

CROP



vol.9

CROP ADVISER

JUST WRITE ANYWAY

Writing is frightening. Words on a page that others can see and read can be very scary. The writing seems to connect to a secret place inside us where we all want to express ourselves and have others connect to our ideas, feelings and words. When I'm writing these words right now, I'm wondering how readers will react. Will they think the title is too clever-cute? Will they think using questions is too common? Will they even read to the end of this introductory essay? And will they laugh or cry or feel they wasted their time reading what I wrote?

Writing is one of the toughest things to do because we all have our internal censors, a critic in our heads, who stops us from writing, or even saying, what we really think and feel. All writers worry a lot, but some writers find ways to move past their worries, and just write anyway. They ignore that inner critic and create. That's what we have in Volume 9 of CROP, writers (who happen to be students) getting over their worry and writing anyway.

This year, the student editors wanted to review past years' writing. The idea was to include selections from CROP Volumes 1 to 8 in the same volume with the great new works submitted by this year's brave writers. This retrospective gives a chance to read works again, or maybe for the first time. The editors read the past volumes and selected their favorites.

What we have in Volume 9 is, then, both old and new. But writing is always "new" in some sense, and maybe always "old", too. Words retain their former social force and acquire new strength each time they are read. This year's CROP shows how much work writers and editors have done over the past nine years. As a teacher and as a writer, I find their efforts and their courage to go beyond small worries and "just write anyway" to be inspiring. Thanks to this year's editors and writers for another great volume.

MICHAEL PRONKO
ADVISOR

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WEEKEND LOVER

KOHTO WATANABE

“Amelia, will you marry me when I win the first place in this race?” Jeff asks.

Amelia answers, “Yes!!”

Amelia’s smile at the moment is much more beautiful than the sunrise of this sunny Sunday. It is the moment Jeff and Amelia are standing on a starting point of a running race which is held every weekend in a small town in Kentucky. Over twenty athletes run in the race all at once. Jeff takes part in this competition every time it opens but he has no memory of having been awarded the first prize or he hasn’t probably gained it yet. However, he makes an offer of marriage because he couldn’t put up with revealing the honest feeling to Amelia, who he fell in love with at first sight in the race, and somehow he has plenty of confidence in himself to win this time.

Jeff suddenly asked for Amelia’s hand in marriage but it was actually an unpredicted event for him. Now he is curious about what encourages him to take such action. He knows he was charmed by her mercerized skin and features as fine-cut as a model seeking after beauty by plastic surgery operations. However, other things such as her atmosphere are much more appealing him.

Jeff asks Amelia, “Talk a little until the race begins. Let me introduce myself. I’m from the adjacent village. And I take part in this race every week.”

Amelia replies, “I was born in this town and am living here.”

The conversation continues. The more Jeff talks about himself, the more he has a rapport with Amelia, who seems to know everything about him as if she is a Russian intelligence agent who hides in the U.S., in terms of their characteristics, favorite food, and even vegan.

“What’s more,” Jeff says, “I was actually woken up by my somniloquy this morning.”

Amelia responds, “I also awoke from my sleep by a talk in my sleep to be honest.”

Jeff continues, “But I felt amazingly refreshed. Plus, I was one hundred percent sure that I will be victorious! Hey, isn’t it an authentic destiny we have various similarity and meet here?”

Amelia smiles, “Yes, God leads the fortune for us!”

To their surprise, Jeff and Amelia are analogous in their character traits as well as the movement in the morning.

“On your mark.” the announcement resounds.

Jeff says, “Hey, Amelia. Give it the best shot for each other.” Amelia nods.

“Get set... Go!” All the racers launch from the starting line. However, immediately before the start Jeff concentrates but gets goose bumps owing to tension or the smells of baked crispy meat. Thus, he gets off to a slower start than other competitors. In the case of Amelia, her unwillingness to leave Jeff makes each step heavier. Jeff is stamping the ground powerfully to go forward raising a cloud of dust and Amelia is running with the

mind weighed by his existence.

After taking the third step, the entrants including Jeff and Amelia are galvanized to rush toward the goal as if they forget all stuff suffering them everyday life.

Startlingly, Jeff overtakes enemies one by one with unbelievable speed and comes up to the second place as time passes. Then, Amelia tumbles forward near the finish line but Jeff continues going on running and running giving no heed to her.

And finally, he triumphs in the race by fighting against the other rivals intensively. After that, Jeff receives a trophy smoothly and leaves back for his home gallantly riding on a rear carrier of a car.

Then, he shouts a spell, “Cock-a—doodle-doo!!”

On the other hand, Amelia also goes back home like nothing has happened.

Next week, Jeff appears in the same contest again and falls in love with Amelia who is next to Jeff at first glance.

Although he can’t recognize he forgets everything after taking three steps, he proposes to her, “Will you marry me?”

And of course, she replies, “Yes, please!!”

PREPARE BEFORE A BIG CHALLENGE

MARINA YASUMURA

“Elly, why not join a guitar contest?”

“Seriously?”

It was a warm day. My big voice echoed in the classroom. My same age friend, Kate suddenly suggested that we apply for a local guitar contest held in Los Angeles. Both of us liked to play guitars, but I knew that Kate was more skillful than me because her father was a guitar teacher and she had been playing the guitar since she was a child. So, I could expect the result even if we did not compete. Participants needed to master rock music or heavy metal music within three weeks. This seemed the biggest challenge in 10 years I had ever lived. But, from this day, I started to live a jumpy life. Because we had only three weeks to prepare!

On going back home, I practiced the guitar every night while rubbing my sleepy eyes because I did not want to fail, spoil the atmosphere of a hall and be embarrassed in front of a lot of people on a stage. I was afraid of making mistakes. Therefore, I cut my finger and blood run on my hands by practicing too much, but I did not care about it and said, “Never give up, never give in!” to myself.

Gradually, I came to like touching the slippery surface of electric guitar more and more because the vivid sound made me feel so excited and cool.

After a week, Kate and I went to a park near our school.

“How’s your practice?” said Kate.

“It’s good, but I cannot play it with confidence...” I replied unsurely. When I talked with Kate, my heart was always pounding because she talked with me confidently and her practice looked like going better than me. I always felt inferior to her.

“How about you, Kate?” I asked.

“How long do you think I have played the guitar? I can perform a one song without any efforts!” said Kate proudly.

However, I did not realize that my father, who happened to pass the park, listened to our conversation at this time.

After I went back my home, I had a citrus fruits ice candy to unwind myself. I knew that I felt so tired by thinking of the contest so much. The icy and sour taste made me relaxed.

Time went by so fast. Finally, the competition day came. I met Kate and she said, “No one knows who will win.” Her black hair suited her black dress well. On the other hand, my fair hair did not suit my red dress. I was wondering if it would go well.

Before the competition, we had lunch together. However, of course I could not eat even a little bit of sandwiches even though they smelled of tasty fried fish I loved.

“Why not have them?” said Kate.

“I’d love to, but I cannot because I am so nervous...”

“How funny you are! I am too hungry to play the guitar well on a stage!” she laughed. I was so sad and regretful.

“Why am I so unconfident with myself? Why only me!?” I said to myself in my mind. My eyes were filled with teardrops secretly.

A few hours later, the curtain raised. My turn was the ninth, but even if there were eight people before me, I felt as if time had flown at the speed of light. The eighth turn was Kate. I also felt so nervous. I stared at her from the curtain. However, Kate would not start to play. Why? What happened to her? I could not focus on myself.

Then I watched her weep. She looked so badly tense. I realized that she was overconfident. Eventually, she could play nothing and returned. I had to go to the center of the stage while I had complicated feelings. However, no matter what show must have gone on! I stood on a stage and felt like my breath was taken away by the view. I sensed my pale face turned red like an octopus boiled in a big pot.

Also, I had a squall in my hands. Everyone looked at me. When I started to play the guitar, light and vivid sound echoed in the hall. I did my best.

“Even if I have not learned the guitar for many years, I will definitely make this song something only I can play.” I strongly said to myself. My turn was over.

Thirty minutes later, a winner was announced. I thought I was not related to the results. I was so satisfied with my performance.

Then, my name was suddenly called.

“I made it! I won!”

I was as happy as a girl who could meet her idol star! I could not express the feeling in words. A lot of clapping hands were given. This was only for me!

“How lucky I am!” I was walking on air.

I went to the lobby and met my father, and he said, “Congratulations! The reason why you could win today is you kept on preparing whenever. Also, you need to keep this saying in your mind forever...”

“Look before you leap.”

In fact, my father had told that I should have held fast to this word in my mind anytime since I was small. It was important for all people in this world to prepare well whatever the reason. From this experience, I could come to engage in things that I really wanted to do and get it, and finally be called “a go-getter”!

THE CANDIDATE

TARO NAKAMURA

Some months ago, I met you. I loved you. I trusted you.
Am I only a candidate for your boyfriend?
Give my one month to me.
Because I had believed for a month.
Perhaps, you weighed me against that man.
Now, he is your boyfriend.
Someone told me, "Let yourself wish for her happiness."
I will never forget you.
I will follow you to the end of the hell.
Someday, I will definitely get my revenge for this.

From your old candidate for your lover.

"I REMEMBER"

KANAKO NOMURA

I remember when I passed through a ticket gate at station. My hand was crossed to touch my IC card. I got used to do it.

I remember when I used a highlighter. I didn't see where I marked. I always had a shadow on my left side.

I remember when I took notes for a long time during classes. My hand turned black. That was my mark to study hard.

I remember when my friend lent me a pair of scissors. I couldn't cut anything.

I remember when I practiced dancing. My dance always opposed my teacher's dance. No one could teach me how to dance. I practiced by myself.

I don't remember when I realized I was a lefty.

I remember when I played a baton with my right hand. My arm had some bruises, and my hand smelled like iron, but I felt like a member of right handers.

I remember when I bought a pair of scissors for left handers. It was unbelievable that scissors are so useful. I used it stylishly, smoothly and speedily.

I remember when I dropped the baton that my friend passed me with her right hand during practicing relay. My team members and my teacher said, "You're wrong."

I remember when we shared our left handers' hardships with my left-handed friends.

I remember when I searched famous people who were left handed. The only person who I knew was Barack Obama.

I remember the first time I noticed most people are right handed.

I remember when I started looking for other left handers. I stared at people who were eating with their left hand at restaurants.

I remember when I asked my parents the reason why they didn't fix my handedness. They said, "We don't mind."

I remember when I first heard the left has a negative or minor meaning in a history class. I was shocked to be a lefty. I detested my left hand.

I remember the only time my calligraphy was chosen as one of the excellent works in my school. I was proud of my right hand.

I remember when I gave up thinking about the reason why I am a lefty.

I remember when people who met me at the first time, everybody asked me, "Are you a lefty?" I answered, "Why?" and everybody said, "I am jealous you." I wondered what they were jealous of, and they were jealous of me or of just a lefty.

I remember when I poured soup in school lunch time. The tap of a ladle doesn't work.

I remember the first time I won the game of table tennis. It was a miracle! My backstroke made my opponent confused.

I remember when my friends pointed out my wrong way to grab a pen. They made fun of me and said, "You should do over again from kindergarten!" I wanted to go somewhere alone.

I remember when I had a friend who could use both right and left hands. I envied her.

I remember when I shook hands with my friend. I held out my left hand, my friend held out her right hand. I changed my hand.

I remember the last time I injured my right third finger. I was glad to be a left hander.

I remember seeing a woman using her smartphone with her left hand in a train. She looked like it was hard to use, but I realized I was in the same situation.

THANK YOU, MOM AND DAD

NATSUKI MARUTA

I miss my mother and father. Also, I want to tell them the feeling of gratitude that is “Thank you for always being nice to me”.

I live by myself because I entered Meiji Gakuin University where I wanted to go. When I was in third grade during high school, I never imagined living alone, so I think that I could not understand some troubles about it. However, by living on my own, I can learn things that I could not have learned if I kept living with my parents. For example, the importance of money, cleaning and food.

Firstly, I will talk about what I learned about money. My mother scolded me very often because I was a spendthrift, so I started a part-time job which I work for two or three days a week. Usually, I get tired and complain very easily after the part-time job. However, when I think of working, I cannot ever remember my parents complaining about work. This made me realize it again, my parents are like a hero to me. Nowadays I buy clothes, food, daily necessities and so on from money earned. My parents send me an allowance when I feel that money is not enough. However, I want to stop the allowance because I feel sorry for my parents to continue to send me money that they earned after their hard work. Also, going to the university costs a lot of money. So, I will try to work more at a part-time job in order to ease the financial problems that they might be facing.

Secondly, I will explain about the difficulty of cleaning. While living in my hometown, my father cleans the bathtub and the drain, and my mother cleans the toilet. However, I must clean all things by myself because I’m out of my parents’ house, and living by myself now. Although if I keep leaving my room without cleaning, it will cause bad smell or may get moldy, it is still hard to keep my room clean. I feel so nice when I finish cleaning my room, so in order to keep cleaning, I decided to clean my room two times a week. When I was living with my parents, I never faced such problems. Thanks to this experience, I learned the importance of cleaning.

Thirdly, I will discuss food. At present, I live in the dormitory. The reason why I chose the dormitory is because dormitory living on my own is safer, I can live with my friends, and meals are provided, so my parents thought that they left me with the location without worry. I usually have healthy and delicious meals with my friends there, however same food tastes different when I eat meals that are provided by somebody. Whenever I have meals with my friends, it makes me miss my family dinner, and makes me feel homesick, so when I get back to my hometown, I want to ask my mother to teach me how to cook. In addition, when I go back to my dormitory, I can eat the same food that I used to eat in my hometown, and feel calm.

Living by myself is a good experience for my life, and based on my experiences, from now on I want to try to study harder and do more part-time job without forgetting to thank my parents.

LOVELY HULA HANDS

MISAKI MASAOKA

Lovely Hula Hands shows the anxiety about corporate tourism and the prostitution of Hawaiian culture. It offers various views about Hawaiian visitors, Hawaiian culture and corporate tourism. Hawaii does not only a good tourist site of a warm climate, it has some problems between Hawaiian culture and corporate tourism.

Today, there is a lot of corporate tourism in Hawaii and Japanese corporate tourism, too. They look like rulers. Hawaii has been controlled by tourist and corporate tourism. They invested nearly \$1 billion in Hawaii's sightseeing. It shows us Hawaiian land is controlled by foreigners. Corporate tourism changed Hawaii into money and are sensitive to the thing which tourism wants. Corporate tourism does not restore Hawaiian people. Their profits are just brought to their home country. Hawaiians are working hard, but corporate tourism's profit has not saved Hawaiian people. More than 29,000 families live in the place other than their own house. Because house rents in Hawaii are high, for example the cost of a house on the most populated islands O'ahu is around \$350,000. They spend nearly 52 percent of their gross income for housing costs. Salary is low, but expensive to rent. This is why many Hawaiians do not pay it. Nearly one-fifth of Hawaii's population live as near-homeless in Hawaii. There is a similar thing that happens in Okinawa. Okinawa has attractive tourist attractions. There is a lot of culture, history of the island, a sea of emerald green and white sandy beaches. Okinawa has a warm climate, like Hawaii, and it is appreciated as a place of sightseeing, resorts, and many tourists visit there every year. But some people don't know about the real culture of Okinawa.

Next, as described above, there are tourists who do not understand about the real culture in sightseeing sites. Many people have an image of Hawaii which is warm, soft, kindness and fantasy. It's related to "she." I mean, Hawaii has been feminized by foreigners. If I use this meaning, tourism is being carried out in Hawaii by multinational enterprises, so that Hawaii seems to be totally raped by other countries. Hawaiian culture is understood to be different from the original meaning. For example, Aloha and Hula. Aloha is simply translated as "love" but it is different from the recognition of native Hawaiians. They don't use it with people who don't understand them. They use it only as family or person who really understands. Aloha is not given to everyone. But when tourists go to Hawaii, people say "Aloha." Hula is a holy ceremony, but now it's so erotic. When I saw the real Hula in the class, I was really surprised. Because it was very different from my image. Many people don't know real Hawaiian culture. And these examples show Hawaiian culture is commercialized. But they accept the tourists as if Hawaii is for them. It seems to be cultural prostitution. Native Hawaiians sell their culture and spirit to corporate tourism and visitors.

Haunani-Kay wrote, "We do not want or need any more tourists, we certainly do not like them." But Hawaiians have nothing to do except tourist movement. They have only

a few choices, do tourism or enter the military. Or they leave Hawaii. Hawaiians do not notice that it suppresses them to do tourism. And they entertain visitors at historical sites without real Hawaiian culture and help promote local Hawaiian tourism. They continue deceiving themselves. Many people are attracted by the resorts, like Hawaii, Okinawa and Guam. Because they want to escape from the reality, work, stress and human relations. And they think that a resort is where that can be forgotten. But it is not a dreamlike place, there are many problems. There is the place which is full of garbage, dirty ocean and homeless. The resort area and the city are not different so much. People expect too much from the vacation spot. Resort areas certainly have good points, but there is not only that. Today, Hawaii is raped by tourists and corporate tourism. Hawaiians sell their culture. They say "Aloha" to tourists who they don't know well, dance erotically and smile as if they welcome visitors. Corporate tourism bereaves them of their original culture.

My favorite line is "We do not want or need any more tourists, and we certainly do not like them." It's very strong phrase. And they show us how much they are angry at culture and tradition being polluted. Writers use the word, "cultural prostitution." This word gave me a shock because it is very negative. I felt that it makes women into an abominable word. But the writer is female. It shows that she is angry about tourism and sad for a disgraceful tradition to use such a word. I didn't know that Hawaii is feminized and many people have the image that Hawaiian culture has no original meaning. Corporate tourism should restore their profits to Hawaiians and should give homeless some work. If they talk with a multinational enterprise among local inhabitants, some solution may be found. And corporate tourism shows only good point like beautiful ocean, warm climate and kind people, and don't show original culture. They should show us bad points, dirty beach, homelessness, garbage and original culture. It's important for us and for Hawaiians. Hawaiian people will lose work if tourists do not come to Hawaii because Hawaii needs tourist. Hawaiians will never escape from tourist and tourism. There are many resort sites in the world, and many people go to there because they want to escape from reality. But resort sites are also a reality in the world. We should look at this point. Tourist enterprises and local Hawaiians should talk to do better than the present situation and they should coexist.

Most people do not know about the real Hawaii. We only look at good points because media, corporate tourism and magazines show us only good things. We are planting incorrect information, wrong tradition and fantasy by corporate tourism. Hawaiians do not show us reality for tourism. And we do not want to understand about Hawaii. We believe that not-real Hawaii information.

MY LIFE ON A DAY

KEITA YAGI

SUN

I Wake up.
Hello. Wash my face.
Eat breakfast as fast as I can.
Change my clothes. Go bath. Brush teeth
Preparation. Leave home. Go to station.
Get train. Get off train. Get train. Get off train.
Get Train. Get off train. Leave station. Walk to school.
Go to classroom. Take class. Leave classroom. Take a rest.
Go to classroom. Take class. Leave classroom. Take a rest. Have
a lunch. Take a rest. Go to classroom. Take class. Leave classroom.
Take a rest. Go to classroom. Take class. Leave classroom. Take
a rest. Go to classroom. Take class. Leave classroom. Leave
school. Walk to station. Get train. Get off train. Get train. Get
off train. Get Train. Get off train. Leave station. Go home
Change my clothes. Prepare for tomorrow. Have
Dinner. Go to bathroom. Brush teeth.
Wash face. Talk to my family.
Watch TV. Good night.
Walk to bed

MOON

LOVE IS CHOCOLATE

MISA HAYASHI

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NICOLE AND HER DAY

AYANO NORO

“Hey Nicole, this is the town you and I are going to live from today.”

Nicole was looking out the window of the truck. The place was new to her eyes. Where she lived before didn’t have the houses made close together, and there were more trees and flowers everywhere. She was also surprised to see that there were no mountains around her. She and her father were moving to a new town, and they were carrying their stuff to the new house.

“Look, that’s our house!” Her father was excited to start a new life here in this new town with her daughter. He stopped the car in front of the house and started unloading their boxes. His friend who lived in the same town came to help them move in. They were working hard and they didn’t realize that Nicole had disappeared. But they didn’t worry so much because Nicole went away by herself very often in the town they lived before. “I bet she will come back soon as always, but because we just moved here, I’m just worried that she could get lost.”

Nicole was looking around the new town. There were new buildings everywhere, playgrounds, and many small houses, as that she saw from the car on her way here.

The new town wasn’t big with many people, but there were many small children, about Nicole’s age, playing outside with the other children. The town she used to live in had more nature, but because there weren’t many children playing around, she really liked to think about making new friends and playing with them. Many kids were wearing colorful backpacks to school. It was their last day of school, and summer break was about to begin. At the playground, she found many elementary school children playing on the see-saw.

“How do you do this?” A girl looked like she was having fun playing on the see-saw, Nicole wanted to try it too. The girl with the red backpack was surprised to know that this little girl didn’t know how to ride the see-saw, but showed her how she could go up and up by pushing her legs off the ground.

“Hey look! I’m really high!” When the girl with the red backpack, named Ann, looked away, Nicole was already at the top of the see-saw.

“Don’t let go!” Ann shouted, but it was too late. Nicole removed her hands and flew all the way to the other side of the park.

“OOOH THAT WAS SCARY!!!” Many of the children who were watching Nicole gathered to see if she was okay. She wasn’t hurt at all. The rest of the day, Nicole played at the playground with the other kids, and Ann took Nicole home. Ann was a 5th grader in the elementary school in the town. She was small, with black, not so long hair, and loved playing outside. Ann was a very kind and clever girl, and she was the student that was in charge of the classroom. She was good at looking after small children, and she wanted to be a pre-school teacher when she grew up. Nicole liked listening to Ann’s stories.

Ann would tell her stories about, how elementary school works, what she is studying,

and what she usually does during the summer. While they were walking home, Ann asked Nicole many things. How old she was, where she came from, and what she was doing all alone and things like that. Nicole answered, that she was seven years old, that she came from a very far place. Nicole would be going to elementary school from next year, so she was excited to know many new things. She, then realized that she had been away for a long time and her father could have been worried about her. So Nicole and Ann hurried to Nicole's house. When they got back, they discovered that they were neighbors. Nicole made a new friend on her first day in this new town.

Ann introduced her family to Nicole. "I have two older sisters. Their names are Kate and Jess. Kate goes to high school, and Jess goes to college. They are both really nice so I think you'll like them, and I think they will play with you too. And this is my mother. My father is usually not home because he has work, but I think you'll see him someday."

"Hi Nicole, I'm Ann's mother. Nice to meet you. You can come to our house every day. We'll treat you like our own kids. Come play with my girls!" Nicole was happy to hear that because she sometimes felt lonely in the house while her father was working. But now she had another house and people that would also treat her as a family. Nicole and Ann were playing in Ann's room with the dolls when they heard Nicole's father

said, "Nicole, come back home. We're going shopping!" Nicole and Ann were having so much fun that Nicole wanted to pretend that she couldn't hear anything, but her father continued, "Since you're older now and we're in a new place, I am going to buy you something." "What? What are you going to buy me?" Nicole was really happy that she hurried back to where her father was, and jumped around with joy. They walked through the corner of the town, and there was a bicycle shop. "I'm going to buy you, and myself, a bicycle so that we can go shopping together. Choose any bicycle you like, Nicole." They entered the bicycle shop and saw many colorful different types of bicycles. There were road bikes, bikes that had a child seat on the back, and bikes for little kids with the training wheels. The store wasn't big enough to have all the bicycles inside, but there were many outside the store so that people passing by the store could easily take a look. On the walls were helmets, gloves, and tools which could be used for self-repairs. Nicole first chose a big bicycle which was for adults.

"Hey dear, I think that one is too big for you. How old are you?" The man in charge of the bicycle shop came to see what she chose. "I'm seven." Nicole answered. "Then why don't you get this blue one? And you can choose a helmet from these ones here." The man pointed at a rack nearby. Nicole chose a blue bicycle with training wheels and a helmet with stars printed on it, and her father also chose a blue bicycle with a big basket on the front so that he could use the bicycle when they go shopping at the grocery store. Nicole and her father thanked the man and left the bicycle shop. Nicole practiced riding her bicycle so she was able to ride it on her own. Nicole was happy to have her own bicycle, but was told that she wasn't able to go ride it by herself yet. Nicole couldn't wait to ride her bicycle and go far. Nicole and her father also went to other places to buy the things they needed for their new house. They bought curtains, plates, a coffee maker, clothes, and shoes. On their way home, they talked about what Nicole wanted to do during the summer.

Nicole said that she wanted to go to the sea, so her father promised to take her. Later that day, Nicole came home with Ann. “Dad! Dad! Let’s go!” She shouted to her father from the entrance of her house.

“Where?” Her father had no idea where she wanted to go.

“What are you saying? You said you would take me to the sea! Can we take Ann too?”

“No, I didn’t say we were going today. I said during the summer break. But, okay.

I think we can go today. Come on Nicole, get your stuff.” Nicole, her father, and Ann headed to the sea. They took the train to get to the nearest beach. On the train, Nicole got on the seat and turned her body to see out the window. At first, she could only see similar buildings passing by, but as the train got closer to the beach, the houses and the buildings became less, and they were able to see the sea between the houses. The train finally stopped at the last station, which was full of people who were going to the beach like them. It was Nicole’s first time to go to the sea, so she got excited and ran into the water without even getting into her swimsuit, but soon was lifted out of the water by her father.

“You need to change your clothes first, and then you can get into the water. You shouldn’t run into the water without doing any exercise because it is dangerous! Okay?” Nicole’s father warned her, but Nicole wasn’t listening much to her father’s words. While changing into her swimsuit, she noticed that many people had floats with them. She

asked her father what that was, and begged him to buy one for her too. Nicole’s father bought her a watermelon pattern float, blew it up into the round shape, and took her to the umbrella where their stuff were put under it. Nicole had sunscreen on her body and face, stretched a couple of times, before slowly walking into the water. She put her foot into the water and felt the sand under her foot moving.

“It’s so cold in here!” Nicole started going deeper and further into the sea. Ann came with her because Nicole’s father wasn’t good at swimming. Ann and Nicole were making splashes and riding on the waves with the float.

“Look! There’s a big one coming!” It was just when Nicole said that when she got swallowed by the big wave.

“Nicole’s gone!” Ann looked for her, and found her floating on the float in the middle of the ocean. Because it was Nicole’s first time in the sea, she didn’t realize that it was hard to come back to the shore from a deep area. Nicole tried to swim back, but the waves pulled her go more and more to the middle of the ocean. Nicole thought that she wouldn’t be able to go back to her father, and started crying. Ann called the lifeguard for help, and Nicole was safely taken back to her father. After that, Nicole was too scared to go into the water again, so Nicole and Ann decided to play with the sand instead, and started making a huge sand castle. They used a bucket and put sand in it, tipped it over, and repeated

that over and over again. The castle was decorated by little colorful shells which Nicole collected. It was almost 5 pm, so Nicole’s father called them to go home, but Nicole said she wanted to finish making the big castle. After 30 minutes, Ann and Nicole’s father found Nicole sleeping by the completed castle. There was a river going through the castle, and a big shiny shell on the very top. Nicole’s father took a picture of the castle, and

put the shiny shell on the top into his backpack to take it home. Ann and Nicole’s father

packed their stuff and headed to the station again. Only their breathing could be heard on the quiet train back home. The girls had fallen asleep. Once they got to their station, it was already dark outside, and Nicole was awake from her sleep.

“What else do you want to do during the summer, Nicole?” Nicole’s father asked on their way home. “You experienced moving to a new town, you made new friends, and you went to the sea. What else do you want to try?”

“I want to go to the mountain. And also go camping, and do BBQ, and go to the river, and go see the stars! Oh, and I also want to go to school with Ann. And...” They talked about what they wanted to do until they finally got home. Nicole said bye to Ann, and went inside the new house she was going to live from now on. Her father showed her the kitchen, the dining, the living room, and her bedroom. They took a bath, got into their pajamas and laid on the bed.

“How was your day?” Nicole’s father asked as he tackled her into bed. Nicole thought about her long day. She came to this new town with her father she loved, explored around and met Ann and her family, learned how to use the see-saw, went to buy her bicycle, and went to the beach. She was already in her dreams before answering to her father’s question. Nicole’s father took out the shell he brought home from Nicole’s sand castle, and put it on her desk. He cleaned up Nicole’s room a little, and turned off the lights.

“Good night Nicole. You experienced a lot today. I hope you will explore something new tomorrow too.” He said and slowly and quietly closed the door.

TIME TRAVEL

NATSUHO KITAYA

This is my true story:

Last night, I traveled in time.

Actually, it is not time travel exactly, but I felt like it was.

I came back from my part-time job, and spent more than two hours in front of my PC.

Then I got tired, so I went to bed about 3 o'clock a.m.

Suddenly I heard my friend's voice.

She said, "You seem to have lost a lot of weight!"

I opened my eyes. I noticed I was lying on my back, and I felt a sign of my friend on both sides of me. On my left side, my friend said about my weight.

They are sitting maybe, but I found certainly they were not lying on their backs like me.

It was a dim vision and I could not move my eyes in their direction.

I was rooted to the ground, but I could see the vision.

I knew the place where I was, I was there the day before yesterday.

It was your house! We had a party in your house on the 27th of June.

I jumped in time. My memory after the 27th of June was gone, and I had even forgotten that I went to bed after working on the PC.

My brain thinks I'm in your house now, today is the 27th of June. No doubt.

The friend on the left was one of the seminar members, but on the right side, there was my ex-friend. So, I thought „Why did she come here?“ and I started to think this is not a real moment. It was so weird.

She was my high school classmate, but we fought, then I renounced her.

After "The left friend" speech, my ex-friend talked about me sooooo badly.

But I could not say anything. I could not even move.

Suddenly, she put something, something fluffy like a pillow on my face.

She was trying to kill me.

I thought this is real, I feel I'm there in the present time.

But I remembered some hours ago at a stretch. I came back from my job, worked on the PC, and then I went to bed. So, I realized this is not real!

She is still trying to kill me, I was so scared and it was hard to breathe.

I tried to make my consciousness clearly, prayed strongly and hardly.

My mouth was moving but my voice did not come out.

I prayed "I need to come back to the real world, please, please, please....."

I know this is dream, just a dream, I will never die, never die, never die....."

Finally, I blew one big breath.

Then everything blew away from me.

I could see my bedroom's ceiling. I returned safely to the real world.

This experience scared me so much.

I thought I would die and I took labored breathing.

Believe it or not, it is your choice, but I think this was not a normal dream. Because I could feel it and it was really hard breathing.

I don't know why the high school friend appeared in my image.

I did not recollect her for many years, so her appearance was very surprising to me.

But actually she appeared in my head, so I think I perhaps imagined her in my head somehow or she was thinking about me and imagined me.

Her feeling reached in my head. It is a kind of spiritual thinking but perhaps that's true or my bedroom was stuffy and I felt uncomfortable and hard to breathe, then my conscious connected pain and the pain connected to her image.

Anyway I think she is evil for me. Maybe I am evil for her too.

I have not seen her strange image since that time.

From this experience, I felt time travel is hard and it needs lot of energy.

If I could choose a moment to time travel, it is maybe nice, but I cannot choose any moment. So, time travel is very tough thing for me.

I don't want to time travel again.

UNFORGETTABLE UNIQUE MEMORY

MEGUMI YAZAKI

Gyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa.

When I was preparing for sleeping, my mother screamed. I was very surprised at the voice. I was running up to my mother. Then there was so spectacularly scary spider. The size was about 20 centimeters. The spider like an aragog is a spider which appears in the movie of Harry Potter. My relative caught the spider with newspapers. I did not believe. Besides, she was a girl. However no one believed this story. I thought I would like to go home early.

That is a story when I was an elementary school first year and I went to Mie prefecture with my family. Mie was my mother's parent's home. But my grandmother moved to Tokyo now. My uncle lives in Mie now.

At the time, I took a shinkansen for the first time. I was very excited. I remember that I enjoyed playing card game. I was looking forward to arriving Mie. However I was disappointed when I got off the shinkansen. There was unmanned station. Furthermore there was only the place that is gathering fisher. Then we went to my mother's parent's home. There were distant relatives. The relations lived near. I was low tension because there were people who I didn't know. But they were very kind. The day was nothing to do.

The next day my uncle went to sea with my family. We took my uncle's big ship. First we watched fishing on the ship. I got seasick. However my uncle said to me wait a moment please and you will get well. I couldn't understand what he said. But at once I understood that.

It was a wonderful view from there. We saw the sea shining under the sunset shine. The sea was brilliant. I saw the sea for a while silently. I remember the brightness of the sea. I saw the sea turned red in the setting sun for the first time. In those day I had thought the color of sea is only blue. So I was riveted to the spot when I saw the scene.

Then we could smell the salt of the sea around there. I thought that was like a fish smell. And I heard the sound of the waves. The sound made me calm. My cousin gave me a big trumpet shell. The size was 15 centimeters. Surprisingly when I put the shell to my ear, it sounded of the waves. In addition the shell sounds even now. It is one of my treasures.

Thereafter my uncle showed me fishing. He caught a lobster. Lobster's back was tough. We ate the lobster my uncle caught. It was very delicious. I got seasick but I had forgot such things. The experience on the ship was very valuable. I can't forget such memory forever.

I thought Mie was boring on the first day. I even thought I would like to go back home. However the next day I thought Mie was a wonderful place. Mie is a very simple prefecture but has many good places. I learned there are many good places in every prefecture.

When I am walking along the riverside and looking out over the river suddenly I remember the brightness of the sea. When I see a trumpet shell I remember the sound of the waves. When I eat lobster, I remember the salty tang of the sea. Precious memories will never leave. I want to go to Mie again and I want to travel to various parts of Japan sometime.

WHY IS A COFFEE BITTER?

AYAKA HANDA

One day in winter, Mr. Coffee fell in love with Ms. Sugar. The fair-skinned girl was so lovely that slightest touch would dissolve her. It was a sweet love. They were always together. So everyone used to say "You're so hot!" as a joke. Their love was filled with warmth like a hot coffee. But when hot summer came, Mr. Coffee was fascinated by Ms. Simple syrup. She opened up to anybody. And their sweet love faded off. Ms. Sugar asked "Why did you change completely?" Mr. Coffee answered "We can't understand and melt together now. "That because you cooled off toward my lover like an ice cream." So she left him. After that, the seasons turned and cold winter arrived once more. Mr. Coffee thought back the sweet love with Ms. Sugar. His past love changed bitter. "I would never meet anyone more than her. I can't fall in sweet love like that." Thus, Mr. Coffee has been waiting someone who gives hot and sweet emotion for him again.

LU RAMBLES

YASUHIRO ABE

My Concrete Poetry, Where Lu Rambles

I

wonder what my name is.

I have six arms and one leg, and wear a black coat.

However, those around to me have their own appearances.

My friend has eight arms, and my aunt is dressed in red. By the way,
rumor has it that there are some young people have the ability to become small.

I have a job. When it rains or snows I'm busy, but if the weather is nice I'm off. In
contrast, my sister leaves for work when the sky is bright with the sun. The worst enemy
of us is a strong wind. For us, a fracture means death. In particular, after a typhoon has passed,
a large number of bodies lay here and there. Oh dear I can't for the life of me recall my name.

The initial letter of my name is...

Initia l

Initi al

Init ial

Ini tial

In itial

I nitial

Lette r

Lett er

Let ter

Le tter

L etter

Is

U

MY FAVORITE MONTH

ISHITA HOKONO

Nostalgic feeling
Oh, there are only two months left this year!
Very cold days
Early sunset
Many precious people's birthdays in this month
Beautiful starlit sky
Every day I drink hot tea or coffee in this month
Red fallen leaves make red carpet on the street

WHAT IS MY REGRET

MANAMI TANAKA

The flash came toward me. I heard somebody shouting and warning me but all I could do was standing on the point. I was covered with this flash of light and suddenly my eyesight turned black.

William opened his eyes slowly and found himself on the white floor. Not only the floor but also everything was pure white. He tried to get up and see around this white place absent-mindedly. In his head, there were a lot of questions floating one after another. Who am I? Oh, it's a silly question. I'm William. Well, then, where am I? Why am I in this strange place? I remember that I was hit by a large truck. Wait a moment, William, am I dead? Suddenly, William's eyes opened wide and he forgot his tiredness completely. William couldn't recover from the shock. He tried to remember clearly what had happened at that time but suddenly he had a heavy headache and he couldn't remember it. All of a sudden, he heard a young man's voice behind him. He looked back to see the person but there was no one around him. The voice seemed to talk to William, but his words didn't make any sense to him. While he was searching for him, he could hear the calm voice clearly. He tried to talk to the voice.

"Who are you?"

The voice stopped talking. There was a momentary stillness and then he talked to him again. At this time, William understood the language.

"I'm a guardian who watches people come to this place. Here is a temporary place where dead or dying people can stay safely. However, this place can't keep the shape of a room. It means this area will disappear soon. You have to leave the room and go to the next place."

"Wait, wait, I can't follow you. I only remember a car accident. I was hit. Am I dead? What happened to me? Can I go back to my house? If you're a guardian, you must know it. Please tell me." William was confused because this talking was beyond his imagination.

"My job is only watching people coming here and leading them to the next place and so I can't explain to you in detail but all I can say is that you don't have your own body now. It's like a ghost. Your soul is separated from your body and comes here. Oh, this place will disappear soon, I'll take you to the next place." William couldn't say anything. His face got paler and paler. However, the voice didn't mind him and kept on speaking.

"Sometimes people who come here have regrets before their death. As long as they have such a feeling, they can't ride a boat to heaven. Can you see the boat? That is it. That's why they try to accomplish what they couldn't do before death as a ghost."

Suddenly, the white area disappeared like sand and William found himself near a large gray river. The weather was cloudy and gloomy. When he looked at the river, he soon found many boats on the river. There were five people on each boat. They seemed to move

toward the same destination.

"Where are we now? Where's the white room?" Poor William only could ask questions to the voice.

"This place is located between the earth and the other world. This large river is called Styx. It leads people on the boats to the other world. If you don't have regret in the earth, you should ride on the boat as soon as possible, because spirits are absorbed into demons wandering here."

"What? Why did you bring me to this dangerous place? You said the white room is a safe place for me, right? Please let me go back."

"Sorry, I can't do that because that room has already disappeared. All we can do is to advance. Let's go."

"But..."

While William was talking to the voice, one boat appeared in front of him.

He tried to get into the boat, but his body passed through the boat and couldn't get into it.

"Why can't I get into the boat? If I can't do that, I will be absorbed by devils and my mind will disappear. What should I do?"

"Calm down. You must regret something in the earth. That's why you can't get to the boat. You have to remember what it was and then feel no regret. As long as you don't remember your regret, you can't move from here."

William tried to remember it but when he tried to do so, he had a headache. At that moment, the easygoing voice talked to William again.

"Sorry, it's time. I have to go back to my job. Someone is waiting for me and I'll lead him to here. I believe you can do it. Good luck."

He seemed to disappear. William called him again and again but he could no longer hear him.

During that time, from the distance, a black fog appeared and came close to him slowly but surely. The closer the fog came to him, the less he remembered. He ran away from it, but the fog followed him. Suddenly, he was covered with this black fog and there was complete darkness around him. He realized that he was absorbed. The black fog held thousands of peoples' minds and they talked to him in a loud voice at the same time. William, who became only a spirit, was mixed into their minds and his mind almost disappeared. At the very time, William heard someone call him. He couldn't remember who he was but his voice sounded familiar. While he was listening to it, William found that the black fog was stepping away from him and so he tried to focus on the voice to recall him. He felt as if he could have seen his back in the distance. Who is he? I can't remember his face but he must have been my friend. I'm sure I would usually play with him. Think deeply. Oh, I had to say something to him. I remembered him completely. That's Fred. He's my best friend and I had to apologize to him. I said a terrible thing to him and I hurt his feelings. I want to apologize to him!

Suddenly, shiny strong light appeared so that William couldn't keep his eyes open. When he opened his eyes, the black fog completely disappeared and he found himself

in the white room again and he heard the young man's voice again. A little while ago, William had a terrible experience because of him.

"Why did you leave me near Styx? I was nearly sucked into the black fog because of you."

"Sorry, but I have to lead many souls like you to the next world in a day and I also have to apologize to you for another thing."

"What is it?" William asked glumly.

"It is true that you were hit by a truck but you're not dead yet." The voice said to him awkwardly.

"What?"

"I'll show it to you."

As soon as he finished talking, a small white well appeared in the center of the white room.

"Look into the well."

William walked to the well doubtfully and looked into it. The water didn't reflect the white room. It showed a room in a hospital. William himself lay on the bed. His eyes were closed and he didn't seem to wake up. However, he was breathing. William, who was looking into the well, felt very relieved that he was alive and felt strange because he watched his own body. The door of the sickroom was open and someone entered. This was Fred. William tried to stretch his arm toward him unconsciously but he couldn't.

"Your friend has been to the hospital and visited you since you met a traffic accident."

While the voice was continuing, William remembered the past. Fred, he was William's best friend and he and William always played together. One day, when they played in the playground as usual, their teacher ran toward them in a hurry. His face was very serious and he looked shocked and approached William directly.

"Calm down and listen to me carefully. Your parents died in a traffic accident. They were carried by ambulance, but...."

William didn't remember well what he said because of his terrible shock. Fred tried to comfort him but William rejected him.

"You can't understand my sorrow. Leave me alone!"

He couldn't forget Fred's face when he said so. William left in a hurry. On his way home, he remembered Fred's parents also died and he was raised by his grandparents and he regretted deeply and he tried to return to the playground. It was then he was hit by the truck.

William found himself crying. He wiped his tears away roughly and asked the young man's voice.

"You said I'm not dead, didn't you? But, I can only see my body sleeping. How can I get to the previous world? Please tell me."

"I've told you just now. Didn't you listen to me? Your body was dying right after you were taken to hospital. Your body didn't have enough power to connect with your soul. That's why your body and your soul were separated, but now you are better and so I'll take you to your world. The simplest way is dropping into this well." Suddenly, William

was pushed by unseeable hands and dropped into the well. He closed his eyes instinctively.

William opened his eyes. He lay on the bed in the hospital. Finally, he could return to his place. His heart was filled with joy and he found a well-known figure by the window. He was putting flowers in a vase. William called his best friend and then Fred turned around and smiled to him.

THE TRUTH OF MAY

ANNA INOUE

‘We only have two weeks until the chorus contest. Why can’t you guys be more serious?’ said May, the conductor of our class wearing glasses, white skin like snow and long black hair in always a single knot. This is May, she is just like a model student and the best student of the class. The exact opposite person from me.

Yes, we are having a chorus contest in a week. We fight against classes and the teachers choose whose class was the best chorus. If we win, we win. That’s all, even if we win we don’t get money, we don’t get prizes, we don’t get good results. So why do we have to work hard on this stupid contest? This is so ridiculous. I thought. Of course I wasn’t the only one who was thinking this contest was ridiculous. In fact everyone except May was thinking this was stupid. Every one was so stressed by practicing everyday after school and that made us bully May. We were calling her a ghost because of her white creepy pale skin. May’s skin was really white like a ghost. So we acted like she wasn’t even there. We made mistakes on purpose and made fun of May. And at length we were neglecting her. So this is why May is so angry to us. But I wonder why May is so serious about this contest. Why does she want to win so much? I thought. But at that time I didn’t know that I was going to know about how important this contest was for May.

One day, we were waiting for May to practice our chorus song as usual. We always practice after school so everyone is exhausted. Of course no one wanted to practice so we were just waiting. Some students were chatting, some were eating, and some were sleeping. But I was worried about May. May was never late to our practice. In fact she was always there five minutes before the practice starts. So this situation was weird. But May didn’t show up and we couldn’t stand it any longer so we all went home without practicing. Nobody knew that we were going to hear about the truth of May.

The next day, May was absent from school. I thought it was strange because May had never missed school before. But on the other hand I was happy. ‘We don’t have to practice today!’ Shouted one of the classmates and everyone else cheered and threw their caps and paper. Nobody cared about May. They only cared about their self. And I was the full-fledged member of them, too. But, the next day May was absent again and the next day and again and again. Finally she didn’t come to school for a week. This made us finally wake up and worry about our chorus. Because now we only had one week until the contest and we hadn’t done anything for a whole week. We just threw a week away. But eventually we couldn’t do anything without May. ‘What are we going to do?’ said one of my classmates. ‘Who cares? Let’s miss the contest,’ said another classmate. And the day ended in a stalemate.

The next day, our teacher said that May will not be able to attend the contest and told us that she has to stay in the hospital for a year. This meant that she cannot graduate school with us, and the teacher told how hard she worked for this contest and had strong feelings for it because this was her last event she could attend together as a member of this class. I finally knew why May was so serious about this contest and how hard she wanted to work on this chorus. May knew that she was sick and this was her last chance to participate in the contest with everyone. I felt ashamed of myself for being such an idiot. Why couldn't I be more earnest? Why couldn't I think of May's feeling? I was only thinking about myself.

I was shocked and I could feel that every one was shocked about this news. At the same time I was thinking of what I can do, and unconsciously I was talking in front of my classmates. 'We only have one week but I believe that we can do something in one week if we hold together. Let's fight for May.' I could see everyone said yes from their eyes. From that day, we started practicing everyday every minute. Everyone devoted every spare moment to practice our chorus. Everyone was making a serious try. We were becoming to have a supportive community with each other. We did not waste a single day. Finally, the big day came. But our class wasn't at the competition hall. We were at the hospital. Our wish was to sing for May. This came from the common desire of all people to May. We sang for May we sang for ourselves we sang from our heart. As a result we weren't able to win, we got in trouble with the teachers for missing the contest without saying anything, but that didn't matter at all. Whatever the results were, we did our best and we learned a lot more from the contest than winning.

POEMS

AYA SUGIYAMA

“Reflecting”

“Who are you?”
“Who are you?”
The golden mirror
Sits in black velvet
Spilling tiny diamonds
And asks
“Who are you?”
“Who are you?”

“Hanabi”

We see the dream
Fleeting dream
On the summer night
No time to say “good-by”
It looks like beauty

“Meeting”

By accident
Any chance
Meeting is precious
Make a smile
I’m sure
I love my friends

“Seeking”

Round, round, round
Again and again
When can we stop
Seeking the meaning
We are still living
Round, round, round
Again and again

PSYCHEDELIA AND DRUGS

CHI HARU HIYAMA

The line between 'artist' and 'drug',
It seems thinner than a knife's edge.
If a drug-addict-artist stops using drugs,
That artist can't make good music.

If this is true, the music is not real. It is made by drugs.

My image of 'hippie': eccentric hair and clothes, making a movement.
Not a good image. But, delve into it, and there are good points.
Free, gentle, kind, anti-war, peaceful...

The psychedelic movement is linked with hippies.

At first, I criticized drugs.
Surely, drugs are bad. But sometimes,
The act makes new things.
Music made not only good things but also bad things.

I felt the depth of music.

WILD ONES WHISPERING IN MY MEMORY

KAORI TANIMOTO

I remember the bird that flew high above the blue wide sky, flapping its big wings. I was looking at the bird thinking; how exciting it would be to fly, how wonderful it would be to go wherever you want, and what will the view be like. Until the teacher said to me, “Are you listening?”

I remember a baby dog chasing me as it barks, and I ran as fast as I could. She was cute but scary for a six-year-old girl.

I remember one of my favorite animals is a toucan, since I touched its big bright mandarin beak in a botanic garden.

I remember the tiny bat that lay on the grass of the playground in school, with its eyes closed. It was noisy outside, but there was silence around the bat.

I remember the day when the horse that I used to ride; “Mundialita” was taking a vacation and she was gone for a while. Instead I rode on another horse, but it suddenly threw me down on the ground. I woke up my body, and realized there was something wrong. Slowly reaching my mouth and I noticed that my tooth was gone, and I cried.

I remember when my hamster bit my finger and I realized how weak they are.

I remember the moment when I dropped the teddy bear in the river in a park. It was a borrowed thing from my teacher, so after I got it back I washed it and gave it back to her saying “Thank you.”

I remember there were seven small aquariums filled up with beautiful fishes in the living room.

I remember looking at the sea lions and penguins from the ship. They were staring right at us as if they were wondering, “What are they looking at?”

I remember the stories that my mother had told me about my father’s cat that she was looking after for a while. It used to climb trees but was not able to get down.

I remember how much I loved cheetah that I tried to run as fast as them.

I remember that I rode on an elephant in the Ruhan zoo. However, there was a dog nearby and the elephant got in a panic. Gradually I didn’t fall off, but it ended so quickly.

I remember the first day when the black cat came to my house. All of my family played with her. As we threw the shining red ball, she would run after it and bring it back to us. Her round eyes were so adorable.

I remember when a white Great Pyrenees started to follow my father at the street of Iguaçu. It wagged its tail with its tongue dangling.

I remember where the poster of a tiger was put on the wall. It was always staring at me whenever I go to bed.

I remember there was a tortoise in my friend’s house. It was always walking around in the garden, beside the pool, and in the house.

I remember that I wanted a stuffed animal of a Procyonidae and I was in a glum mood.

Then my father got off the bus and went to buy it. The Procyonidae was wearing a pink t-shirt that said, “Bienvenida a Iguacu, Brazil”

I remember the path to the pool where there were many slimy small frogs. I used to catch them with my grandfather, every June in Nikko.

I remember the smell of the barn that I milked the cow.

I remember whenever I went to a restaurant. I used to draw ponies on papers while dishes were served. The ponies were drawn in sparkling pens with several colors; red, pink, yellow, green, blue, and purple. They had big eyes, long hair, and decorations on their body. To finish, I drew a rainbow over them.

I remember a dream that there were many kinds of sea fishes in the pool. Surprisingly there were sharks too.

I remember about the news that an Ostrich had killed the caretaker by stepping on it. I have decided not to be a caretaker.

I remember there were many animals carved in the tree of Disney’s Animal Kingdom.

I remember there were two squirrels chasing each other and climbing on the tree, in the backyard of someone’s house in Orlando.

I remember the parrot that had blue and yellow wings. As my friend gave me one of its smooth long wings she said, “Whenever you see this wing you will remember that we are best friends.”

THE RADIO GHOST

SHINGO MATSUO

In dark thickets, there was my grandfather's house. I and my grandfather lived there. One night, I was eating a cheap and awful cup noodle alone because my grandfather had entered a hospital two weeks ago. Then, I heard a high pitched and loud noise. I was very surprised and thought, "What happened?" I searched all over the house for something which had sounded.

It was in the toilet: a broken, elephant-shaped, dirty and old radio. This radio had been there before I was born and I had never seen that it is working. I took the radio in my hand to try turning it on, but the switch was rusted, so I couldn't do it. Suddenly, the radio started speaking in a man's voice. I was surprised and dropped it on the floor. In fact, the truth of this voice was a news report, but it was enough to make me afraid and panicked. I thought that the ghost which haunted the elephant radio is speaking to me. "Shut up, or I will break you!" I shouted for the radio ghost, but it continued speaking.

There was no other way, so I decided to break it even though it is my grandfather's. I took it to the corridor to get a wide space. I kicked, punched, threw, and stamped it to stop it sounding, but it wouldn't be quiet. I brought a hammer. I raised it up, and struck the speaking radio powerfully. Then, the entrance door which leads to a corridor was swung open and closed. It was just like someone who doesn't have a body had run away from this house. Though I went near the entrance door soon to see what happened, there was nothing except the smell of sand. After that, the elephant radio which was broken into pieces has never been speaking.

The day after passed, one information came from the hospital. It told me that my grandfather had died last night. I felt strange rather than sad because I thought the radio wanted to tell me what happened. The radio ghost which I broke and forced out was not a bad ghost. That journey taught me a very important message. I didn't believe in the existence of occult, supernatural, unscientific things before that day. However, I learned there are more things in the world than just what I can see. There are also many invisible, mysterious, wonderful things in the world. I hope this change will make me have a wider perspective.

WHY DON'T WE BE FRIENDS?

MAYU GOTO

December 24th 1980

Dear diary,

Today is Christmas Eve. My mom hung an ornament from a Christmas tree just like every year sing- ing a song “why don’t we be friends?” I don’t know why she does that not on that day when we take the Christmas tree out of the shed but on Christmas Eve. I don’t even want to remember the lyrics because it reminds me of my complex. That is, I have a half black sister. I’ve never met her, but it is clear that we can never be friends. My mom had two choices when she gave birth to her rst baby. Staying with a black husband and a half black baby which means she would be treated horribly by the society. Or leave them to protect herself against discrimination. ...And she chose the latter.

Anyways, she is mine. I love my mom.

Mary

December 24th 1980

Dear diary,

My dad bought me an ornament of a little bear this year for my birthday. So now, I have 20 orna- ments. I love my father. He raised me by himself. But I don’t know how many times I have imag- ined if I had a mother. Even she was white and left me to prevent herself from becoming known that she has a black kid, all I want for Christmas is “mom”. The only things she left for me were this brilliant blue eyes that black normally don’t have. This is the only connection between my mom and me.

Jasmine

December 25th 1980

Dear diary,

Today, I received an acceptance letter for nal stage of Miss USA pageant 1980.

I was pumped when I heard sounds of the doorbell because I knew that the contestants who passed documentary examination must collect a letter from the host today. But I wasn’t surprise because I was sure I could make it. I am the one who won the Miss contest in university.

So I’m sure I will win this competition as well.

Such an awesome Christmas gift.

Mary

December 25th 1980

Dear diary,

A postman gave me a letter... So I've just opened it.

... "What!?!? Did I pass initial screening of Miss Universe America!? Dad!!! I did it!"

I screamed. I can't believe that I made it because... I am black.

No black girls have ever gotten through even the paper exam. I am the first one.

...I'm so nervous.

Jasmine

January 3rd 1981

Dear diary,

Oh my goodness!! I won the contest!! I can't describe my feelings in any words!!

Although the ladies on the final were all as bright as a diamond, it was an expected circumstance because only chosen finalists must be there.

However, I saw a black girl. I didn't understand how come she was on the contest.

...Anyways, I performed perfect walking on the stage and played the piano impeccably.

Therefore, audiences gave me a massive applause. To be paid attention is always a good feeling.

My heart beat like crazy when a host called the name of a winner. I'm sure that I'll never forget that moment.

"Miss Universe America 1980, the winner of the grand prize is... Entry number six,"

"Eeeeeek!!!"

I screamed in a high tone like a whistle before my name was called.

"Mary Clark"

Then, my name was called. My beauty was officially proved today. It is the best day ever!!

Mary

January 3rd 1981

Dear diary,

The really bright lights dazzled my eyes. I was standing on a stage with white girls. My dad was my only supporter. On my way to an anteroom, one girl said to me "Hey, what's up?" So I said "Nothing."

"...So what are you doing here?"

I didn't get what she meant.

"...I'm waiting for the final review."

"...Uh, I don't think you should be here." She said.

—"All the finalists are required to perform musical ability for final stage." I heard a host announced that in the room.

"You don't have any ability to play an instrument, Do you?" The girl said.

Suddenly I left the room.

—I saw my dad in the front row from the stage. And I also saw a lady next to him. They were holding their hands each other. My dad were strongly appealing me something by his eyes.

“I can’t play any instrument.” When I said to the audiences, they buzzed.

“But I can sing.” The site became still.

“Why don’t we be friends?”

I started singing a song that my dad used to sing to me as a kid.

“We are all beams of hope on the same planet.

Make a better day. Make a brighter day than yesterday. We are all brothers and sisters from the same species. There is no suffer in love and peace.

Make a better world.

For you and for me.

So why don’t we be friends?”

I saw my dad and the woman were singing the song together. Who is she? I asked myself.

—The huge cheers never stopped.

After all performances of participators nished, a winner of the competition was called.

That was her name. She is the winner.

The woman next to my dad was crying out to her in tears. “Great job my girl!” She said so. When we walked down to the oor, the girl said “Mom I did it!” to the lady.

At that time, I was enthusiastically applauded by crowds. That was the most highlighted mo- ment in my life. Then the lady smiled at me and she said “That was awesome girl.”

But it seemed she looked at me as if I was a stray.

She had pure blue eyes just like me. Then I inferred who she was.

“Thank you mom. Even the color line makes us apart, I am your daughter. I need you.” I said that on the inside.

Jasmine

HOP

TYLER BLAKLEY

I find myself within a city again. I don't know why. I hate cities. Cities are dangerous. Millions upon millions of people all bottled up in such a small space...it's a revolution waiting to happen.

But I'm here anyway, wandering through these crowded streets, no aim, no destination; watching the neon lights flash patterns into my eyes, ignoring the advertisements that change and adapt for each person, bracing as one with the crowd to keep my footing in the wake of a passing freighter. It's all the same, a pattern, a routine. I have long since grown weary of such monotony.

A street urchin suddenly begins slipping his way through the crowd. I immediately look for his partner. In my peripheral I spot the other, a tiny movement in the sea of people. Their target isn't me. They have their eye on a naïve looking young man; obviously a newcomer, obviously from a privileged background. I don't know why a kid like him would be traveling alone; he won't have anything of value left on him after another hour.

Just another pattern. The uneducated act without thought of the consequences. Their actions have sealed the fate of this city; the entire planet for that matter.

I feel a tiny body brush against my coat. Actively, I suppress my reflex. The little thief is only passing through, searching for another easy target.

I've never been gifted. I'm too ordinary. Too vanilla. Too plain. People's eyes just pass over me. Common thieves go after more distinctive targets. My appearance has served me well, though it is not specifically intended to divert thieves.

Of course, it isn't natural, my appearance. Some features are easily changed: staying clean-shaven, cropping my hair short, keeping up with the local fashions. Other things are more... difficult. I had green eyes before they were modified for unnaturally superior vision; now I have brown eyes. My cheekbones were high and prominent before they fiddled around with the structure of my face. I was a slightly tall man before they took away a few centimeters away from my legs. I had marks on my body to remind me of my purpose, until they removed all the scar tissue. I'm average; nothing to distinguish me. I do not wink. I do not smile. I do not cry.

I don't know if I regret being like this. There's absolutely no way I can live a normal life, but when I think about it, I've never lived normally. I'm not suited to connect with people,

so I keep moving; never long enough to know anyone, just a whisper in a memory. I'll be out of this damned city in another day or two. Then it's back to the countryside. Where I can breathe again.

If I could have a home, it would be some old fashioned cabin in the middle of nowhere. Live off the land, be self sufficient. Something like that. Something like our ancestors thousands and thousands of year ago. But I'm not built for that kind of life. Some program inside drives me. I cannot idle. I must be doing something all the time. I cannot sleep for more than an hour. I wake up fidgeting and I can't clear my mind enough to rest longer.

I suppose it's only fitting for me to live with a body and mind designed for conflict during a time of peace. It's a maddening existence, but tolerably so. I've had a lot of time to deal with it. I suppose I'm a little happy despite everything. Happy that I live in an age where people can live without fear of dying the next day. Happy that children can grow up without knowing loss. Happy that people like me have been forced into the shadows.

I see a familiar face. That isn't good. In a city as large as this, I should never run into the same person twice.

I don't change direction, I don't turn my head, I don't caress the gun in my coat to reassure myself. I keep walking. My eyes do dart around in their sockets, checking obstructions, looking for escape routes.

I glance at a reflection in a store window. He's gotten close. Perhaps a couple meters away. His face is like mine. He doesn't look like me, it's just an ordinary face; forgettable. That young face has a determined look though. He's consciously making sure he does a good job. It gives him away. He must be new.

That still isn't good. If this guy is new, then there's bound to be a veteran with him. That was stupid of me; I should have seen it coming. They let the new guy grab my attention while the other one slips by my sight unnoticed. Not good.

I need to string them along just a bit more.

I don't speed up. I don't change direction, I don't look around. If I show any reaction, any sign that I've caught on, they'll rush me. And I don't like those odds.

There's an intersection just ahead. I should be able to lose them in traffic. At the last second, I dive across the path of an enormous public transport unit.

I cut it a little close. The edge of the vehicle barely clips my foot as I cross its trajectory. But now I have a couple of seconds on my pursuers. I roll to my feet and navigate the

rest of the traffic lanes on autopilot. In this city it's perfectly legal to run down a pedestrian stupid enough to wander around in the expressway. But so long as they don't change speed or direction, I'll be fine.

My eyes spot a likely place to hide. Inside a large, bustling restaurant I should be able to take a booth and wait it out.

My reflexes tell me to jump, and not a second too soon. The vehicle breaks my leg instead of my spine. The old fashioned glass windshield doesn't shatter upon impact, but fault lines appear like a spider's web. The pain in my arm registers at the 'spectacular' level. It still works though. Guess the cybernetic replacement was worth the trouble.

The wind is beginning to sting my eyes. Oh yeah, the vehicle is still moving. I glance at the driver; he must be wealthy to afford a personal transport. I don't like the look on his face. He hit me on purpose. That bastard.

I roll off the hood towards the edge of the street. I take care to scratch the paint as I go. Ignoring the pain, I land on my good leg. Or try to, at least. Instead, I slam into a group of passersby. I use one to break my fall and keep weight off my bad leg. She'll be fine, probably.

I stand up with difficulty. I can barely walk; not good. Snatching away a cane from some elderly citizen, I limp off, making my way through the crowd. Yet again, I'm on the hop.

After I'm a considerable distance away, I begin looking for another hiding spot. Another large restaurant should do nicely. I have enough credits on me to get a private table, no questions asked.

I try to look as dignified as possible with a broken leg, but the effort is wasted. Three men with black trench coats, matching hats, and square sunglasses, immediately have me trapped.

Damn.

'Greetings, Mr. Ghost,' the one in the center says quite cordially. 'If you would be so kind as to join us, we already have a table reserved.'

I don't answer, continuing to search for an escape.

'We just want to talk.' There's no way out. Double Damn.

'Under whose authority?' I ask lightly, not letting my resignation show.

'Mine,' comes a female voice from behind me. I didn't hear her enter. I keep my face

straight despite my initial shock.

‘My lady. I should have known,’ I mutter by way of greeting.

I turn slowly to see her. She’s changed since I left the Order. Her laughing, smiling face is gone. The eyes that charmed me years and years ago are hardened and dark like mine. Even her hair, her beautiful long, soft hair, is gone, hacked mercilessly short.

If I were a softer man, I would have wept to see what this once young and innocent girl has become. Wept for countless other ruined lives like hers. Wept for every unnecessary evil.

But I don’t. That’s not how I roll.

‘So you’ve caught me. Now what?’ I inquire lazily, as if it means nothing.

‘Now we talk,’ she answers curtly.

‘Then get to it,’ I respond, matching her tone.

‘The Order has need of you again,’ she said after the slightest hesitation. I could have told her that.

‘Is the Order so weak as to draw their strength from me?’ I accuse suddenly. ‘Do you really want to start this game again Mary?’ I allow some of my weariness to creep into my tone. ‘You should kill me now.’

‘If that were true, then I wouldn’t be talking to you,’ she replied coldly, looking me directly in the eyes. I sigh heavily, finally breaking the ruse.

‘You’re the reason I stayed on for as long as I did. You could have run away with me. Left this life behind.’ I feel old, reminiscing like this.

‘Shut up and come with us. We need to replace that leg. And don’t look at me like that. If you didn’t want this life you would have killed yourself a long time ago.’

‘True enough.’

SKY SKY SKY

KENTARO YASUDA

Sky Sky Sky Kentaro Yasuda When I was a high school student, I threw a stone at the sky. The stone disappeared, then I knew this world might be illusion, like a TV game. Actually, the stone hit my friend and he got hurt in his head. However, he never knew who threw the stone. He and I are good friends who really want to die. 'To want to die...' So attractive, sorrowful words...

His name is Yuichi. He has no job. He is very strange, but he is very clever. He said he started to become wise since the stone hit him. I am a fool. I am a fool...

He makes his living by eating leaves and mushrooms. He lives in the forest. I asked 'Weren't you arrested?'

He said 'What kind of people pay attention to Saitama forest?'

He is certainly correct. In this world in 2060, there are very few people in this area. 'Sky' are people living in the forest. They live without earning money and eat leaves and weeds. However, their lifestyle became outdated. A lot of people had a romantic view of the forest. However their dream always broke down. Certainly, they escaped from labor or social discrimination. However, they didn't become happy. Some went back to the city; others become mad and went further into nature...

I am working at school and teaching English. English is outdated, too. Now, we speak only 'Clostphitic', which is a universal language. However, Yuichi speaks only 'English'. He persistently speaks only 'English'. Why does he do so? Why does he resist this world?

The word 'Sky' has two meanings. One is 'being innocent like the sky'. The other is 'being eccentric like high blue sky' I never wanted to be 'Sky', but I always wanted to die. There are people who are 'Anti-sky'. They believe in eternal death. They want to finish with this world and really commit suicide. I am in sympathy with them, but I don't agree with them. 30 years ago, we thought what life is or what happiness is. However, we don't even know the meaning of happiness or life. We are not human but animal.

I always think human beings cannot live without trusting someone. I dare not say 'believe', because believers always have bad lives. Especially, 'believers in god' A lot of Christian, Muslims, Buddhists, and other believers were punished by 'religion crime law,' which means 'the law to punish people who tell a lie to others and push 'god' to those who don't want to believe.' I strongly agree with the law. I was a believer, and I wish I had not been a believer.

Yuichi and I went to the theatre to see a drama called, 'You Should Believe Someone'. This play was very interesting, because the drama criticizes people who turn something into 'God Save You!' or something unknown into 'The Mystery of God'. I wanted to laugh at them, but we couldn't laugh at them because of their criticizing or punishing us in the name of their ass-hole 'god'!

Yuichi always treats me to beer when I have feelings like that, and he always says 'If there were an eraser to delete memories, we would become happy.' I strongly think so, strongly think so.

'You insulted god!'

'Actually, yes!'

'I'll kill you!'

'Kill me, and let me go to another world'

Then, I saw my sister's dead body.

I'm tired.

I'm tired to live.

I'm very tired to live.

What is life? What is death?

Sky Sky Sky

End

MY STRANGE FRIEND

SAORI NAKAZAKI

In my sickroom, the only sound was the flipping over of pages of a novel. When I became a patient, I was already 65 years old. My husband had been dead for three years at that time. My children wouldn't come to see me for a long time, so I was alone. As for killing time, I often used to read many novels and my pleasure was talking with 'him.'

'You look so fine today, Hana.'

'Oh...please don't surprise me, Masashi,' I said.

His name was Masashi. He looked over 20 years old and lived in the hospital. He was a ghost only I could see. He wore a blue kimono and his hair and eyes were deep black. He picked up my half-read novel and started reading it to me.

'Don't you remember I told you not to appear suddenly?' I said with a sigh.

'Never!' he responded with a smile. 'If I did, do you think I could keep that promise?'

'Well... yes, you're right.'

I know his character was perverse. As he was reading the book, I asked him if it was interesting or not. He answered, 'Not at all!' even though he laughed. He seemed to be absolutely surprised when we first met, because I could see him and hear his voice. And he said that he was 'Death,' as he often visited patients who were dying. It was strange that I felt no fear of him. 65 years had made my heart strong, I guess. Since we met we often talked with each other about the weather, other patients, and Masashi's or my life.

'When will you die, Hana?'

His question woke me up to reality. At first I didn't understand why he asked that. I stared at him with my eyes wide open, but I didn't feel any anger.

'When will you die?' said Masashi again.

'I don't know. Do you want to say goodbye to me so soon?'

'No,' he answered quickly, 'I just want you to be fine and happy forever.'

'People will die and be born again someday,' I whispered.

It was unusual for him to show me his sadness. He bent his head and squeezed his cracked voice. 'I've never met a person like you. None of the other people in the hospital can feel me.'

'I know, you told me that before.'

'I hope we meet someday, when you've come again to the world. I really hope,' he seized my right hand and said smiling, 'You are beautiful.'

'Used to be,' I said ironically. 'But thank you, Masashi.' I put my left hand on his hand, and then he grasped my hands even more strongly. I almost began to cry, it seemed so thick a connection. I realized he was trying to protect my life. I realized it was time to say goodbye. He faded gradually so I could see through to the wall. His feet, body, hands, face...he vanished from me completely. I was stunned at the goodbye for a while. I thought that it was just an illusion, but his warmth remained on my hands. I cried and cried as if I was a baby. I regretted not asking him to stay. He was a kind ghost. My heart hurts now for I am alone again. But I felt full of happiness because of him, my strange friend.

SOMEONE IN THE SUMMER

AYUMI SHIMIZU

During one Bon holidays, I went to my grandparents' house to visit the grave where my ancestors sleep. To tell the truth, I did not like to be there because the house was in a rural area surrounded by woods, grass, and a river. However, I was obliged to go because to visit here in every Bon holidays is our family's custom.

When my parents and I arrived there, my grandparents welcomed us with open arms. We went to the grave which stood back some distance away from the house, walking down the road covered with grass and gravel. Although I was very hot, the refreshing winds sometimes went down the road. The grave was moss-covered and surrounded by plants, which were not only weeds but also flowers. Two bunches of new and colorful flowers, an offering, and sticks of incense were laid on the mossy old grave. I announced that I had come here again to my ancestors. As soon as we entered my grandparents' house, I enjoyed the evening cool, sitting in front of a fan. 'I'm tired...' I said to myself.

The next day, I sat in front of the fan to cool myself. I heard only three sounds, the sound of the fan motor working, cicadas, and a wind-bell swung by winds. In the house, my mother and grandmother were chatting while my father and grandfather were playing shōgi with serious faces. But it seemed that shōgi finished easily, and my father said with a laugh that my grandfather was no match for him. Then my grandfather came to me and asked me to go fishing. I had nothing to do, so I agreed and followed after him. The surface of the river was shining with the reflected light of the sun. I could see fishes swimming at the bottom of it. We enjoyed fishing but we started a competition without saying. I moved away to get more fishes than him after promising to return to the house by evening.

As soon as I arrived at an upper part of the river, I found a boy who was the same age as I was. The boy noticed me, and came up to me. He held the hem of my T-shirt smilingly. I asked who he was, although I was surprised. He did not give me a reply but he smiled. I guessed he wanted to go with me because he had a fishing pole, too. 'Shall we fish?' I asked. He nodded happily. After that, we were wild about fishing. There were no words between us but I felt our hearts linked.

The evening sun colored the woods and river in orange all over the place. I remembered my promise to go home by evening. 'I have to go back,' I told him. We walked in the same direction. I realized he lived the neighborhood of my grandparents' house. In front of the house, my father and grandfather stood and seemed to be waiting for me. 'Did you fish alone all day?' father asked me. I turned my head, trying to introduce my friend to them. He was not there.

Next morning, my parents and I carried some baggage to the car. I heard the words 'See you again...' from somewhere. There was nobody there except my family. 'Get in the car. It's about time to leave,' my father said to me. I wondered if I would be able to see him again next year. When I was about to get into the car, a soft wind was blowing from the grave.

CARPE DIEM REQUIEM

NAO GOTO

(IN MEMORIAM)

Nao Goto passed away last year. He was a writer and editor of CROP for several years.
We're including his story here to honor his memory.

"Hey, Lilly. Are you still up?" I ask.

"Yeah." Says Lilly.

OK. A minimum response. I can't believe this was the first conversation in a week between siblings. A couple years ago, this wasn't like this.

"We're going to Boston for grandma's funeral from early in the morning tomorrow, right?"

"Yes. And Josh, don't bother me! Will you leave me alone? I am studying and going to college next year de nitely not to be like you!"

"OK. Good night, sis."

Like father, like daughter. Not son, not me. I admit my dad and sister both don't like me. It's okay unless it ruins tomorrow's event. It's gonna be the very first event for the three of us get together in a few years.

Actually, I left home and dropped out of high school when I was sixteen. 'Cause I didn't think it would make sense. I just wanted be free and join a punk rock band. And then, dad was real mad at me. He always wants me to live straight. But I never wanted a boring nine-to-five suit-and-tie life like him. I had enjoyed "my life" for two years.

However, things started not going well. Last year, my band broke up and my mom died. So it means I got no place to go and came back home because dad couldn't earn Lilly's tuition for college by himself. I got a minimum wage job instead of guitars. I gave up my dream. And I am living a life that I never wanted. It's okay. I gave up.

Anyway, tomorrow is early. A funeral for an old lady I have met like only three times. In my bed, I am wondering what grandma was like. I really don't know. Dad's never told me about his mother. Will I ever get to know it?

"Josh," I hear a tiny little voice. Who's calling me? I guess it's female voice, but I'm sure it isn't Lilly. So, who is this?

"Hello there?" I said. Or am I talking to myself? Funny. Nobody else but me is in my room now. But then, "Hi! Josh! Oh you got tall, boy! Last time I saw you, you were like four feet."

No, no, no. I can't believe my eyes. It's grandma. How can this be possible? She is dead and her body must be in a coffin case and miles away from here right now. But she's here.

Oh well, I don't understand.

"Umm... Hey, gran. Uhh... How are you doing?"

"Dead. Of course, dead. Recently deceased."

Yes. Yes, you are. Have I got the sixth sense? Do I see dead people? "Tomorrow, you are coming to mourn me, right? Before you come, there are some things I'd like you to know." Says grandma.

"Yes. Yes, but, what are you talking about?"

"And tonight, a ghost will come visit you. Make sure to take all the advice she'll give you."

"Oh, OK. Then, what can I... Hey, where are you, gran?"

She's already vanished. What is that? I get it. This is just a dream. Just a dream. Then, how come I am tapped on the shoulder right now? I have a bad feeling about this. I guess I should not turn back.

"Hey, Josh. Look at me."

All I see is an old-fashioned punk rock costumed girl. Bleached blonde hair and nets on arms and legs, she's not so bad.

"Hi, how ya doin'? No, I mean, who are you? What are you doing? It's my room."

Oh, she has green eyes. And so do my family and I.

"Sorry. I'm Celine. Celine O'Connor. And I am a so-called ghost."

"Nice to meet you, Celine. I'm Josh. Josh O'Connor. Coincidentally, you share your name with my grandma."

I don't think I wanna hear the next word she'd say.

"No, it's not coincidence. Well, I am your grandmother."

Alright, I knew it. Should I act like Luke Skywalker when he realizes that Vader is his father? No. Now I gotta ask, "What happened to your appearance, gran? It's too young and old-school and British punk rock!"

"Anyway, I'll let you see the past you have long forgotten and you've never seen before."

"What do you mean?"

"Hold on, Josh!"

"On to what?"

Then everything goes spinning around and black and white. It looks like junior high hallway.

"Look, a bully is coming for you." Says Celine.

It's Bill. I truly hated this bully jock boy. And little and young me. "Celine, are you telling me to see myself beaten by a bully?"

"No, just look what will happen."

"Yo, loser kid. How ya doin'?" said Bill.

"Hi, Bill. What can I help you with?"

I was just imagining myself balling up my fist and hitting him in the face. This would be a little pay back.

"Mr. Josh O'Connor, will you please go buy me a lunch?" I eventually balled up my fist and said,

"SHUT UP!"

"Huh? Who do you think you are, loser?"

He got mad as a bull. But then I punched him in the face just before his fist reached my face. And he fell back down.

We're still in the hall.

"See that, Josh? This was your first resistance to the power. Don't forget this attitude, forever."

"After this incident, I began to become like a punk rock boy. Since then your son, I mean my dad started to be strict to me, though."

"Now I will show you what you never knew." Says Celine, raising her eyebrow.

"About what?"

"About me. And hold on! We're heading to England in the 70's!"

"Hey, wait! What?"

Then spinning and black and white again.

"So, this is where I was born and grew up." Proudly says Celine.

"Well, England. I never thought a ghost could bring me here for the first time."

"Oh, there! Look at me!" She points.

There is a girl with a guitar on her back who looks completely same as Celine. I can't believe this was really who my grandmother used to be.

"So let me tell you a story," Her backstory begins.

"I'd finished two of the new songs to show in the next gig in Manchester.

A new founded record label – think it was Factory Records- would host this gig. They would have vote, and the one voted most could be the very first band signing with them. If The Kidnaps win the contract, we can release records and have tour in all the Britain."

"Factory Records? That's Joy Division's label?" I ask.

"Yes, it was. And then, what I liked it about in this punk rock music scene was that everybody would be evaluated by their music, not where they are from. For this last years, I'd been feeling much better than last year. What I had been treated till last year made me write songs though. Bullied because of red hair and pots. Never been a cool kid in high school. And lost jobs three times in a year. Because they cut down black and Irish first. I didn't even wanna remember, but I was a loser. Just like you, Josh."

"You resisted and became a punk rocker. How cool! What more about this?"

"Practiced songs for the show. I was afraid if the guitarist Stacy, the drummer Jake, and the bassist Mary would like new songs but it worked. All we gotta do was let it all out in the gig."

"How was that show, you did well?"

"It's gonna be a funny part. In the day of that gig, I was really confident when we headed to Manchester but I got nervous when we were dressing up in the club. I wished that a double decker bus would crash into us. My hands were shaking and I felt like I was throwing up. Hearing other bands made me frightened. "Hey, Celine, can you fasten up

my back zip?" said Jake. "Would they think I'm crazy cuz I dress like a lady that doesn't even exist. Blonde hair wig, black eyes like a Chinese creature, whitest foundation, and reddest lips. So gross! Who would dress like this? Even women!"

"Don't worry Jake." I said and laughed. "This is our concept. See, Stace, Mary and I dressed suits, ties and even fake moustache like guys."

He unconsciously comforted me.

"Fake moustache!? I didn't know that... I only see your backs when I play drums."

"We wish we could grow one!" Said Stacy jokingly. "So let's go guys and a lady. No, I never wished. Anyway, I got ready to rock it out."

"And so? You won the vote?"

"Before the result, I'd like you to hear our song."

"Yes, I will. I'm curious."

"So we got up to the stage. Jake hit the counts and I hit a chord on strings.

And I sang,

"I ain't gonna die

or I ain't gonna live

doing what I don't want to

Never gonna hear a word you say

till I die

Just let me live my life

my own life

Don't wanna bring a regret to my grave"

So, this is it. And we won the vote and released single record of this song, maybe 500 copies. Now, only geeky record collectors have the record." "Hey, Celine, you're fading."

"Oh, time has come. Will you sing that song for me? I wanna hear you singing my song in the co n."

"Absolutely, yes."

"Josh! Live your life! Seize the day, boy!"

And she vanishes.

Then, I nd myself in my bed at 6A.M. Now I know what to do. What to do today and what to do with my life. I don't wanna live a life full of regret. I gotta live my life.

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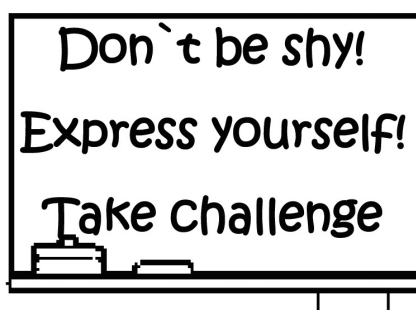
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