile was heartbreaking.

“That’s what I thought too for myself.” She held out a scarred arm, making me gasp.

“But that was before I could do this.” She made a fist and threw it in the air, making a wall of water erupt from the ground.

My jaw dropped.

Behind the sparkling wall of water, she grinned and snapped her fingers, causing it to dissipate into a million rainbow-colored droplets.

Before I could applaud her, Hestia interrupted by saying, “Someone’s coming. We need to take her,” she pointed at me without looking, “and go.”

“Where am I going?” I asked, suddenly afraid again.

“Somewhere you really belong,” Adrian said quietly. Her words hit a bruise.

“But—what about my friends? My family?” I whispered, bracing for the worst.

Hestia and Adrian both turned away.

“I’ll never see them, will I?” I said without looking at them. But it suddenly clicked that they wouldn’t want a fire-conjuring girl in their lives.

The steps got closer.

Adrian took my hands gently.

“You don’t belong here anymore. Since you picked the Fire Lily, you have been granted access to live where we live.”

“And where is that?”

She smiled. “You’ll just have to see.”

I stared at my feet, counting the seconds as my brain finally came up with an answer.

“OK,” I whispered reluctantly, half-hoping that she wouldn’t hear it. But she did.

“Good.” Her sad smile almost made me wonder if she understood what I was going through. She gently pulled me up and led me to the door, where an annoyed Hestia was standing next to a fallen Indonesian man.

“Did you just—” I couldn’t finish the thought.

She stared at me.

“Of course not. He’s just sedated,” she replied, filling me with a flood of relief that washed away my fears. We took off running through the suffocating jungle until we reached a clearing, where a strange contraption that looked part boat, part motorcycle, part hot air balloon was waiting, humming quietly.

“What on earth?” I began.

“The S. S. Whenter, that’s what it is,” breathed Hestia, obviously proud of the strange—thing.

I stared at its rickety boarding and gulped.

“Are we supposed to get in that?” I asked, hating the tell-tale quiver in my voice.

“It’s perfectly safe,” Adrian reassured me, although I thought I could hear her mutter something about “maybe” under her breath. I pretended not to hear that as we, hand in hand, climbed into the shaky death trap. When Hestia, the last one in, pulled a lever, the machine whirred to life with an invigorating rumble. Hestia breathed deeply, as if clearly in love with that sound it made.

When I was just about to ask what it did, it shot straight up into the air with so much g-force my stomach would have been sick had it not been flattened at the time. I wasn’t able to scream, so I turned with teary eyes towards Adrian, who was flat on her back, trying to laugh. Hestia was frantically pushing strange buttons, until finally it slowed dramatically, throwing me into the air before I came crashing down right beside Adrian, who was rubbing her sore neck.

“Well. That was... exciting,” she finally managed.

“What on earth was that?! Were you trying to kill me?” I yelled.

“No,” replied Hestia coolly. “If we wanted to do that, we would have done so already.”

That made me go quiet.

“Now. Let’s answer some of those questions you have,” she said as she sat down in a battered leather seat. Adrian and I did the same.

“Ok,” I said. “Who are you?” I asked.

Adrian responded, “We are ambassadors from the land of Estuain in the name of Iris, Skylar, and Zelda; supreme leaders of our kingdom.”

“Estuain?”

“It’s the elven land in which people like us live. There are five major kingdoms: Kitronidy of the centaurs, Estuain of the elves, Junipher of the fairies, Yoderia of the trolls, and Docotrimum of the dragons; one of which is an island of smaller kingdoms like mermaids and such.”

I was dumbfounded.

“We’re almost there,” warned Hestia. “You probably have time for one more question.”

My mind was racing, trying to find one that I needed to know.

Only one stood out.

“Who am—I?” I whispered, barely audible over the sound of

the whirl of the engines.

Adrian hooked an arm through mine.

“You are my friend, and a fire elf, and the newest member of our village,” she said.

Something about the words made me feel like this was all going to turn out OK.

“You are who you choose to be,” she completed.

I went from a confused girl in a stuffy room in the jungle to a fire elf soaring to another world with newfound friends. In an hour.

Suddenly the machine stopped, slowly hovering at a glowing port filled with bustling creatures of all sorts.

“This is your new home,” Adrian whispered in my ear.

My heart was thundering in my chest, but inwardly I was SO ready.

Taking both hands and making deep breaths, we stepped slowly, yet surely, into the light.



# The Bet

David Caswell

*Grade 7*

I stay very still. As I look at the target, I load my weapon. I aim. I hold my breath. Thwap! The egg soars true, and hits home. Mr. Bruner is knocked back as the gooey substance splatters all over his bald head. It's time to run.

I jump down from the tree I was hiding in and run across his front yard. But he has recovered, and is angry. "Hey!" he yells. "Stop, kid!" But I keep running. As I run, I tuck my slingshot (AKA the Punisher) into my back pocket. As I turn to look back, what I see makes me run faster. Mr. Bruner is running after me, and he is catching up. I turn the corner onto Second Street and dive into a bush along the sidewalk. I stay still. A few seconds later, a panting Mr. Bruner stops in front of the bush and puts his hands on his knees. He doesn't see me.

His face is as red as a tomato, and it makes a weird image when mixed with the yellow of the yolk. He growls as a bit of egg drips off his head and lands with a squish on the sidewalk. He looks around some more, then turns and leaves.

I let out the breath I had been holding in and wait a few more minutes before poking my head out of the brush. Finally, I

pull the rest of my body out and stand up. I grab the walkie talkie that was in my back pocket. I turn it to channel four.

“Alpha Lion, this is Bravo Tiger. Come in,” I say. A few moments later the walkie talkie crackles to life.

“Bravo Tiger, this is Alpha Lion. What is your status?” It is Jacob’s voice.

“The package has been delivered,” I say with a grin.

“No way! You actually did it!”

“Yeah, told you so,” I say with a laugh.

“Well hurry up and get back here. I want to hear all the juicy details!”

“On my way,” I say. I tuck the radio back into my pocket and turn around. And bump right into a sweaty, angry Mr.

Bruner. “Oh hi, Mr. Bruner,” I say with a nervous laugh.

“Fancy seeing you here!” He isn’t amused.

Two days later, I stand in Principal Tracy’s office with Jacob by my side. “What were you thinking, boys?” she says angrily, “You could have seriously hurt Mr. Bruner with that egg!” Jacob and I just look at each other.

I reply first, “Well, you see ma’am, Jacob said that he’d give me a dollar if I were to hit Mr. Bruner with an egg. So I...”

She cuts me off before I finish, “I don’t want to hear it. You boys both have after school detention tomorrow!”

“Yes Ma’am,” we reply.

“Now go!” she finishes. We turn and walk to the door. As I walk out, Mrs. Tracy stops me. “Umm, Brady?” she says.

“Yes, Mrs. Tracy,” I reply.

She hesitates before speaking. “What did it feel like to hit that old geezer?”

I smile. “It felt good, Mrs. Tracy,” I say. She holds back a smile.

“Now go, before I make it two detentions!” she says.

“Yes Ma’am.” I turn and walk out the door, grinning to myself.

# Victory!

Nona Wherley

*Grade 6*

The Olympics were something for which many people strived. Kallipateira had been dutifully training her son Persirrhodos for the Olympics. They were invented by the Greeks for their god Zeus. However, these Olympics were **very different than today's. The talented athletes were only from Greece and had to have been training for ten months. They had many less events, and no winter Olympics, but lots of people still wanted to compete. Running, swimming, wrestling, and discus throwing (a discus is basically a five-pound Frisbee) were some events. Her husband was just one of the many men in her family that had been in Great Zeus's Games. After his tragic death, she decided it was her son's turn to win.**

**There was just one small problem with that. Girls weren't allowed to watch the Olympics, let alone train someone for them. Trainers even had special seats! The punishment for sneaking in was death. Thrown off Mount Typaeum. But that didn't bother her. Kallipateira had been training Persirrhodos for months and wouldn't let a problem like that stop her. In her spare time, she made herself a costume as a boy!**

At last, the day came to leave. Kallipateira even had to wear her costume while she was traveling. Thankfully, the traveling was easy (or at least easier) because during the Olympics there was no war between cities and everybody was allowed to pass through. Once they were there, they stayed for three months in a tent like everybody else.

Finally, the big day came where Persirrhodos would compete. **Kallipateira put on her costume and went into the trainers' circle, which was surrounded by a fence. Persirrhodos won!** She was so excited that she flew over the fence to congratulate him. Unfortunately, her clothes became tangled **and the judges discovered her true identity. A girl!** She wasn't punished because so many of her relatives had been in (and won) the Olympics games before her. Kallipateira had reached her goal. Not only had she helped her son reach victory, but she was victorious also as the first woman to witness the Olympics.

# Middle School

Francesca Valentini Alguire

*Grade 7*

Middle school is so different from how it is portrayed in the movies. However, some of it is very realistic. People don't throw papers around the room at each other or up in the air on the last day of school.

Sixth grade was basically just a year of everyone trying to get to know each other and figuring out who they want to be.

Going into middle school, you don't really know what to expect. You are just thrown into a sea of people and told whatever happens—happens. However, seventh grade orientation was a real eye opener. The boys had their hair all gelled up. They smelled like Abercrombie models. The girls had different colors in their hair along with a whole wardrobe consisting of all name brand cloths.

The beginning of the year was a blur.

All I remember is volleyball games and how I couldn't figure out how to open my locker. But as the memories became clearer... it's just so weird. People were trying desperately to fit in. Everyone followed the trends to make sure they didn't

stand out. As soon as you bought everything to fit the trend, it would change or no longer be cool, and the cycle would start again.

Some people went out of their way to fit in. It went as far as mimicking other people just so you would be accepted. The amount of betrayal that occurred each day was literally insane. It was as if our whole generation had become immune to **anything that didn't involve talking bad about someone or something you saw online.** If there were a movie that is slightly relatable to my middle school experience, it would have to be "Mean Girls." Some days, it seemed that our school was practically based off of that movie. The lunch tables have names and so do the different groups of people. People go from being best friends to completely hating each other. It's crazy to see how, with a snap of your fingers, people could just turn on you.

Someone you thought was your best friend suddenly wanted **nothing to do with you.** You couldn't go to one dance without having a least one crying girl in the bathroom. Every single person assumed they were in love when really they were in love with the idea of being in love.

Every time someone would have an emotional breakdown they would threaten to commit suicide and have the whole school freaking out and trying desperately to get involved. It seems crazy, like a train that had just derailed.

You are spinning in circles and can't stop.

It almost doesn't seem real, like well—you're watching a movie.

This girl gets mad at that girl because this other girl said she didn't like her when really she didn't say that but another girl did but it wasn't about that girl it was about that other girl.

Like I said, it doesn't seem real.

But it is.

It's very real.

It is so much more real than you could ever imagine.

And I live it every day.

It's scary and entertaining and stressful and completely ridiculous, but it's real.

It's something that some people, especially adults, will never understand, even if they try.

Parents like to say, "It doesn't matter. It's not important." Well it's a complete understatement. It does matter.

It matters a lot.



People are cruel and unforgiving. Parents think it's all a joke and it really doesn't matter, but it does.

People my age will tear you apart until all that is left is bones, but they can also be kind and caring.

One thing that I have especially learned in middle school is that most everyone is fake, and can't be trusted. But maybe some people just act fake because they don't know what else to do or who to be. We aren't perfect.

We're all teenagers who listen to bad music and care too much about the littlest things. It's not going to change. That's just the way it is. So keep overreacting and caring too much. Because when you overreact, it shows that you care.

So I guess in a way, middle school is very similar to the movies, at least all of the emotions are. One thing I now know is that not everyone's going to make up, but you're better off without certain people, especially the ones that can't make up their minds or who you know you can't trust. I also now know that you—at least—have to give everyone a chance. We are all just trying to find out where we want to be. Not everyone wants to be fake, but some people are just going to end up like plastic if you don't give them a chance. So middle school is honestly not a waste of time. It gives you the opportunity to find yourself and others. You will never truly understand the difficulties of it by simply watching a movie; you just have to see it for yourself.

# On Growth and Vulnerability

Katie Hanslik

*Grade 11*

When you're a child, you generally don't really know why you cry. Usually it's something along the lines of, "*Tommy took my toy,*" and you want a tangible form of sympathy, of justice, for this act of seeming betrayal against you. It is ingrained in us from the beginning of our lives to hold onto things, to *possess* what we see as rightfully "ours," to form a single distinct identity that we feel we must guard and protect against from outward intrusion at all costs.

This fear, this need to own and control and measure everything in our lives—it halts growth. Yet such actions and behaviors are rewarded in our culture, are instilled in us from a very young age—"*protect yourself and what is yours; openness is weakness, and when you're vulnerable, you get hurt. Live life on the sidelines, kid. Don't get hurt.*"

Crying is not readily accepted in our culture, because crying exhibits vulnerability. Yet who decided that vulnerability is the **dirty word that it's so made out to be?** Despite how weaknesses, breakdowns and tears are not socially tolerated, these are some of the few effective methods we know to channel our inevitable grief, anger, anxiety, sadness, frustration, and so forth.

What exactly is it in our lives that makes us so spectacularly, paralyzingly terrified of vulnerability? Is it failure? Is it the idea that we can be hurt—an idea fed and inflated by parents, mentors, and elders throughout our youth? Perhaps so; and yet we, as a species, choose to overlook or deny the fact that one cannot forge any relationship whatsoever—whether it relates to romance, parenting, siblinghood, friendship, comradeship—on grounds free of vulnerability.

We have to accept the inevitability of hurt. We have to grow up and learn that this world is not generally going to be kind to us, that we are going to fail at times; but that we have to keep trying. The capacity for failure is perhaps endless; and yet, so is the capacity for love, for growth, for strength, for courage. The only way to enjoy our too-short existences here is to take the risks that will lead us to the rewards of the latter mentioned.

Courage is giving someone a piece of yourself and accepting the fact that, no matter how secure and comfortable you may be with this action now, you could eventually be hurt by it.

**Vulnerability is the only way to honesty. If you aren't open, if you aren't honest about yourself... if you don't let somebody see you for who you are... you are going to live a life of seclusion and frustration.**

It is only within human nature to strive to be understood. We are built to be social in the sense that we thrive with a support system of those closest to us. Things we crave more than

anything else are companionship, kinship, like-mindedness. We were built to support each other; humans are not solitary creatures, and living a life of solitude—be it in either a mental/emotional or physical sense—can cripple even the best of us.

We are driven to *create*, to *express*, to process our emotions and **to share our ideas; yet we can't very well do this without an** outside source, a second party to observe our lives. We were **not built to hate and to destroy and to compete for “who deserves what more.”** We learn through *growth*; growth is the only thing we can ever be sure of to heal, to produce, to propel. And growth is fueled by the act of exposing oneself through compassion and empathy—without which, there can be no connection upon which to build friendship, to build comradeship.

Language, as I see it, has been the major leap forward in the growth of our species—allowing us to rapidly develop complex societies and nations at a rather alarming rate. Humans pride ourselves on the ability to think deeply, to convey our own such thoughts effectively to others for the sake of working together. We are built to be problem-solvers, and as such have built our very *lives* around the concept of growth (for the most part, in a very materialistic sense), constructing intricate societies and cultures and governing systems out of the mere power of our imaginations.

We consider this a success. We consider our films and books

and our arts and laws—our culture and our homes and our jobs to be “success.” And while these things... while this *society*, is certainly a comfort and considered enjoyable to many of us, for the most part... I still wonder, have we along the way neglected the fact that we are still inherently driven to connect, to communicate, to *live* in our own uniqueness?

Living is the simple act of being aware of one’s presence, one’s very *existence*, and making the most of this realization. Of recognizing your own life, *as it is living itself*, through the tools of consciousness you’ve been given. How often do any of us pause to ask ourselves whether we are aware of our own very existence, of our constant and inevitable subconscious strive for growth? The answer is likely not often, if ever.

I would say that people, in general, do not realize this, nor would some even agree with me; but that’s alright. All that I ask is for you to *stop* on occasion, to question your own motives once in a while. *Why*, precisely, is it that you do what you do, that you want what you want, that you strive for what you strive for?

This is all that I ask. *Question yourself.*

In conclusion: We know that we are here to live. And living, for everyone, is going to be defined by completely different terms. Yet we must do our best to live, and to live is to grow—and growth, of course, is triggered by brutal, crippling

honesty, by *vulnerability*. We are afraid of this knowledge, yet fear is not the enemy; fear is merely the obstacle. You cannot attack it; but you can get around it, you *can* leave fear behind you.

Learn to be open about yourself, and invest in the ability to pause. Once in a while, you must take the time to pause. You must exist and *realize* that you are existing. And when you do this, I truly do hope that you remember why you are here—you are here to live, which is, to grow. It is up to you, and solely you, to learn how best it is that you do that.

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# Tornado Alley Spring 2016

Featuring Art, Fiction, Nonfiction, and Poetry  
by area Teens in grades 6-12.

From colorful artwork to emotionally charged  
fiction and poetry to honest and engaging  
personal essays, experience the unique writing  
**of Dover's young adult population.**

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