

The Blue Guitar Jr.

*Featuring
literature
and art
for youth*

The 2017 edition



Art

Aneesh Velicheti — “Beautiful Fall”	4
Catherine Hong (R.S. Mardina) — “Jeweled Girl” and “Backyard Desert Bloom”	10-11

Poetry

Shirley Mason — “This Small, Stiff, Square-Leg’d Table”	8
George Fischer — “Coyote’s Tears”	9

Fiction

Aneesh Velicheti — “The Flying Switch”	3
Vrinda Bansal — “The Tale of Sarah, Her Dog, and the Chewed-Up Homework”	5
Daniya Siddiqui and Rania Sayed — “Family Vacation”	6-7
A.L. Means — “When Rabbits Ran Rampant: The Book of Sylvilagus”	12-13
Sydney Cohen — “Life of a Loner (Prologue)”	18-19
Rachel Woosley — “The Misunderstanding”	20-21
Lysa Cohen — “Vzpomínka”	22-23
Curt Robinson — “Lost and Found on the Fort Bowie Trail”	28-34

Nonfiction

Ethan Park — “Penguin”	14-15
Surabhi Sajith — “Growing Up Desi”	16-17

Play

Angikar Sarkar — “The Breaking News”	24-27
--	-------

The Blue Guitar Jr. Staff

Co-editor: Rebecca Dyer
Co-editor: Richard H. Dyer Jr.
Publisher: Elena Thornton
Artwork for front, back covers: Marjory Boyer

The Blue Guitar Jr. magazine is a project of the nonprofit The Blue Guitar literary and arts magazine and The Arizona Consortium for the Arts. The Arizona Consortium for the Arts is a startup, nonprofit group dedicated to supporting and fostering artists and the arts in Arizona, including the literary, visual and performing arts. For more information about The Blue Guitar and The Blue Guitar Jr. magazines and The Arizona Consortium for the Arts, visit our websites:
www.theblueguitarmagazine.org and www.artizona.org.

“Things as they are are changed upon the blue guitar.”
— Excerpt from Wallace Stevens’ 1937 poem “The Man With the Blue Guitar.”
Copyright reserved, Random House Inc.

The Flying Switch

By Aneesh Velicheti

© 2017

One bright sunny morning, I awoke to find myself floating in midair! It didn't take me long to realize that gravity had disappeared. I thought it was a dream, but I pinched myself and realized I was already awake. I was so excited. I. Could. Fly! I wanted to show my powers to my mom. I knew she would be making breakfast, so I did the backstroke to the kitchen. I found my mom making breakfast of oatmeal and pancakes. I tried to be quiet, but I accidentally knocked a pot over while I was coming in the room.

My mom screamed when she saw me hovering over the table because nothing else was flying. She tried to pull me down, but couldn't hold onto me because I was too strong. I flew up to the ceiling so she could not grab me again.

I asked her if she knew why I was flying. She said "no."

I asked if she was sure, but before she could answer, I had already floated to the attic. My parents would never let me go in there, so this was my only chance. Inside the attic I found an hourglass, Ant-Man comic book, and Pokémon cards. I looked around some more and found a switch. When I turned it off, I stopped flying and fell to the floor. When I turned the switch back on, I started flying again.

I flew out of the attic and showed it to my mom, thinking she would be fine with me keeping it. She said no. I flew into my room and hid the switch in my room so I could fly whenever I wanted.

The next day, I woke and started flying again. I went to the kitchen and found my mom making breakfast of eggs and ham. I made sure not to make any noise as I hovered. I turned off the switch before she saw me, so she thought I couldn't fly anymore. I did not want to tell her that I could still fly, so I ran out of the kitchen and hid the switch under my bed. I knew she would find it eventually, but that was the only place I could think of.

Later that day, I played a game of Ultimate Frisbee with my friends. Halfway through the game, I brought out the switch and I turned it on so I could fly. My team won the game because I could fly. After the game, we all took turns flying around the playground. At the end of the race, my mom came and saw us flying. She got mad and took the switch away.

THE END



Aneesh Velicheti is in third grade at Basis Chandler Primary South Campus. His favorite hobbies are reading, playing with Legos and tennis. When he grows up, Aneesh wants to be either an engineer or an entrepreneur.

Artwork by Aneesh Velicheti



Autumn is one of my favorite seasons. I love the earthy aroma of the season and richness of fall colors. For this painting, I used white, brown, red, and yellow acrylics on the canvas to get that beautiful reflection of fall colors. I also used a combination of brushstrokes and blending technique to create depth and texture in this painting.

- Aneesh Velicheti

“Beautiful Fall”
Acrylic on canvas
9”x12”
Sept. 30, 2017

The Tale of Sarah, Her Dog, and the Chewed-Up Homework

By Vrinda Bansal

© 2017

Sarah opened her backpack and spilled the contents on to the floor. Just as she started to do her homework, her dog ripped her books. Sarah cried out loud because her books were really important to her. “OH NO!” she thought to herself. What would her teacher say? Sarah hoped that she would not get in trouble. The next morning, Sarah went to school. She told the teacher about the book. Her teacher, Mrs. Mann, was nice and gave Sarah another book. However, Mrs. Mann warned Sarah to take care of her books or she would lose 50 percent of her grade. Sarah promised that she would take care of her books and her dog would not chew up anything else. The next day, Sarah was able to turn her homework in. After the school day was over, she scolded the dog. Even though the dog didn’t chew up her homework, she was still angry with him. A few weeks after that, her homework started to pile up because they were getting deep into the school year. She was not behind in homework at all, but was getting a lot more homework. Sitting in her bedroom, she was about to do her homework and warned her dog not to chew up her books or homework this time. Her dog was mad at Sarah because she yelled at him and chewed up all of Sarah’s homework. After that, she gave the dog away.



Vrinda Bansal is in fourth grade at BASIS Chandler. She enjoys swimming, badminton, and hiking. When she grows up, she wants to be a doctor.

Family Vacation

By Daniya Siddiqui and Rania Sayed

© 2017

My name is Chloe Gidell. I have seven siblings. I love baking, writing, and, of course, shopping. One day, I was in the kitchen eating breakfast and my mom said that she had an announcement. She seemed super excited.

“Come on kids, I have an announcement to make!” “What is it, Mom?” my brother, Jacob, said. “OK, Jacob ... are you guys ready? We are going on a family vacation to Hawaii!”

Everyone was so excited. We hadn’t been on a vacation in years! All of the kids ran upstairs to their rooms to pack. Even my dad, who packs at the last minute for every trip, started packing! By the end of the night, we were all done. But then of course, Mom had to check our bags to make sure we had the right things.

The week until we left felt like a year, but finally, the day had come. We were going to Hawaii!

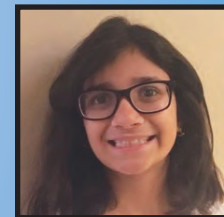
“Ok everybody, go get your bags and shoes and the Gidell family will be off to Hawaii!” my mom said. There was one issue, though. No one was ready — except me, of course. I was trying my hardest to get everyone out the door. We could not be late!

“Go, go, go, everybody, we can’t be late! I am going to die if we miss our flight!” I yelled across the house. Finally, 30 minutes later, we were out the door. We got into our car and drove as quickly as we could to the airport. We got there 45 minutes before our flight. There was no time for food, getting gum, or anything! We rushed passed security, got our boarding passes, and got the plane at the last minute. Our seats on the plane were all separated, but at least some of us got to sit in first class.

The flight was absolutely terrible. My little sister, Sarah, started crying and the whole plane was complaining. I was extremely relieved when the flight was over. When we landed, the first thing we did is go to our hotel. I was so tired, but all of my siblings insisted on going to the beach. We changed into our swimsuits and they dragged me along to the beach. We stayed at the beach for at least a year. Everyone had their own ideas of what to do at the beach, and I just wanted to relax. Some of my siblings wanted to surf, some wanted to build sandcastles, and some wanted to go snorkeling. By the end of the day, I was wiped out. All I wanted to do was plop down on a bed and sleep for the



Daniya Siddiqui is a sixth-grade student at BASIS Chandler. She loves baking, acting, and playing the violin. She is a dancer, and her favorite subjects are History, English, and Latin.



Rania Sayed is a fourth-grader at BASIS Chandler Primary South Campus. She loves biking, baking, and art. She is a junior Girl Scout, and her favorite subjects are math and music.

Continued on page 7

Continued from page 6

rest of my life.

The next day, we were planning to see the dormant volcanoes near the beach. I was so overjoyed that we were planning to do this. No one else wanted to see them. I was furious. I chose to try to stay positive and have fun, but I just couldn't. All of my siblings got to do what they wanted to do but me. Instead of volcanoes, we went jet-skiing. I was terrified of falling in the water and getting eaten alive by a shark.

In the evening, we were looking for a good place to eat. With a family this big, finding a restaurant is difficult. Everyone started arguing about what they wanted and what they did not want. We finally settled on a restaurant called Bob's Kitchen and went for dessert at Cupcakes Galore.

The next couple of days were the same. Our parents would figure out where to go and I never got to choose. All of my siblings and I fought constantly and it was a disaster. We did do some fun things, though — some sightseeing, some shopping — we practically did everything.

Then came our last day. We went to another beach, but this time was better. We didn't fight; we all played together and had fun. I think it was my favorite part of the trip.

Overall, the trip was ... interesting, but fun. The plane ride back was better, but still not great. This time, Sarah barely cried.

I learned something about my family. We fight a ton, but, in the end, everything works out perfectly.

A poem by Shirley Mason

This Small, Stiff, Square-Leg'd Table

© 2017

This small, stiff, square-leg'd table,
Stands before me, waits for a meeting.
Sighing softly, nodding and greeting,
Ghosts glide in and take their seating.

On this small, stiff, square-leg'd table,
Cups stained, hands leaned, arms rested.
Here, with notes of prose, orators spoke;
They teased, they warned, some jested.

The ghosts have come to hear a fable.
They shuffle feet while patience keep,
They wait to hear, to laugh, to dream,
Against their will, perhaps to weep.

To these fine, silent, hopeful guests,
Which otherworldly realms enable,
I'll read ghost stories from ghostly books,
On this small, stiff square-leg'd table.



Shirley Mason Larsen writes novels, short stories, poems, and essays. As well, she paints in oil, watercolor, acrylic and egg tempera. Still, she finds an afternoon each week to forge and solder silver and copper at the lapidary club. She has raised two children, earned a pilot's license, attended The Lyme Academy of Fine Art, returned to college for computer science, and for seventeen years programmed computers. Now her concentration is writing and painting. Needless to say, her townhome needs a thorough cleaning. Contact the writer and artist at slarsen2222@gmail.com.

A poem by George Fischer

Coyote's Tears

© 2017

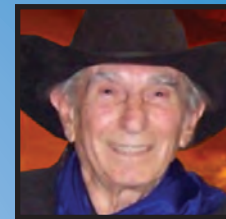
I'm just a coyote who ranges alone
I must move on and on lest my presence be known
By those who would hurt me and invade my home
So I'm doomed forever to roam — just roam

I wander over the great Southwest
To you I seem free! Just another roving pest
But, tho' I'm a gypsy by every action and deed
Sorrow grows in my heart like a terrible weed

Each day brings new sadness, for I'm hated by all
Even cast out by my own — Who each night I call
As I cry in the moonlight, my muzzle to the sky
I wonder — who else — feels the same as I?

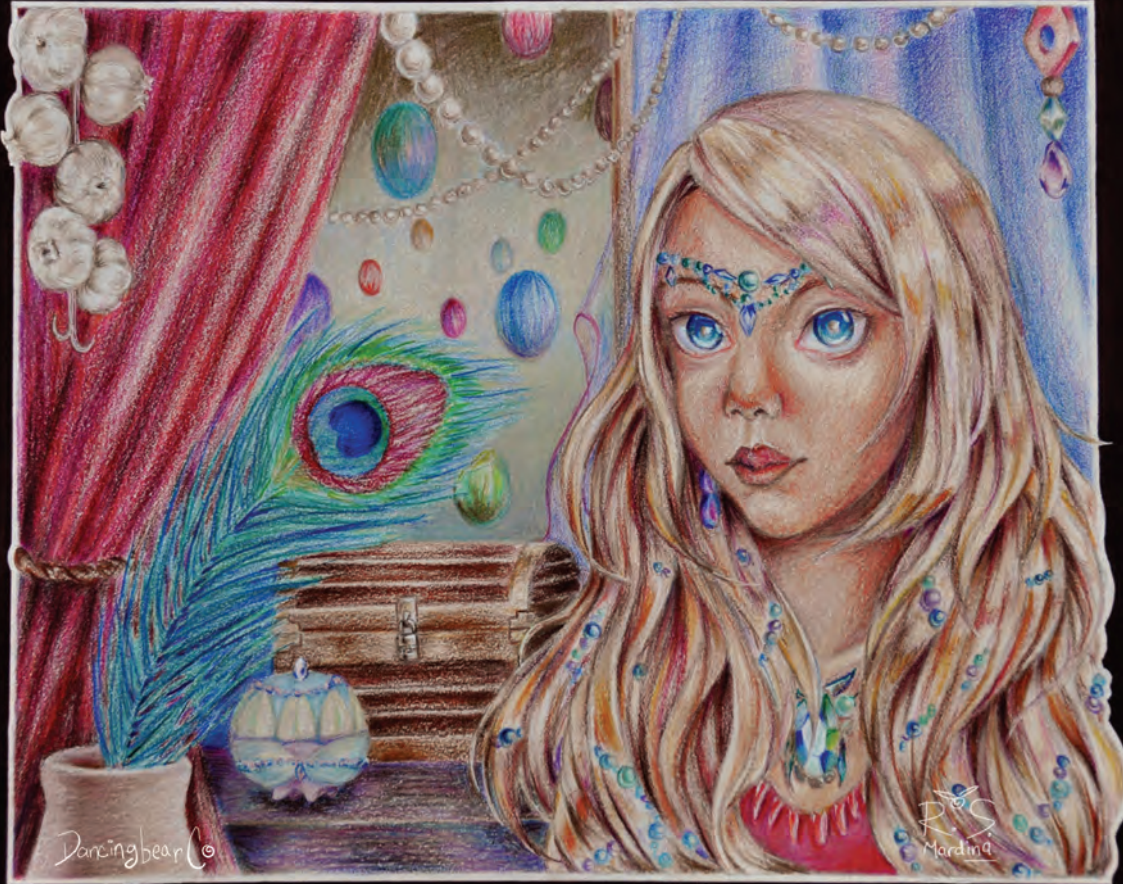
Aren't we all, somehow, the same in a way?
Don't we all look for happiness day after day?
So if I should waken you in the dead of some night
With a mournful howl about my plight —

Think of me as your heart — cryin' out —
that night!



George Fischer writes:
“2005 was the year the books closed on an over 250-section, central Arizona, cattle and horse ranch. Beginning in the late 1800s, when much larger, and named the DK RANCH, formerly called the Coconino Cattle Company or briefly, The Windmill Ranch. After nearly fifty years there as a cowhand, I had advanced as their chief honcho. During the start of the year 2005, the handwriting on the wall began and the books closed on this historic steer and horse ranch. I sadly, then, became my pen-name, THE LAST DK COWBOY. Join me by enjoying ‘True Stories and Rhymes of the Range’ and later in the other books that describe a rewarding, exciting life of ridin’ out in Arizona’s beautiful, natural scenic wonders. These true tales, although unusual, are just as I recollect them. To all those who have ever dreamed of being a cowboy, here’s your chance to ride along with me as your sidekick and saddle pard. ‘There Ain’t Many Of Us Left.’” Email George at lastdkslashcowboy@gmail.com. Visit his website at lastdkcowboy.wordpress.com.

Artwork by Catherine Hong (R.S. Mardina)



“Jeweled Girl”

Colored pencil, sharpie, ink pen, gel pen
2016

(Also appears in “The Storytelling Book of the Ancient Traveler” to benefit emerging creatives. AbsolutelyWild.net.)

The artist writes, “Hello! I’m Catherine. My home base is in Chandler, Arizona. Sunsets, cacti, and rain delight. The full brute of the sun in the summer does not. I enjoy pulling fantasy ideas out of my head & onto paper and, just as equally, pulling off playful shenanigans with my friends. Co-Founder of the DancingbearCo arts and crafts group. Check out more works at dancingbearco.wordpress.com or @dancingbear_co on Instagram. Shoot an e-mail our way for commission inquiries, comments, or questions! (We don’t bite.) dancingbearco@outlook.com.”

I’m enthralled by color and light and make an effort to practice it in every piece. The golden-haired girl was drawn from imagination. While you’d have a tough time finding her face in a beauty magazine, you can tell this mysterious girl is still full of magic. The flower was a figure-ground study. A painstaking amount of time went into attempting to do justice to the petals’ brilliant colors.

– Catherine Hong
(R.S. Mardina)

Artwork by Catherine Hong (R.S. Mardina)



"Backyard Desert Bloom"
Colored pencil, gel pen
2015
(In Celebrating Art)

When Rabbits Ran Rampant

The Book of Sylvilagus

By A.L. Means

© 2017

Chapter One

Between the bushes, the cottontail hopped along a path in the dirt. It was a path that was old in the time of his grandparents, old even in the time of their grandparents. Cottontails had been hopping along this path for as long as things had been the way they are.

High above, there was a mark in the gleaming sky. It was a faint black smudge in the otherwise blue expanse. The smudge moved in a circle, with the sun every now and again turning it to white and then a russet brown. Slowly it grew bigger, until a tail could be seen, and then wings ruffled by air currents, and the outline of a beak. Last of all, he could see the claws that reached out when the smudge came lower.

The little rabbit moved forward in his usual way—a few hops and a pause, a wiggle of his long ears to catch any sound of paws or hoofs, and then a few hops more. Other cottontails came along the path towards him. Their noses wrinkled as they sniffed at each other. There were so many cottontails that it was hard to keep track of them all. But cottontails don't usually go far from home, so he knew most of them.

Continued on page 13



A.L. Means grew up in Britain and has lived in the Phoenix area for over 30 years. He has authored fiction and nonfiction of various kinds, using different pen names, and has spent much of his working life as a journalist. "When Rabbits Ran Rampant" (<http://www.whitebirdpublications.com>) is written for readers of all ages who might enjoy a lighthearted fable about the changing nature of how things are in the world. Means can be reached at MeansALPhx@msn.com.



"When Rabbits Ran Rampant" book synopsis

When a young rabbit named Tohbi rambles through the Arizona desert, it is always with eyes and ears alert for danger from hawks, coyotes and rattlesnakes. Sometimes, his friends are not as careful, and Tohbi wonders why life can be so cruel for rabbits.

Back in the burrow where he lives, his mother can only tell him that this is the way nature is. But that's not enough to satisfy the little cottontail, whose name comes from a Native American word for "rabbit." And so, he sets out on the trail to find an answer.

On his journey, he meets several companions and learns about the age-old balance between different forms of life. He even uncovers surprises about the past that suggest rabbits did not always have to fear predators. Wiser, he returns home with a better understanding of the place of rabbits in the world. Never again will he doubt the worth of the humble cottontail.

Continued from page 12

A shadow slid across the ground in front of him. It brushed against branches and circled over the path. The cottontail moved beneath a bush and stayed as still as a cactus. Down came the shadow, circling around him. It was so big it was as if part of the sky had come adrift. He thought his heart was going to stop. Then there was a swish of wings and a squeal, and the shadow was gone.

The cottontail looked out from his hiding place. Now the shape was high above him, and he could see two furry legs like his own dangling below it. His ears flattened over his back, and he crept under the bush as the shadow swooped over him one more time. Then there was just a smudge on the horizon.

Once again the cottontail peeked out. Other cottontails were rustling in the undergrowth. Their noses and ears twitched, and dark, shiny eyes peered this way and that. The danger had passed, at least for the time being. One by one they hopped onto open ground and continued their journeys. Some were looking for green shoots to nibble. Others gamboled towards homes in safe places deep among the roots of trees and tufts of tall grass.

He waited to see what would happen next. But the shadow did not return, and the other rabbits kept hopping on their way. Of course, they were careful to stop every few hops and look around for more danger. They stuck out their noses and sniffed. Their restless ears probed the air for sounds. For the time being no smudges or shadows in the sky would bother them.

The cottontail joined the other rabbits on the path. He headed for the burrow where he lived with his mother. There had been others who lived with them. But the cottontail was not sure where they were now. Sometimes they were there and sometimes they weren't. Some of them had been gone for a while. Perhaps they had found different homes.

It was snug inside the burrow, and the cottontail was able to catch his breath. He lay still and tried to stop trembling. His mother nuzzled against him.

"I heard about the hawk, Tohbi," she said in a sympathetic tone. Somehow, she always seemed to hear about things almost as soon as they happened. "It must have been very frightening."

"It wasn't a rabbit I knew well," Tohbi told her. He shivered as he thought of that limp little body being carried into the air. "Just someone I'd seen around."

"It's sad, I know," his mother continued. He waited for her to say more, but she didn't.

"Why does it happen?" he asked. "Why does it happen to us cottontails?"

"Hawks have to eat too," his mother said in a quiet way, as if she wasn't quite sure why it had to happen either.

"Well, why don't they eat grass and leaves, like we do?"

"I don't know," said his mother. "That's just not the way it is."

"Someone should tell them." But neither Tohbi nor his mother looked as if they had a clue how to do that.

Penguin

By Ethan Park

© 2017

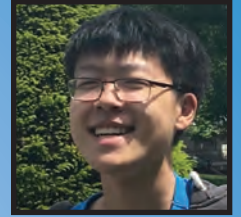
Being scared as a kid is the worst feeling in the world. You are young and vulnerable and cannot do anything to help yourself. Some kids have security blankets or other toys to hold on to when they are scared. I had a stuffed penguin.

I was little when my family still lived in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. It was autumn and my younger brother and I had to go in for surgery to have our tonsils removed. I do not remember what the hospital looked like, what food they had, or even what the people looked like, but I do remember being scared. I was not just a little scared, but more like a being trapped in a haunted house with a chainsaw-wielding clown type of scared because the doctors would not let my parents into the operating room.

That was the first time I had experienced fear. Even though I could not see into the operating room, I knew that it was alive and waiting for me just inside the swinging double doors of death. When the nurses tried to wheel me in the room, I sobbed and reached out to my parents, terrified that I would never see them again. My mom leaned down to hug me and kiss my forehead. As she held me tightly against her, she told me that I had nothing to be afraid of and that everything was going to be all right.

That was when my mom gave me Penguin. He was safety and security stuffed into a tiny black and white plush and stitched together with my parents' love. He was a fluffy reminder of a happier time when we took a family trip to New England Aquarium over the summer. Penguins were my favorite animal. I would spend hours watching them frolic and swim in their enclosure. Knowing this, my parents brought Penguin for me. His slight weight was soft in my hands as I clutched him. He felt like a cottony cloud of comfort and protection as my brother and I were separated into different operating rooms. I held him even tighter as I squeezed my eyes shut when the doors closed behind me and I could not see my parents anymore.

I am unable to remember anything about the actual operating room. Time and age have blurred those memories. However, sometime after the operation, I do remember waking up in the recovery room with Penguin still by my side. I picked him up and hugged him really tight and really close. Even when the doctor and nurses came to check on me, I



Ethan Park is a senior at Desert Vista High School. When he is not studying, he enjoys playing video games with his friends. After graduation, Ethan plans to pursue a degree in Computer Science at ASU.

Continued on page 15

Continued from page 14

refused to let him go. They later told me that I kept one hand on him through the entire operation.

When my parents were finally allowed into the recovery room, I was so happy. They smiled and hugged me. My mom kept fussing with the blankets around me. But, I guess that is what moms are supposed to do when they are worried.

I remember telling my mom and dad that Penguin kept me safe. They just smiled, but I felt proud of myself for making it through such a hard challenge.

Looking back, I realize that Penguin has given me courage and bravery to face other obstacles on my life's journey. When I am upset, like if I fail a test or have a fight with my brother, I go to my room and talk to Penguin. It may sound silly, but talking out my problems with him really helps. He is a great listener and never interrupts or checks the time on his watch. Penguin is the best friend anyone can have.

Growing Up Desi

By Surabhi Sajith

© 2017

I am a citizen of the United States, the country of freedom and opportunities — but I am also Indian, with spices and curry running through my veins. My life is a dichotomy of old and new, pani puri and apple pie, churidars and jeans. Though I fully embrace American culture, as I grow older there is a deepening in my personal understanding of the importance of maintaining my Indian heritage.

When I was in kindergarten, I had not seen myself as different, even though I was the only Indian girl in my class — or in my neighborhood, for that matter. That changed the week we studied cultures and festivals. My teacher passed around a sheet with festivals and we each had to choose one to present.

My classmates went wild with youthful exuberance, as most kindergarteners would when faced with the opportunity of food and presents. “I can’t wait! I’m going to do Christmas for my festival,” one of my friends said.

I was excited too, but then the sign-up sheet was passed to me. It listed the common holidays: Valentine’s Day, Christmas, and Halloween. Yet none of the festivals that I celebrated were on the list. No Holi, Onam, or Vishu. No Raksha Bandhan, Dussehra, or Navratri. My heart sank. I did not know why there were no Indian festivals listed. I remember feeling as if I was not as important as my American friends. That evening, I showed the list to my parents.

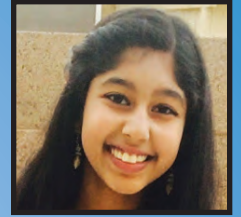
“This sounds like a fun project,” my dad said.

“But there is no Holi, or even Diwali!” I exclaimed, dismayed that he did not understand my sadness. “Everyone celebrates Diwali.”

My dad laughed as he picked up the list and scanned it again. “So, do you want to present Diwali then?”

“Yes!” I wanted them to taste Gulab Jamun. I wanted to tell them the story of Lord Rama. I wanted to show them how to make Deepam lamps. Most importantly, I wanted to share my culture with my friends.

When my mother took me to school the next morning, she came inside with me to ask my teacher if I could make my presentation on Diwali. My teacher agreed, adding that she thought it was a great idea.



Surabhi Sajith is a freshman at BASIS Ahwatukee. She is a dancer and singer who loves to write. In her spare time, she likes to teach children and hang out with her friends.

Continued on page 17

Continued from page 16

I spent the next week preparing for my presentation. My parents helped me make a Powerpoint filled with images of India and videos of the celebration. My dad had a cake elaborately decorated with colorful streamers and the words “Happy Diwali” emblazoned in red across a field of fluffy icing. The morning of my presentation, my mother dressed me in a lehenga, a traditional blouse and skirt set with intricate patterns and colors on the borders of the skirt. I felt like the most special little girl in the world. When I did my presentation, all my classmates loved it. My best friend told me she wanted an outfit just like mine.

Introducing my culture to my friends was the changing point in my life. It was the first step to understanding what it means to grow up in two different cultures. Even though trying to keep both sides in harmony can be a struggle, it is a struggle that I would not relinquish for anything. I love my history and heritage just as much as I love my birth country.

Life of a Loner (Prologue)

By Sydney Cohen

© 2017

What is the meaning of hate? Is it the feeling of wishing someone would leave you alone, or is it the feeling of you wishing that certain person would pass away from this world?

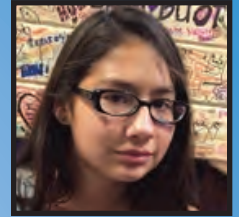
I often wonder why I am here. Why I am living this life. Is it just the luck of the draw or something far sinister? I don't really believe in fate or destiny; however, if it turns out that they are real, I wouldn't be too surprised. I'd have a lot of questions of course. I don't like school. I don't like people. I don't like bright lights. And I don't like perky humans who think they're something special or think that everything is just great. In some ways, I guess you could say I'm a bit of a loner, an oddball in the eyes of most people.

The other day, one of my teachers asked if I had one wish what would it be? My response was that the world was the same but the women were still not considered "equal," as humanity likes to put it, to the men. My reasoning is simple. Women had three jobs: clean, care for the young, and do as they were told. I like simple — not how things are nowadays where you are put inside a school where they teach you all these different things and expect you to remember them all.

There is, however, one thing I think that school is good for children or young adults. When you look at the world now, if we didn't have school, how many kids do you think would be slouched in their beds watching or playing something on the Internet right now? I read somewhere that if the human mind doesn't interact with others then you could go mad or something, but I don't know if that's true or not. Although when people interact with others, they tend to want to be the one that everyone envies.

The human mind is very complex and has all these different things happening in it at the same time, and for some reason we have these things in our minds called pride, greed, lust, envy, wrath, sloth and gluttony, but they have a more common name — the Seven Deadly Sins. Due to these sins, many things in the history of humans is rather sad, revolting, despicable, and even heartbreaking.

I hate when people say do the human thing or what's the human thing to do, I mean what does that even mean? I know that they mean for you to treat that certain thing with care, but our history as humans isn't all that caring and loving. These sins that are found in



Sydney Cohen is a sophomore at Red Mountain High School in Mesa. She is a varsity swimmer and first violinist for the Chamber Orchestra. In her free time, Sydney enjoys camping and hanging out with her friends. Sydney writes: "Eventually 'Life of a Loner' will become the prologue of my first novella."

Continued on page 19

our mind have created racism, war, judgment and plenty other terrible things. The human mind is a mysterious place — for example, if someone is told to kill someone, will they? In some cases, they'll say I'd never, not even for a million dollars, when someone desperate would kill for just a dollar.

Another thing that I don't get is people who try to be something they're not — like smiling with others when they don't even understand what everyone's laughing about, or going along with what other people are doing that they themselves know is a bad thing. I myself don't associate with many people because of these reasons, mostly because I know that my human brain will think and act the same way, for some odd reason. Even when I know that certain part of my mind is taking over, it's hard to break free from it. It's as though your subconscious knows better than you; well, maybe it does.

Anyway, because I don't talk to other people that much a lot of people think that I'm emo. Which is odd because the definition of emo is actual a style of rock music resembling punk but having more complex arrangements and lyrics that deal with more emotional subjects.

I know my life is meaningless and it counts for nothing. I know the world is far from perfect. I know that some people do things for reasons I don't understand. But in my wicked mind, what he did was revolting. It was despicable. It was heartbreaking.

What is the meaning of hate? Is it the feeling of wishing someone would leave you alone, or is it the feeling of you wishing that certain person would die? Me, I have my own opinion of the question of course, and that's why I'm here. I'm in this godforsaken place because I sought out revenge, revenge against the man who ruined my life. Revenge against a man who left my family to rot in filth. Revenge against a man who deserved to die.

The Misunderstanding

By Rachel Woosley

© 2017

I walk the web of hallways leading to my apartment, the dust from my shoes lost in the years of grime and dirt. The landlord was always promising to have the hallway carpets cleaned, but I know that he will never do it. But at least the rent is cheap and it's a nicer place than where our parents currently live.

After such a long day at school, the old oak front door is a welcome sight. The sound of the lock clicking open under my key is an even more welcoming sound. I kick off my dirt-covered shoes in the entryway, pad across wood floor in my bare feet as I make my way to the kitchen. Dishes overflow the sink to spill across the countertops. I know that it's my day to clean the kitchen, but I decide I will do it later. Instead, I head for the refrigerator. I am just taking out a soda when I hear the front door slamming shut and know that it is my older sister. I can tell by the sound that something is wrong.

"Hello Sara, you alright?"

"Just—splendid."

I can hear a stress in her voice that hadn't been there that morning. While normally I head up to my room when Sara arrives home, today I offer to help her with dinner. It's the least I can do in my efforts to stay put. I start setting the table, while Sara collects the ingredients.

"So, how was work?" I ask, cutting through the silence of the kitchen as I set out the plates. There is a chip on one of the plates that is rough against the pad of my thumb. I think briefly how nice it would be nice to have dishes that weren't hand-me-downs or thrift-store finds, but with just Sara's salary supporting the both of us, new dishes are a luxury that we just can't afford.

"Fine."

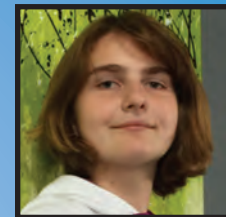
The tightness in her tone belies her response.

"What happened?" I set the silverware on the table. I know what her answer will be, but I ask anyway.

"Nothing," she says, just a hair shy of sarcastic.

"Did someone make you mad?"

I jump slightly as she bangs the pan on the stove and throws two burritos into it.



Rachel Woosley is a freshman at the New School for the Arts in Tempe, Arizona. When she is not studying, Rachel enjoys drawing, writing, playing video games, and reading. She has recently completed her scuba diving certification and looks forward to many scuba trips with her family. When she graduates from high school, Rachel wants to study art in college.

Continued on page 21

Continued from page 20

“It’s quite none of your business, Flower.” Her response is sharp and loud.

I lean on the counter next to the stove as she flips the burritos to brown in the frying pan. “Is your boss being an aggravation?”

“It’s none of your concern!”

I am not prepared for the ferocity of her movements and I take several steps backward as Sara whirls and strides past me to drop the burritos on the plates. One almost slides off, but stops at the lip of the plate. I sit, watching as Sara returns the pan to the stove. She slides in across from me with a convincing expression of a stack of TNT about to explode. I’m not sure if her anger is directed at me or on what had happened at work.

“Is everything alright?”

I hear a big crack, like the beginning of an earthquake, at the end where my sister sits. My eyes widen and my head shoots up to see her hand flat on the surface of the table.

“My day was fine. Now leave me alone! I’m tired of all the questions!”

I can practically see my sister packing my bags and decide that it is definitely time for me to be quiet. Time seems to slow and silence settles through the kitchen. I sink into my squeaky three-legged chair, dodging my sister’s laser eyes. The chair is yet another thing we would replace if we had more money.

I look up in surprise when my sister says, “I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have yelled. My day was fine. How was yours?”

I blink several times before I respond. “Fine, nothing big happened,” I say, before taking a bite of my burrito, trying to keep my tone casual. It is the same tone used to soothe cranky polar bears or teething toddlers.

“Make any new friends?”

“No.”

“How are your grades?”

I sink down in my seat, my eyes on my half-eaten dinner. “The usual A’s B’s and a C.”

What is she trying to do? It bugs me that she’d even try to make conversation after that blow-up, she should’ve just stayed quiet.

“Any new students?”

“No. I would of told you if there were.”

“How was the group project?”

“Have you talked to our parents lately?” I ask, raising my eyes to collide with hers.

At the mention of our parents, Sara stops talking, as I knew she would. Silence stretches out between the two of us. Sara slowly slips out of her chair, leaving me with the quiet. I hear the door to her bedroom slam and decide to follow suit and leave; the only thing remaining is the uneaten food on our plates. I glance back at the dishes and remember that it is my night to clean the kitchen. I take a step back towards the kitchen, but stop, turn, and go to my room.

Vzpomínka

By Lysa Cohen

© 2017

Heat poured out on butter-scented waves as my matka pulled a tray of koláche from the oven. Tendrils of steam rose from each cookie on a lazy swirl, permeating the kitchen with rich sweetness. Rumbles eddied from deep in my stomach as I watched her slide the delicate confections from the baking sheet to perch on the thin metal of the cooling tray.

I inched towards the counter, drawn by the lone koláche that had slipped from the cooling rack to lay broken on the counter. It called to me in a promise of apricot sweetness I could already taste on my tongue. Another inch. I could feel the delicate crunch of the dough breaking apart in my mouth. Another inch. I reached out—

“Eliška! Nedotýkejte koláche!”

My pudgy hand flew back from the counter, just missing the bite of the wooden spoon my matka wielded with arrow-like precision as she scolded me.

“How many time have I told you not to touch the koláche when they are cooling?”

“I’m sorry, Matka.” I looked down at the floor, shuffling one foot back and forth over the worn tile in a look of remorse I had perfected by the time I was five.

“Hmm, I’m sure you’re not, but you would be if you had burned yourself.” Wooden spoon still in hand, she pointed toward the table where my grandmother sat. “Now go sit down next to your grandmother and stay out of trouble.”

Dropping into a chair, I glanced at my matka as I pulled my knees up to my chest. I sighed as loud as I could, but she didn’t seem to notice. A chuckle from above my head pulled by gaze upward where my babička smiled as she placed a finger to her lips. The lines around her eyes deepened as she grinned and winked. Tendrils of grey-streaked hair had long since escaped her tight bun to curl along her temples and cheeks. No matter how many bobby pins she used, Babička’s hair never stayed in its bun.

Renewed anticipation filled me as I watched her pluck the koláche from the counter. Her hand-sewn house smock and old-fashioned apron pulled tight across her ample bosom as she blew on the confection.

With a conspirator’s smile, Babička handed me the cookie. It was a secret shared between us: When my mother said “no,” she would say “yes.” I made sure my mother



Lysa Cohen is a writer and educator from Phoenix, Arizona. She has a Master of Arts in Education and is finishing a Master of Arts in English and Creative Writing. When she isn’t writing, she is traveling the world in search of adventure. Lysa has also had her work published in Page and Spine and The Flash Fiction Press.

Continued on page 23

Continued from page 22

wasn't looking, then snatched the koláche and bit into it with the lusty exuberance of a six-year-old. Sweetness exploded on my tongue, filling my senses, as I bit into the crisp dough.

As I nibbled, I watched Babička. Despite the arthritic curl of her fingers, she rolled out another sheet of dough and cut it into perfect squares. She dropped spoonfuls of jam into the center of the squares, then folded the ends into the center. Over and over, she cut, filled, and folded. The motion was hypnotic and I climbed up on the table to get a closer look. My eyes followed every movement in rapt attention as I licked the last of the sugar from my fingers.

Beneath me, the table was hard as it pressed into my corduroy-clad legs. The ancient oak was so solid, not even a squeak escaped as my brother raced into the kitchen and clamored onto the table, bouncing his three-year-old body up and down, begging for a taste.

Moisture and heat curled the ends of his hair so they stuck to his cheeks as his voice cut through the noise of the kitchen. "Can I have one? Can I have one? Eša had one, can I have one, too?"

My brother couldn't pronounce my name, so he called me Eša.

Over and over he begged for a cookie, his body almost shaking in his persistence.

"No!" I mimicked my Babička's accent as I scolded my brother. "Get off the table."

I could feel his defiance. "But you're on the table. I want a taste! Give me a taste!"

He grabbed for one of the cooling cookies as I grabbed for him. I missed. He didn't.

He screamed as his hand closed around a koláche and the molten filling burned him. He dropped the cookie

and began to jump up and down holding his hand as he howled his rage.

"Sedni si!" Babička's accent was thick, like molasses over porridge, as she barked at my brother to sit down. The blast of words had the effect of forcing my rambunctious brother into instant compliance.

"Good. When they cool, you will have one. If you sit still, they will cool faster," she told him.

He wiggled for a moment longer, then stilled. His sigh was long and loud and could be heard over the clatter of a wooden spoon against a ceramic mixing bowl.

When Babička nodded her head, I noticed an almost imperceptible wobble to the movement of her chin that I had not remembered seeing before.

"Eliška. Watch. Watch how I make the koláche."

"Ano, babi. I am watching." I nodded and could feel the soft brush of hair against my cheek as my braids bounced up and down.

"Soon you will do this, you will make the koláche for your children. It is tradition. My matka taught me and I taught your matka. The women always make the koláche."

"And the men eat the koláche." My brother's voice cut through the kitchen with the authority of a three-year-old secure of his place in the world.

He started jumping up and down in his chair again, but I noticed that he stopped when Babička frowned at him.

"Your dědeček has been filling your head with nonsense, again," she said. "I will have a talk with your grandfather later. No, Josef, the men do the dishes. That is also tradition."

From the other side of the kitchen, where she was mixing the cottage-cheese dough, I heard my mother laugh.

The Breaking News

By Angikar Sarkar

© 2017

Name of Tagore's work inspired from:

This play is adapted from Rabindranath Tagore's (Nobel laureate in literature, 1913), in Bengali the original "Baro Khabor" (English meaning: "The Breaking News"), and has been depicted as a drama or play in order to make it more attractive and interactive. Apart from the main characters of the original story, a few more characters have been added to infuse the flavor of dramatic palaver.

Prologue:

In this play, an old grandpa tells a story to his granddaughter, Kusumi (Kushmi in Bengali). The story is centered on a "fluyt" cargo vessel ("Bajra") owned by a landlord ("Zaminder") of the then-Bengal. The vessel left the port and sails through the mid-sea towards the south. A grave situation is going on here in the boat to decide who actually runs the boat: the Sail or the Oars? Each object of the vessel has been personified here for the sake of the play: the Sail, the Oars, the Mast, the Deck and the Hull, and the Boatman plays a key role here as well, as he is judge here and has to give the final verdict on the altercation.

Theme/thought/idea inspired from:

"Baro Khabor" is the third short story of Tagore's, one of the innumerable immortals "Galpo Shalpo," where an old grandpa, portrayed after Tagore himself, tells 16 stories to his granddaughter Kushmi, portrayed after Tagore's granddaughter Nandita. These stories are based on very simple real-life events, but each of them is sort of moralistic and teaches some eternal truths of life. When Nandita was growing up from her adolescence, Tagore used to tell her stories that can help a child to learn things, to know the outside world, different natures, behaviors and motives of human beings. Eventually, Tagore converted all of these stories into literature masterpieces with his acumen, and all of them were published as a book format later on.

"Baro Khabor" is also a moralistic story where Tagore fantastically portrayed two things.

Firstly, Tagore wanted to tell that all of the small-column news in a newspaper is not insignificant nor all of the front-page news is very worthy either. Sometimes, the news that we normally ignore, considering it as insignificant, turns to breaking news eventually,



Angikar Sarkar, 30, is professionally a software engineer and an arts and music aficionado. He is originally from India and completed a third year in fine arts at the Indian Academy of Fine Arts. In 2009, he came to the U.S. to pursue graduate studies from Texas. Since 2013, he has been in north Phoenix for professional connections. His wife, Samayita, is the biggest motivation behind his arts. Whenever he gets spare hours, Angikar involves himself in fine arts, poetry and music. He can be contacted by e-mail at thisisangikar@gmail.com or by phone at 409-210-9116. He is also reachable by Facebook at www.facebook.com/angikar.sarkar.

Continued on page 25

Blue Guitar Jr. 2017

perhaps not in a single day, but may be in months and years. So nothing is insignificant in this mundane world.

Secondly, the story has the flavor of a fable. It signifies the very truth, that the glitter of human civilization often hides the hard labor and the sweat of the poor and downtrodden. The great pyramids of Egypt only tell us about the Pharaohs but hides the laborers who built the pyramids brick by brick, and eventually wiped them out, burying them under those great monuments. But when the downtrodden revolt, human civilization witnesses some great phenomena that often change the course of human history entirely.

Cast and crew

1. Grandpa
2. Kusumi, the granddaughter
3. The Boatman
4. Oar 1
5. Oar 2
6. The Sail
7. The Mast

The Script

[Stage: left pane: Kusumi and Grandpa; right pane: the boat and related actors. Light is first shed at the left pane while the play starts and eventually moves to the right as the play takes progress.

In left corner of the stage in an easy chair, Grandpa is sitting, reading a newspaper, and suddenly Kusumi enters]

Kusumi: Grandpa, O Grandpa, you promised me yesterday, that you will tell me a long story. And now you are reading the newspaper. Get up. Get up please, please tell me a story.

Grandpa: Ha ha ha...(laughs)...stories...huh? Well...I can tell you some but those will be a short and simple one. But you have to tell me the message of the

story. We read many stories, but we don't realize the meaning, we often fail to understand its spirit.

Kusumi: I have read Aeshop's fables which has a moral. I understand it! Grandpa, please tell one. I can't wait. Please, please, please!

Grandpa: Ok ok ok...I have a story for you. This is the story of a boat.

[Both take a walk and Kusumi listens to Grandpa's story]

Kusumi: Boat?

Grandpa: Yeah...Boat. But not an ordinary one. A Bajra boat. You know about Zaminders, right?

Kusumi: Oh, yes! The landlords of Bengal?

Grandpa: Yes, yes. One landlord, Mr. Buphendra Narayan, was going from Tamralipta to Vishakhapattanam to trade indigos. He had a very beautiful double-decked cargo bajra named "Ishani." It was well known for its famous three-layered Sail, blue and black in color. It was full of indigos. The wind was favorable and the boat was sailing smoothly.

The Sail and the Mast felt very proud and suddenly passed some bitter comments towards the Oars. And a quarrel gets started.

(Light fades from the left corner and it gets focused and prominent in the midstage/right pane, where the boat is set)

The Oars: Row, row, row your boat, Gently down the stream, Merrily merrily, merrily, merrily, Life is but a dream

Row, row, row your boat, Watch the water flow, Rowing's fun but rowing's hard, That is what I know
Row, row, row your boat, Row, row, row your boat
Row, row, row your boat...

(Rhyming continues but fades)

The Sail: (to the Mast) ...Rowing's fun but rowing is

Continued on page 26

hard...ha ha ha...the poor lazy idiots. You poor people will always find it hard...ha ha ha...

The Mast: hee hee hee...poor people, my dear, they are poor laborers. They do not want to work hard. That is why they have this fate. Forgive them, my lord. They are poor...hee hee hee...

(The Oars hear this conversation and become angry)

Oar 1: Boatman, hey Boatman!

Oar 2: Boatman, are you listening at all?

Boatman: What's up, my dear friends? What happened?

Oar 1: What happened? Are you deaf? The Sail and the Mast have literally insulted us. And you are asking what happened?

Oar 2: They called us poor.

Oar 1: They called us lazy.

Oar 2: They called us idiot.

Oars 1, 2: And you are asking what happened? You did not protest at all...

Oar 1: They insulted us just because we are tied to the deck and we face the waves?

Oar 2: They are safe at the top and they don't have to care about the tide at all. What happens when the storm comes? What happens during high tides?

Oar 1: His funky job makes him feel proud? Makes him feel more important than us? Really? Oh...come on...

Oar 2: Boatman, we Oars, are telling you, this is not acceptable at all.

Oar 2: If the Sail does not change his mind or does not take his words back, we won't row anymore.

Oar 1: And then we will see how you can drive the boat?

(Boatman feels scared. He takes the Oars together at one corner and tells them in a subtle voice so that the

Sail and the Mast cannot hear him)

Boatman: Oh oh oh, my dears! Why are you even mad at his words? He sounds childish...hee hee...you all know that well. You are the backbone of this boat. If you do not work hard, how can I drive the boat? Who will help me when there is a hurricane? Who will help me when there is rough tide? It's no one but you. Please don't get offended. Your role is beyond question.

Oar 1: Then go, tell your adorable Sail to flutter and not to judge our significance.

Oar 2: Yes yes yes, go now and tell him.

Boatman: Yes I will, my friends, I am going now.

(The Oars continue their singing in subtle voice: "Row, row, row your boat, See the water run, Rowing here and rowing there, Oh we're almost done. Row, row, row your boat, Gently down the stream, Ha ha fooled ya all, I'm a submarine.")

...but the Boatman got scared again)

Boatman (monologue): Did the Sail hear all these? Oh God, no no...please no. I will go and flatter him now.

Boatman (rides at the upper deck and tells the Sail): Oh, my lord. Hope you are doing well.

Mast: Here comes another stupid creature...

Sail: What's up, Boaty? I saw you at the deck. What were the Oars telling you?

Boatman: Ha ha ha...nothing, sir, nothing. They are illiterate idiots, you know that. Who tells that you have to drive the boat? That is the laborers' job. You are the pride of this boat. Your color signifies victory, pride and aristocracy. You direct the wind, my man, and when there is no wind, you take a nap. But that is perfectly fine...hee hee...purely understandable. You are the leader, my lord, and we all should follow you. Please don't bother. I already tied all the Oars hard at the hull.

They can only quaver but cannot scream. Hi hi hi... sounds good? My lord?

Sail: Yeah...they should understand that they are just workers, so they need to be meek and obedient.

Boatman: Yes, sir, definitely. I will make them understand. You don't have to worry...hee hee...thank you, sir, enjoy your day and I will take my leave now. (and he climbs down from the upper deck)

Sail: (got flattered, yawning) Hmmmm...hey Mast!... it is a pretty good day! The sky is blue and the breeze is soothing. I will take a nap now. See you in the afternoon.

Mast: Okay! Enjoy your nap.

(Boatman climbs down the lower deck and becomes scared again to see the northeast sky)

Boatman: (monologue) Oh, dear lord. What is it? It is deep dark at the northeast. A big storm is coming and we are at the mid-sea now. Don't have enough time to take this on, Oh, lord! Oh...hey my friends, are you there? (Speaks to the Oars)

Oar 1: Yes, yes! We know. We need to prepare for the storm as well...

Boatman: Here we are! Let's row hard.

Oar 2: Yeah...okay...let's row...

(Oars start singing again...) Row, row, row your boat, Watch the water flow, Rowing's fun but rowing's hard, That is what I know. Row, row, row your boat, See the water run, Rowing here and rowing there, Oh we're almost done.

[And the light on the boat fades a little now and becomes prominent on Kusumi and Grandpa]

Grandpa: So this was the story, my dear!

Kusumi: Oh no...it cannot be so short. It hasn't yet ended.

Grandpa: See, that is what I told you earlier. It is easy

to listen to a story but hard to understand it. Ok, tell me what did you learn from here?

Kusumi: Unnnnn...learning? You mean a moral? Unnn...it ended so abruptly.

Grandpa: Now let me tell you the significance of the story. The Mast and the Sail represent the aristocrats of our civilization. The Boatman represents the middle class here and the Oars are those who actually build the civilization — the poor people without whom we are nothing. If they do not work, the society cannot even thrive. Do you want to know what happened to this boat later?

Kusumi: What happened, Grandpa?

Grandpa: A big storm hit the boat. The sea was swelling furiously like a dragon. The Sail immediately hid and the Mast was down too. But the Boatman stayed tight at the hull with all the Oars. They struggled a lot to avoid it and finally after an hour of effort they survived and could change the direction of the boat away from the storm. The boat was safe. [At the right hand corner, fade light onto the boat]

Grandpa: Now tell me, what did you actually learn?

Kusumi: Never underestimate the poor.

Grandpa: Yes, never disrespect the poor and the downtrodden. They work so we survive. And if they revolt someday and decide not to work anymore, the civilization will stop.

Kusumi: Yeah...now I get it. Why did you call this a big story? Thank you, Grandpa, thank you!! Can we have another story time now?

Grandpa: Another? Ha ha ha...wait, my dear, wait... we will have another tomorrow...

Kusumi: No, no, please, right now...

Grandpa: No, dear, tomorrow...

[And a conclusive music becomes prominent. The play ends eventually]

Lost and Found on the Fort Bowie Trail

By Curt Robinson

© 2017

“Food Stamps!” *O.K. ... I get it.*

I kept hearing these words at my new school. When someone walked by me in the hall, I heard ‘Food Stamps,’ or when I walked into a class it was blurted out from a back corner of the room. Maybe deep down I knew what they meant, but pretended not to notice; acknowledging was too painful.

Cindy Jenkins, one of the beautiful girls, brings me to understanding in the lunch line. She’s the girl you want to ask out, but your status falls short; still, you hope in some kind of lottery-winning moment she notices you, is actually interested in you. I move invisibly behind her in the lunch line and look for a chance to make a witty comment at the right moment. Only, when I get to the cashier, she lays it out for me.

“Do they take food stamps in the cafeteria?” She asks innocently, but there’s venom behind her words.

Her beautiful friends cackle, and it’s confirmed. ‘Food Stamps’ is my nickname, and it’s not a good one. That’s it. I’ll take this cheeseburger to go. I dump my tray in the trash and slink out of the cafeteria.

I should explain something about my new school. My dad teaches history here, so I’m here too. Having a teacher for a parent means being broke. The problem is my new school, Carson Preparatory, is in the rich part of Carson, Arizona. All the other kids’ parents make at least triple what Dad makes, and they have the attitude that goes with that kind of money. I can’t afford to dress like them, or own a nice car, so I stick out—hence ‘Food Stamps.’ But, there was no way I could go to Desert Vista High—the other high school in Carson. “You are NOT going there! We have enough problems already.” Dad insists.

So I’m walking out of the rich school:

“Food Stamps. I get it,” I announce to no one in particular. I walk past the fake marble columns, the neatly manicured landscaping. I walk through the parking lot filled with cars that Dad could never hope to afford, across the street, and down the road. I’m taking a holiday from everything.

It’s good to be free from elitist classmates, out in the sun, but then there’s reality. Where



Curt Robinson has lived in Arizona for over 40 years, and has taught Second and Third grade in public schools for the past 20 years. He has a degree in Journalism from NAU, and a Master’s in Curriculum and Instruction from ASU. Curt enjoys trail running, hunting, fishing and camping when he’s not being a husband and father. His teenage years and subsequent experiences as a parent of two teenagers have provided quite a bit of writing material for young adults. The desert provides inspiration, and the setting for many of his current stories. You can learn more by visiting his website: www.curtrobinsonwriting.com.

Continued on page 29

to go? I could walk to the bus station and catch a bus back to Phoenix. Maybe one of my friends could let me stay until I graduate? Yeah right. Like that would fly with Dad; Mom already bailed this little town, he won't let me go too. Eventually, I make my way back to the Low Budget side of town.

It's not long before the Jeep Wrangler chugs into the driveway, and the driver-side door slams. Here it comes. I can see him, he's crimson red, already—not a good sign. The front door bursts open:

“DANIEL. What do you think you're doing? I get a call after 4th period that you can't be found? You leave school? Do you know how that reflects on me?” The red face, the bald head; he's an angry red light bulb.

“I've had it! I don't belong there. They're all rich, and we're not,” I shout, which is something that I don't do around Dad.

“It may not be easy,” Dad explains. “But you're getting the best education you can get. It's a good school. Who cares what those kids think?”

“They call me ‘Food Stamps.’ I don't belong there. It sucks! It's your fault for enrolling me there.”

Reasoning time's over after I throw that one out. He rushes up to my face, the accusing finger comes out—now's the time for punishment:

“You ingrate. You know what sucks?” Now he's shouting. “You're GROUNDED. No phone, no T.V., you're not going anywhere this weekend. THAT sucks.” Dad's voice is cracking with anger.

“Fine!” I storm into my room, flop down on the bed, and stare seething at the popcorn ceiling. It's not just my school; it's Mom leaving ‘to clear her head’ she said, it's shouting Dad, it's everything. But, what can I do about all that? While I stare, the ceiling begins to transform into clouds, then mountains and valleys; it's time to

start thinking about some new place, it's out there somewhere, and one day I'll find it. There's no changing my situation, at least there's just one more year here, and I'm out. That's doable; I can make it.

After a couple of hours of blank staring, my dad walks in, ready to deal out more lecturing or punishment.

He sits down quietly at the foot of my bed. “I've been thinking,” he says.

“Oh yeah?” I answer.

He moves past the attitude. “I'm going to Fort Bowie tomorrow. I want you to come with me.”

“Yeah, right. I'm grounded remember? I'm not going anywhere with you!” At this point, the argument usually escalates, but he's quiet; calm even.

He takes a breath, and rubs his hand over his bald head and through what's left of the silver hair buzzed on the sides. His blue eyes look weary, ringed with resignation.

“I'll give you everything back. No grounding,” he concedes.

Now this is significant. He NEVER goes back on a punishment.

“My cell too?”

“Yes, cell too.”

“Why Fort Bowie?” I'm not ready to agree just yet.

He pauses, staring out the bedroom window at the sunset. “That's where they brought Geronimo when he surrendered to the U.S. Calvary. It's where U.S. troopers battled Apache warriors. Besides, I need to go there for information for my Arizona History class.”

Dad has shown me pictures of the fort, and it really is just a ruins. The place was shut down in 1894, and all that's left of it are some dissolved adobe walls and foundations where the fort used to be. That's not enough of a reason; there must be more to this trip.

“You go to these places all of the time. Why drag me

into it?”

“I want you to come.” This is the closest to pleading I’ve ever seen out of him.

“Alright, I’ll do it.”

He straightens up when I agree, then messes up my hair. *Totally annoying.* “I’ll see you bright and early.” He gives me the fatherly shoulder grab.

It’s still dark outside when the light turns on without mercy in my room, and my dad’s grossly cheerful voice fills up my room. “Up and at ’em,” Dad crows.

I stumble out of bed, grab the backpack, and make my way to the Jeep. The bucket seat immediately reclines, and I fall back asleep, with the added bonus of no annoying conversation. By the time I wake up, we’re way past Tucson, with not much farther to go. Dad is staring quiet out the window as the miles of desert cruise by. He doesn’t say much these days, since Mom left.

“Junior year is almost over, and then you’ve got just a year to go.” He says as he blankly stares at the road.

“Oh yeah, one more year.”

“Then what?”

“Well, college. If I can keep my grades up. No more Carson Prep. for me. I’m out.”

He keeps looking down the road. “Just stay out of teaching.”

“Teaching, no way, Dad.”

‘Stay out of teaching.’ That’s his famous quote. When he’s paying bills, or up late grading papers, or going to school on weekends, he’ll say that. And he doesn’t know, but I heard their last fight. The one where Mom said she ‘needed space,’ and she ‘expected more’ out of her life. That was about teaching too.

There’s awkward silence that neither one of us wants to break, so we ride along as the tall, slender stalks of ocotillo plants flash by. They’re covered with bright

green leaves, and super orange tassels, which mean the spring rains have been falling.

Dad smiles for once when he notices the electric green. “Nice to see how a little rain turns the desert green. The plants burst out green and flower. It’s good to think that at any time, some stroke of fortune can change your life for the better.”

“Sure, Dad.” *Always the hopeful one.*

It’s about 10 in the morning when we drive onto the winding dirt road that leads to the Fort Bowie Trailhead, then we park. There’s one of those tan National Park block outhouses. Dad yanks the parking brake, and jumps out quickly, and starts lacing up his boots.

“It’s a little over a mile and a half to the fort.”

“So all we gotta do is go to the fort?” *Maybe now we get to the real reason.*

“Yeah, but there’s something interesting about our family along the way,” he adds.

“What do you mean?”

“You’ll see,” Dad says cryptically.

We pack our water bottles, and a few granola bars in our packs while Dad hums to himself, a big change from the past couple of months. Then he puts a hat on and rubs sunblock on his blotchy, 50-year-old skin.

“Let’s go.”

We go down the ridge on the railroad-tie steps that mark the trail. I hear thrashers and cactus wrens chirping, and quails calling, and the cactus are in bloom—the desert is full of sound and color. The trail leads down into a valley filled with ridges and rolling hills.

He hurries down the trail fast for an old guy: stepping lightly over rocks, and powering through the uphill sections. The weary, ground-down look is gone from his face, replaced with joy and a weird euphoria. The stooped-over slouch has disappeared. Anticipation for

Continued on page 31

something is driving him; he's looking for some kind of victory.

"Watch for snakes," Dad warns.

Dad taught me when the snakes come out in the Spring you need to keep your eyes on the trail so you don't step on one, especially a rattler. I'm looking down when I see a feather, a real big one on the ground. I pick it up.

"Hey, Dad! Look at this."

He stops and walks back to me, taking the feather out of my hand.

"Do you know what this is?"

"A feather." *Duh.*

"It's an eagle feather." He offers me a fist bump, which I don't return. "This is a good sign for our trip."

"Why? It's just a feather." *I must be missing something.*

"Eagle feathers are sacred to the Apaches. They believed that since eagles flew so high, their feathers were a present from the heavens. Finding one or being given one is a great gift. You have to take care of it."

"Take care of it?" I'm confused.

"Don't let any harm come to it. Here, put it in your hat." Dad reaches over to stick the quill into my hat.

"Now I look like an idiot," I say, but I humor him and keep it there.

"We'll find a good place for it when we get home." He points us back to the trail.

We head up a hill, panting as the late April sun bears down. We stop in the shade of a mesquite tree for water. Mountains rise up all around us in browns and grays, and past the peaks you can see the blue-gray clouds banking up, higher still, over the mountaintops. It looks like rain might be coming.

Dad points to the north. "Over there are the Dos

Cabezas. Dos Cabezas means 'two heads' in Spanish. South are the Chiricahua Mountains, and this valley that we're in is a pass between the two ranges. Close to here is the Apache Spring, the only fresh water source for miles. A mountain pass, and fresh water made this area an important place back then. That's why the Army put Fort Bowie here." *What a fountain of knowledge he can be. He should go on a game show.*

No, he's not finished. "Just think, the Chiricahua Apaches walked on these very trails for over 400 years. Where did they go? They were shipped out of here years ago."

"Well, didn't they keep on fighting and break the peace, like Geronimo?" I took an Arizona history class too.

"This was their land, what do you expect?" Dad asks, and waits for an answer.

"I don't know. But you said this was about us too. How do we fit into it?"

Dad jumps up, the break must be over. "You'll see. Not much farther."

He picks up his pace. *Doesn't he get tired?* After a mile, we stop at a plaque on the trail's edge. There is no building, or even a rock; it's a plaque marking nothing. The sweat drops off us in the humid late morning.

"Read this."

I step up to the plaque. *"The Bascom Affair: On this spot, the Apache chief Cochise was briefly held by army troops under the command of Lt. Bascom. The army was investigating the kidnapping of a rancher's boy, and they wrongly accused Cochise of taking him. They confined Cochise to a tent until he produced the missing boy. This enraged Cochise, who ripped through the tent with a knife he was carrying and escaped while soldiers fired at him."*

Continued on page 32

“This is it,” Dad announces with a slight air of triumph.

“What?”

“This is why we’re here.” He is beaming, standing triumphantly at the plaque. I don’t get it.

“What? We’re related to Cochise?”

“No, we’re not related to Cochise. Look at the plaque. Who wrote the account on it?”

I look down. “It was some sergeant in the Calvary. So what?”

Dad points excitedly. “What was his name?”

“Staff Sergeant Daniel Richardson.”

I look at Dad, his eyebrows are raised with the ‘I told you so’ look on his face. “Daniel Richardson.” He repeats.

“So you think he’s related to us.”

“Yes! Your Great-Great-Grandfather was a Staff Sergeant in the Calvary named Daniel Allen Richardson. He fought right here in the Apache Wars.” Dad claps his hands.

“O.K., but what’s the big deal?”

“You don’t see it? Our family is part of Arizona history. Our ancestor stood with Cochise, fought against the Apaches. That’s important. Only ... I’m not sure.”

“NOT SURE?” Now I’m getting frustrated.

Dad explains. “Daniel Allen Richardson is our Great, Great, Grandfather and he retired as a Sergeant Major. That’s where you got your first name. He was actually sent to a mental ward in California where he died. That’s all we know.”

“Oh great. I’m named after a crazy man.”

“He left no journal, and records weren’t kept too well back then. I’ve been trying to track him down for a couple of years, and I’ve had some extra time to work on it lately.” Dad pauses and looks down. “He must’ve

had such a hard life back then, seen things in the Indian Wars that haunted him that drove him to the asylum. But the problem is we don’t know his exact unit in the Calvary. I have searched the soldiers’ database, and they have information on several sergeants named Daniel Richardson, but their middle names aren’t listed, so I can’t find their units. We have to try and find out if this Sergeant is OUR Sergeant Richardson.”

“So how do we do that?” *I must admit it’s getting interesting.*

“We go to Fort Bowie.” Dad points in the fort’s direction. “There’s a little museum there, and the curator, Ray Ordonez, has the records of the soldiers who served in the region. Those records should have the full name of those men, including their middle names. That will tell us if he’s our guy.”

“How much farther is the fort?”

“A little over a mile.”

We march on, and as we get closer, the anticipation drives us. I wonder why this is so important to him? Sure it’s a little interesting, kind of like trivia, but it’s not that big of a deal. We approach a stand of trees: cottonwoods and sycamores. Their broad, bright green leaves means there’s water nearby. Then we hear the water trickling. We stop at the spring, and I get my chance to ask him.

“Dad, why is this important?”

He rubs the sweat off his forehead. “I don’t know, I guess it would just be nice to know if our relative is part of history.” Then he changes the subject: “This is Apache Spring. It’s the only water source for miles. Everyone passing through here came for water.”

There is one last rise to hike up before we get to the plateau where the fort lies. Finally, we see the fluttering U.S. flag that marks the fort breakout through the trees.

Continued from page 32

A hopeful smile breaks across my Dad's face. "This is it." Dad is beaming.

Dissolved adobe walls rise out of the desert, and empty foundations lay hidden in the dirt and grass. We walk around what's left of the buildings. Here's the Stables, the Officers' Quarters, the Mess Hall. The plaques in front of each pile of rubble have pictures that help you figure out what each building looked like.

Dad stops in front of one plaque: "Look at this, Daniel."

I come over to look at the plaque, and there is a picture of twenty Apache men with a few women and children. That was all that was left of them—Geronimo and his warriors after they surrendered in 1886. This was the place they were brought to. Even though their fight was over, they still looked defiant as they stood surrounded by soldiers.

"Just think. Geronimo himself stood right here," Dad says. "That was the end of the Apache Wars. The Army shipped the surviving Apaches, including the Apache scouts that helped them, out on a train to Florida. They closed this fort down eight years later."

We walk to the Visitors' Center, which is a plain-looking ranch-type building with a white tin roof. The floorboards creak as we enter the building, and you can smell the pine wood.

Dad approaches a large man sitting at the desk. "Hello there. I'm looking for Curator Ordonez?"

The big, barrel-chested man rises and offers a handshake.

"You've found him." He smiles. "Are you John Richardson?"

"Yes, and this is my son Daniel."

Ordonez looks at my hat. "Hey—an eagle feather. Way to go, kid." We shake hands too; his grip is strong

and friendly.

"So you two are here to find out if your relative served in this area?" Ordonez asks.

"Yes. You can help us solve a family mystery." Dad is trying to sound nonchalant, but he's fidgeting.

Ordonez walks over to a large locked cabinet, grabs some white gloves that are laying on top of it, and puts them on. He unlocks the cabinet, and pulls out a large, worn-out leather-bound book:

"This is the official log of Fort Bowie, which has the record of troop units who served in the area right up to the fort's closure. The fort was built after the Bascom Affair, but it was common practice to transfer records of personnel that operated in a given area to that fort once it was operational. If your Great-Great-Grandfather served here, then this log will have his full name, and unit. The Bascom Affair happened in 1862, and troops from the 14th Calvary Regiment were involved. So let's look there."

Ordonez carefully thumbs through the pages, and Dad looks like he could rip the log right out of Ordonez's hands to look through it. I'm interested too at this point. There is uncomfortable silence, then Ordonez stops.

"Here we are. Now, what was your Sergeant Daniel Richardson's full name?" Ordonez asks.

"Daniel Allen Richardson." There is hope in Dad's voice.

Mr. Ordonez frowns, and I can tell he has some bad news.

"The sergeant who was at the Bascom Affair is Daniel TAYLOR Richardson. I'm sorry, but he's not your ancestor."

Dad's face goes stoic as he tries to hide his disappointment. He offers a handshake. "Thank you for your time, Mr. Ordonez."

Continued on page 34

Blue Guitar Jr. 2017

Ordonez shrugs. “I hope you can track him down.”

I shake his hand too, and we quickly leave. Outside, the rain clouds are looming higher, turning blue-gray as they roll in our direction. It fits my Dad’s mood; he says nothing as we start down the trail back. At least the clouds mean some cooler weather.

The trail back feels longer, and he starts to stoop over again. *Is he thinking about Mom?* We walk slowly, the wind picks up, rattling through the leaves, and the smell of rain hangs in the air. Usually, rain is a time for celebration, but not when you’re out in it, not if there is lightning, or if the dry washes fill up in a flash flood. By necessity, we start to push on faster, jogging as the thunder rumbles, and rain starts falling.

“It’s coming. We need to get across that last wash before it starts flowing,” Dad shouts over the wind.

Cold, big drops come down in sheets and we start to run full speed to get across that last wash before it fills up and cuts us off from the car. We splash across the wash while the water is still only ankle deep; we’re panting, shivering when we get to the Jeep.

“Whoa. That was a wet one,” I say to Dad, trying to engage him.

He unlocks the car, and we get in. He turns the key, the Jeep starts, and he sits there, gripping the steering wheel, saying nothing. He looks out absently as the windshield wipers go back and forth.

“Dad?”

He doesn’t answer.

Then, he leans forward, pressing his head against the windshield. It feels like he’s hoping that those windshield wipers will wipe off his defeat, wipe away the loser that’s all over his face. He sits there; failed

marriage, low-paying job, no respect from his son.

Then I get it—why this trip to Fort Bowie was so important to him. Now I understand. Having a remotely historic Great-Great-Grandfather would be one kind of something that he could feel positive about. He gets no pride from his job, he barely pays his bills. His wife, my mom, couldn’t handle it—she’s gone too. There isn’t even the hint of success in any aspect of his life. At least he could have pointed to an ancestor who accomplished something. Isn’t that a little pathetic to be in a place where your only win is having some noteworthy relative who has been dead for like 100 years?

Why did he bring me here? He wanted to reconcile. He sees me tearing myself away, how his discipline is driving us apart. He knows time is running out before college too. He hopes to claim a tiny piece of history, and he hopes to know his son loves him. He knows what I mean when I say ‘one more year.’ This trip was supposed to be a double win for him: be notable in some small way, and to rebuild his relationship with me. He thinks he’s lost on both counts.

All of my resentment and frustration vanish as I look at my Dad staring out the window, hoping the wipers will wipe away his failure. My own issues are small as I watch him barely holding himself together.

That’s when the words come tumbling out: “I love you, Dad.”

There is a small smile that creases his face. “I love you too, Son.”

But I know something that he doesn’t know: He’s going to wake up tomorrow morning, and climb out of bed, back into his hopeless cycle. Only tomorrow is going to be different because when he wakes up, he’ll find an eagle feather waiting for him. The eagle feather that I found on the Fort Bowie Trail.

A Call to Writers for The Blue Guitar Jr.

Open to children and teens who write
and to adults who write
for children and teens

The Blue Guitar Jr. magazine seeks literary submissions for its next annual issue for children and teens. Submissions from children and teens and adults who write for children and teens are sought by Oct. 1, 2018, in all genres — fiction, poetry, plays, creative nonfiction — all geared to appeal to youthful audiences. Writers must submit original work and must live in Arizona. Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the writer must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and submissions may be made in multiple genres. Please include your name and the best way to contact you on your submission. To submit or for further information, e-mail Editor Rebecca Dyer at rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org. For additional information, visit www.theblueguitarmagazine.org.

A Call to Artists for The Blue Guitar Jr.

Open to children and teens who create art
and to adults who create art
for children and teens

The Blue Guitar Jr. magazine seeks art submissions for its next annual issue for children and teens. Submissions from children and teens and adults who create art for children and teens are sought by Oct. 1, 2018, in all media geared to appeal to youthful audiences. Artists must submit original work and must live in Arizona. Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the artist must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and submissions may be made in multiple mediums; up to 5 images can be submitted. Artists are encouraged to submit images of work by e-mail; please provide high-resolution JPEGs of 300 dpi. Images must be identified in the e-mail with the artist's name, contact information, titles of works, dates and mediums. Please include your name and the best way to contact you. To submit or for more information, e-mail Editor Richard Dyer at richarddyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org. For additional information, visit www.theblueguitarmagazine.org.

READ~~TRADE~~SAVE

Dog-Eared Pages Used Books

16428 N 32nd Street

Phoenix, AZ 85032

(Just south of Bell Road on the West side of 32nd Street)

602-283-5423

Open 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,
10 a.m.-7 p.m. Thursday, Friday, 12-5 p.m. Saturday.
Closed Sunday.

Visit us online at

www.dogearedpagesusedbooks.com

or

*Come in and have some fun in your new
neighborhood bookstore!*

Mystery

SCI-FI

Romance

Adventure

Literature

Cookbooks

Children's Area

NON-FICTION

FANTASY

Meet the staff of The Blue Guitar Jr. magazine



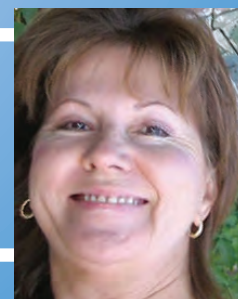
Elena Thornton, publisher: Founder and president of The Arizona Consortium for the Arts, Elena is an educator, artist and poet and lives in Phoenix. Reach her at info@artizona.org.

Rebecca Dyer, co-editor: A Tucson native, Rebecca is a poet, journalist and teacher residing in Mesa with her husband, Rick, her Blue Guitar co-editor. Reach her at rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org.



Richard H. Dyer Jr., co-editor: Richard (married to Rebecca, above) is the managing editor for two news websites and two monthly newspapers in the East Valley, a photographer and a welded-steel sculptor. Reach him at richarddyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org.

Marjory Boyer, cover design artist for The Blue Guitar: Marjory, of Scottsdale, is an award-winning artist, muralist and an acrylic-painting instructor. Her biography and contact information are available at mboyerart.com.





*Blue Guitar Jr.
will return in
2018!*

*“Things
as they are
are
changed
upon
the
blue guitar.”*