

The Blue Guitar **Jr.**

*Featuring
literature
and art
for youth*

The 2023 edition



Table Of Contents

Fiction



Atluri

Bellis Nieh — “The Secret Room”Pages 3-4
Shreya Bansal — “The Dog Mystery”Pages 8-9
Jasinth Saravanan — “Home Alone: Kiara’s Version”Pages 12-13



Nieh



Bansal

Poetry

Chaithra Yarlagadda — “The Best Friend,” “Staircase,”
“The Murderous Lollipop”Pages 14-18



Sajith



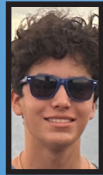
L. Encinas

Nonfiction

Akshaj Neil Atluri — “A Day in New York City”Pages 5-7
Leonardo Encinas — “Canoeing up Moose River”Pages 10-11
Shruthi Sajith — “A Phase”Pages 19-20
Nicolas Encinas — “Cops and Robbers”Pages 21-22



Saravanan



N. Encinas



Yarlagadda

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 Secret Room

By Bellis Nieh

Once, there were twins named Max and Julie. One day, they were playing tag when Julie hit the wall and suddenly flew onto the top of their bunk bed.

Max ran to her. “Are you okay?” he asked.

“Yeah,” she replied, startled.

“What just happened anyways?” He slowly turned around. Max jumped off the top of their bunk bed and walked over to the wall. “In all these years,” he said slowly. “We never knew that there had been a secret room inside our own room? ... Impossible!”

“Yeah, it is!” Julie exclaimed. “But apparently, it’s possible even though we’ve lived here for eleven years since we were born! Come on, let’s go check it out!”

So, they both rushed over to the door and gasped. What they found inside was incredible! It was a big room with three walls, each wall holding different things. The wall to their left had shelves and holders with grapple hooks, laser lipstick, and all sorts of cool spy gear! To their right, there was a coat rack with so many different costumes and disguises! But the wall right in front of them was the most amazing one; right there were about a hundred pictures pinned to the wall that their parents were on. These were no ordinary pictures, though. These pictures showed their parents with grappling hooks ... on the Eiffel Tower, them in disguise as chefs, and them fighting bad guys at a restaurant that looked like it was supposed to be their date night. There was even a giant computer! Was it possible that their parents were spies and possibly still are?

Max and Julie looked at each other, exchanging looks of both curiosity and surprise. Finally, Max spoke, “Are you thinking what I’m thinking?”

“If you’re thinking that our parents are possibly spies, then we’re thinking the same stuff,” she responded, stunned.

At that moment, her necklace, Max’s watch, and the big computer screen started glowing. On the screen, there was a map of the entire state of California, where they lived, and there was also one pink dot and one blue dot in the location of their house. Given the evidence, the twins came to a conclusion, “Is my watch a tracker?” Max



Bellis Nieh is in fourth grade. She likes taekwondo and is one belt away from the black belt. She also enjoys writing fictional stories, swimming, theatre, and playing piano. She is a huge Harry Potter fan. There are many exciting things that she wants to do when she grows up and being a photographer is one of them.

Continued on page 4

asked.

“Depends. Is my necklace a tracker?” Julie said.

They were both flabbergasted.

Suddenly, they heard footsteps, and when they turned around, their parents were staring at them in shock and guilt. “Are you two spies?!” shouted Julie.

“Ummm,” said their dad, staring at the floor.

“Well, go on!” shouted Max.

“Yes, we are,” their dad said.

“We were going to tell you at some point!” blurted their mom, trying to look reasonable.

“Yeah, we were. I mean, we were going to tell you sooner or later,” said their dad.

“And when would that have been?” interrogated Julie.

“Maybe 15?” responded their mom.

“Fifteen?!” the twins yelled.

“Yes?”

“Really?” asked Max.

“Yeah pretty much.”

At that moment, everything went dark and the next thing the twins knew, they were sitting in a completely white room, but they were tied up in chairs, their hands were duct-taped together, and their mouths were also taped shut. What had happened? Suddenly, something unexpected happened; Julie had raised her hands slightly and ripped them apart. The duct tape ripped! She was now able to take the tape off her mouth and

speak.

“How do we get out of here?” Max asked.

“I know the answer to that one too,” said Julie. She rocked her chair and fell back. She then did some interesting flips, and she was out of her chair.

Julie ran over to Max to help him, but he said, “Now, I think I got this.” He stood forward, still tied to the chair, and also flipped, then he fell onto the floor, which led to the chair breaking and the rope that was tying his body coming undone.

“Great job!” They congratulated each other in unison, high-fiving each other. “But we still need to get out of this room,” Julie said. So, together, they held hands and kicked the door open.

For some reason, they escaped to people clapping. In front of them stood about a dozen government agents ... and their parents.

“Congratulations!!!!” cried everybody.

“Uhhh, what’s going on?” Max asked Julie.

“I have no idea,” responded Julie, clueless as ever.

“You two are official agents, and you’re the youngest ones ever! That was just a test to see how you would do, and you did it in 1 minute and 3 seconds, a record!”

This was probably one of the happiest days of their lives and one of the most memorable! From that day on, they went on missions and had fun together!

The End!

© 2023

A Day in New York City

By Akshaj Neil Atluri

“Hey! Hey! You need to get up because if you don’t get up, you won’t go on the trip!” At about 6:00 in the morning on that day, this is what I heard. Groggy, I didn’t want to get up, but hearing this, I sprung up from bed, dashed to the bathroom, and did my routine as fast as I could and ran down the stairs, to my parents’ and uncle’s surprise with me going downstairs so quickly. After eating my breakfast, I managed to get out onto the driveway and sat down on our bench by the street. Then I said to myself, we really are going to New York City; I wonder what we’ll see there. Once I decided to stop pondering that question, my uncle suddenly came outside, started up the car, and yelled, “Come on, guys, we’ve got to go, or we’re going to miss the ferry with this traffic!” I said goodbye to my parents, who took care of my baby brother, and got in the car with my brother and uncle to set off on my journey to New York City.

After what felt like forever in the car, I could see the very tip of the towers that made up the skyline. I then cried out in joy, “Look over there! Look!” Once we had entered New York through one of the various bridges, drove on JFK Drive downtown to Battery Park, we stepped out of the car for our first sight to see.

In the hustle and bustle of downtown New York City, it is hard to find a place of greenery, whether it be a plaza, park, or memorial. Yet on the contrary, seeing Battery Park was a whole different place. The lush, green grass, the beautiful trees, and the calm ocean made me almost forget that we were in the middle of the most populous city in the United States! We were there for around an hour, checking out all of the structures, taking photos, anxiously waiting to see the huge statue, and waiting some more for the ferry to take us from the park to our first stop: the Statue of Liberty.

Once we had arrived at the statue, we spent some two hours there, taking photos, playing tag, and learning about the statue’s history. The statue is majestic seeing it in person, with the modern surroundings, to the antique nature of the statue. After that, we got onto the ferry to Ellis Island.

Once we got off the boat, we were on Ellis Island, and I was instantly amazed by the sight of the large, towering buildings that most immigrants passed through in 1892 to



Akshaj Neil Atluri is in sixth grade. Some of his hobbies include building large Lego sets, playing video games, and reading. He enjoys playing basketball and golf. Neil has also been published in the Scribbler Literary and Arts Magazine.

Continued on page 6

1954, with over 12 million immigrants passing through Ellis Island. There, we would then begin to explore the ins and outs of the complex, from the large main hall, where most of the immigrants passed through to get to the big city, to the infirmary. After an hour or so had passed, we boarded the ferry back to the lush Battery Park.

Once we were back at Battery Park, we got in the car to see the beautiful downtown of New York City. We parked around a mile away from our first stop, the New York Stock Exchange. After arriving at the Golden Bull statue, representing an aggressive stock market, we visited the Stock Exchange and took some photos outside at the exterior. Afterward, we took some time admiring Wall Street's beauty.

Then, we set off for the 9/11 memorial pools, a set of two reflecting pools. They were built with the people's names who died on this tragic day in American history engraved into the surface of the pools. The two pools are huge, with the pools and the museum taking up approximately 8 acres out of the 16-acre complex. Just with the little I could see with my size just barely being higher than the wall, the pool's depth and size made me gasp. Once we were finished admiring the pools and the complex itself, we got lunch and proceeded to get to our car to go to our final stop on the trip: Hudson Yards.

Frankly, I wasn't happy to be standing on a glass floor 102 stories up in the air with the wind, but I was not going to back out of this opportunity, as I think I would only do this once. So off we headed towards the west of Manhattan, where the Hudson Yard Plaza is located. The complex consists of four towers, the Vessel, a shopping mall, and Pier 76, which is a cruise departing destination for the Statue of Liberty. Once

we reached our destination, we parked in the massive underground garage of the complex. Then we took one of the elevators to the lobby and went outside to explore the Vessel.

The Vessel is a large cocoon-esque structure consisting of many interconnecting stairways and is great for cardio. After regretfully looking down on top of the Vessel, I realized that the Edge, the balcony that is 102 stories up in the air, is about ten times bigger than this. Realizing this, I gulped, but nonetheless proceeded to head down the stairs over to the third floor of the indoor mall, where the elevator that would take us to the Edge was located. I was scared, and very anxious to be higher than I ever have been before, but excited, because I was waiting for this moment all day.

Once inside the exhibit, we got our tickets that we bought two weeks before, scanned them, and waited in the queue starting at the elevator that would lead to the Edge for what was a short wait. Once in the middle of the line, I saw a very intriguing light table with a map of the entire island of Manhattan, and it highlighted where Hudson Yards is. I mapped out all of the places we had been to, and then I realized that we had almost finished the day! Right when that realization set in, we boarded the elevator up to the highest point I had ever been in my life: 1,100 feet in the air, on a balcony that protruded 35 feet out of the edge of the tallest skyscraper in Hudson Yards.

Once we stepped out of the elevator and onto the balcony, I immediately was struck by the beautiful lines and shapes formed by the unmistakable Manhattan skyline. I stepped onto the glass floor, and I then looked down. Surprisingly, I didn't seem to toss the cookies (vomit), get giddy, or get a headache. I then looked out,

Continued on page 7

Continued from page 6

and I didn't realize the beautiful sunset contrasting the concrete and glass jungle that is the skyline. I could see everything from there, from the countless cars and helicopters to the numerous docked boats along the Hudson River. Then, after we had finished taking all the photos and taking in the view, we returned to the car to head back home.

On the way, we saw the glittering lights and screens of Times Square. Then, once we saw the renowned plaza, we drove the three-hour drive back home. Once back home, we got out, and entered the house to such an avalanche of questions that I thought that a TV network must have come to our house! After that funny moment, I had dinner, and we shared the wonderful experience we had with the rest of our family. After having dinner, I went to my bedroom and thought about my magnificent day. I thought about the Edge, visiting the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, admiring downtown Manhattan, and running up and down the Vessel, with the latter being my favorite part because of the cardio. I was very exhausted because I somehow slept in what felt like approximately five seconds. Which concluded my very enjoyable day in New York City.

© 2023

The Dog Mystery

By Shreya Bansal

It was a winter night in Wisconsin, and rain was pouring till lightning struck a pink and blue fence, creating holes in the mesh. The holes were like squares and the fence was destroyed, which was great news for the dog that lived in the apartment building inside the fence. His owner was a doctor who had recently moved into Evergreen Street Apartments. Even though the dog was very much loved by his owner, he sought to explore, mostly at his friend's house, right down the hallway, where Rover the golden retriever lived, and where the sock jackpot rested. His owner would hopefully find him, but was it too late?

The doctor ran into the street, waiting for her ride home. A blue Mercedes drove up to her. The person in the car looked as if he had slept for two weeks straight.

"Find him," he said, looking shaken at how he had driven up to her.

"Wha-," the doctor said, shocked, as he drove away before she could speak. The doctor felt confused, knowing that the only thing she lived with was her dog. Then, it hit her. Running into the lobby of Evergreen Street Apartments, she saw the security guard sleeping. It was a shame that he didn't see where her dog had left. She woke him up as he jerked awake. She told him to stop sleeping on the job and then ran to the elevator. The guard was confused and resumed sleeping. The doctor rapidly pushed the button for the third floor, but it stopped at the second floor. A person came in and pushed the button for the fourth floor. It was awkward in the elevator since the doctor looked like she was about to burst. Once she was out of the elevator, she ran full speed to her apartment to notice that her dog was gone in the dead of night.

In the morning, she got ready and ran towards the elevator, and breathlessly approached the receptionist.

"Can I please see the security cameras? My dog escaped last night and since the security guard was sleeping, I had no answer from him," the doctor said worriedly as she fiddled with her bracelet.

"Sure, I guess. I just need to know his description and the time you think he left."

"He left at around nine o'clock in the night, and he is white, tan, and black. He is a border collie and has merle eyes."

The receptionist opened the previous footage that was taken at around nine o'clock.



Shreya Bansal is a sixth grader. She likes to spend time with her dog and to do fun activities such as baking once in a while. Her poems and stories have also been published in Scribbler Literary and Arts Magazine.

Continued on page 9

She played back the footage. Her eyes went wide. She played back the footage over and over again and then told the news to the owner.

“It seems to me that your dog is not in any of the footage,” she said, shocked at how a dog could ever manage to escape the security. Then she remembered the security guard.

The owner could never live without a dog, even though she got bit by a dog when she was five. She was a dog lover at heart and she could not live in despair for long, so she thought about another solution to finding her dog. She was going to track a car.

She turned around persistently and told the receptionist to go back to the security cameras and look at the footage from nine o’clock again. She rolled her eyes and slowly pulled up the footage on her computer monitor.

“Look for a navy blue Mercedes with a half-asleep person who looks almost dead!” she exclaimed sternly while staring the receptionist down the whole time. The screen was turned her way showing everything on the monitor. Soon, at 9:15, a blue car with a half-asleep person drove by. She took note of the license plate on a small piece of paper that was ripped off from a notebook. Walking to her car, she was thinking about where he was and what he was doing. He really was a chaotic dog and was high maintenance.

She drove to a facility where you can see who is the owner of a car just by putting in the license plate number. She went on one of the computers and searched for the license number, just to find the owner of Rover, the golden retriever that lives three doors down from their apartment. Almost jumping out of her chair, she got up and almost ran to her car. She drove all the way back to her apartment, came into the lobby elevator, and pressed the button at least twenty times. She ran down to room 840, Rover’s apartment, just three doors down from

her own. The door was already open, which was weird because Rover’s owner was a complete germaphobe. She swung the door open, shocked to find loads of pillow fluff and stuffing lying across the obnoxious blue and yellow carpet. In the fluff, there was a hint of a brown lump sticking out of the fluff that looked as if it were moving and stopped suddenly as she came closer. As she stuck her hands out to pick up the brown lump, it bolted out of the fluff to reveal a large brown dog, covered in white fuzz balls, running around the room at full speed, as if there were a power button in the dog.

“Rover!” she shouted sternly. Rover stopped in its tracks, with a smile, and stared at the treats in her hands. She slowly walked to the bedroom, seeing Rover’s owner on the carpet floor, staring at the ceiling blankly.

“Hi,” said Rover’s owner, peeking out of the corner of his eye. She looked more closely at him and realized something that was too coincidental.

“You are wearing the same robe as the person that was in the blue Mercedes when I found out my dog was missing!” she screamed.

“What do you mean? Your dog isn’t missing. I thought you dropped him off here!” He said as her dog came strutting into the bedroom with a black sock. He gave her the side eye, then strutted back to Rover to play with it. She ran over to her dog and picked him up. Before she left the apartment, she said a thank-you to Rover’s owner, then ran down the hallway and skidded to her own door. She fiddled with her keys and unlocked the door, putting her dog on the floor. He had a face of satisfaction and was in pure delight as she walked up the stairs of her bedroom. She dropped her laptop on her desk and purposely fell on her bed. She decided to pretend nothing happened and tell nobody and silently dozed off to sleep.

© 2023

Canoeing up Moose River

By Leonardo Encinas

Summer mornings in Alaska with my family were always my favorite, especially when we were about to embark on an adventure. Every summer my family and I go up to Alaska because my mom grew up there, and my grandparents built a cabin there. On this vacation, we decided we wanted to do something together as a family. My mom suggested canoeing, because she used to do it when she was younger, and she enjoyed it very much. In this story, you'll go on an adventure with me and my family as we go canoeing in Alaska.

We took the canoes off the back of the truck and loaded them into the water. It was strange how light they were compared to their size. My dad and I got in a canoe with me in the front, and my mom and brother in one with my brother in the front. Once we got in, we started upstream. My dad and I took a little while to adjust to the canoe, but my mom and brother were in sync.

We started off by going under a bridge where some fishermen were fishing off of. My dad greeted them by saying hi before one of the fishermen greeted us back. Then we continued up the river for a good ten minutes and saw a seaplane on the side of the river. Beyond the seaplane, we saw a golden retriever that was barking at us on a dock next to a house. Once we finished a quarter-mile straight part of the river, we started on a half-mile winding section.

Once we started the winding section, we saw a giant bald eagle with a wingspan of around eight feet fly onto the top of a tree. It was so majestic, but I am sad that we didn't take a picture. We paddled for a bit longer before stopping to eat in a clump of grass to stabilize ourselves while we ate. It was challenging to maneuver the food to everybody without tilting the canoes. We got out seven sandwiches and two oranges. We each ate one sandwich to start, along with oranges, and then I ate one extra sandwich, and my brother ate two extra. I was still pretty hungry, but once we finished eating we headed back downstream.



Leonardo Encinas is a seventh grader. His hobbies are playing video games, playing with his dogs, playing piano, and swimming. His writing can also be found in Scribbler Literary and Arts Magazine.

Continued on page 11

Continued from page 10

The way back downstream was much faster; even though the river was barely moving, it still felt a lot faster. Once completing the winding section, we saw how short the straight part was compared with the mile that we thought it was. Halfway back down the straight part, my dad and I started to get in sync and we were getting pretty fast.

My mom and brother returned to the ramp first and then my dad and I made it. At that point, we were all tired, so even though the canoes were light, it was still a bit of a struggle to get the canoes onto the trailer. Then we headed back to the rental place before going home.

Going canoeing in Alaska with my family was a great adventure. Throughout this experience, I learned to pack more food and to bring a waterproof camera. Even though we started off slow, overall this was a great experience with my family. I loved being outdoors all together as a family — because we don't often do stuff together outdoors. I am excited to go on more adventures soon.

© 2023

Home Alone: Kiara's Version

By Jasintha Saravanan

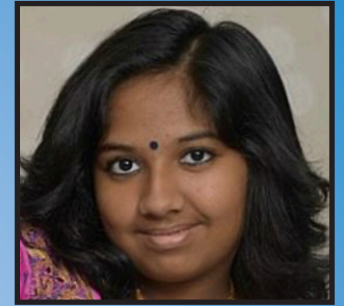
Kiara was a bright and curious eight-year-old girl who had always been surrounded by her loving family. But today was different. For the first time, she found herself at home alone while her parents and older siblings went out for a family event. Feeling a mix of excitement and nervousness, Kiara decided to make the most of her time and surprise her family with something special.

With a determined smile, Kiara set her sights on baking cookies. She had seen her mother do it countless times and wanted to prove that she could do it too. She scoured the kitchen for the necessary ingredients and tools. Feeling adventurous, she searched online for a new cookie recipe and found one that caught her eye. The recipe was called Pistachio Rose Cookies. They were a delightful combination of nutty pistachios and the delicate essence of rose. The cookies have a tender texture and a beautiful pale pink color. Topped with a whole pistachio. The recipe was also straightforward which helped Kiara a lot. The recipe also included a dip: Rosewater Cream Cheese. It combines creamy and tangy cream cheese with the delicate floral notes of rose water. It's a simple yet indulgent dip that elevates the cookie experience.

Kiara measured out the ingredients, following the recipe step by step. But as she mixed the dough, she realized she didn't have enough flour and sugar. Panic began to rise within her, but then she remembered Mrs. Langley, her kind-hearted neighbor who always lent a helping hand.

Without wasting any time, Kiara mustered up her courage and knocked on Mrs. Langley's door. The sweet elderly woman welcomed her with a warm smile and listened attentively as Kiara explained her predicament. Mrs. Langley gladly offered her some flour and sugar, pleased to assist the young girl in her baking adventure.

With the borrowed ingredients in hand, Kiara returned to her kitchen. As the cookies baked, filling the house with their mouth-watering aroma, Kiara took the opportunity to tidy up the kitchen meticulously. The clattering of dishes being washed, the rhythmic sweep of the broom, and the satisfying click of utensils finding their place formed a symphony of order and organization. Kiara's dedication to both the art of creating and



Jasintha Saravanan is a 7th grader. She finds joy in reading, writing, baking, taking photos, and listening to music.

Continued on page 13

maintaining a harmonious environment was evident in every action. The aromatic atmosphere and the sight of a pristine kitchen reflected her unwavering commitment and growing culinary prowess, leaving her with a satisfying sense of accomplishment.

Just as Kiara took the freshly baked cookies out of the oven, a sudden accident occurred. In her haste, she accidentally burned her finger on the hot tray and tears welled up in her eyes. Despite the pain, Kiara took a deep breath and wiped away her tears. She knew she had to be strong and carry on.

After calming herself down by chugging her hand in ice water, Kiara thoughtfully decorated a plate with a colorful napkin and arranged the cookies on it, ready to surprise her family. But just as she finished, she heard the sound of the front door opening. Her family had returned earlier than expected!

Panicked, Kiara quickly hid the plate of cookies and rushed to the living room to greet her family. They chatted about their day, unaware of the surprise waiting for them in the kitchen.

When the conversation started, Kiara seized the opportunity and excused herself, pretending to go to the bathroom. Sneakily, she retrieved the plate of cookies

and entered the room with a beaming smile. “Surprise!” she exclaimed, presenting her homemade treats.

Her family’s eyes widened with delight as they saw the delicious cookies. They praised Kiara’s baking skills and expressed how proud they were of her independence and determination.

“These look amazing, Kiara!” her mother exclaimed, reaching for a cookie.

“You’ve truly outdone yourself.” Her father nodded in agreement, a proud smile on his face. “I can’t believe our little chef has become so independent and skilled in the kitchen. We’re so proud of you, Kiara.”

Overwhelmed with happiness and a sense of accomplishment, Kiara beamed with pride. “Thank you, Mom and Dad,” she replied, her voice filled with genuine gratitude.

Kiara couldn’t help but feel a surge of joy as her family devoured the homemade cookies, savoring each bite. The room was filled with laughter and the warm scent of freshly baked treats.

With a contented sigh, Kiara joined her family, lounging in the joyous atmosphere. The evening was filled with shared stories, laughter, and a newfound appreciation for each other.

© 2023

3 Poems by Chaithra Yarlagadda

The Best Friend

In third grade, we met, the world so wide,
A kind girl by my side, my heart did swell
With each passing year, our friendship would glide
Through laughter and tears, our stories to tell

She's smart, you see, a beacon in the night
Guiding me through the shadows of my doubt
In every challenge, she'd shine so bright,
With wisdom beyond her years, there's no doubt

Her kindness like the ocean, never-ending
She's been my friend through all the highs and lows
In her, I found a heart that's so heartrending,
A friendship that forever, in my heart, glows

So here's to you, my best friend is you
In this sonnet, I share to all what's true

© 2023



Chaithra Yarlagadda is a freshman at Hamilton High School. Outside of school, Chaithra plays the piano (6 years), plays tennis (2 years), and participates in Indian classical dance (1 year). Her pastimes include reading books or writing. Chaithra loves to write all types of poetry, including songs, and fictional short stories. She loves volunteer work, and is even in various volunteering clubs in her school. Though she is not 100% sure about what she wants to pursue as her career, she is currently aiming toward business management and marketing.

Staircase

Twirling and twirling
It never seemed to stop
Like I'm going in circles
But instead a staircase

Each step is a step
In the right direction
And at my destination
Death awaits

But as of now
I am still stepping
One by one
Making my way

I think I made the end
But instead took a wrong turn
And retrace my steps
To the bottom of the staircase

Filling me with frustration
Stress and anger
Not giving me a break
Or a happily ever after

I am forced to work
Or else I die
Without a good life
I will say bye

Continued on page 16

Continued from page 15

As much as I regret
As much as I cry
Life seems like the staircase
Forcing me to take a step

And if I don't
I am at my destination
I have nowhere to go
Except away from the staircase

© 2023

The Murderous Lollipop

The bright morning sun
Aims its heat toward me
At the age of nine
I was skipping happily

I saw a lollipop
It was on the ground.
then everything turned black
And there was not a single sound.

I went home to my mom,
Asked for some sweets
She said no to me
And told me to take a seat

At the dining table
I did not talk to her
I wanted that lollipop
I must get it back

I stopped eating immediately
And grabbed all my stuff
I ran out of the house
In search for the lollipop

Once I reached outside,
I found the lollipop lying on the floor
Quickly I grabbed the candy
And went ahead skipping home

Continued on page 18

When my mom saw the candy
She came in front of me
She gave me an angry expression
And asked me what I held

I told her “It’s a lollipop”
Steam was coming out of her ears
And suddenly, she smacked my arm
Forcing the lollipop to fly out of my hand

I screamed at her
Asked her why she hit me
She told me I was in danger
The lollipop could have killed me

I looked at the candy
Lying hopelessly on the floor
Could it really be
Trying to murder me

And after that poor day
Whenever I saw the killer
I would run away
Away from the lollipop.

© 2023

A Phase

By Shruthi Sajith

As most humans reach a point in their adolescent life, they go through what the world refers to as “a phase.” A point of rebellion in their life. A point where their hormones can’t handle the amount of vulnerability and loneliness they feel as they try to grasp onto some sort of affection without seeming like complete fools. A point where curiosity has left their body as they start to have to face and accept the harsh realities of the world awaiting them. Phrases such as “What do you want to be when you grow up?” change from a search of endless possibilities to the couple choices, from which they will have to select, no matter who they are or who they intend to become. At this time, there is no more choice in life, there is no more possibility; in fact the question itself, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” should be rephrased to, “Are you ready to live the life that was set for you when you grow up?” Though it may be mistaken that the sudden intense control and expectation implemented in your life is what instigates “the phase,” in reality it is the realization of this control and these expectations that have not only been placed since the beginning of your life but most likely even before it began.

My phase started similarly. Though I can’t quite remember my inciting incident, I can still remember the rising action. There was always an intense amount of hate put into every one of my actions. The things in my life that made me angry I could not control, so instead I took it out on everything else. The people that I loved the most in the world, I showed the most hostility towards. And soon events took a turn for the worse. The world was put on pause. Everyone and everything locked inside. The outside world seemed completely still yet the world living inside of each and every one of our minds was wrecked in havoc. And the people that you skillfully avoided talking to, to avoid arguments, are the ones you are now stuck with for every moment of every hour of every day. While being isolated physically from the rest of the world, I also found myself being isolated mentally, relying on sources of entertainment to provide fuel to my real everyday life. The worst part of going through “your phase” is believing your problem is never really big enough. Believing that there’s always someone out there that has it worse than you. Though in actuality a phase is not something you can blame on someone else, it is a natural path that everyone eventually heads to.



Shruthi Sajith is a sophomore in high school. She enjoys writing in different genres and styles of literature. She has been learning both Bharatanatyam and Mohinyattam dance for the last nine years. Along with dance, she loves music and participating in different community events.

Continued on page 20

However, I was not aware of this at the time, so I sat there engulfed in my own sadness and self-pity.

And I continued to live like that, eventually slowly ascending to my climax through what I imagine to be an old rickety escalator, the type you see in those black and white films or in museums. In a story mountain, the ones on the worksheets that your English teacher would make you fill out through elementary school, the climax is always portrayed as the tip of the mountain, the one event that is the turning point of your story. Despite those elementary lessons, in my understanding, a climax is a series of events that happen; they may happen one after another or maybe even all at once. My climax began at the end of the day. The day itself, I don't have the slightest idea about; the night, however, though foggy, still stays memorable. A room that didn't feel like mine, pin drop silence echoing throughout, with only the sound of a whirring ceiling fan that creaked every time it spun, the chaos and anxiousness in my head with my worries running around frantically. Me, cornered in the dark with only my thoughts to accompany me, a dangerous combination, particularly for those going through "a phase." A horrid feeling that starts from your head and travels down your spine. It spreads through your body and you feel paralyzed in your own guilt and selfishness, regretting every action and every decision you've ever made. This was the starting point for the many breakdowns to come. Some in isolation like on this particular night and some out in the open for the world to see. Despite where or when or what triggered them, each one of these moments were important to move beyond the hellhole I was torturing myself in. It was time to stop pitying and to start living.

The falling action happened much faster than the rising action. This is common for most things. Take hiking, for

example; going up is painful and miserable and you have to constantly remind yourself that you're almost there, but going down is much more alleviating and refreshing. It starts off with small changes, buying new furniture for your room: a bed, a desk. And slowly expands to making the bigger, more risky changes in life. In spite of that, it is important to make these jumps to move on and leave behind the once terrible moment in your life and safe keep it as a distant memory, a fever dream. And soon enough you'll find yourself at the resolution of "your phase."

The resolution, though often overlooked, is a vital part of any story. It is when you debrief the events and problems and solutions. And in my resolution I came to a new understanding of what it means to go through "a phase." Though we all are aware of the phase that we are told we go through in our teenage years, we neglect the idea that every period, every era of our life is a phase. In my early childhood, I loved Dora, it meant the world to me; the fact that my mom was never going to let me, a five-year-old, out of the house by myself with a talking backpack and a monkey devastated me. But now, that is simply a memory, just another phase that I went through and it passed. Even the things I have loved since birth till date I have changed my perceptions about. Every one of my favorite foods I have come to dislike; all of my once favorite outfits are now on some rack in some Goodwill. This story I just told you about, my rising action, and climax, and falling action, they will all occur again for some other completely different reason. And once I get over that, it will happen again and again, and so is the cycle of life. And with this ideology, I like to keep in mind two things. One, everything you enjoy now will go away later, so remember to be grateful for it. And two, all of the hardships you are going through right now will go away later, so persevere through them, because all of life is just "a phase."

© 2023

Cops and Robbers

By Nicolas Encinas

As the sun started setting, the triplets rushed in and out of the pantry and fridge, grabbing things by the handful and building a mountain of items. Hot dog buns, hot dogs, chips, condiments, dips, salsa, utensils, and drinks, all piled together on the granite countertop, getting ready for a party. We eventually organized everything inside and went outside to set up some coolers with ice and sodas next to a small foldable table around the fire pit to hold the ingredients for s'mores, and hot dogs, as well as condiments and other snacks like Oreos. Not long after, family members started arriving.

After everyone greeted each other, the younger cousins sprinted to the golf cart and started driving around the yard, gathering everyone to play their favorite game of cops and robbers. Being part of the game was an obligation because the aunts enforced the safety and supervision of their children onto me so they could enjoy themselves. Once everyone had been gathered, the kids made the teams. I was the cop, and they were all robbers. They gave me control of the golf cart as the cop and told me to close my eyes and count to sixty. I agreed and watched them run into the woods just as I began counting. 3... 2 ... 1 ...

I jumped off the golf cart and ran into the woods following the voices of two scared littles. I found two littles, the youngest of the group abandoned by the faster, slightly older kids, saying that they no longer wanted to be in the woods but couldn't get around the barbed wire fence that separated the woods and the property. We made it out and they ran to the fire pit, distracted by the idea of food and sugar. I made sure the adults were watching them as I ran back into the woods to find the rest of the cousins.

While running through the makeshift trails and getting eaten alive by mosquitoes, I found the shoe of one of the littles. Surprised that they had abandoned it, I picked it up and kept searching for them. Moments later, I heard voices and sounds of muffled laughter behind some bushes and tiptoed my way over there. As soon as they realized that I was nearby, they bolted out from behind the bushes, sprinted around the barbed



Nicolas Encinas is a junior in high school. His favorite subject is math. He is interested in running, swimming, and engineering, which is what he wants to study in college.

Continued on page 22

wire onto the property, and hijacked the golf cart. Before chasing them, I ran back to the fire pit to ensure the two littles who got scared were safe. I proceeded to chase down the golf cart before the kids crashed with their reckless driving. After a lengthy chase, I eventually caught up to them while they were flooring the gas and got them to stop the cart.

Exhausted and drenched in sweat from what felt like running a marathon, they exclaimed that they wanted to play another round. I reluctantly agreed because I couldn't think of another game or activity to occupy them all. The second round was the same as the first. I was the cop, they were all robbers, and the two littles got separated, scared, and couldn't get around the barbed wire. Someone lost something of theirs while running through the woods, and the golf cart was stolen by the cousins again. After getting the littles out of the woods and chasing down the golf cart for the second time, the group wanted to play another round, but I convinced them that it was too dark and distracted them with the prospect of food next to the fire where the adults were. Finally, I was able to catch my breath for more than two seconds.

At this time, the older cousins arrived with all sorts of sweets and snacks, from unique flavors of Oreos that I had never heard of to multicolored marshmallows and chips. Everyone swarmed the table in a frenzy to grab their favorite snack, tearing apart plastic grocery bags and other bits of packaging. It was like a tussle, seen in cartoons where limbs fly everywhere and random

sound effects pop out of the white cloud of movement. Within about thirty seconds, everyone seemed to settle down and one of the aunts emerged from the mayhem holding a lemon-flavored Oreo, practically shoving it down my throat because she wanted to get my opinion on her absolute favorite flavored Oreo. I assured her that it was great while I escaped my responsibility of the littles to go hang out with the older cousins.

We soon joined everyone else around the fire pit where our uncle had gone crazy, playing very odd music and dancing, looking like a bull in a rodeo while attempting to get others to join him. While doing this, he kept throwing more and more wood into the fire, until eventually we convinced him that there was plenty of wood to keep the fire burning. Once everyone sat down, we arranged ourselves in a circle and decided to play a few rounds of telephone. We laughed over and over as each round the answers kept getting more and more wild. After some time, sleepiness caught up to us, and we cleaned up a little and said our goodbyes.

Lying in bed, moments before finally falling asleep after this exciting, chaotic, and eventful night, I thought to myself how funny it was that perfectly disorderly situations can emerge from the smallest and most unassuming incidents. Playing cops and robbers turning into the rescue mission and intense, exhausting chase, cousins setting snacks on a table becoming a hunger games-like frenzy, and an uncle playing silly music and dancing while presenting it as his magnum opus.

© 2023

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, 2024, 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, 2024, 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 11 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Closed Saturday and Sunday.

Summer hours — Please call first!

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



IMAGINE WELLNESS CHIROPRACTIC CENTERS

Get the life you deserve
(623) 582-9851

Meet the staff of The Blue Guitar Jr. magazine



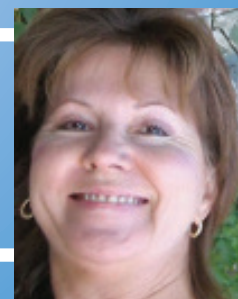
Elena Thornton, publisher: Founder and president of The Arizona Consortium for the Arts, Elena is an educator, artist and poet and lives in Phoenix. Reach her at info@artizona.org.

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 seven monthly newspapers and websites 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 Jr.: 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
2024!*

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