



# StoneSoup

APRIL 2022

VOLUME 50 / ISSUE 4



# StoneSoup

Writing and art by kids, for kids

## Editor's Note

This issue has two central threads running through it: cats and . . . sports. When I am working on an issue, I always look for both obvious thematic links—like subject matter, like cats!—and then also something less tangible and easy to describe, something maybe about the energy of the pieces that seems similar, or the style, or simply a subtler theme.

For me, the stories and poems in this issue share a certain light energy and even zaniness, as well as a concern with the animal—whether that takes the shape of an actual animal, like a cat or a dog or a squirrel or a snail, or whether that is about tapping into the animal within each of us. Our raw athletic energy, for instance.

These two themes meet each other particularly well in Leo Roiphe's story "Squirrel," where a boy actually turns into an animal, experiencing a few hours in the intensely physical, reactive life of a squirrel. I also love how the animal perspective is depicted in Sevi Stahl's poem "Roo's Song," written from the point of view of a dog, and with a notable lack of punctuation that perfectly captures that breathless canine excitement.

This month, taking inspiration from these pieces, try your hand at channeling some animal energy—and remember, you don't need to inhabit an animal to channel one!

Enjoy the April showers,



On the cover:  
*Music Lover* (Acrylic)  
Selene Wong, 11  
Champaign, IL

Editor in Chief  
**Emma Wood**

Director  
**William Rubel**

Design  
**Joe Ewart**

Blog & Production  
**Caleb Berg**

Customer Service  
**Tayleigh Greene**

Special Projects  
**Sarah Ainsworth**

Refugee Project  
**Laura Moran**

*Stone Soup* (ISSN 0094 579X) is published eleven times per year—monthly, with a combined July/August summer issue. Copyright © 2022 by the Children's Art Foundation—Stone Soup Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization located in Santa Cruz, California. All rights reserved.

Thirty-five percent of our subscription price is tax-deductible. Make a donation at [stonesoup.com/donate](https://stonesoup.com/donate), and support us by choosing Children's Art Foundation as your Amazon Smile charity.

To request the braille edition of *Stone Soup* from the National Library of Congress, call +1 800-424-8567. To request access to the audio edition via the National Federation of the Blind's NFB-NEWSLINE®, call +1 866-504-7300, or visit [Nfbnewsline.org](https://Nfbnewsline.org).

# StoneSoup Contents

## STORIES

- 9 **Squirrel**  
Leo Roiphe
- 15 **The Case of the Catnapped Cat, Thomas**  
Miya Lin
- 35 **Tumble Town Gymnastics**  
Evelyn Mealer
- 39 **The Mysterious Case of the Cat in a Glass of Water**  
Ellie Wang

## MEMOIR

- 22 **A Magical Moment at Meow City**  
Elise Cheung
- 25 **Drive**  
Audrey Tushman
- 28 **Accomplishment, the New First Place**  
Augusta Koch-Cochrane



## ART

### Cover: Music Lover

Selene Wong

### 4 Hanging Vines

Anna Weinberg

### 8 Beach in Autumn

Joey Vasaturo

### 14 My Lovely Friend Cat

Leticia Cheng

### 19 Mystery

Sage Millen

### 24 A Handful of Magic

Tatum Lovely

### 27 Colors

Sage Millen

### 29 The Stable

Savannah Chun

### 32 Reach for the Sky

Arjun Nair

### 34 The Flash

Tatum Lovely

### 38 Forgotten Moon

Anna Koontz

### 44 Beautiful Blue

Sage Millen

## POETRY

### 5 Wild

Rex Huang

### 12 Two Poems

Katie Furman

### 20 Two Poems

Autumn E. Weinreich

### 26 In My Head

Lucy Rados

### 33 Pointed Freeness

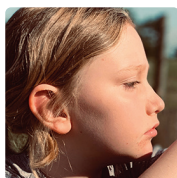
Ismini Vasiloglou

### 45 Roo's Song

Sevi Ann Stahl

### 46 Highlight from Stonesoup.com

### 47 Honor Roll



*Hanging Vines* (iPhone 6)  
Anna Weinberg, 11  
Washington, DC

# Wild



By Rex Huang, 11  
Lake Oswego, OR

What one may miss once  
Will never miss twice  
There's always new  
New plant  
New wind  
New ant hole  
And it's the little things  
That make the world

Welcome to our birdbath

A crimson red leaf  
Is shed from a tree  
Drifting slowly  
Slowly  
Slowly  
Into the crystal-clear reflection of the water  
Only disturbed by the ancient moss  
That lives there

Spring is coming  
New is coming

The lively chirps of a bird  
Make people smile  
*Chirp*  
*Chirp*  
Calling for her young  
To drink

The cat screeches  
The mouse yelps  
The wind howls  
With them  
The ants cry  
*Please don't trample us*

A historical chase  
Cat vs. mouse  
Through the golden fields  
Over the log  
Through the grass  
To the bath  
The mouse trips  
And the cat  
Gets dinner

The stream is calm  
Little sounds  
*Chika de-de-de*  
*Croak, croak*  
But it's interrupted  
*Splash! Splash!*  
The beavers

The great pine tree  
Covers all  
Gives them shade  
Reminds them she's alive  
With a little bonk



The grass grows  
The squirrels chatter  
The birds return  
The flowers bloom  
And the world is back from the dead

A robin swoops down  
So elegantly  
Wings spread wide  
Cherry-red breast  
Ripples the calm  
Of the water  
And is gone again  
Gone

The leaf  
The chirp  
The sounds  
The chase

The stream  
The tree  
The return  
The bird

What can we learn?

Nature

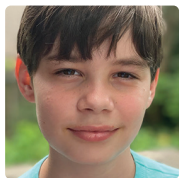
Has its language.



*Beach in Autumn* (Samsung Galaxy S9+)  
Joey Vasaturo, 10  
Colebrook, CT

# Squirrel

An unexpected change in perspective prompts a new understanding of the natural world



By Leo Roiphe, 12  
Brooklyn, NY

It feels like everything is more difficult here. I spent an hour picking blackberries for jam and then took a spoonful of it when we made it. I almost ate the entire jar. The fresh air is great, and the grass seems greener here. But it also seems like this place doesn't exist back home. I love it here, but it's almost too damp to go outside.

I don't know why I'm on this trip.

I popped up out of bed and walked down the wooden stairs. They turned, and I hugged the wall with lethargy.

"Good morning," I groggily blurted out to the noise at the end of the hall.

"Morning!"

"What do we have for breakfast?"

"Pancakes. They'll take a bit."

He always took a while with the pancakes.

"I'm gonna go pick berries."

"Still keen on making jam?"

I laughed.

"Don't go past the trees!"

I opened the door with a hasty "Yup!"

I had only woken up fifteen minutes before, but I decided to go out anyway. I'd barely slept last night because of the incessant banging of droplets that had to have frozen

before digging into the shingles of the white cottage.

I slipped on a sweater lazily to see my favorite part of this whole place: the vast fields that feel like an ocean of green that lead down to the lawn where I can sit and have tea and cookies.

I had always liked those fields. I could just walk out the door and take fifteen steps to the hedge that overlooked the hill. I had seen better views online, but this one felt special. I saw flashes of red and white and gray. Sometimes when I'd go farther for a closer look, the cows would pace toward me. I always thought it was funny to see them jaunt over to me and stop at the gate.

I was fascinated with everything I saw, even with the dirt beneath me almost transmuted fully into mucky water. It was always exciting to see the glimmer of cozy velvet, tainted with dark beige and brown.

I yawned and sank into the mud. As soon as I closed my eyes and opened my mouth, I heard a rush of vigorous water, thwacking and squelching as it split into two on the rocks. I opened my eyes, and I felt my

**I soared back down to the ground and felt the back of my throat pulse as I squeaked. I knew it was a dream, but I couldn't pinch myself, could I?**

cold feet digging into the dirt near some kind of river. I tried looking around, and I felt my throat buckle.

I recoiled and looked down to the silt. I saw two dull-gray paws rooted to the ground, quilled and monotonous, connected to limbs that arched toward the bottom of my vision. I jumped up at the sight of them and rolled down toward the river. I closed my eyes, and for some reason; my body twirled through the air and spread its arms, almost on its own. As my arms spread, the flaps of quilled fur acted as a parachute, and I looked up to the river as I soared. I saw my own reflection: a squirrel. Not the kind I saw back home. This one was black and gray, and its tail flapped in the wind like a sail in a stormy ocean.

For once I was above the dirty sludge that coated the ground from last night's rain, and I could see, past the vast array of rocks and busy waters, a clearing.

It had almost cabbage-green grass, and the trees parted to reveal white mushrooms and wildflowers that grew without humans. Looking down at them, I noticed they were swaying lightly, like the wind was whispering through them.

I soared back down to the ground and felt the back of my throat pulse as I squeaked. I knew it was a dream, but I couldn't pinch myself, could I?

My limbs couldn't move well enough to burst out of their locked position, and my small jaws could

barely move. So I dropped down to the muddy, silty ground and popped my miniscule shoulder blades out of place, planted them to the ground, and dragged myself using my neck. I made another high-pitched noise almost unconsciously.

Suddenly, I was hungry. I wasn't hungry for anything back home—I wanted nothing more than to pop open a walnut or a peanut and chew it with my teeth. But I didn't like nuts. I was whatever you call the step before allergic. Whenever I popped one in my mouth, I almost gagged.

As I lay on the ground, inching toward the forest clearing, I saw the same velvet glint I had been so eager to see. A fox, as gently as can be, lay one paw, then another, into the clearing. It arched its neck and turned to me. I had never been so close.

It was a perfect and never-ending red, with golden eyes that shimmered amongst the flowers. Its peaked ears rested on its scalp like a rabbit's. Its two canine teeth protruded into its jaw and curled its tongue inward. I shifted my own furry head, and I saw it from a new angle. It was malnourished and weak, its four knees curling down from fatigue.

And then it pounced. I had no sense of space or how far away it was, but I knew it would chew me down and swallow me.

Maybe that's nature.

But again, almost instinctively, my arms jumped and contorted, and I began rolling back down the hill I had



spent at least a few minutes climbing. But it could've been seconds. Hours, maybe.

I rolled, like the water I was tumbling toward, thwacking into sharp rocks and staining them with the dirt on my fur.

I fell into the rushing water and crashed against the rocks. As I lay there, sprawled out, using what little strength I had to cling on, I saw it again. The fox seemed wary of the crashing water. It put one paw in, climbing rock to rock toward me. Its weak body, jagged with brittle bones and ribs, almost in sync with the water.

My squirrel body relaxed and fell to the water and then was washed up between two smaller rocks. The fox climbed over and stood on the rock. It laid one paw on the rocks. And saw me. Its yellow eyes charged forward and gleamed into my black ones. In the very back of its memories, I saw two pups. They were even hungrier. I understood. As it shared its message with me, the squirrel, I was hypnotized in the creature's eyes.

---

I woke up back at the top of the field. I could already feel the memory fading from my mind. So I took a twig, and I drew the best fox I could in the sinewy mud. I looked at the rough mud sketch and smiled.

I rolled over and headed back into the house. I was almost limping from the soreness of being hit against the rock.

The fox would do anything for her pups. She was a hunter and a mother. Nature is something that doesn't

care whether you are split in two. It'll chew you up either way, just like anyone else.

My dad walked out of the cottage. "Hey." He eyed me up and down, seeing the mud on me.

"We should probably clean you up." He smiled.

I nodded, tired. I felt at peace.

# Two Poems



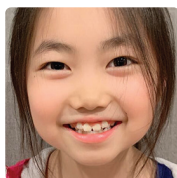
By Katie Furman, 10  
Fogelsville, PA

## Eyes Full of Wonder

A doorway to the  
starry sky  
where the  
stars shine so  
bright in  
the night  
you can see as clear  
as daylight  
the world full of wonder  
your eyes like a window  
for your soul grass so green  
and clean  
it almost seems  
as if a dream

## Oh Graham Cat, Oh Graham Cat

Furry and wise but  
bold with pride  
smart as a  
fox  
slick as a  
fox  
no fright in sight  
goes out at night  
comes home with  
a snack  
possibly a rat!



*My Lovely Friend Cat* (Pastel)  
Leticia Cheng, 9  
San Jose, CA



# The Case of the Catnapped Cat, Thomas

Julia resolves to find a missing cat and reunite him with his bereft owner



By Miya Lin, 10  
Irvine, CA

"Julia, would you be a dear and read the *San Diego Times* to me?" My grandma speaks with a scratchy voice as she slowly lies down on her crooked bed. Silver threads of moonlight shine through the window and blend with her bedside table lamp.

"Sure!" I unsurely reply. We always read the newspaper before bedtime, which for me is usually an uninteresting task, but tonight, thank goodness, soon puts Grandma to sleep. I love my sweet grandma, and now I want to take good care of her while my parents are off to Hawaii for their vacation, but sometimes I wish we could just try something new. I can't stay in one spot for long. My restless body can't resist the urge to dance. Yet tonight's late-night news soon becomes engaging:

"The catnapper moved as swiftly as a cheetah," the housemaid reported. She saw him as she was leaving the Fiddlewick mansion at 7 p.m.: "He ran across my vacuumed carpet until the beautiful pure-white cat, Thomas,

beloved of Ms. Fiddlewick, stopped him with loud screeches and hissing. That was when I knew he was being catnapped, so I ran outside to phone the police." Said she didn't get a good look at the catnapper, all covered in black with a black facemask.

This news makes my heart ache for Thomas. A feeling of sorrow and kindness fills my body.

Too tired to stay awake, Granny is already asleep. As I switch off the light, moonlight now fills the room, and I know I have to rescue Thomas. So, by moonlight, I continue reading:

Apparently, Thomas's loud screech had caught the attention of nearby police officers. But they were too slow to catch up. Though they searched the mansion, they couldn't find Thomas. What else the catnapper stole, if anything, remains to be determined.

The police asked another witness about the catnapper all in black. His gray eyes looked serious as he

## Hmm . . . find the cat, find the criminal? Or find the criminal, find the cat?

informed them, "I saw a man in black remove his balaclava and enter the Curtis Hotel. He had blond hair, nicely combed."

*That hotel could be the catnapper's temporary home. But after the news release, he probably left the hotel in a hurry without leaving a forwarding address.*

I listen to the deep growl of a bear, which I soon realize is my stomach. As I walk down the long hallway to the kitchen, I ruminate while my stomach growls noisily over my grandma's snoring. Granny sleeps very heavily, and her snoring is almost as ear piercing as a loud siren in a deserted desert.

As I enter the neat kitchen with a growling tummy and walk toward the white wooden cabinet, the cool marbled floor soothes me. The moon is now invisible from the kitchen, forcing me to turn on a light. From the shelves full of snacks in front of me, I choose a bag of dried apples, and snacks in hand, I stroll back through the hallway and into my grandma's bedroom, pick up the newspaper, and continue to read. The paper included a "Missing Cat Announcement":

Our cat, Thomas, went missing on Aug. 15 around 7 p.m. We think he has been catnapped. Thomas is an all-white Siamese. His eyes are sapphire blue. See the attached photo. If you find or see this cat, please call Ms. Fiddlewick at 984-6783-5559 and leave a message with location details

and your phone number. She will return your call.

*Hmm . . . find the cat, find the criminal? Or find the criminal, find the cat? The criminal could have read the news or heard the broadcast and already called that number to learn if there's a reward for the cat. He could be caught that way.*

*Most likely, though, he would have left the Curtis in a hurry. Where would he go? Perhaps Thomas, unminded, escaped and hid in the hotel where food would be plenty. So many unknowns and possibilities. Though the chance of my rescuing Thomas is slim, I can follow my instincts. I must gather food and milk to feed this cat and let him know that I care.*

I return to the kitchen for temptations: a bag full of aromatic tuna, steamed-warm milk, and a cat's favorite treat—kibbles! Armed with temptations and my kind heart, I quietly sneak out the door so as not to wake Granny. Granny, overly protective, would surely forbid me from going on this adventure.

I secure my helmet and begin to bike to the hotel, looking everywhere, wondering if I am anywhere close. Finally, I spot a big Curtis Hotel sign, written in big, lit-up words. I steer in that direction, get off my bike, and walk through the automatic sliding doors with my backpack, realizing that I look like a tourist. I sneak past the concierge, thinking about where a traumatized cat might hide.

As I move toward the hotel dining room and kitchen, passing through a lounge, I begin to whisper, "Thomas!

Thomas!" while searching the area. Under the couch, I find a single puff of white fur.

*A puff of white fur! Could it be Thomas's white fur?*

Studying the ground closely, I discover a seemingly endless trail of fur leading into an ominous hall where a cold, ghostly wind meets me, and I walk toward a soft creaking from up ahead, where lights occasionally turn on and off. There, the trail of fur stops, and I can see a door. I saunter into the room, a kitchen. There, I look up to notice the chefs staring at me.

"Hi, I'm very sorry for disturbing you and for barging in. I will leave after I ask you if you have seen a white cat come into your kitchen?"

"Yes, we have, but because it began eating our fresh fish and making a mess of this place, I threw it out the window," a chef with dark-brown hair and a skinny body replies.

"Why would you throw it out the window? I'm sure it was just extremely hungry. Why didn't you feed it and offer it milk and water?"

"Well, some of our guests are allergic to cats. Either the cats can't be in the hotel or the guests. We are here for the guests."

"Okay, I see. Nevertheless, let me suggest that you be kinder to animals if something like this happens again."

As I walk down the dark hall to exit the hotel, I realize that the chef hadn't read the newspaper or he could have called Ms. Fiddlewick. I check my watch: 3 a.m. I feel for the cat's agony as, outside the hotel, I marvel at the brilliance of the summer stars.

*Wait, don't cats always land on their*

*feet? They do. That means that Thomas could still be around here somewhere . . .*

I walk to the window outside the kitchen where the cat's footprints would begin. I turn on my flashlight, and there they are, ever-so-faintly impressing the newly cut grass. I follow them to a small lake. It shimmers beautifully under the stars. I reason Thomas might go here to rest with the calm water and the refreshing wind.

Then, after circling my flashlight in all directions, I spot more footprints in the sand. *Could be Thomas's! Yes, they are cat paw prints that have traces of orange and a lingering aroma of salmon in creole sauce.* Each paw print, one after another, leads me to a small cave, one fit for a big bunny. I peer inside to find white fur surrounding sapphire-blue eyes staring back at me.

"My name is Julia," I announce. "Could your name possibly be Thomas?"

No response. Only complete stillness breathing in and out.

"Would you like to come out? I have some treats, or I can call Ms. Fiddlewick. Whichever one makes you feel safer."

A soft purr responds.

"Did you just indicate that you love Ms. Fiddlewick? That she always makes time for you, even when she is very, so very busy?"

A meow answers, as if saying "Yes."

"Then you must be Thomas, right?"

A purr follows.

I phone Ms. Fiddlewick to inform her of who I am (a girl named Julia

and certainly not the catnapper) and that her Thomas is outside the Curtis Hotel by the lake, where I am feeding him kibbles and warm, steamed milk. Her voice becomes elated as she replies, "Be there in a wink and a whisker!"

When Ms. Fiddlewick arrives near dawn with her protective pink cane, Thomas has nearly polished off my treats.

"You must be Julia. Oh, you are such a dear. I can't thank you enough!"

"Pleased to meet you, Ms. Fiddlewick! And pleased to have found Thomas."

"I'm so exceptionally happy to learn that Thomas escaped the catnapper and that you troubled yourself to find him."

Ms. Fiddlewick offers me an envelope filled with her promised reward money. "I hope this thousand dollars will support your education or whatever you need."

"Thank you, Ms. Fiddlewick. It was quite an adventure! I'm so happy to reunite you with your beloved Thomas. I hadn't considered the reward when I decided to undertake this quest. But I am grateful for your reward and will always honor you and Thomas."

Walking toward my bike in greater-than-expected happiness, I realize that Granny must be awake by now. I fervidly bike back to my house, run through the door, and hustle back to Granny's bedroom, where brilliant light begins to rise with the sun. *I'm just in time.*

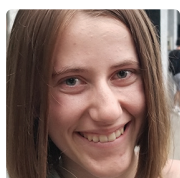
"Hi, sweetie. Are you okay?" Granny yawns. "Did you have a good night?" she asks, rising like the sun

from the comfort of her bed. "I feel like I had a very nice catnap."

"Yes," I respond, "I'm okay and so happy you enjoyed a restorative catnap. And, yes, I had a very good night."

*... very good indeed.*





*Mystery* (Panasonic Lumix ZS200, Picsart)  
Sage Millen, 13  
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

# Two Poems



By Autumn E. Weinreich, 6  
Wilmette, IL

## Chocolate

Oh, I got a new snail.

Wait!

Wait!

He is dead.

# The Tuna Cat

Once, the new cat.

Cats.

Cats.

Oh cats.

Please come with me.

Be with me.

See what you see.

The Tuna Cat.

Oh cat.

Are you the cat?

The Tuna Cat?

Yes.

You are the Tuna Cat.

# A Magical Moment at Meow City

The narrator meets a remarkable kitten at the Houtong Cat Village in Taiwan



By Elise Cheung, 8  
Danville, CA

I grinned from ear to ear as a cat cautiously strolled up to me and sniffed my hand, looking for food bits. I was so delighted to finally arrive at Meow City!

In June 2019, my family took a trip to Taiwan to visit my relatives. One of the highlights of the trip was exploring a special place inhabited by cats of all sizes and colors. The Houtong Cat Village sits on top of a mountain surrounded by lush, ten-foot-tall trees.

When I first entered the place, I saw hundreds of cats. There were grey, orange, and black cats, striped or freckled cats, cleaning themselves with their tongues or just wandering around. It was a colorful sight. Some were rotund, while others were rail thin—you could see their rib cages. The air smelled crisp and clean like fresh laundry. The morning sun smiled down radiantly. I felt like I was in heaven because I love animals.

The one unique thing about this place is that all the cats are strays. However, the villagers take care of them and love them. The people leave

out food and water bowls that thirsty cats lap up eagerly. Once a month, a professional vet comes to check on the cats and provide medicine and vaccinations. There are several cat condos erected to give them shelter, some with ramps leading up to the door for the older cats. Two rows of small shops made of old red bricks sell food that tourists can purchase to feed the cats. The cats never feel lonely because tourists pet and talk to them or snap pictures with the adorable felines.

One particular cat stood out in my memory. She caught my eye when I heard a sorrowful whimper near the bushes near the entrance. I slowly crept toward the noise. After that, I tried to lure the kitten out by offering it a yogurt stick that my dad bought at the convenience store. A pair of sparkling orange eyes stared back at me. She was a small tabby cat, covered with orange and white stripes. Her pink tongue started licking the treat eagerly, like a starving child who hasn't eaten in days. I wanted to scream. I wanted to

shout. I even considered fainting. To my surprise, my feet stayed firmly planted on the ground; my mouth didn't even twitch. I was destined to meet this kitten. My heart burst with joy like a greedy three-year-old opening his present on Christmas Day. She took to me so easily; it was like we had been friends for life.

As a result of this visit, seeing all these villagers helping and caring for all these kittens, I am more inspired to become a vet someday. Hopefully, one day I will return and see my tabby cat all grown up. I thought my visit to Meow City was simply divine.





*A Handful of Magic* (iPhone 8, Lightleap)  
Tatum Lovely, 12  
Pipersville, PA



# Drive

**"I'm an average gymnast. To me, competition isn't always about winning. It's about the drive."**



By Audrey Tushman, 12  
Wellesley, MA

I nervously step into the arena, itching at my rhinestone-covered leotard. My hair is pulled back in a tight bun as voices echo off the ceiling that soars above my head. The cold concrete floor tickles my bare feet. I search for my teammates and spot them at the far side of the room. Rushing over to see them, I pass many other gymnasts on the way. A booming voice fills the auditorium: "All gymnasts may begin warming up." Feet pound the ground as we tumble across the springy mat. We take off our team jackets and capris and stand for the national anthem. My heartbeat accelerates.

"You now may go greet the judge," the loudspeaker blasts. We line up and head to the judge's table. There we say hello, and she wishes us good luck. I step up to the blue floor and stand, chin up, straight arms, waiting to begin. I hear my name sing throughout the auditorium as the judge salutes. Returning the signal, I raise my hands above my head. It's *go time*. Straight back, pointed toes, I get into my starting position.

The first note of my floor routine rings throughout the auditorium. Matching the rhythm of the music,

I dance across the floor. I reach the corner and prepare for my first tumbling pass. Hurdling into a roundoff, I launch myself forward. Quickly, I connect one back handspring and then another. With a sigh of relief, I stick the landing and continue my routine.

*Accelerando . . .*

My steps quicken, naturally pairing with the tempo of the music. My eyes track the next corner as I prepare for my leap pass, arms extended to the side. Floating across the floor, I throw myself into the air as my legs straighten into a split.

*Crescendo . . .*

The music gets louder as my body fills with adrenaline.

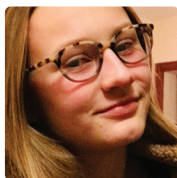
*Ritardando . . .*

The music slows as I make my way to the corner, steeling myself for the finale.

I stand at the edge of the floor, feet neatly tucked into the corner, heartbeat racing. I take a deep breath and run . . .

I'm an average gymnast. To me, competition isn't always about winning. It's about the drive.

# In My Head



By Lucy Rados, 13  
Buffalo, NY

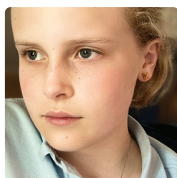
It's like this beat  
That's trapped in my head—  
It can't escape, won't escape.  
It eats at me, bothering me,  
Telling me to stop, to recognize everything it does.  
It pulls me out of the dredges of life,  
But sometimes into them too.  
Why is it there?  
I don't know.  
What I do know is that it drives me, makes me  
me.



*Colors* (Panasonic Lumix ZS200)  
Sage Millen, 13  
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

# Accomplishment, the New First Place

Competing in a horse show prompts some self-reflection



By Augusta Koch-Cochrane, 12  
Lexington, MA

My heart almost stopped when my mom parked our gray Honda minivan on the grounds of the annual Halloween Horse Show. Horses were everywhere. Horses being led, horses being groomed, horses being tacked and warmed up. The usually quiet grounds of Hybrid Farm looked like a beehive. I smoothed my baby blue schooling show button-down and grabbed my ebony helmet and lavender tote bag before hopping out of the car. My heart beat even faster, if that were possible.

I hastily marched up to the barn and strolled in. I inhaled the sweet smell of hay as I grabbed a teal cotton lead line from the hook on the wall. I nervously pranced over to Sky's stall and clipped the lead to her matching teal halter. Today she wore a cerulean stable blanket that stood out and blended into her lustrous, burnished, fox-red coat. Her white sock on her back foot and star on her forehead looked like they had been made from the icy snow that littered the ground outside. I unlocked her ecru stall door and walked her out into the crowded

aisle and clipped her to the only pair of open crossties.

"Hang tight," I whispered to her. Then I marched to the buzzing, leather-scented tack room, grabbed a grooming bag, and hauled my tack back to her side before hanging them both on a rack. I snatched my currycomb from the bag and rubbed it on Sky in wide circles. Thankfully, she had kept herself moderately clean.

I started to think about all the things that could go wrong, a talent of mine. What if I fell off, or Sky spooked, or I didn't remember the basics? These what-ifs filled my head. Sky nudged me with her nose, and I realized that I had stopped brushing.

*Jeez, Augusta, I chided myself. Brush the horse!* I remembered that I was doing something I loved and that no matter what the result, I knew I was going to have fun.

I switched brushes and flicked all the dirt off of her till her coat shone like a horse-sized penny. I selected a purple soft brush and smoothed over her coat, then picked her hooves.





*The Stable* (Oil)  
Savannah Chun, 13  
Dallas, TX



## When the final competitor entered the ring, the judge sent us into a forward walk and my nerves started doing somersaults in my heart.

Finally, I cleaned her ivory sock and combed out her fiery mane and tail. I polished her face and smoothed the spotless, white saddle pad onto her gleaming back. She turned around and gave me the characteristic “Sky Eye.”

I carefully leveled on her half pad and freshly scrubbed saddle and tightened her soft girth. I walked up to her head and fished a peppermint out of my pocket, and she gobbled it up. Then I kissed her velvety nose. My moms delivered our numbers (77) and exchanged the usual “We love you,” before heading off to see my sister. I pinned my armband to my sleeve and put on my helmet. I looked down at myself and brushed a strand of hay off my tawny breeches and wiped a smear of mud off my boots.

“I’m ready,” I told myself.

I gently lifted Sky’s cocoa-colored bridle off the hook and placed the silvery bit in my hand while pulling the reins over her head. I unclipped her from the crossties, then took off her halter and let her take the bit. I pulled her ears through the crownpiece and adjusted the noseband and bejeweled browband, then tightened the throatlatch before pinning her number to the side of her bridle.

As I walked out of the barn, I took in the warm sun glinting off of her shining coat. I walked Sky to the sunny warm-up ring where my instructor, Kelly, waited.

“Sky looks beautiful, Augusta,” she said.

“Thank you,” I replied as I mounted and adjusted my stirrups. As I moved Sky out on the rail for our warm-up, I shoved my heels down as far as they would go and encouraged Sky to wake up. She responded well and picked up the pace, moving into a more forward walk. After we had walked both directions, I urged her to a working trot and adjusted my diagonal. Soon I changed directions and went the other way.

“You are doing this perfectly,” said Kelly. “You are going to crush this. Now it’s time for you to go to your ring.”

As I walked out of the warm-up ring on Sky, I felt a little more confident.

When the final competitor entered the ring, the judge sent us into a forward walk and my nerves started doing somersaults in my heart. I shoved my heels down farther and took a deep breath.

“Change directions and trot!” yelled the judge, and I gave Sky a nudge with my heels. But Sky, clearly picking up on my nerves, tried to canter! Thankfully I got her collected and focused and tried to pretend that this was just a normal lesson. I instantly calmed down, and the class just unfolded from there, so when the judge called us forward to the center for our ribbons I was amazed at how fast it had gone by. As we lined up our horses to see what places we got, my nerves picked up again. I felt so nervous that I barely noticed the judge call sixth and fifth place.

Well, at least I'm not last, I thought. When the judge did not call me for fourth, I almost gasped. I had made it on the podium!

"In third place, we have number seventy-seven."

As I walked forward, I almost believed this was a dream. But No, I told myself. *This is not a dream; I worked hard and deserved this.* As I reached down to collect my ribbon, the judge said, "Nice job out there." I only smiled, and walked out of the ring. As I dismounted and ran up the stirrups, a nervous-looking girl of about ten came up to me.

I smiled and said, "Are you riding Sky next?"

She nodded.

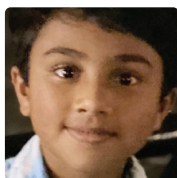
"Well, you are going to do great out there."

The relief was evident on her face; it was as if she had taken off a mask.

I gave Sky a scratch and handed the reins to the girl.

"Good luck," I said and went to join my family.

Right at that moment I knew, for me, the sense of accomplishment was even better than getting first place.



*Reach for the Sky* (iPhone 12 Pro)  
Arjun Nair, 9  
Midlothian, VA

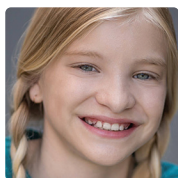
# Pointed Freeness



By Ismini Vasiloglou, 11  
Atlanta, GA

Keen  
Pointy  
Knife-Like  
Razor-Sharp  
Angled Piece Busts  
And Smears Ink Blots  
Most Sublime Yellow  
With Tiny Little Black  
Dark Lines Indented,  
In Divinely Wrapped  
Peeling Paper which  
Flakes Away with Each  
Sharpening Within the  
Motor with its Grating  
Noise Which Grinds at  
The Soul, Paper Peels  
Away like my Worries  
As I Pick up a Pencil  
And Write my Sadness  
Away like Stardust on a  
Blust'ry Eve, Finger Rubs  
'Gainst Course Material  
Of Sun, Lemon School  
Bus, Gorgeous Golden  
Onion Skin Shaves Away  
And Ashen Grey-Colored  
Graphite Collects in Tube  
Like Powder Sugar Soon  
Turned Charcoal, Lovely  
Pole of Saffron Freeness  
Most Gorgeous Block of  
Fuchsia Elatedness which  
Allows a Take Back, Redo,  
Precious Second Chance  
That Disappears Too Fast.





*The Flash* (iPhone 8, Lightleap)  
Tatum Lovely, 12  
Pipersville, PA



# Tumble Town Gymnastics

After a couple of years as a serious gymnast, Adelaide's passion for the sport fades



By Evelyn Mealer, 9  
Montclair, NJ

There was once a gymnastics gym called Tumble Town Gymnastics. This gym was the opposite of famous, and everyone who worked there or went there knew it. Except one person. Adelaide Collins. She wasn't the best gymnast at the gym, but she wasn't the worst. But she didn't care because she didn't know.

Adelaide was twelve, and she lived with her mom, dad, uncle, aunt, and grandparents in a big four-story house in Montclair, New Jersey. She went to the gym almost every day, even though she wasn't on the gymnastics team, because her family thought she needed to "get extra pent-up energy out." So that's exactly what she did.

Her coach was Miss Anderson Pulatinaski. Miss Pulatinaski was once a three-time Worlds gymnast, but she never made it to the Olympics because she broke her ankle very badly and wasn't able to compete. So she settled in New Jersey and opened a gym. But Miss Pulatinaski hated running the gym and doing all its paperwork, so she hired someone else to work the gym and she started coaching there.

Adelaide was Miss Pulatinaski's favorite because she never cared what anyone thought. This made Adelaide special to Miss Pulatinaski.

One day while Adelaide was working on her punch front tucks into the foam pit, a poster caught her eye.

TEAM TRYOUTS NEXT MONTH ON  
THE 21st  
TWO HOURS OF HARDCORE  
GYMNASTICS

"Wow," said Adelaide. "Do you think I could try out?" she asked Miss Pulatinaski.

"I think you could make the team, but are you sure you want to be on the team?" asked Miss Pulatinaski.

"Of course!" shouted Adelaide.

"Alright," Miss Pulatinaski said.

So Adelaide signed up for tryouts.

And on the twenty-first of May, Tumble Town Gymnastics hadn't been this crowded since . . . well, ever. Adelaide felt very intimidated and was so nervous she almost threw up. But Adelaide walked into the gym and stretched with everyone who was trying out. Then they did back handsprings and front handsprings

## When she got home, she looked up on her computer “ways to get out of gymnastics.”

and then punch front tucks into the foam pit and then round-off back handsprings and then round-off double back handsprings.

One hour later, Adelaide was very tired. Just kidding. She wasn't tired at all. Two hours later she was really, really tired. No joke. She went home and fell on her bed exhausted. The next day she heard she had made the team and was ecstatic.

### *Two Years Later*

“Okay, people. Line up and go home,” said Adelaide's coach. Which Adelaide was really excited to do because in the last couple weeks she had started disliking gymnastics more and more. When she got home, she looked up on her computer “ways to get out of gymnastics.”

She found a bunch of answers:

1. Fake sick.
2. Skip it.
3. Find another sport.
4. Tell your coach you won't come anymore.

Adelaide hated gymnastics because Miss Pulatinaski had retired and Adelaide had started going to the gym more and more and more and more and learning harder skills, and it ate away at her love of the sport. It was obvious Adelaide was unhappy when she was doing the trickiest skill the team would allow at a competition and fell. She didn't hurt herself seriously, but she did sprain her wrist and was pulled out of the competition.

Something snapped in Adelaide that day.

That night she went to Miss Pulatinaski's house, like she always did when she had problems, and explained herself to her old coach. Miss P. understood and told her to either find a new sport or take a break, which is exactly what Adelaide did: took a break.

She started running around her block over and over again to stay exercised; even though she did not love running, she figured out that she could run really fast. She realized after a while she was really good and that running was actually really fun. She then tried out for the track and field team at her school and made it!

Adelaide started to get very serious about running and soon tried out for more advanced and prestigious running teams until she found herself face to face with the Olympic trials.

It was the night before the trials, and Adelaide's running coach was in her hotel sleeping because it was literally 10 p.m., which was pretty late for Adelaide, but Adelaide couldn't sleep because of nerves. She decided to call her parents, but since it was 10, they didn't answer.

Adelaide decided to call Miss Pulatinaski. She answered and sounded pretty worried at first but calmed down and asked what was wrong, and Adelaide told her. Miss P. told her she was going to be okay and that even if Adelaide didn't go to the Olympics, she would still be proud of

her. This didn't really make Adelaide feel better, but she agreed and hung up.

The next day Adelaide woke up and did not feel in the least bit tired. Adrenaline pumped through her as she ran around the track with her team. Then, she headed down to the big building where the trials would be held.

After a short break, the coach who would be judging told Adelaide and her teammates to run around the track until she blew her whistle. Adelaide started running and the adrenaline pumped through her again as she ran around the track once, then twice, then three times, then four, and then five. It seemed to go on forever, and as the coach blew her whistle, Adelaide's lungs felt like they were on fire. On her break, Adelaide replayed the moment in her head over and over and over again until she caught her flaws and perfections.

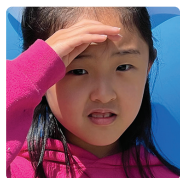
Then she went back to do it all over again, and when she saw her score, she knew that she was going to be a star because Adelaide Collins was going to the Olympics for running, something she would never in a million years have thought she would be doing.



*Forgotten Moon* (Sony Alpha a5100)  
Anna Koontz, 13  
New York, NY

# The Mysterious Case of the Cat in a Glass of Water

After her beloved owner dies, Mayhem invents a game to find a new, equally caring, friend



By Ellie Wang, 9  
Sammamish, WA

*Inspired by T.S. Eliot's poem  
"The Naming of Cats"*

It was a dark time for animals. Wise elephants were dying. Raptors and other birds had lost their homes. Polar bears were still swimming for their lives. Baby penguins, because they cannot swim, were drowning. Unmindful people were stepping on snails. Fearful owners were abandoning their pets who could spread new, lethal viruses. Pet cats and dogs were kidnapped and then returned for reward money.

In this dreadful time, a cat named Mayhem wanted to have some fun with humans. Besides, her owner had died, leaving her abandoned. She didn't really want to become a feral cat. She longed to find a new, right owner. So, when she learned of a new way to use her secret name to serve this purpose, she was elated.

She found one of the portals for "cats only" in the nearby city park on a picnic table by the water fountain. The forever-green park was always relaxing. The old oaks, chestnuts,

and elms were relaxing deep into their roots in the cool earth. The bookworms, leaning against their trunks, were relaxing. The mallard ducks in the pond were relaxing. The reeds, the wind, the fish, and even the water were relaxing. The blind walking with their guide dogs were relaxing. The gardeners were relaxing into their work, the grass was relaxing, the roses, poppies, peonies, water lilies—all were relaxing. Only the police were vigilant, and the weeds were stressed.

There, feeling calm and relaxed, Mayhem spoke her secret name at the portal, leaving behind an optical illusion of herself inside a glass full of water.

Mayhem first explored the feline world. She found it as dark as black pepper and very cozy—a perfect refuge for cats. All cats in the world could secretly go there to party with all of their friends and enjoy everything they could possibly want! From there, Mayhem could always return to her water-glass portal and, through a special lens, inspect people



**Yet reflected sunlight through the glass of water, unfortunately, caught the man's eye, so he stopped to stare at—oh, my gosh—the cat in the water glass!**

and play her game. Every day, when people would pause, curious about her image reflected in the water, Mayhem would speak to them:

"If you want to save me, guess my second name, and if you guess correctly, you will receive a reward."

In the feline world, one of Mayhem's friends asked, "Why are you so interested in humans?"

Mayhem explained that she was trying to find an owner.

Her friend replied, "If you do find an owner, please visit us daily, or I will miss you."

Mayhem nodded and smiled. "Of course. I will come back daily, and I will never forget you."

Another cat came by and said to Mayhem, "Why do you want to find an owner? I think the cat world is great."

"I want to find an owner because it is a love that nothing can beat. So whenever a person tries to guess my name, I need to be behind the scenes, ask questions, and study the person's characteristics to learn if she or he merely wants a reward or truly wants to save my life." She never told any of her cat friends that she had planned to accept the guessed name only if the person had shown true care for her.

Mayhem soon saw a person strolling through the park reading a newspaper. He smelled like sweat and rotten eggs. *Yuck*, thought Mayhem. *How gross. I would prefer an owner smelling of catnip.* Yet reflected sunlight through the glass of water,

unfortunately, caught the man's eye, so he stopped to stare at—oh, my gosh—the cat in the water glass! Unsuspecting a real cat listening nearby, he laughed out loud.

"So ridiculous! A cat in a water glass?"

Mayhem thought him mean, but because she wanted some fun, she encouraged him: "Perhaps your guess will be just as ridiculous!"

Embarrassed by the hidden cat's voice, he became serious. "Okay, I will try to guess your name."

"Definitely not a person who could be my rightful owner," Mayhem grumbled to herself.

"Is it Leggy?"

"No," replied Mayhem.

"Is it Koko?"

"Sorry, Koko isn't the right name."

"I give up. Besides, I'm due at work in five minutes."

As he walked away from the water glass, folding his newspaper, Mayhem felt relieved and patiently waited since the park would be full of people during the noon hour.

After a minute, a high school boy saw her. "Haha, a cat in a water glass! Someone must have painted it!"

To Mayhem it looked like he had painted himself. He wore a funky hat with dots and splashes of vibrant colors, a plain blue shirt and pants splashed with the same vibrant colors, and his shoes were jolly-looking, being unmatched. He himself was as white as blank paper, except for a painted monkey on his

cheek. He also smelled like caramel candy. *He's a person who loves to laugh and to make others laugh too*, Mayhem discerned and, rolling her eyes, said, "I'm real, not painted. Do you want to save me?"

The boy blithely replied, "Oh, a talking cat that doesn't appear at all to be afflicted by water. You must be a joke." And he walked away.

Back in the cat world, Mayhem took a nap. A dozen people had tried to guess her name, all of them wanting the reward. She returned to her post for the after-school kids.

A kid soon walked by, engaged in reading an *All About Science* book. He wore large, round-rimmed glasses and a navy blue-and-grey school uniform. He looked up to the cat in the water glass and politely said, "Hi, my name is Joe. What's your name?"

Mayhem thought, *How nice!* "My name is Mayhem."

Joe stared at Mayhem and observed, "Looks like you're stuck in a water glass. My father told me that if I guess your name correctly, I can save you!"

Mayhem nodded in agreement. Quite unexpectedly, and to her dismay however, Joe suddenly turned to announce, "Oh, look down! There's a big yellow snail! I want a closer look at its beautiful spiraling shell and to add it to my snail collection!"

As he knelt down at the foot of the water fountain, Mayhem frowned and sighed. "He is way too curious and easily distracted to be my owner. I suspect he would ignore me most of the time."

Soon, the kids lessened as the sun began to set and shadows

lengthened. Just as Mayhem began to fall asleep from the day's wearying task, running footsteps alerted her. A middle-aged woman zoomed by, a streak of grey hair, pale pink T-shirt, and cyan pants. Not at all curious or concerned about the cat in the water glass, she briskly waved at Mayhem and breathlessly spoke: "Sorry! Can't guess now. I'm late! Late for a very important birthday!"

Mayhem reflected as the woman disappeared. *I bet she's always running late. Bet she hurries through her whole life. Why, if she needs to arrive at her work thirty minutes after she eats breakfast, she might unwittingly pour my food on the floor instead of in the bowl.*

The next morning, Mayhem woke, yawning and stretching through her mad cat, keen to find her new owner. As full of hopes for the new day as Mayhem, the human world was also full of cars, but it was raining and the park was practically empty.

Finally a long- and grey-bearded person walked by in a police uniform. "Hello there, kitty! What's your name?" he formally asked.

Mayhem formally replied, "I am Mayhem. Guess my second name, and you will liberate me from this prison."

The policeman smiled, but his smile wasn't normal: it hid a smirk, "Well, that would be a change. My job is to capture, arrest, and imprison, not liberate. Why should I liberate you?"

"I'm loyal to my friends, and I was loyal to my owner who died."

"Okay, I'll give it a go." After thinking for several long minutes, he

## Only one person truly wanted to save Mayhem.

finally asked, "Is it Peter?"

Mayhem thought, *Thinking this long just for a very common name? He is not using his heart to study my temperament. Temperament is key to finding suitable names!*

She replied, "No, Peter is not my name, and you have to go to work now, don't you?"

He nodded and spoke: "Good luck! I hope you find a better liberator than me."

Next, a person wearing a deerstalker and a brown coat stopped. "Ah, you're the cat I've been searching for! I'm Detective Dan. I solve cases, and I've been asked to solve the case of the cat in the water glass."

When Detective Dan aggressively reached into her water glass to rescue her, Mayhem realized he himself was a case in need of rescuing.

"The way to rescue me is to guess my name."

"Oh, the Rumpelstiltskin game?"

Mayhem responded: "Yes, before you do anything else, let's play the Rumpelstiltskin game. You just need to guess my name."

Detective Dan shook his head and continued to inspect the glass of water. He was just about to flip the glass over when Mayhem begged, "Please. You might get a reward!"

Detective Dan thought for a moment and said, "Fine, I will play the game with you, partly because I may receive a reward."

Mayhem thought, *Good. Now he is distracted from solving the water-*

*glass puzzle. In fact, he was so easily distracted that he is probably a new detective. Yet, he may truly care for me. I need more evidence.*

First Detective Dan guessed, "Is it Penny?"

Mayhem shook her head, not wanting to be associated with such a low value.

"You seem to be so graceful. Is it Bomballarina?" Detective Dan guessed again.

But again, Mayhem shook her head, unconvinced that he cared for her. Besides, she remembered that only when she had offered a prize had Dan started to guess her name. Detective Dan guessed many more names, yet Mayhem still found him more determined to win the game than caring. Finally Detective Dan gave up.

Only one person truly wanted to save Mayhem. That person was Maya. But after introductions had been made, Maya hesitated to guess Mayhem's second name, looking very worried, so worried that Mayhem had never seen anyone this worried.

"Mayhem, I will be right back!" she urgently assured as she ran off.

As she ran off, Mayhem called out, "Thank you, Maya, for remembering my first name!"

Maya returned carrying a tray of food. Mayhem could smell the bowl of kibbles, the bowl of tuna, and another bowl of fresh, steaming milk. As she knelt down to place the tray, she spoke in warm, friendly, considerate tones. "Here, little Mayhem. Help yourself. You must be terribly

hungry. I'd give you a hug if I could," reminding Mayhem of the sweet mornings with her former owner, Miss Dorothy.

*Who had abandoned Mayhem? Or could Mayhem be feral?* Maya wondered. Still worried, her eyes widened, and she asked, "Are you still okay?"

Mayhem softly replied, "Thanks for asking. Though I appear to be drowning, I am actually in the world of cats. But if you guess my second name to save me, I can return to your world and enjoy this wonderful feast. And, if you guess correctly, you will receive a reward. Here's the clue: my second name is a family name."

Maya nodded and thought to herself.

While Maya thought of names, Mayhem wrote in her notebook: *Maya wants to save me.* Then she added a star. *Why?* Mayhem continued to write: *My faithful whiskers tell me that this genuinely kind person would make not only a great owner, but also a fine friend.* Then she spoke to Maya:

"I will give you three guesses, since you have been so kind and concerned about me."

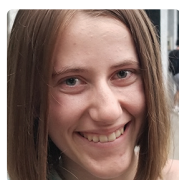
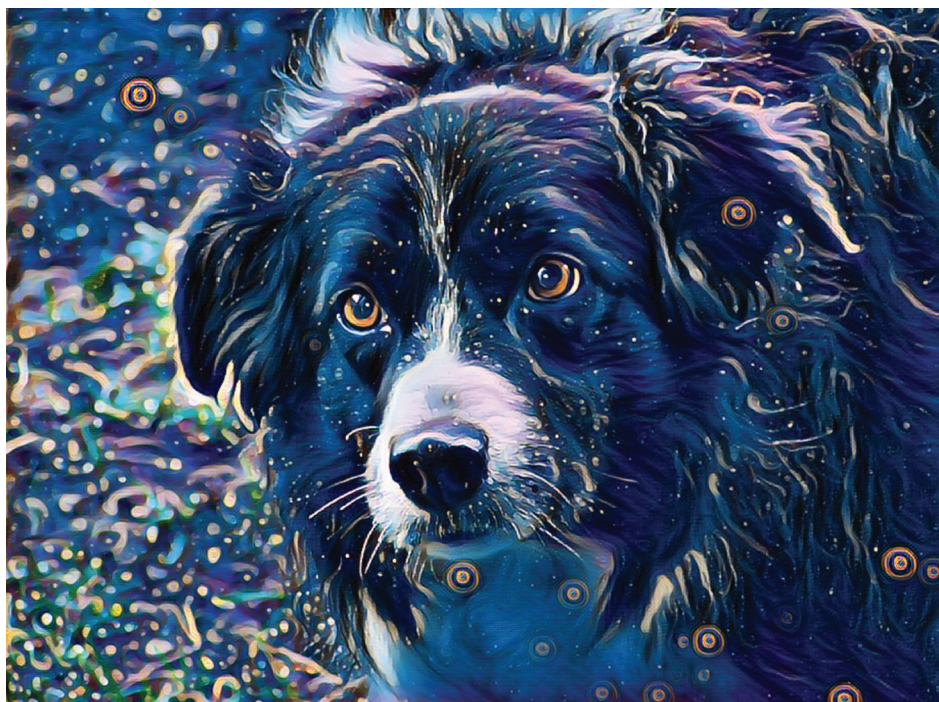
Maya guessed, "Is your family name Miracle?"

Mayhem nodded with a big smile. "Yes, Miracle is my second name! And you are my miracle, one of the family, for having saved me! Your reward is that I long to be your pet! Our reward could be that we will be good friends."

Maya replied cheerfully, "I had only wanted to save you. Now, I would love to be your owner!"

Back in the cat world, Mayhem jumped through the portal and

landed next to Maya, and they walked to their home together.



*Beautiful Blue* (Canon PowerShot SX600, Picsart)  
Sage Millen, 13  
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada



# Roo's Song



By Sevi Ann Stahl, 10  
Bend, Oregon

The fur blurr enough slow to know it's her  
that a foot or maybe a wild ear  
she turns the corner  
ripping sod, leaving a heap to run through  
as she comes leaping through the underbrush  
or meadow of our yard  
making sounds of happiness and wishing of being a car  
to vroom down those highways of pavement,  
tail spinning, she turns the next corner  
leaping, becoming a bird for one fleeting moment  
before landing with a plop on the ground  
as she skids to a stop  
finally over with her own song, Roo's song,  
of noiseless pleasure.

# Highlight from Stonesoup.com

## Flash Contest #37:

Write about a character who has everything they wanted but still isn't happy



### Gone

By Scarlet He, 10  
Scarsdale, NY

Once, in a faraway land, there was a person. Yes, a person. A plain, plain, person. This "person," Chuo, was always wanting something. Always, always wanting, wanting something.

Chuo lived in a small hut on the outskirts of Happiness Town, a town that was as happy and joyful as a buzzing bee collecting loads of pollen and nectar. A happy, happy, joyful town.

This time, Chuo wanted ice cream. He longed for the creamy texture of the ice cream and gooey consistency of his favorite syrup, Super Happy Yummy Creamy Maple Syrup. *Mmm*, he thought, already drooling at the mouth. *Super Happy Yummy Creamy Maple Syrup is my favorite*. Yes, all he thought was of what he wanted and how it was the best and his favorite. His best, best, favorite thing.

As he scrambled from his hut and into Happiness Town, flowers of the rainbow were blooming all around him, large crowds of people were zooming by, chattering like they had no care in the world, and birds sang in the distance.

"Lovely day," he greeted a person walking by him, but he really was not feeling lovely.

"I can't feel lovely until I've gotten my ice cream," he muttered to himself as he came up to the usual shining stand of the ice cream shop.

The shop had bright, bursting, beautiful colors painted on it. The wooden deck was standing on top of a large flower bed, which was exploding with color. Metal white chairs were propped on the deck, and many people wearing all sorts of clothes were occupying them. *They sure do love color*, thought Chuo, miserably.

"Three scoops of Neapolitan ice cream with a large drizzle of Super Happy Yummy Creamy Maple Syrup and black licorice gooey sprinkles," said Chuo to the cashier, who was already scooping out his ice cream.

"Here you go: \$5.00. And thank you!" replied the cashier with a humongous grin spread from the corners of his face.

Chuo paid up, then hurried to the nearest unoccupied seat with his heaping scoops of ice cream. The ice cream looked absolutely delicious; the scoops of ice cream themselves were the perfect mixture of sweet and icy cold, and they were creamy like no other. The syrup was too good to be true—the gooey, sweet rainbow sauce was dripping down the scoops of ice cream and melting into it, turning the ice cream even sweeter. It had jet-black sprinkles mixed into it, and it was shining in the sunlight. Chuo licked his lips, then dug in, snarfing up the ice cream in one huge gulp. This time, Chuo grinned a huge grin. A huge, huge, grin.

*Read the rest of Scarlet's story at <https://stonesoup.com/contests/>.*

### About the Stone Soup Flash Contests

*Stone Soup* holds a flash contest during the first week of every month. The month's first Weekly Creativity prompt provides the contest challenge. Submissions are due by midnight on Sunday of the same week. Up to five winners are chosen for publication on our blog. The winners, along with up to five honorable mentions, are announced in the following Saturday newsletter. Find all the details at [stonesoup.com/post/stone-soup-monthly-flash-contest-winners-roll/](https://stonesoup.com/post/stone-soup-monthly-flash-contest-winners-roll/).

# 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.

## STORIES

Skylar Chen, 6  
Nimek Gnahz, 9  
Yutia Li, 12  
Madeleine Reichle, 11  
Olivia Rhee, 11  
Lily Yagi, 11

## MEMOIR

Sophia Tang, 10  
Isabelle Wong, 10

## POETRY

Audrey Billington, 10  
Aidan Bosmajian, 13  
Charlotte Casey, 9  
Dylan Ecimovic, 12  
Mabel Eimicke, 10  
Bryson Mendolera, 10

## ART

Tatum Lovely, 12  
Nolan Mealer, 11

## Visit the Stone Soup Store at [Stonesoupstore.com](https://stonesoupstore.com)

### At our store, you will find . . .

- Current and back issues of *Stone Soup*
- 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!

