

StoneSoup



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VOLUME 50 / ISSUE 1

StoneSoup

Writing and art by kids, for kids

Editor's Note

The stories in this issue (one of which is a play!) span a range of styles and subjects—from an old-fashioned gothic ghost story to a political allegory that helps us better understand our own politically divided times, a war veteran reminiscing on a lost friend, and the brave revolutionary uprisings of the Arab Spring. But what unites these pieces is their focus on friendship and connection.

Friends lift us up personally and, on a broader level, social ties between people—our community—is what enables political movements and social change to happen. The pandemic has been so difficult in large part because it cut off those ties. Yes, many of us were FaceTiming and Zooming with friends and family, but we lost all those other moments for random connection—the stranger who smiles at us in a coffee shop, the shared joke, the pleasantries exchanged in the park. At first, everyone became suspect, making the idea of community seem like a memory.

After reading this issue, I hope you'll be motivated to pick up a brush or a pen and create something that captures the vital necessity of friendship, or community more broadly.

Happy reading!



On the cover:
Antarctica (Oil pastel)
Leticia Cheng, 8
San Jose, CA

Editor in Chief
Emma Wood

Director
William Rubel

Managing Editor
Jane Levi

Design
Joe Ewart

Blog Editor
Caleb Berg

Customer Service
Tayleigh Greene

Special Projects
Sarah Ainsworth

Refugee Project & Book Club
Laura Moran

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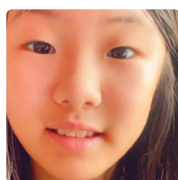
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Fire and Water (iPad Air 4)
Cathy Jiang, 11
Portland, OR

Up on the Roof

Violet lives in the Divided States of America, a country split between the Purple and Green People



By Harper Fortgang, 13
San Francisco, CA

“Who’s there?” I call into the empty blackness, a chill running down my spine. I watch as a black cat leaps past me and around a corner, disappearing into the darkness. I exhale a sigh of relief and try to convince myself, yet again, there is nothing to fear. I begin walking, squeezing the strap of my satchel filled with documents like a four-year-old clinging to her mother’s hand. I dart across the street, heading toward a haunted-looking building with decaying red trim.

Delivering business documents in the Forbidden Strip is dangerous, especially for a thirteen-year-old Purple girl like me. My parents would have never let me come here, but we are struggling for money, so I became a business courier. The Forbidden Strip is part of the Divided States of America, which consists of three separate lands. I hail from the West, a land solely for the Purple People, and the Green People occupy the East. My parents tell me the West is far superior and our brilliant shade of lavender should remain separate from the East’s pale-green skin.

We believe in individual

achievement and preserving traditions while the East advocates a new direction, putting the government’s interests ahead of citizens’ needs. I am told that the people from the East look down on us and we have a long history of conflict, causing mistrust and fear. Between both lands lies the Forbidden Strip, where people from the West and East choose to live together. I have heard terrible rumors about the people who live here. However, important documents still need to be transferred from the West, even if we are separate territories. So, I must skulk through the neighborhoods of the Forbidden Strip delivering documents, afraid of every shadow I see.

I am still jumpy as I walk toward the train station to return home when I notice a tall figure with a similar satchel tucked under his arm rapidly approaching on the horizon. He must be another courier arriving from the train station, but is he from the West or East? And is he dangerous? I glance around the street for places to hide—an odorous garbage bin,

a rickety wooden stairwell, an abandoned couch.

When I look up again, the figure is staring straight at me. I am no longer a courier, but a deer caught in headlights. I take inventory of my feeble weapons: my satchel strap, shoelace, and a hair elastic. I feel the breeze from the figure's coat as we walk past each other, and I continue toward the train station without looking back at him.

Just when I think I'm a safe distance away, I hear a deep voice yelling, "Are you Violet, the courier from the West?"

My mind is racing: I could pretend that I am not her or ignore the stranger and continue to the train station. He walks closer and grabs my hand. As his flashlight dances across my skin, it reveals a deep purple—the color of a field of violets in spring: "Well, you sure are purple. Purple as they get, and you have the right courier satchel. There was a mudslide on the train tracks and they're halting all travel until it's cleared. You will have to stay in the Forbidden Strip for another day."

The light moves across his hand as he readjusts his satchel, causing me to gasp. His skin is bright green, the color of freshly mown grass. He must be from the East. I blink and look again, but he turns off the flashlight and I cannot see his skin anymore. He bids me farewell, though I am too distracted to thank him.

I touched his skin. I talked to him. And he was green.

I run and run until I am out of breath to distance myself as much as possible. As my lungs recover

and my body evaporates its layer of salty sweat, I remember the man's green hand. I think about his message and don't know whether to trust him. Maybe the tricky Green People caused the mudslide. I recall now that I never heard the 3 a.m. train whistle: maybe there really was a mudslide.

I stare at the empty streets of the Forbidden Strip, wishing they would transport me back to the familiar streets of the West. I feel utterly lost. A tear slips from my eye. I look up at the sky and take big gulps of fresh air. The bright, glittery stars are beginning to fade into the pale-blue morning light, and the sun is peeking up from behind the buildings. I don't have time to decide whether the Green man's message is true. The glow of a new morning is spreading across the Forbidden Strip. If I can't return home, I need to find a place to hide.

I awake to the sounds of feet thumping below me and little voices begging for a pancake breakfast. For a blissful moment, I am convinced that I am lying in my own comfortable bed back in the West and these are my two younger siblings, Iris and Mauve. I am the last one up, probably exhausted from my adventure in the Forbidden Strip. I roll onto my side and open my eyes. Instead of finding my purple wall, I see a cobweb-filled ceiling, a dusty mattress, and an attic stuffed with old bicycles, worn chairs, and dusty paintings. The moment of bliss slips away as I remember my current situation.

Earlier, I'd wandered through the streets in pursuit of a place to hide.

What horrible plan are they devising? Are they triggering a war to force us to adopt their views?

After careful searching and several close-up encounters with squirrels, I discovered a fire escape leading to an attic. Fatigued, I collapsed onto a tattered mattress and pulled something fuzzy over my body—was it a carpet or an old couch cover? I couldn't tell, but promptly fell asleep.

My thoughts return to the animated voices below me. I didn't know that people from the Forbidden Strip also ate pancakes. Suddenly, I am struck by homesickness: this family reminds me of my own. Despite stark differences between the West and Forbidden Strip, we also seem to share at least one similarity.

This, of course, does not diminish the fact that people from the Forbidden Strip are dangerous and I must remain hidden. While this family may seem friendly, they could ascend the stairs at any moment, catching me like a thief. They might imprison me in this attic, brainwashing me with their views. Quietly, I begin creating a hiding place out of chairs and blankets. I press my ear against the floor and hear the family's continuing conversation.

At first I only hear scattered words like "maple syrup," "West," and "East." A few minutes later, their voices erupt in a heated debate:

"But we belong. We can't keep yielding because we're afraid of conflict."

"You don't understand! If we start a conflict, our people will be destroyed!"

"It is time to stand up. We need to

spread our way of life."

My ears perk up. What horrible plan are they devising? Are they triggering a war to force us to adopt their views?

A plate clanks and a chair is pushed back with annoyance: "Will you two just stop fighting?"

"We're only working out important issues. These are serious conflicts that we need to discuss, and we have different opinions."

"The two of you started fighting and ruined breakfast!"

A pair of feet storms up the stairs. They ascend the first flight and stomp down the hallway. Then, they climb the second flight. I expect them to stop walking. Instead, they continue moving toward the attic. My breath quickens and I sit up from my eavesdropping position.

Thump. Thump. Thump.

The steps get closer and closer, louder and louder.

Thump. Thump. Thump.

The door across the attic creaks open and someone grabs a flashlight. I feel a wave of panic—they are sure to notice me now. I hold my breath, cross my fingers, and stay completely still as a sense of defenselessness washes over me.

Thump. Thump. Thump.

Time has suddenly slowed down, and every second is stretched into hours. Finally, they stop in front of me and whip back the blanket. The light flashes across the corner of the attic and settles on my face.

“Hi.” The blanket reveals a tall girl peering over me with a surprised expression. “I’m Unum.”

She smiles warmly and extends a hand. A surprising greyish-brown hand—a mix of purple and green. I blink, confused. *Isn’t she supposed to scream and call her parents?* She stands before me with a playful, questioning look. “And you would be?”

“I’m . . . I’m V-Violet,” I stutter.

Unum’s hand lingers in front of me. She wants me to shake it. But she is not Purple. The image of my hand touching the green skin of the man whirls through my mind again and I can’t imagine my fingers touching her even darker complexion. “Are you gonna shake my hand or not?”

“Sorry . . . I . . .” I struggle for words. I hesitate to trust her or reveal any more of my identity, but I don’t have a choice because she reaches forward and gives my hand a welcoming shake.

“How did you end up here in my attic?” Unum asks.

She jumps up from the corner and moves to the other side of the attic.

“Oh, and don’t mind my parents arguing. Sorry if you heard that.”

I have no clue what to say.

“Don’t worry if you are shy. I was shy when I first came here as well. Just follow me. I’m heading up to the roof to get some air.”

Following Unum onto the roof of a three-story building is the last thing I want to do, but her amiable personality draws me in. She turns and opens the window with a loud shove, climbing onto the fire escape and up on the roof. That explains why the window had been unlocked

when I slipped into the attic earlier this morning. She looks down at me from the ladder, her green hair with purple highlights blowing in the wind, reaching out a hand to pull me through the window.

“I hope you’re not afraid of heights!” she calls.

Fortunately I’m not, but I am afraid that she is going to push me off of the ladder. I have trouble maneuvering onto the roof, but she waits patiently for me as I transfer one limb at a time. She leads me across the roof to a little ledge where she keeps a woolen blanket, a messy stash of food, and a thick book.

“So, you come here often?” I ask, attempting to sound friendly.

“Oh yeah. Pretty much every day. It’s freeing to be above everything, isn’t it?”

For the first time, I look out from the brown-shingled roof and gaze down at the world below, seeing the Forbidden Strip in daylight. Everything looks miniature from this height. The rows of houses stretch in every direction. While one house is round and pale yellow, another is a beautiful stone mosaic. Purple, green, and greyish-brownish people dot the streets, along with a few cars and bicycles.

“It’s a nice change of view compared to the old musty attic,” jokes Unum.

“Yeah.” I force myself to laugh.

“Why are you here anyway? I’ve never heard of you before. Are you visiting from another part of the Forbidden Strip?”

Suddenly, my throat tightens. I’m not sure what to tell her, so I play

“Why should we even want to live together? We have different ways of life, and we are different colors. We simply don’t belong together.”

along: “Yeah. I’m from the northern part of the Forbidden Strip. I was supposed to take a train home.”

“Oh, and then the mudslide happened! I heard about that. Sorry.”

“Yup, the mudslide that must have been caused by the terrible Green People.” As my words hit Unum, her facial expression changes from cheery to quizzical.

“You’re kidding, right? It happened naturally; it occurs a fair amount around here. That sounds like the propaganda the Purple People are always spreading. If they actually talked to Green People, they would realize what is really happening.”

Suddenly, I don’t feel comfortable around Unum. I need to get off of this roof and away from her. I abruptly stand up and run across the roof.

“Wait!” cries Unum. “Where are you going?”

“Get away from me!” I scream. I find the fire escape and begin descending as quickly as I can. I should never have followed Unum. But she runs as quickly as I do, and we reach the ground at the same time. Catching my hand, she forces me to sit on the grass and looks me in the eye. I find myself holding the hand of someone as different from me as fire is from water.

“Violet, are you okay? What just happened?”

“How can you defend Green People? There’s no point in talking to them!” I shout.

“You must not be from the Forbidden Strip. Instead of fighting

with each other, Purple and Green People need to work together.”

“Just because you believe it, doesn’t mean you are right!” I counter.

“Well, I am right and people from the West are actually wrong!”

“Wow, you didn’t even listen to my perspective before saying that you’re right.”

Unum crosses her arms. “Okay, tell me everything you think about the Forbidden Strip—and I will tell you why you’re wrong.”

“You want to bring Purple and Green People here and force them to live with one another. I even overheard your parents plotting!”

“Partly true. Except, we only want to demonstrate that Green and Purple People can live peacefully together. We don’t want to force anyone to do anything.”

I fidget with the grass and decide to pose a tough question. “Why should we even want to live together? We have different ways of life, and we are different colors. We simply don’t belong together.”

“The color of my skin doesn’t change anything about me. Yes, we are sharply divided by our different political opinions, but why couldn’t we come together? Imagine the power we could create by working together.”

We are both silent for a minute before Unum continues: “I have a very different view from you, but I also realize that I’m giving you a lot to consider.”

I ponder Unum’s questions. *Is she telling me the truth? Why am I scared*

of her skin color? And if everything she says is true, why did I believe the negative stories about the Green People and the Forbidden Strip?

I think back to when I was younger and first learned that Green People lived in the Divided States of America when a neighbor reported a Green person sneaking around our street. I remember my fear as my mother told me to hide under my bed. *Were the Green People trying to break in and harm us? Was this the first step toward another war?* I learned to be afraid of the Green People and look down on those who lived in the Forbidden Strip. For thirteen years, I believed this was the truth and never questioned these assumptions. Yet here I was, face to face with Unum, who was once a little girl like me and whose parents had told her something completely different.

Up on the roof, I realize that for my whole life I have been looking at the shingles. Only now do I look out at the rows of houses and recognize that I have been missing this view my whole life.

I stare out the window of the train as the fields speed by, blurring into shades of gold and green. A greyish-brown hand sticks up from under my seat and passes me a note. I scribble an answer and pass it back to the waiting hand.

I am bringing Unum home to meet my parents so that we can change their perspective about the Forbidden Strip and Green People. Stowed beneath my seat in a large duffle bag, she is concealed from the train

masters, who are under strict orders not to let any non-Purple People cross the border. We are playing a game where we tell each other something new about ourselves in each note. Unum told me that she originally lived in the East and moved to the Forbidden Strip because her parents wanted to live together even though her mother is Purple and her father is Green. The greyish-brown hand sticks up from under the seat once again. This time, it holds a round, copper object that glints the sun into my eyes.

"It's an old penny" she whispers. "I found it on the floor." I bring it closer to my eyes, examining the head of an old president on the front and a shield on the back. I squint as I try to decipher the string of words engraved on it.

"The first part looks like '*e pluribus*.' I remember learning it means 'out of many' in Latin. Can you read the rest?" I ask, handing the penny back to Unum.

"Oh look! One of the words is '*unum*,' like my name. It means 'one.'"

"*E pluribus unum*. Out of many, one," we say in unison.

She hands me the penny and our hands briefly touch in a flash of colors. I hold it in my purple palm, watching the sun dance across my reflection in the window. Less than 24 hours ago, I had never touched a different-colored hand. I think about the insight Unum shared: the color of your skin doesn't change anything about you. While we are many different colors, as humans, we are one.

Before we know it, we have arrived in the West.

"Welcome home!" cries my mother, wrapping me in a big hug. "I heard about the mudslide. I'm glad you are safe and back in the West."

I walk inside our small house and feel the warm fingers of our fireplace reaching toward my body. I breathe in the smell of home. My mother brings me tea while my siblings run into the room.

"Hi, Iris," I say, patting her purple hair. "Oh, and hi, Mauve," I say as she climbs onto my back. My father walks into the room, his hands dirty from his job repairing cars. After nearly an hour of talking and laughing, I see a greyish-brown hand from outside the window and I secretly motion to Unum.

"Hey everyone, follow me." I guide my family outside, our shoes crunching across the brown grass. I ask them to climb up the fire escape to the roof.

"Look down at the shingles," I tell them. My family is visibly confused, but they walk behind me as I lead them across the roof. I ask them to sit down and hold hands.

"Alright, now let's look up from the roof," I say.

"Wow," exclaims Mauve.

"It feels like we're on top of the world!" shouts Iris.

"I don't think I've ever been up here before," observes my mother. "But it's a nice change of view." My hands are shaking. I am nervous about what will happen next.

"I have someone I would like you to meet," I announce in as confident a voice as I can muster. Unum peeks her head up from the top of the fire escape and says a friendly hello, just

like she did when we first met in her attic.

I look out at the rows of miniature houses below. Each one is painted a shade of purple, from indigo to lilac, and covered by a brown shingle roof. In the distance, I can see the small, run-down buildings become townhouses and modern skyscrapers. I also vividly remember the colorful buildings in the Forbidden Strip, the Green man's hand, and Unum's greyish-brownish complexion. Purple is pretty, but there are so many other beautiful colors too. I think I am starting to see outside of my skin.

I can also see the light of a new perspective and the possibility of change. Unum and I helped each other to see beyond our own views. Now we are challenging my family to change theirs. It will not be easy: I know that there are heated arguments and many questions ahead. But, if I can change my family's beliefs, others can change theirs too. *Is it possible that one day the Purple and Green People will work together and learn to trust each other? Could parts of the country find ways to unite?*

I toss the coin that Unum and I found on the train into the air. Perhaps there are more than just two sides to our country.

Dear Tom

A kid spends the school day writing a letter to their missing friend



By Bea Hertzmark, 10
Riverside, CT

Dear Tom,

You are not missing much. School is the same. I am supposed to be writing a poem about the fall and how magical it is, but poems just do not work for me. Ms. Soody said poems are magic falling from the sky. I disagree. Every time I think of a poem, the flashback hits me like a bee stinging my arm. I have to be quick and ice the sting.

Today we had PE. Everyone wants to play football. Why that game? I prefer baseball. You liked baseball too. Of course, no one cares about my opinions, so I don't say anything. Recess is not any better, except that we don't have to listen to anyone and we can just be ourselves. So, I stay by a tree and eat my lunch.

It starts to form again. The memory is so clear. The words are so precise. I couldn't shake this one. It kept staying. The lake. The swing. The letter.

The bell rings and I start to head inside. I didn't realize we were still doing poems. I hate poems. When will the day end? I have to begin a poem, so I'll stop writing.

I'm back from the worst poem I have ever written. Luckily, it's music

now. I love music—the sound of each instrument being played. The piano is my favorite. Remember when we used to play together? The keys going up and down. Music is only thirty minutes, so I don't have much time. Ms. Soody says we are the greatest class. I know she is just saying that and doesn't mean it. She says it to all her classes. Whenever Ms. Soody says something, she starts to clear her throat. Like a frog is blocking her airway. I am pulling at my jacket as I listen. It is loose on my right arm. It is Sarah's old jacket. I still like it anyway. Then it hits me: the jacket, the lake. I hate it.

I look at the clock. The minutes feel like hours. When I am bored, I think everything is hours. That is what my mom says.

It is math right now. I should be listening, but fractions are too easy. Ms. Soody does not know fractions are easy. So, I am sitting here writing to you. I wish you were here. I can still remember the day you left. How could I ever forget? The moment my head turned to the moment you read the letter. I could tell something was wrong.

**I look at the clock. The minutes feel like hours. When I am bored,
I think everything is hours.**

Hold on, I better listen. Ms. Soody
is saying something about free time.
That means more time to write.
Turns out free time is doing work you
did not finish. I've got science that I
haven't finished. I'll be back.

Water cycle. That is what we are
learning. I thought you would want to
know because science is your favorite
subject. I feel like there is a circle, but
half of it is missing because you are
not here.



Winter Wonderland (Acrylic)
 Shaivi Moparhi, 11
 Sugar Land, TX



Magnolias at Midnight (Acrylic)

Two Poems



By Avery DiBella, 10
Salem, NH

The Moon

The moon
Shines as bright
As the stars
In the glimmering
So glimmering
Night sky.
The moon
Soothes
Me
In my sleep.
The moon
Is soaking
With new
Dreams
That can
Be discovered.
The moon
Is too
Bright
That in the
Gorgeous
Night
I dream about
The moon.

The moon
Howls
And howls
Like my dog
Because
The moon
Is the best
Pet
You could ever
Have.
The moon
Feels like
My pillow
When I myself
Am
Sound asleep.

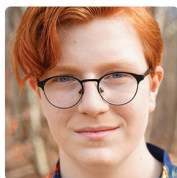
Snow

Snow
Is pretty
Like a lilac
Blooming.
It's falling
Like a skydiver,
Except from clouds.
It's melting
Like ice cream.
It's gone
Like a sad,
Sad song.
But someday,
It will be falling from the sky.
Soon.
In winter.
It does evaporate,
After all.



Mirrored (iPhone 11 Pro)
Sabrina Lu, 12
Ashburn, VA

Two Poems



By Rainer Pasca, 14
Bay Shore, NY

I Fall Into Snow

and hit ground.
I stare at tree.
It stares back green. (Come) *LOOK!*
Kite is peeking at the sky.
I open the package. (It is the present.)
I feel the now again.
My legs are hot—
doesn't matter. Can you
find tree? Sky crystal kisses me.
Snow is moving under my feet
like a whisper. I soar like
lights pushing out from you.
I can't tell; world is moving so slowly,
I think I am flying. I move my head
from side to side
and go back in.

One Day a Blizzard Came

I live in a snow globe.
A little lamp shines in on me.

I talk to the lamp,
maybe it's lonely. A door

opens. My brain
is full of water, but I am

not alone.
Johnni, Adrian and Oliver are here.

Johnni says,
Look out, everyone!

It's a blizzard.
Oliver counts five pieces

of snow on his nose and Adrian jumps
like glitter. Everyone stares

for a second.
Then, their lungs remember

to breathe

Two Poems



By Amity Doyle, 11
Katonah, NY

Endless Months

January

January-cold winter air swoops through the chimney but can't
blow out the fire

February

Bundled up in your house you lay surrounded
by your needs of warmth
No one can cold you

March

March makes birds get ready to sing
It makes snow into grass
It makes a hundred nests built for birds
It makes winter to spring to summer to fall

April

Sing this poem in the showers
and dance around with the flowers which you're
delivering to Grandma

May

May the flowers start off
May the luck bloom from thou
May the warmth start on
In May

June

The swimming pool is filled with sunlight
warming the warm air
The breeze feels good, especially when you're
reading a book in the shade under a hickory tree

July

July is the sweet sticky sound calling the birds and
the humidity healing the trees with green

August

Hot, Hot, Hot, Hot

August's hot

September

The beginning of fall and the end of summer. Who
could ask for more.

October

Put on your hat, your cloak, your robe, we plead; fall
is in session

November

The harvest on the field looks up to the cold moon

December

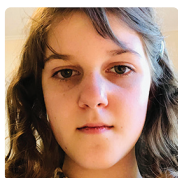
The December rain pains down
on the windowsills frozen as ice
cackle cackle cackle! It seems to laugh
No snow today, just frozen rain
Pitter patter
The rain spatters across the ground
Frost evolves and multiplies itself by the minute
As the atoms in the air turn to ice

Hammock

The kids they play around you

The dads just back from
work

They laze and gaze into
you, at the lovely
sway of the trees
of the trees,
of the lovely sway
of the trees



Town of Bright Holidays (iPhone 8)
 Anna Leventopoulos, 11
 Menlo Park, CA

Best Friends Forever

On a field trip to an old spooky castle, Lola meets a mysterious girl



By Charlotte Moore, 12
Brooklyn, NY

The castle loomed large and ominous above me. I heard the tour guide blabber on about some people who had died inside the castle, probably trying to make it appear scarier than it was—something about ghosts and people hearing screams when no one was there. I wasn't scared; I just didn't want to be there. All I wanted to do was go home and be with my cat, the only being I felt I could trust.

A feeling of loneliness washed over me as I watched the girls in the class huddling up and whispering about how creepy the castle was. The way the girls all had their secrets reminded me of my old best friend, Olivia. We used to be like that, always sharing inside jokes.

When we were in fifth grade we began drifting apart, but honestly, she started drifting away. Every time I wanted to hang out with her, she would push me aside. She stopped inviting me over, stopped calling me, and before I knew it, we weren't even eating lunch together. After that, I felt completely alone.

By then everyone else had already formed cliques.

The tour guide showed us through

the door. As soon as we walked in, I noticed how dim the castle was. Engraved details covered the walls. I watched a mouse scurry from one hole in the wall to another. There were so many different passageways.

The group paused to look at a painting of another one of those old rich guys from the 1800s. "Arthur Livingstone." He was the master of the castle, and he had been the seventh-most wealthy man in America at the time, the tour guide explained.

I didn't care.

My eyes wandered, looking for anything more interesting than this. It was then that I noticed a dark passageway with a black piece of tape blocking off the entrance, and a sign saying DO NOT ENTER.

Do you know that feeling when you are being drawn toward something even though you know it's wrong and every bone in your body is telling you not to do it, yet the pull feels stronger than you? That's what I was feeling right then. The doorway grabbed my attention and pulled me in, just like a spider grabs its prey. I couldn't look away. I stood there awkwardly staring at the hallway.

I should stop now, I told myself. Just turn around and go back to the class. But my feet kept walking.

One of the girls came up to me. "Staring off into space again?" She turned around and whispered to her friend, but loud enough so that I could hear: "Super weird."

I had to get away. I hated this tour. The hallway seemed inviting, like a kind of escape. Plus, it wasn't like anyone would notice I was gone. I wondered why it was closed off: was it just under repairs, or had something bad happened down there? It might sound weird, but in some ways I identified with the passage, separated from the rest of the castle, all alone.

Doorways lined the dark and dusty hallway. Cobwebs hung from the ceiling, almost concealed by the carvings. Before I knew it, I felt surrounded, trapped. Did I hear footsteps behind me? Was someone there? I turned my head to make sure no one was following me. I took a deep breath and kept walking. The hallway was becoming more ominous. I felt the urge to scream to hear my echo, but I didn't. Shivers ran down my spine as I made my way through the darkness.

I should stop now, I told myself. Just turn around and go back to the class. But my feet kept walking.

I didn't want to admit to myself that I was scared, but I noticed I was shaking. It felt almost as though I was at war with myself and being pulled in two different directions. Part of me wanted to turn around and go back to the tour, but the other part of me wanted to keep going.

I wondered what this passage

led to, and what it had been used for back in the day. I imagined a servant girl walking through here holding a duster and stopping at one of the bookcases nailed to the wall to dust off shelves.

This hallway reminded me of when I was little and my family would drive through a tunnel. I would feel that the tunnel went on forever. I would ask my parents over and over how much longer, but they would brush off the questions and tell me we were almost there. That's what this passage felt like, except no one was there to assure me that everything was going to be okay.

Looking ahead, a door caught my eye; it seemed to be glowing. I fastened my eyes shut and reminded myself that it was just a door. When I opened my eyes it still seemed to be glowing. Was I going crazy?

I walked toward it and noticed the dark-brown wood. It was curved at the top and covered with an immense amount of detail, swirls upon swirls tumbling on top of each other and making it hard to focus on one part; the swirls were intertwined, resembling vines or knots of messy hair strewn together.

I wondered what was behind the door. Did it lead somewhere else? I imagined walking inside. Maybe I would find some stairs that led to a series of underground tunnels? Walking away seemed out of the question—I had to take one quick look. It was different from the other doors: more intricate, more

menacing. I was fascinated. My eyes searched for a doorknob. Instead, there was an old-fashioned door knocker. Every creak of the door made me flinch. My stomach was in knots.

As I pulled open the door, I took a step back and realized what a ridiculous idea this had been. Did I think I would find something in here? But as soon as I stepped back, I wanted to step forward again. It was the weirdest sensation—it was as if I couldn't walk away; the force was too strong. The door creaked, gradually revealing more and more of the room.

It was just a closet. A bookcase stood nailed to the wall next to a trunk and a mirror. A map taped to the door caught my eye. Why would there be a map stored in a closet? The temperature must have dropped ten degrees as I stepped inside.

Just then, the door slammed and closed behind me. I heard the latch click before I realized what had happened. A ringing penetrated through my ears. I tried to scream, but nothing came out. I slammed my fists on the door until they started to turn red and hurt. I turned and sat down on the trunk. What had I done?

I stared at myself in the dusty mirror. My curly brown hair had fallen out of its ponytail. I wasn't the type of girl who really looked in the mirror. Other girls my age would spend hours just staring at and admiring themselves in the mirror. I didn't. I spent too much time inside my head to really focus on what I looked like. How people would see my personality seemed more important than what they would think about

which outfit I wore.

I peered back at the door. Maybe if I concentrated hard enough it would open? Nope. Already it felt like an hour had passed.

The latch clicked. Was someone coming? As I hurried to the door, I could feel my heart skip a beat. The door was thrown open. A servant girl around my age stood in the doorway. Dust and grime covered her face, and she wore a black blouse with a white apron. She looked surprisingly similar to the girl I'd imagined walking through the hallway dusting the bookcases.

Relief flooded over me. I was saved! "Thank you! I've been trapped here for at least an hour," I said.

She stepped inside and closed the door behind her. The latch clicked.

"What are you doing?" I asked. "Aren't you here to let me out?!" I ran up to the door and tried to open it, but it wouldn't budge. "What have you done?!"

She stared at me, her eyes unmoving. "How are you doing? My name is Jane," she said with a slight accent I couldn't identify.

I felt the anger swell up inside of me. I was suddenly sweating. It was infuriating how she had completely ignored my question. I took a long, deep breath and attempted to respond calmly. "It seems as though you hold the key. Would you mind letting me out of here?"

As I glanced back at her, I noticed that her eyes looked red and puffed. I realized she had been crying.

"Oh, don't be mad, Miss. You have

I didn't even know this girl. She seemed like she didn't belong here, like she was out of place—or time.

witnessed my sorrow. And you see, this is where I come when I am upset. No one can find me when I am here."

The anger in me subsided. I suddenly felt compassion toward her.

"If I ask you why you are upset, will you let me out?"

"Oh certainly, Miss—"

"My name is Lola," I interrupted.

"Well then, Lola. You see, no one ever uses this room, so I stole the key from my mother. My family takes care of this place. They are the caretakers. I come here when I am terribly lonely, as I am right now. I lost my dog a few weeks ago. He was my best friend. I miss him so much. Every time I look for him and come back alone, I come here and weep."

Caretakers? She must mean security.

"Oh, I'm sorry," I replied. "I have a cat. She is my best friend." I spoke calmly "Now, will you let me out with the key you have?"

There was a pause. A look of pleasure crossed over Jane's face.

"Would you . . . do you want to be my friend?" Although she appeared oblivious to the fact that I wanted to get out, something moved in me.

She reminded me of Olivia. We used to tell each other everything. We would be at her house sitting on her purple and blue beanbags eating the oatmeal cookies her mom made. She was an only child, but she convinced her mom to buy two beanbags, one for her and one for me. I wondered if she still had both beanbags. Was one of her new friends sitting on it? Or had she simply thrown it away along with

all the memories of our friendship?

Jane seemed like she could understand things the same way Olivia had, like I would be able to tell her anything and she wouldn't judge. Suddenly I wanted, needed, to be friends with her.

I stopped myself. I didn't even know this girl. She seemed like she didn't belong here, like she was out of place—or time. Yet even though she was so mysterious, there was something familiar about her. It felt like there was a string connecting my heart to hers and if tried to pull away, I wouldn't be able to. I felt a connection between us just like there had been between me and Olivia. We both had that emptiness only a friend could fill.

"Okay," I said.

"Splendid! So what do friends do? I've never actually had one."

Jane's statement made me sad. *Never had a friend?* At least I'd had Olivia. But was that worse—having a best friend, then losing her?

I was about to tell Jane about Olivia, but suddenly I remembered where I was.

"Well, they usually help each other out. Like if one of the friends needed to be released from a certain closet, the other friend would help them get out."

She just stared at me blankly.

I used to imagine this scale in my head that would show how "hot" or "cold" I was. The lowest level was "cool," which meant I was calm; the highest level was "boiling," which meant that whatever was happening

needed to stop or I wasn't going to be okay. I felt my meter creep up toward "very warm." I wanted to leave—it felt like I had been in this room for hours.

What was wrong with Jane? Why wouldn't she let me out? I envisioned going up to her and simply grabbing the key. It taunted me—right there in her pocket. But I couldn't do it. Having a friend felt so good, and I didn't want to make her cross. I didn't want to lose this feeling of friendship and closeness.

Jane was strange, with her accent and her clothes. She could almost be from the 1800s or something. The thought passed through my mind, but I simply shrugged it off; that would be impossible.

There was a knock at the door. I heard my teacher's voice, desperate. "Lola, are you in there?" I was saved, for real this time. My teacher threw open the door. *How had it opened so easily? Had it been unlocked the whole time?* There was no time to think about things like that. I needed to get out of this castle.

"What took you so long? I was in there for hours!" I shouted. I knew it was pointless to yell at my teacher, but I couldn't stay in there any longer. She glanced at her watch. "It's hardly been fifteen minutes," my teacher said. Was I just imagining that it had taken that long? No. *It had been longer than that.*

I could think about that later. Now all I wanted to do was get out; this castle felt full of tricks. "I want to leave, now," I said, with sternness in my voice. I wasn't going to let the teacher persuade me to stay; this field trip was over. I turned to Jane.

What about you? Do you want to leave with me?" I asked.

"I simply couldn't."

"Oh, well. Bye." I was disappointed but also eager to leave and finally be free.

"Maybe you can stay here with me?" she asked. "We can keep searching for my dog together. He must be around here somewhere. Even though Mr. Livingstone told me that there was no use in looking for him and that he was most definitely lost. We can be best friends."

"Lola, who are you talking to?" my teacher asked.

"Oh, um . . . this is my friend, Jane."

My teacher gave me a strange stare. "Come on. Let's go," she said. Then to herself, she muttered, "Her parents will be even more worried if they discover she has imaginary friends again."

Somehow I didn't care if my teacher didn't see Jane. I knew she was there. I was torn: should I stay with her? It wasn't like there was anything better back home. Plus, I did want a friend, and I longed for the feeling of a best friend. But the way Jane had said "best friends" made me shiver. Somehow I sensed that if I became friends with her, I would never come back.

I had to leave.

My teacher grabbed my wrist. Her hand was warm and clammy. She pressed her fingernail into the flesh of my arm. I knew she wanted to get out of there as much as I did. We began to walk away. I took a deep breath; things would be okay. I would get out of this dreadful castle.

Suddenly a memory flashed

through my head. When I was eight, Olivia's mom took us camping. We stayed up late telling scary stories. Olivia came up with this story about a deeply troubled boy who became possessed by a ghost. Olivia told the story with ghoulish relish. I couldn't go to sleep that night or many nights after. But Jane wasn't a ghost, was she?

I heard my heart beating. It rattled in my chest and drilled into my brain. I was sure that my teacher could hear it, and as a matter of fact, I thought I could hear hers. A droplet of sweat ran down my face. I could taste it, salty on my tongue. It was almost comforting; it reminded me that I was still in control of my body. The smell of dust was clogging my nostrils. My vision seemed to be cloudy, and my head hurt. I could barely see anything. I felt overwhelmed, forced to completely trust my teacher.

The walls were closing in.

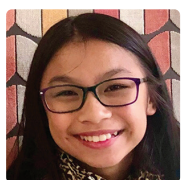
As we rushed away, I pictured the invisible string connecting me and Jane snapping. We were practically running through the passage. I felt the string bend. Why wouldn't it snap? Was Jane getting closer? There she was, hovering over the floor coming closer and closer to me. Every step I took she traveled two.

She was above me.

I screamed.

In less than a second, she vanished. A weird sensation hit me. It felt like my body was crowded. I heard a voice in my head, but it wasn't mine.

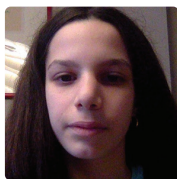
"Now we can be best friends. Forever."



Intangible (Procreate)
Emi Le, 13
Milbrae, CA

Two Stories

Flash fiction pieces that speak to the mysterious pull of the wild



By Oren Milgrom-Dorfman, 12
Brooklyn, NY

Choices

Opal took a step onto the forest path. Her posture relaxed as she centered herself on the forest path. Opal's parents were a few steps behind her. She lightly ran ahead. Opal didn't want the unusual hike to be filled with the sounds of her parents talking to her sternly, the sounds that filled the rest of her life.

Opal made sure to stay ahead of her parents, who seemed content to talk to each other for once. She allowed herself to indulge in a fantasy that came into her head on every hike like this, where she would disappear into the forest, leaving all her problems behind.

The hike wore on. Up ahead, Opal saw slabs of rock, seemingly piled on top of each other. She ran up on light feet. This was a moment that came, at one point or another, on every hike. Opal had the desperate urge to dash off the path, take a leap to freedom in the forest.

Opal hovered there, caught in the moment between two possible futures. She looked back. For a moment, her eyes caught the eyes of her father.

With one swift movement, Opal turned and slipped into the forest. Her parents, listening, heard swift light footsteps running away into silence.

Witnesses

A girl opened the door, looking quickly back before stepping out and shutting it behind her. It was night, but the moon was full. If the squirrels in the trees around her had been watching, they would have seen the girl's eyes fill with tears that reflected the moon like a mirror.

She shook her head as if shaking away her thoughts, then walked in among the trees. A doe saw the girl reach her destination, a small clearing surrounded by dense trees and bushes.

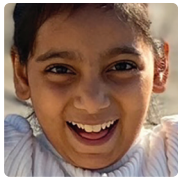
The girl sat down against a tree and put her head on her knees. The doe ran off through the forest, leaving the silent stars and the bare branches as the only witnesses when the girl began to weep.



Frost (Canon SX600)
Sage Millen, 13
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Thank You, Joseph

A World War II veteran recalls the day he lost his best friend on the battlefield



By Chamonix Fernandes, 11
Singapore

Full of regret, heavy clouds mask the gloomy sky. The war veteran, now frail and old, enters the cemetery. In front of him, perfectly lined headstones stand to salute him, and among them . . . among them is the soldier he will never forget. A path leading to the fallen—steps acting like a stairway to heaven. Tom walks gingerly, taking in his surroundings. In the distance, birds sing songs to honor the fallen. Branches bow, and their leaves rustle like sobs.

Guilt fills him with each step—the more he takes, the heavier it becomes. Sorrow leaks out along with his tears. Slowly, the elderly man staggers toward the grave he wants to see most. The one he needs to see.

First step: the scarred battlefield.

Second step: bombs, bullets, planes. Complete destruction.

Third step: the last time, the last moments with Private Shield, Joseph. His best friend.

Tom stands by the grave; his fingers trail along the inscription. A jet roars past, and memories flood his head. With nothing to stop them, he falls back into his past . . .

He stood amid the dense jungle, catching his breath. The leafy, cobweb-like canopy spread out above him. Gnarled roots, rotting leaves, and dead branches littered the mossy floor. The jungle was a maze of trees, a maze that possibly had no end. Scrambling to find a place to rest, the young soldier slumped against a tree. The more Tom thought about his friends, the more he worried about them. Staring into the distance he tried to reassure himself, when through the deafening silence, Tom heard something. The sound of leaves crunching. The sound of twigs snapping. Tom tensed and unconsciously reached for his pistol. Someone was approaching. Fast.

Then, the click of a gun. Tom spun around, holding his pistol up to the face of the silhouette.

“Show yourself!” he hissed, not wanting to draw any other attention.

The person stepped forward and, through the dirt and grime, Tom saw . . . “Joseph?”

“Tom!” Joseph said.

Tom smiled happily and crawled closer to greet his friend. They wrapped their arms around each

other, and Tom realized that Joseph was flanked by two of his fellow soldiers, Private Jefferson and Private Stone.

"You guys all good?"

"Yeah, for now." Joseph chuckled under his breath. "We'll stick together. Stay strong. Hopefully, we can survive this." He gestured around at the thick forest.

"Yes sir!" William, Private Stone, joked.

They all laughed. A nice, warm feeling that felt too good to be true, thought Tom. Not under these circumstances.

Then: "What was that?" asked Private Jefferson.

"Probably just the wind," Joseph said. Yet he backed up and looked around apprehensively. Branches broke. The four privates huddled together, forming a defensive circle. Their guns were out.

Terror coursed through Tom's veins. His heartbeat reverberated throughout his body. Branches and trees concealed everything around the group, but the young soldiers could still see the dark shadows around them. The enemy knew where they were. They were coming.

"Stone! Jefferson! Albans!" Joseph whispered. "On three, we split up and run!"

Tom took a deep breath.

"One."

He stood up.

"Two."

He put his bayonet away, swapping it for his pistol.

"Three."

Not knowing where he was going, not caring where, Tom sprinted into

the mesh of leaves. Ducking in and out of trees, he dashed to the closest thing he could call safe—a wide, tall tree, the type that made Tom think it was made for hiding behind. Gunshots ricocheted off trees around him. Screams echoed. "Joseph!" Tom spotted his friend and ran toward him.

"Tom, what are you doing?" Joseph said quietly. "You're gonna draw more attention—" Joseph broke off.

A bullet pierced the air, hurtling toward them as two Japanese soldiers approached. Tom tried sprinting back to his cover, but then he heard it.

The bullet had met its target.

He turned. Lying on the ground, barely breathing, blood pouring from the side of his chest, was Joseph. Tom sank to his knees and checked his friend's pulse. Joseph was still alive, for now. His face was ashen, and dripping with sweat.

"Take care, Tom," Joseph managed, weakly. His last words.

Exhaustion, blood, fear—which one had killed him? Tom wanted to shout for help, but he couldn't risk anyone else finding them. Tom looked back at Joseph's limp body. Tears streamed down Tom's face.

"Why?" he murmured "Why Joseph? Why me?"

Tom's eyes were blank, as if he were staring into the future, a future that Joseph, unfortunately, could not experience with him.

Dazed with grief, the elderly man blinks hard, trying to clear his vision. He looks at his friend's name.

"Thank you, Joseph. You did more

Branches and trees concealed everything around the group, but the young soldiers could still see the dark shadows around them. The enemy knew where they were. They were coming.

for me than I ever could have done for you.”

Standing up, Tom salutes the white stone.

“You stuck with me your whole life, and you still do now. The light may have gone out inside of you, but it continues to live in my heart. That light has guided me my whole life. Thank you, my friend.”



The Fall of Democracy (Acrylic)
 Alexa Zhang, 12
 Los Altos, CA

Spring Will Not Die

Stone Soup Refugee Project

By a group of Syrian refugees in Reyhanli, Turkey with the support of Karam House—Afnan, 15; Ahmad, 16; Fatima, 18; Hayam, 16; Mohammed A., 16; Mohammed, 16; Mustafa, 16; Nour Al Huda, 16; Rasha, 16; and Sedra, 15

Translated from Arabic.

Characters

The King: A dictator; angry, cold, insensitive.

Thaer: The revolutionary; a young, driven, impatient dreamer of freedom. Passionate with his people, tough with his enemies.

Khaled: A young man; hesitant but quietly driven.

Maria: A very strong young woman who impacts the people around her in a powerful way.

Lara: Hesitant, always afraid.

Rama: Adamant, insists on her way; strong and passionate.

Lana: A young woman who loves modern conveniences and the advantages of modern life. She has drive and passion but is soft.

Fatima: Always hides her feelings. The revolution engaged her after she realized its essence, then embraced its meaning.

Introduction

Welcome to all our guests. Revolutions, and especially the revolutions in the Arab lands today, aren't simple events that can be conveyed in a play of less than half an hour. The reality is the blood of the people. It's not easy to fully portray their pain and suffering. This play may not be one-hundred percent accurate or an exact mirror of reality, but it seeks to present the way in which the demonstrations the youth brought to the streets were driven by their passion for freedom. Thank you for attending.

Scene One

A procession through the kingdom as the KING and his entourage pass through. Sitting on his throne, he exudes power. Next to him are his courtiers. The poor people in tattered clothes walk by, cursing the procession.

THAER

(quiet and afraid)

Oh, people, we need to start the movement now. Enough of silence and fear. We're fed up. We should no longer tolerate this oppression. Don't

you see our ruler's transgressions?

MARIA

(in a very soft voice)

What are you doing, Thaer? Do you want to get us all killed? The King has forbidden us to even think about democracy. Stop it. You don't know what will happen to us.

FATIMA

You may tempt fate and survive, but what about the millions of people who will be implicated and caught up in what you do? And if you're killed, what about all those who see you as their hero—what about them? Do you know what will happen?

LANA

(fearful)

Stop it! This only creates fear, and if someone hears this talk, it will be the end of us.

Scene Two

An alley in the kingdom.

From afar, someone speaks. A suspicious gathering. In a secret location, young people come together and then disperse.

THAER

Friends, enough of fear. Let's prepare to claim our rights.

LARA

You're going to get us killed!

KHALED

Let's talk about something we can actually accomplish, something

realistic.

THAER

My loved ones, my friends, my family—what's wrong with you? You hear and see, and don't speak out. Is it worth it for you to lose the dignity which you only claim to have? Or your honor and pride, which you are burying with your own hands? Your conscience is drugged while you sleep. Answer me, for the sake of the life you dream of. Do you want to applaud empty idols and worship gangsters and obey ignorant thugs? Don't you believe in yourselves?

I swear to God, who is generous of spirit and who makes all things right, that you will be shunned by His mercy.

I want you as I knew you—free and with self-respect. Revolutionary. Don't be like animals, without a sense of purpose and destiny.

Silence.

Scene Three

The King's minions are collecting taxes by force from the poor merchants.

RAMA

With all this oppression and aggression, I'm beginning to understand Thaer's words.

KHALED

Me too. I can't tolerate this stealing from the people while the rich are in their palaces, surrounded by flatterers and covered in gold.

FATIMA

We need to work together, hand in

hand, and not let each other down. We need to regain balance in our country. This is our mission.

LANA
I completely agree with you.

MARIA
I'm with you too, and I will stay with you until my last breath. And this will be the pin of the grenade—we will rekindle the conscience of the people.

THAER
What about you, Lara?

LARA
(waiting for everyone, speaking hesitantly)
I'll be with you.

RAMA
(stepping forward and speaking)
Tomorrow will be our first outcry against their arrogance.

Scene Four

In front of the King's palace.

Everyone is approaching the throne and glancing at each other.

THAER
Who are we and who are you?
We are the hidden voice of justice, and you are the voice of oppression. We are the driving force, and you are steering us without knowing where you're going.
We are the light, and you are extinguishing us.
Let's all repeat: this kingdom is ours; it does not belong to the King's minions.

We are the owners of the kingdom, not you.

More and more people pick up the chant.

While the crowd is shouting, the throne begins to quake and the KING orders his minions to attack. LARA is killed, and everyone withdraws from the square where they were assembling.

The curtain closes.

Scene Five

The curtain opens on the same hiding place. There are new members of the group, but all are downcast over LARA's death.

RAMA
(standing in the center, cries out)
What's wrong with this ruler? Does he want to kill us simply for asking for our basic rights? What would he do if we went even further—to demand his removal?

THAER
(after thinking)
I think this is our new mission. Everyone prepare to instruct the people to demand their rights.

The curtain closes.

The curtain opens on the square. RAMA starts by claiming power for the people and an end to the tyranny and oppression of the oppressor. Everyone begins to chant, and then spears start to fall all around them.

KHALED and LANA are killed, and RAMA is captured. She appears with her face bloodied, saying, "I know I will never be freed from this prison, but my hope is you will continue what we started."

Everyone disperses.

Scene Six

The people gather publicly for the funeral of the martyrs. THAER and MARIA are among them.

THAER

Do you think you will get away with what you did? Do you think people's lives are the pillars of your throne?

MARIA

You can kill people, but you cannot kill ideas. And you cannot escape the day of reckoning.

THAER

We will not kill you because to kill you would change nothing. We all know you are only a puppet.

THE KING

I've had enough. You've gone too far. I made you—you were nothing. Yes, it's now your end. Now—yes, now. We will not be merciful to any of you.

THAER

Kill us, but before you do, you need to know that when we started this uprising, we were soaked in blood for speaking against injustice and oppression. We are not afraid of losing our lives for the sake of these ideals. Yes, you can kill one or two of

us, but today we, the people, claim that sovereignty is ours.

MARIA

I will say it again: freedom from oppression is an idea that will never die.

THE KING

Kill them.

They all gather with the PEOPLE and line up in front of the KING.

THE PEOPLE

Oh guards, who are you? Our children, our brothers, our family—wake up before it's too late. Take off this uniform of weakness and humiliation.

THE GUARDS

(crying and quiet)
We are the weakest.

THE PEOPLE

No, we are the strongest.

They take the hands of the GUARDS, and together they seize the KING so that he is alone in a circle of the people. It is the end of the time of oppression and tyranny and the start of the time of justice and equality.

About the Project

There are millions of children affected by war, social collapse, and climate change now living in refugee camps or dispersed in host countries far from their original homes. The work that appears here is a part of *Stone Soup's* growing collection of creative expression by young people whose lives have been upended by such conflict throughout the world. To explore the entire collection, please visit the Stone Soup Refugee Project online:
<https://stonesoup.com/refugee-project/>.



The Rise of Democracy (Acrylic)
Keira Zhang, 12
Los Altos, CA

Highlights from Stonesoup.com

From the Stone Soup Blog



An excerpt from *How Nationality Affects the Eyes*

By Sue Park, 12
Incheon, South Korea

I stood in the middle of the hallway, frightened. I took a deep, slow breath as I took a giant step through the whooshing crowd of children. I quickly scanned the group of kids next to me; they looked like 3rd-graders that were enjoying the trip. I was blankly staring at them for a while when I heard someone calling me. My homeroom teacher motioned me to come, then smiled at me. At first, I thought she was waving at the playful boy behind me, but as I stuttered, she came up to me and told me that it was my turn for the interview. At that moment, I screamed, inwardly, "I don't want to do this!" As my teacher carefully held my wrist and took me to the man from North Korea, I did not practice my script but rather practiced the karate skills that I had learned in kindergarten, fearing sudden violence. When I finally reached the door to the interview room, which looked like a torture chamber, my teacher nudged me calmly. At that moment, my teacher appeared to be a frightful green monster pushing me to the town of hell. Recognizing my fate, I trudged to the chair and quietly sat on the corner of it, ready to leave at any moment.

Surprisingly, the man didn't look any different from a normal South Korean man. He had a warm smile and he did not wear the military clothes that I had pictured in my head. As I quickly scanned him and looked into his plain black eyes, there was an awkward silence. And it felt like a millennium.

When I couldn't stand the silence much longer, I blurted out my first question: "What is the main obstacle you have faced in South Korea?" and as he answered accordingly, my stomach rumbled with guilt and fear. The man calmly listed out the prejudices and perceptions South Koreans had of him, and how difficult it was for him to find a job due to the people neglecting him after listening to his North Korean accent. As he listed out these examples, my guilt increased more and more due to the fact that I could relate to all of them. As if he noticed my pain, he asked, "Is something wrong?" and I replied, "No, I'm fine!" But, I knew this was a lie.

You can read the rest of Sue's personal narrative on our website: <https://stonesoup.com/stone-soup-blog/>.

About the Stone Soup Blog

We publish original work—writing, art, book reviews, multimedia projects, and more—by young people on the Stone Soup Blog. You can read more posts by young bloggers, and find out more about submitting a blog post, here: <https://stonesoup.com/stone-soup-blog/>.

Honor Roll

Welcome to the Stone Soup Honor Roll. Every month, we receive submissions from hundreds of kids from around the world. Unfortunately, we don't have space to publish all the great work we receive. We want to commend some of these talented writers and artists and encourage them to keep creating.

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At our store, you will find . . .

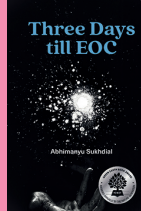
- Current and back issues of *Stone Soup* Magazine
- Our growing collection of books by young authors, as well as themed anthologies and the *Stone Soup Annual*
- High-quality prints from our collection of children's art
- Journals and sketchbooks

. . . and more!

Finally, don't forget to visit [Stonesoup.com](https://stonesoup.com) to browse our bonus materials. There you will find:

- More information about our writing workshops and book club
- Monthly flash contests and weekly creativity prompts
- Blog posts from our young bloggers on everything from sports to sewing
- Video interviews with *Stone Soup* authors

. . . and more content by young creators!





CHILDREN'S ART FOUNDATION