

CROSSCURRENTS

JAMS Literary Magazine



🧐 *2020 Digital Spring Edition* 🧐

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We have been publishing CrossCurrents at JAMS since 2007. This is our first digital issue and we are very proud of it. Enjoy!

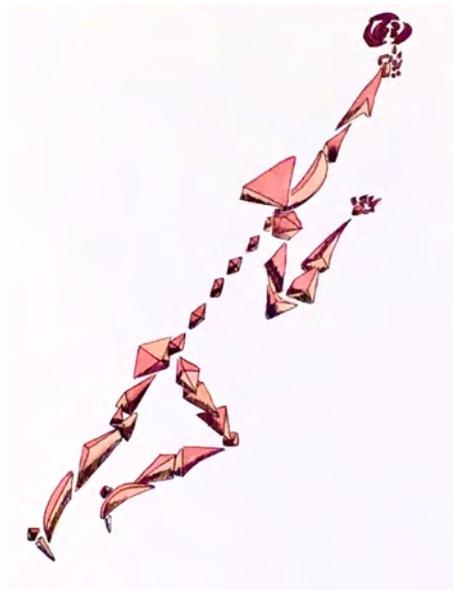
-Mr. Saling

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Ode to my Sketchbook

by Eric Lima

As I open the cover,
Revealed are the numerous pages filled with drawings of all shape and size,
Colored art sits next to still black and white pieces,
Doodles, full-pieces, rough drafts, even just abstract lines adorn the pages,
A sense of disorganization is given off,
But upon later inspection, it is an organized clutter,
Each drawing has a meaning, a purpose,
Each one created with a certain feeling at a certain time,
A simple, meaningless line may have been created due to anger, sadness, or even something else,
No, this isn't just a sketchbook, but an illustrated journal,
Even though on paper, drawings jump out of the page like a crowd of people trying to catch your attention, with each one trying to overpower another,
However, when the artists' thoughts are organized, magic occurs,
An entire page filled with one concentrated drawing,
Details cover every square inch; no line was not considered,
Matching a trees' branches, the sketchbook goes many directions,
Yet, they all are still firmly planted in the artist's vision,
And even when the pages run out, the imagination never will.



Diego Oberman

Messy Traditions by Ana Luiza Milk

In my family, having flour on your face is a sign of happiness. My paternal grandmother, my *Abuelita*, is the main chef of the family. She lives in San Antonio, Texas with my grandfather. My grandmother is probably the most gifted chef and baker I've ever met. She loves the kitchen, but from all the magnificent delights she's made, the most prized, anticipated treat is none other than the *alfajor*. It's always an honor to be able to eat my grandmother's *alfajores*. Maybe it's because even though she retired years ago from teaching, she still goes out to the Latin market to sell them. Or perhaps it's because our family has a secret recipe that makes the *alfajores* taste like no other dessert.

Today, however, is going to be special. Today is the day that I'm going to learn, for the first time ever, how to make *alfajores*. It's super exciting.

"Can you help me flour the table," she exclaims from the kitchen. I run over as fast as I can, eager to start. As she gathers different ingredients from the pantry and the fridge, I work on sprinkling flour over our workspace to keep the dough from sticking.

"*Abuelita*," grandmother, "I'm done with the table." She looks closely at the white powder on the table, as if there is some sort of code written between the clumps.

"Great job, let's start with the dough," she says while handing me gloves. As soon as I see them, I notice the gloves are nowhere near my size. I grab a rubber band and tie it around the loose area of my wrist.

"Let's start with this," she hands me a bag of what seems like another type of flour. I measure it out, then dump it in a mixing bowl. I add the rest of the ingredients listed on the page as she beats them up. One thing is certain, we make a pretty good team. She hands me the whisk so we can trade jobs.

Looking at the measuring cup, she tells me, "Don't mix too hard or you will spill it all over."

I should have listened, because the next thing I know, I whisk too hard, letting the powder fly into the air, getting ourselves full of flour!

"What did I tell you!" she exclaims between laughs.

"I'm so sorry," now I laugh even harder, realizing I've made her face as white as snow.

We settle down and set our attention to cutting the dough evenly with some cookie cutters. The next step will be to put them in the oven for a few hours, then let them sit for a while. After that, we will prepare the *dulce de leche*, so that later we can put it in between the cookies. Lastly, powdered sugar is to be drizzled on top. The entire process can take around 6-8 hours.

As she puts the cut out dough into the oven, she looks over to me and smiles. Although she doesn't say it, I know she's happy to have some company. My grandmother never has anyone to share her interest in cooking. She has two sons, and I'm her only granddaughter. I'm the only one in the family who she can pass the tradition down to. Even though my grandfather helps her out occasionally in the kitchen, I know that most of the time she works alone.

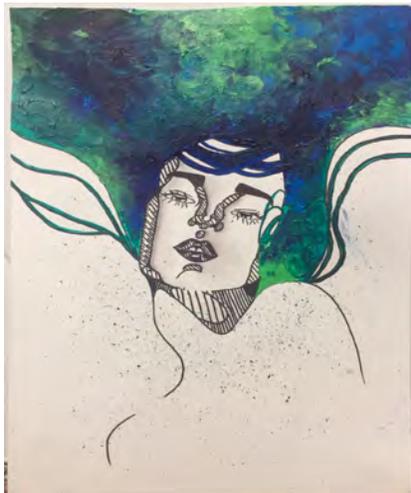
I look back to the cookies silently resting on the oven pan. "I'm glad I didn't find a way to mess the mix up."

We both stare at each other, and the next moment we burst into laughter. We laugh until it is physically impossible to continue. So instead we smile. This is a good day.

Ode to Nachos

By Angelina D'Alesandro

Oh Nacho
So layered
So easy
Your hotness and gooeyness
Your chips, imperfect triangles
The perfect amount hell to heaven
Your jalapenos so hot
It's like a fire in my mouth
But with the rain of sour cream
It cools you down
I can't help it
It's you I must eat
Your salsa so red
Your guacamole so green
Delicious golden cheese
Once a solid block, now drips golden
Your meat, so good
So seasoned, so rich
You melt my heart
And my stomach
The shade of fullness is upon us
But it is you I must finish
There lays a clean plate



Lia Levin

Ode to odes
by Ashley Crampton

i am in
my history class
the time sure
went by fast

time is like a fish
like a large wet trout
alright, what the heck am i
even talking about?

i should be writing a letter
about an expedition
i would start soon,
but i'm in no condition

instead, i waste my time here,
writing rhymes
this has happened
countless other times

i sit by my computer,
pretending to work
carefully fooling teachers
who constantly lurk

i'll do it later,
i always say
do I really mean it?
no, no way

well, that's not true
i eventually will
though the very next day
i say that still

it's never now,
always later
I guess you could call me..
a professional waiter

my paper cries out,
“oh please, start writing!”
i start to consider it,
it’s so exciting

i pick up my pen,
hold it in the air,
i think to myself,
wait, what’re the rules of solitaire?

i was ready to start
i was going to begin
but deep down inside,
deep within,

i knew it wouldn’t work
my mind starts to roam
oh, I know what i’ll do
i’ll finish it at home

when i get home
i check my mail,
i go on youtube,
watch “a rabbit eating kale”

one more video
i solemnly swear
but i secretly know
i am not going anywhere

the weekend comes
all too fast
i think i’ll do it
at long last

wait, it’s due on monday
i have time to spare
oh, well now it’s sunday
do i really care?

i have all day
not to worry

no reason to be in
such a big hurry

11:30 PM
what do I do?
can't say i'll start
that'd be untrue

11:59
the project is due!
but i really think i
have one more video to view

12:26
i click "submit"
though, it's a bit sloppy
i must admit

i look at the submission
it's not late?
oh, it's due *next* monday...
this must be fate!

i am overjoyed,
devoid of sorrow
oh, i have math homework
guess i'll do it tomorrow...



Makena Parker

Summer Vacation by Izabella Gonzalez

It all started in the summer around 12:00 a.m. Me and my family were having the best vacation ever in Mexico. We went to have fun and to get wet at a lake, pool, and hot tubs. We slept at several hotels and stayed there for three days.

The next morning, half of our family had left because they had jobs to get done so we all gave each other bear hugs and said goodbye. The only ones left were my mom, aunt, my two cousins, and me. We headed towards the water. Our hotel reservation was due so our parents went to find another available hotel. Meanwhile, me and my cousins decided to go into the pools. We saw that there were two different pools. One deep one and one shallow. At least that's what we thought.

We all followed each other down the pool's stairs. Angelica went first (oldest cousin but younger than me). She was paddling like a dog in the water. I assumed that she couldn't swim. I was the second one in. I freaked out.

"Ahhhhhh!" I screamed.

Crystal (younger cousin), didn't hear us scream in terror. She headed in too. I thought there was another stair but clearly I was wrong. I sank to the bottom of the pool which took long enough. It felt like hours. I was drowning. I didn't give up though. I found the ground and I took a huge jump. When my head was out I saw that Crystal was struggling to swim and so was Angelica. I, on the other hand, didn't want to die so I jumped on Angelica with so much fear without even knowing.

Angelica had found the staircase already but I had jumped on to her so her foot slipped and we both went down again. Furthermore, Crystal was laughing and drowning at the same time.

“Let go of me!” Angelica said.

I did as she wished. I had let go but once again, I was drowning. Crystal continued to laugh but she was practically drinking a gallon of pool water. After I had let go of Angelica, she had found the staircase again. She pulled me towards the surface and then Crystal. In conclusion, we learned a valuable lesson, never assume.



Isaac Feinberg

Ode to Dogs by Derek Napier

Excitement fills you as you open the door,
Barks fill your ears,
And you see it,
The thing that keeps you happy when you're sad,
The thing that annoys you but still makes you happy every day,
This thing is the wonderful dog,
Holding the thick fur in your arms,
Wagging tail slapping your leg,
Wet tongue licking you,
A smile fills your face,
You go outside,
It seems he's challenging you to a race,
He starts running and begins the chase,
He grabs a toy,
You throw it and watch him fill with joy,
He goes back upstairs and you follow,
In his mouth, you see a leash,
The snap connects it to his collar,
You go to the park and watch him bark at the geese,
As you keep walking he pulls your hand,
You look over and see another dog he wants to play with,
As you walk over they start to sniff and play,
You and the other owner conversate,
As you talk to each other you hear a growl,
You pull the dog back and tell him no,
He looks at the other dog with anger,
A strong tug and you walk him back home,
You open the door and unclip the leash,
He runs to his toy and starts to chew away,
He hears you pouring the food in your bowl and eats it all,
You go to sleep because it's late,
The next day you go to school,
As you come to the door the daily cycle of excitement hits you again.



Samantha Clark

Ode To Potato By Gracie Mason-Firth

Potato,
You have many traits,
Many flavors,
Potato,
From French Fries to potato chips,
You always find a way to satisfy my belly,
Potato,
You are an example of the saying,
“It's not the outside, it's the inside that matters,”
The way you are so crispy and squishy,
Potato,
You are my favorite crave,
No matter the season,
Like Summer,
Fall,
Winter,
Potato,
The way you light up the kitchen,
With your brown peeling,
And your rough texture,
Potato,
No matter the size,
Or taste,
You are still my potato,
Potato,
You make me feel,
Like I belong,
In my home,
Potato,
I hate to eat you,
You speak to me,
Like no one else does,
Potato.

A Small Act of Change

by Melanie Trujillo

After taking long and cramped taxi rides all over the city, the bumpy and non-cemented roads stop and my back and bottom stop aching for the first time since I got in the taxi. Although the body pain stopped, one thing didn't change. The hot weather continued just like the mosquitos kept sucking my blood until I had none left. The taxi dropped us off in between two short streets with just 10 small houses on each side. Our destination and the place that would change my life was just at the end of the street.

We, as in my sister, my 3 cousins, and my uncle-in-law, had a week in Oaxaca, Mexico. We went to visit, but mostly explore. That day we went to go visit my uncle's sister with her three kids. I had never met them, so I didn't know what to expect. When we got to their house, I was extremely surprised to see that their living room and kitchen were the size of my bathroom. I immediately feel a mixture of different emotions. Just like when you have a cold and go to a hospital and think that you are going to die and then see someone who can be in a wheelchair forever and may not use their legs again. That feeling makes you forget your problems and feel bad for thinking your life was "harder." As soon as I sit down this little 5 year old boy comes up to me. A wide smile spread across his face, happy to see someone in his house.

"Hola!" he greets my sister and I.

"Hola, cómo te llamas?" (Hi, what's your name?) my sister asked.

“ Me llamo Elliot, y ustedes?” (My name is Elliot, what about you guys?)

“Yo me llamo Melanie,” (My name is Melanie) I told him. “Y yo me llamo Brianna,” (and my name is Brianna) my sister informed the little boy whose smile never left his face. His two older siblings who are around my age came out as well. They greeted us and then went inside the room where the family of five slept together. The only one who stayed was Elliot. Even though it was his first time meeting us he acted like we had known each other for the longest time.

A few minutes later my oldest cousin who went on the trip invited all the kids to go buy something at the store down the street. When we entered the small shop we separated into small groups. My miniature group was with Diego, my cousin the same age as me and my favorite. We went to go look for snacks or something to eat. We got a bottle of Coke and a coconut popsicle. We kept on looking for more snacks because Diego and I felt that what we got was too little. While we were searching we stumbled against each of our older sisters (who also consider each other as their favorite cousin). They carried a bag of Hot Cheetos, a bottle of mango Arizona, and a small pack of Oreos. Both groups of 2 started looking for Elliot, his siblings and my older cousin. When we found them, all of them had 1 popsicle except Elliot. He was still deciding what he wanted. You could tell he was indecisive because his eyes wandered across the room filled with snacks.

“Que vas a querer?” (What do you want to get?)

“ Yo creo que esto.” (I think that I will get this) He stuck his hand into a glass jar and pulled out a small piece of gum.

“ Eso es todo?” (That’s all)

“Si cuando vengo con mi mama ella solo dice que le alcanza para comprar me uno.”

(Yes when my mom and I come she says that she can only afford to buy one piece) When he said that the group went silent. My sister and I looked at each other. We were both thinking the same thing. We knew that a piece of gum that small could only be worth 25 cents in the U.S, but that was still too much money for Elliot's family. I looked down at my hands filled with treats and put the soda, and the chips I had taken before back on the shelf. I only kept the popsicle. Diego saw me and did the same thing.

“I think I'm only going to keep the chips. That's all I need.” he said.

“Same, I will have probably thrown all that food away instead of letting someone who really needed it buy it,” I responded. I didn't regret putting my snacks back. I realized how my sister, my cousins and even myself aren't fulfilled with all that we had and then Elliot got a small piece of gum and he seemed the happiest boy alive.

“Puedes tomar un chicle de cada sabor y te puedo comprar un jugo,” (You can take one piece of gum of each flavor and then I can buy you a juice) my oldest cousin told Elliot. The little boy's eyes sparkled like when a dog gets a bone, or when someone opens a present on Christmas Day.

“Hey Julie. I have some extra money. I can buy Angel and Fernanda (Elliot's siblings) something too,” I let my cousin know.

“Sounds good,” she responded. When we made our purchase we headed back to Elliot's house. He ran and skipped with his juice in his hand and the gum he stored in his pocket. Angel and Fernanda ate there popsicle as everyone else.

“Hey Meli (how I call my sister) I think I know a goal I want to pursue in my life,” I told her.

“What is it?”

“I think I want to have a career in making people who have complicated lives have a second chance and thrive. So build schools for their education, houses so that they have something to call home, and food so that they don’t starve.”

“That sounds like a good plan, maybe we can work together one day,” she told me. I nodded and went back to walking with Diego.

Ever since that day, my idea of the future hasn’t changed. Not one bit, I keep learning more and more and I am positive that I will achieve those goals. It will make the people I help happy, but it will make me happier and proud of myself. We should all make a small act of change, it’s easy and we should try it.



Liv Nicholls

Ode to Plants
By Ana Luiza Milk

The sea of green,
Overflow our land,
They fill our world
With bursts of color.
Plants give us so much,
And yet we treat them with disrespect;
Flowers bloom to showcase their happiness,
Grass multiply to lighten our world,
And trees grow to represent patience,
And yet, like monsters,

We
Cut,
Damage,
Kill,
And
Destroy;
Flowers
Make me
Happy;
Trees
Give me
Peace,
Their small
Movements,
Are all so
Actively still.
Trees as
Tall as mountains
Flowers as
Bright as rainbows,
From oak trees
To rose bushes,
All plants deserve
Protection and love,

////////////////////// *For plants make this world* ////////////////////////



The Day My Dog Died

by

↔Leonel Escobar↔

In this memoir, I will be sharing the day my dog died. It all started in the morning, while I was playing on my WII U, then my aunt had called my sister to feed Chocolate because she hadn't had enough time to feed him because of work, so we agreed to feed him. My sister was taking a shower at the time so she told me to feed him, so I took out the dog food and started pouring it into the bowl, when I called his name there was no response. I waited a couple of minutes but nothing happened, so I decided to go look for him myself. As soon as I found him I was confused about why he hadn't moved from the spot he was on. I started shaking him and even brought his food to him, but he refused to eat.

In my mind I was just like, *"He probably isn't hungry, I'll leave him alone until lunchtime."* So I continued playing my game. Fast forward a couple of hours, my sister told me to feed him for lunch, and I said okay hoping that he would eat this time. I poured the bowl once again and called his name, like last time... no response, I started to worry so I called my sister and I told her what had happened. Just as confused as me, she attempted to feed him herself, but unfortunately, he just didn't eat, we decided to leave him alone again.

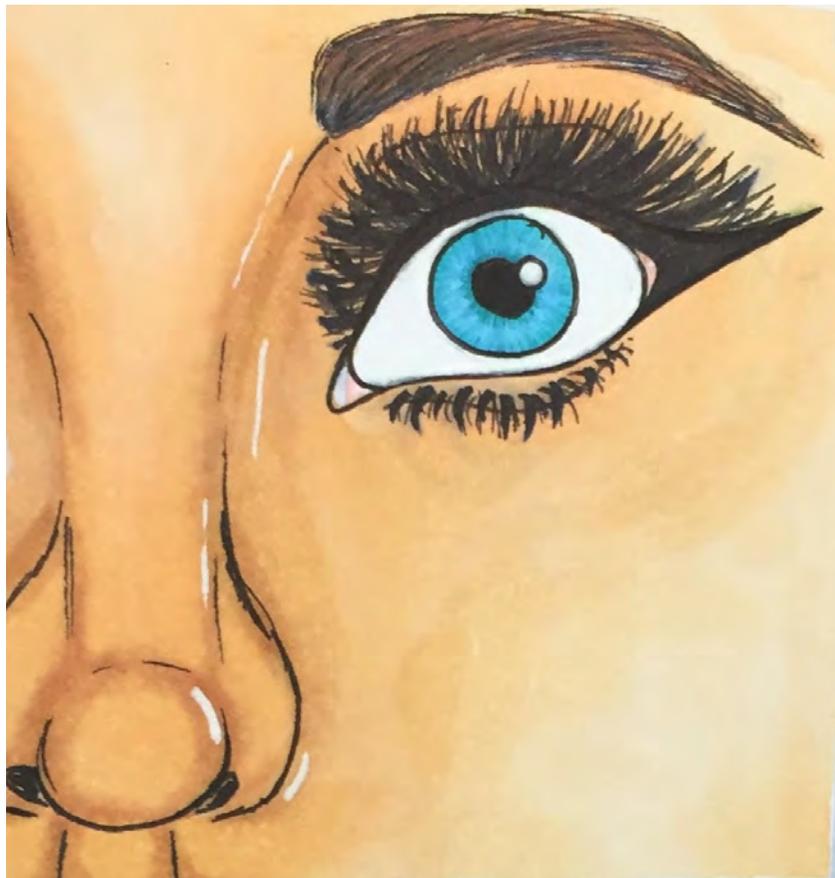
Day #2: The next day came in a heartbeat, once again my aunt had left early, and told us when to feed Chocolate. I went to the living room to go feed him. Once I had filled up his bowl, Chocolate was nowhere to be seen! Calm, I went to go look for him. I dashed around the building until I found him lying in the backyard. Confused, I shook him so he could wake up/get up, but he didn't move a muscle.

I called my sister again to see if she could do anything about the situation. She tried to get him up as well, but he wouldn't move. Out of breath, she told me to go get his food and see if he'll eat it where he was, so I went to go get it and we saw that he took 1 little lick of water then just completely ignored the food. Once he took a lick he stopped and continued lying down.

Day #3: Once I woke I got up and took a while to remember but then I remembered what had happened to Chocolate the day before and I raced to go look **EVERYWHERE** and I couldn't find him. I started worrying badly and I informed my sister about the situation, after about 40 minutes of searching we called my aunt and my uncle but neither of them answered, we gave up in stress and carried on with our day.

About 2 hours after our search my aunt and my cousin came back and what information they were about to tell us was heartbreaking. When she walked

through the door I immediately told her that Chocolate was nowhere to be seen, and she told me that she and my cousin went to the vet to see what was wrong with Chocolate, and it turns out that he was actually bleeding inside his stomach that is what was causing so much pain, so my aunt had to make a choice, either let him live **painfully** or **put him down** right now, and of course my aunt didn't want Chocolate to feel any more pain, so she chose what was right, and put him down. Once my aunt informed me what happened, I was filled with disbelief and started running around the building hoping all my life that they hid Chocolate for a prank, but sadly they were telling the truth. After that I cried for about 10 minutes while my sister couldn't imagine life without Chocolate. That was the day my dog died, truly a sad moment...



Gabriella Carrillo

The Soccer Ball

by Lucas Milk

The sun was glaring overhead. I yelled to my cousin, “pasa a bola,” telling him to pass me the ball. My little cousin and I were playing soccer with some local Brazilian kids from the area. I was visiting Brazil because I have family that lives there. We try and go every year but this year my family was having second thoughts. The country was currently having a political crisis and violence had become very common in the streets.

Even though my family had picked a safe hotel with extra security personnel, the violence was still there. The kids from around the area who had been playing soccer with me had showed me a car with holes ripped through the back windshield due to multiple rounds shot from a gun. The game kept going, we were winning by a lot since our team had a lot more experienced players.

“Do you want to switch the teams?” I said in Portuguese. However they always responded with “nao” refusing again and again.

As the game went on, the other team clearly began to get very frustrated. Temperatures kept rising from both sides until one of the boys from the other team took the game ball from my little cousin’s hands and ran away with it yelling in Portuguese, “I have the ball.”

My cousin was knocked back in shock and began to cry because the ball was of an expensive variety. While a bunch of the kids went after the boy with the ball in an attempt to recover it, I stayed with my cousin while trying to comfort him. During the game, some of the opposing team had been making fun of my cousin for not being able to stop some very simple

shots while he was playing goalie so he was already upset. When I finally managed to calm him down, one of the kids returned with my cousin's ball.

“Don't worry, he was just being a sore loser,” he said in Portuguese. My cousin stood up and took the ball from him, “Obrigado,” he said, thanking the boy and walking away with the ball.

Shortly after, we returned back to the hotel with my little cousin still holding my hand. I'm grateful in the end that we were able to recover the ball but sometimes I wonder if it would have been better off staying with the boy who stole it. In some of my travels, I have visited multiple shantytowns where we have met with the locals and helped them by giving them supplies and supporting the local schools. But for some reason I feel a special connection to those born with less. It seems to me that they are more happy than we of the middle class are. They can take in the simple joys of life and they do not need all the stuff we so desperately desire to be happy. So this is why I wonder if that boy had kept the ball. He may have had a lot more use of it than my cousin would have ever had.



Victoria Gonzalez

Ode To Lemonade

by Dylan Fanselow

Restaurants with red banners and gold
Lettering always seem so bold,
But besides this there are other
Common things you find
These luncheonettes also
Have a special drink,
One that's crisp but slightly yellow,
One that's bubbly or still,
One that is shared
Through all ages,
Lemonade,
Its sweet sour
Act is enough
To make your mouth
water with thirst,
Order at a fancy restaurant or bar
And the skilled bartender
Might add something special
Like a cutlass sticking out the side
Of a lemon clasped to the rim of the glass,
On a hot day on the beach or
Desert you can have some with ice
Without your drink tasting too
Watery,
If you had enough of one kind
There is plenty new to taste,
Pink, Blueberry, Honey
Are just a few,
If you're more of a hermit,
No worries
Lemonade is easy to make without
A store or eatery
Nearby,
By combining fresh squeezed lemons,
Touch of sugar,
Cup of water you have created your
Fresh summery drink to quench your
Deep dry thirst.



Isaac Feinberg

Ode to Cardboard

By Alexander Andrews

The roughness
of cardboard
in my hands
as possibilities
come into mind.

Sadly, I must destroy its perfectness
to make
my dreams become reality.

A cube
turned into
a helmet,
a rectangle
formed into a sword
All this potential
from a
simple piece of cardboard.
Like a savior,
coming to
help me
when I need
them most.
Excitement,
when a little cardboard box
arrives at your doorstep
with the item, you've been waiting for.
From dinosaurs
to battle-droids,
the decision
is up to you.
A prototype
of a chair
you want to build,
everything you
can possibly imagine can come from
one of
the most
overlooked items,
Cardboard.
When a package arrives in the mail,
we take the item
and dispose of
the box,
but why do this
when you can

simply use it
to store
your bits and bobs.
To hold up a
wobbly table
to cover a
hole in the wall.
A magnificent, recyclable, and
Cheap material,
with this,
you can't go wrong
so why don't we use it more often?
That has always confused me
I guess people just want a quicker solution.
When I see cardboard, it is like
it is asking me, "Alexander, please make use of me,
don't let
me go to waste,"
and I listen.



My Magical Adventure to Michigan

By Molly Brady

Once upon a time, in a land not that far away, I woke up to the “quiet, gentle vibrations” of my alarm. After 2 years of feeling my watch wake me up, I’ve learned to hate it. I peered down from the top of my bunk bed and looked at the clock, which was glowing a sickly neon blue: 4:00 am. Much too early to wake up. I climbed down from my bed, careful not to wake my brother up, a failed mission.

“Hello,” my brother whispered.

“Hi,” I responded, my voice scratchy from not talking since the day before. I clambered around in the dark, in search of the clothes I set out yesterday. After I knocked each and every single one of my belongings down onto the floor, I found them.

“I guess I’ll see you in a week,” I said, hugging my brother. I got dressed and headed downstairs. Today was a big day.

“Come on Mom! Let’s go!” I whisper-shouted. One thing to know about me is that I hate being late, especially for an event as important as this. We hopped into the Uber and started the series of awful awkward conversations that come included, free of charge, every time you rideshare.

“Why would an Uber driver be up this early?” I thought to myself. Whatever reasons they had, it didn’t really matter. The only thing that really mattered was that we got to the airport on time.

“Are you sure that this is the right line?” I asked my mom for the hundredth time. While standing in the never ending line, I was able to come up with a long list of things that could go wrong:

1. *I am in the wrong line.*
2. *I am late for my flight, so I miss it.*
3. *I go on the wrong flight and I get stuck in the middle of nowhere.*
4. *My grandparents forget to pick me up.*
5. *Aliens come and take over the world.*

You know, all of the usual worries one has.

“Next!” My train of thought was interrupted by the check-in lady at the counter.

“That’s us,” my mom whispered, and we hurried up.

I guess my mom was right. It turned out we were in the right line after all.

Why had I even gotten so stressed before? There was no use in thinking about all the things that could go wrong, it only made things harder.

After waiting in about 200,000,001 more lines and going on a *very* long flight, we made it. The beautiful city of Chicago. I glanced down at my wrist.

“Still here,” I thought to myself. The “unaccompanied minor” bracelet on my wrist definitely made me stick out like a sore thumb. I could feel everyone staring at it, judging me. Not actually, but to me, it seemed like it.

“I think we go this way,” my mom said, gesturing to her left.

“Okie doke!” I had no idea how to decipher the airport signs so I followed her blindly.

My stomach was starting to hurt. This felt like more than butterflies, maybe it was birds, or maybe dinosaurs (the ones that can fly, obviously), or maybe even airplanes. Ugh, just thinking of airplanes made me worried.

Then I saw it. The big green letters shone in my eyes like a sign. Starbucks, a.k.a. exactly what I needed right then. Yes, I said needed. No, I'm not a Starbucks-addicted teenager... totally... yup, not at all...

"Mom, look! Starbucks!" I said.

"Oh, cool," she responded.

"What time is it?"

"3:57, why?"

"When's my flight again?"

"4:15, why?"

"Can we go to Starbucks?"

Maybe it was because the Starbucks was only like 30 seconds away from my terminal, or maybe it was because she wasn't going to see me for a week, but my mom responded, "Ok."

"Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! You're the best mom ever!" I said, with a lot of enthusiasm. Or as much enthusiasm as you can have after waking up at 4:00 am and then flying all day.

After about 3 minutes in line, I started to get nervous. It was going very slowly. I was starting to regret going to Starbucks (even though Starbucks is the best thing ever). I peeked at my terminal. Still not very many people. We should totally be 100%, perfectly fine. Totally... yup... totally fine...

Guess what? We were fine! Totally, perfectly, 100% fine. Especially when I was able to get a Pink Drink. Not that I'm addicted or anything...

Why had I even gotten so stressed before? There was no use in being nervous, it only made things harder.

"Hi, this is my daughter. She is going to be flying as an unaccompanied minor," my mom explained to the flight attendant.

"Ah, a U.M. You will be staying with Sarah the whole flight." She pointed to another flight attendant who I assumed must be Sarah. "Would you like to board first or last?"

Who knew how tough that simple question would be? I had no idea. *Did I want to go first? Would I rather go last?* At this point my stress levels were pretty high, and they were only going up. *What if I choose the wrong thing? What if Sarah is going to get mad at me for my choice? What if...* The lady was looking at me, waiting for an answer. I had to think quickly.

"Um, first I guess..."

She replied, "Ok, perfect." Oh good, perfect. "You can head up in a couple of minutes," she said, smiling. I was starting to feel better. Why had I even gotten so stressed before? There was no use in getting really worried, it only made things harder.

"Goodbye Molly, I love you," my mom said, and she leaned in for a hug. I hugged her tightly. This was the last time I was going to see her in a week.

"Goodbye," I whispered into her shoulder. *Don't cry, don't cry, don't cry...*

"Are you Molly?" It was Sarah.

"Yeah." Was my voice always this quiet?

"We are going to go in now, you can follow me."

“Ok,” I shuffled behind her. This was it, the big moment. My first time flying alone.

“Make sure you don’t leave without telling me,” Sarah said. “A little boy did that to us yesterday and we were all very worried,” she said with a little laugh even though she didn’t seem to think it was that funny. I made a mental note: *don’t leave until Sarah tells you to.*

“So why are you flying to Michigan?”

“I’m visiting my grandparents and two of my cousins,” I responded. I didn’t realize until now how excited I was. Before I was so worried, but now I was just eager to see everyone.

Long story short, I flew from Chicago to Michigan making awkward conversation with Sarah, except when she fell asleep.

Vroooooom! Pppssshhhhh!

“Ladies and gentlemen, this is your captain speaking. We have arrived in Michigan. The weather is...” said the captain from the loudspeaker.

“So I just wait here?” I asked Sarah.

“Yeah,” she responded. “He can lead you out.” Sarah pointed to another flight attendant a couple rows ahead of us.

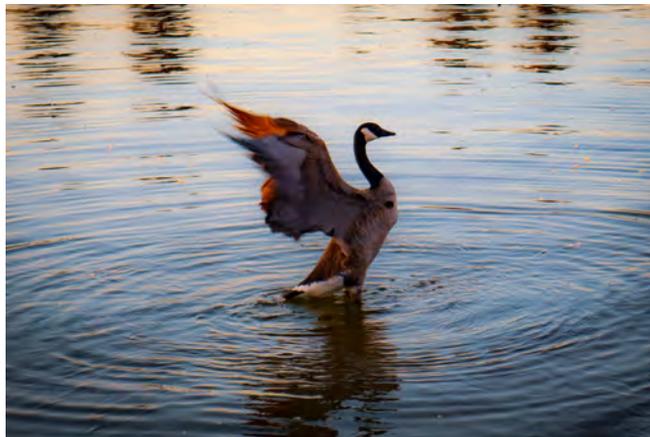
“Ok.”

After literally *everyone* got off the flight, it was time. The flight attendant led me out and in the distance I saw three figures. They weren’t just figures, I knew these people. Grandpa, Ben (my cousin), and Brady (my other cousin), were standing there waiting for me.

Why had I even gotten so stressed before? Yeah, you know...

Ode to a Pencil by Grace Houari

Oh pencil,
How you always help me work,
And write the answers
Even when my head hurts
Gliding across the page like slippery snow
You make school as easy as A.B.C.
Your writing on the page is crystal clear
When I sharpen you, you get as sharp as a razor
As a ring on my finger, you're a perfect fit
Ready to transfer all my thoughts
To desk
Paper
Or wall
Rubbery on one side to erase my mistakes
Pencil, oh pencil
Never leave this place
When I put you to sleep in my pencil case
You go party with the pens and highlighters
Unless you go rest until the next



Isaac Feinberg

Ode to Pizza
by Manuel Castagna

The night was cold but from the
Distance the delicious smell of
Pizza cooking was luring. Its
mouthwatering crust was thick
and plump. The flavorful tomato
sauce was as red as a red Ferrari.
Its cheese was melted and was unrolled
On top of the tomato sauce.
The juicy pepperoni a true ingredient that
could not be forgotten. Last but not least the last ingredient
that gave the pizza the finishing touch was
of course the oregano. And now the pizza was
finally complete, you could almost smell the
happiness that the pizza would make you feel
once you took the first juicy bite, and that first bite
would be engraved in history for the rest of eternity.
From that day on that legendary pizza was known
as the best pizza ever made on the face of the planet
earth, known for its taste and juiciness.



Angelina Gandara

The Document
Filled with grammatical errors,
Period 2,
English Class,
Students Silent
In their assigned seats
They fear
Their documents
Run Wild
With
Errors,
In
The Tools Window
The first button down
The Spell-Check document sits
The Archangel of English Papers
The Savior of Period 2
Control-Alt-X
The Window Opens
The Brilliant Bright Blue Button
Pressed Again
And Again
And Again
And Again
And Again
Correcting Any and All Errors
And the Document
Once Full to the Brim
With Grammatical Errors
And Misspelled Words
Is Clean.
The Teacher
Believing his Student Smart
Grades The Document
And Finds

Not a Single Error
Throughout the Page
He Smiles
He Believes His Work Done
He Grades The Student
The Highest Grade
An 'A'
The Student Smiles
Content with His Work
Content with His Grade
Content in his Class
And thanks
Spell Check

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Isaac Feinberg