

StoneSoup



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Antara

StoneSoup

*The magazine supporting
creative kids around the world*

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Editor's Note

Stone Soup was founded by William Rubel and a group of students at Porter College at the University of California (UCSC) in 1972, and the first issue of *Stone Soup* was published in May 1973, 45 years ago. This past semester, I got to work on this issue with a group of eight students in a Porter College classroom at UCSC. It was exciting to hear their ideas for the magazine and to discuss their reactions to submissions as we went through the difficult process of selecting pieces for the issue. I'm very proud of the result. What ties these pieces together is a spirit of experimentation and adventure, which takes us back to the excitement of that first issue four-and-a-half decades ago. I hope this issue inspires you to try new things—whether that's a screenplay, a review of a TV show, or a short poem.

Sincerely,

This issue was created with the invaluable work of a group of dedicated readers and writers from UC Santa Cruz:

Allison Finley
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Sarah Lynn
Erin Mock
Olivia Joyce
Samantha Rozal



On the cover:
'Connected with
Nature,'
by Antara Gangwal, 10
San Jose, CA

StoneSoup

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Untitled, *tempera, watercolor, cellophane*



by Chloe Goodman, 7
Santa Cruz, CA

The Clock of Emotion

After being discarded, the clock of emotion sets out on a quest to find a new owner

“Blast you, too, clock!” Aunt Stephanie screamed, hurling the beautiful clock of emotion into a ditch behind her home. Her emotion rapidly changed to misery and loneliness. “I am ruined!” The clock seemed to tremble hauntingly as Aunt Stephanie dropped to her knees and wept, head in her hands. An owl hooted as the darkness of night fell over the city. The moon rose like a ballerina in the ash black sky. Shy stars peeked out of the blackness and twinkled. The clock of emotion seemed to shiver with the unpredictable tick of Aunt Stephanie’s emotions. One second he ticked to misery, the next to anger, the next to loneliness, and then to sleep. There Aunt Stephanie lay, on the side of the ditch, a tear still streaming down her face.

The wind whirled, the sirens rang, and voices screeched in terror. Aunt Stephanie slept and slept. Water gushed down the ditch. As the clock was being whisked away to sea, firefighters came and pulled Aunt Stephanie up from the water, dirt, and rubble of her house. Aunt Stephanie

finally woke with a jump. No one saw the clock bobbling along in the icy, harsh water, though Aunt Stephanie did seem to take one last lamenting glance at the ditch. Then, with a flick of her brown, muddy hair, she left the clock to be seized by the sea.

White gulls flew above the clock like feathery angels, occasionally swooping down and pecking at the clock, thinking it to be a fish. This was an easy mistake to make because the moon shone on the clock’s ivory back, making it stand out in the dark ocean. The clock avoided the distraction, and simply sped up, leaving the gulls to find real fish. The clock felt like he had control of the sea.

The clock went down, down, down. Finally, BUMP! The clock hit the bottom of the ocean. The clock bobbed around, sand trailing behind him. At last, a fish swam over, followed by several of his friends. All of the fish—probably a grand sum of 85—seemed to be investigating the clock. Suddenly, all of the fish began to swim away in two single-file lines, about a fish length apart. They all glowed as they swam, faintly swaying with the flow

by Elisabeth Baer, 10
Atlanta, GA



of the water. The clock quickly picked up on what the fish were trying to say: follow us.

More fish and other creatures joined the lines, making a path going down a rocky slope and then up a seamount. On top of the huge seamount, there was a hole. The clock bobbed up the hill. Suddenly, a swift change in Aunt Stephanie's emotions threw the clock off the mound, and onto the rocks beneath it. A sharp stone left a small scratch on the clock's ivory back. With a creak, the clock righted himself and made his way up the seamount, and dropped down into the hole with very little hesitation. After all, the clock went to the bottom of the ocean. The clock could go to the bottom of a hole and have utter confidence in the fish. They knew the sea.

One of the curious fish followed the clock, watching to make sure he arrived safely at his destination. The clock just kept falling, and falling, and falling.

Finally something warm, something very warm, blew up at the clock. The fish gently pushed the clock into a passage on the side of the hole, so as not to be pushed out of the mound again by a hydrothermal vent.

The passage was narrow, dark, and stuffy. The clock of emotion had to turn sideways to get through.

Then: something made out of wood appeared. As the clock neared the object, he realized it was a scary and mysterious old shipwreck, overgrown with barnacles. It was hidden underneath the seamount that encapsulated it. One half of the ship had already decayed. The fish motioned into the shipwreck, and the clock traveled in through a splintered hole on the side of the ship.

The clock took a right, then a left, then a right, and then climbed up to the deck, as conducted by the fish. Then the clock was directed by the fish to go into what would have been the captain's quarters.

Inside, behind the captain's large desk, there sat a very small person, if you could call it that. It was more like a mermaid, except its ears were the wings of a butterfly, its eyes were entirely purple, and its hair was made out of seaweed. In the language of emotion, the being said, "Tell me, what is your emotion, clock?"

The clock responded, "Confusion." "Tell me your story, and your purpose. There you will find what you want, and that will lead you out of confusion."

"My purpose is to regulate my owner's emotions. If my owner truly appreciates and seeks good times, then I make the happiness feel longer, and the bad times feel shorter. When Aunt

"If my owner truly appreciates and seeks good times, then I make the happiness feel longer, and the bad times feel shorter."

Stephanie first received me, she was young and promised to always seek good times. But it has been 47 years, and she is now lonely, miserable, and wretched. She no longer looks for the good times. In fact, she seeks nothing at all. I cannot regulate her emotions, so she threw me away. I have had many different owners since I was first created, and I have noticed a pattern among them. When my owner does not feel gratitude for the good times, then the bad times get longer, and the good times fly by. That is what happened to Aunt Stephanie. But in contrast, if my owner looks for good times and happiness, even when they are sad, then I can help them.”

“Oh, I see...” the being replied. “You want to be loved and used again. And, with you, time is not constant. Whoever finds you will be lucky. Now I shall send you on your way.”

The being stood with grace and began to swim out of the room, then down the stairs, and out the huge crack in the side of the ship. The clock banged on the sharp edge of the ship while exiting, and his scratch turned into a deep fracture. The clock and the fish followed the being through a nearly invisible hole in the ceiling. All of a sudden, the clock, the fish, and the being were at the surface of the water!

“Good luck, clock of emotion. By the way, I am the Empress of the sea.” With that, the being and the fish disappeared.

The clock floated on the waves of the ocean. Once again, gulls came to eat him, thinking he was a fish. The

rough tides swooped the clock way under the surface, and then threw the clock up in the air. Soon, the shore was in sight. The clock put all of his remaining strength into getting to the shore.

The clock washed up on shore. Children ran in the water around the clock, and parents collected shells. But there was one child, a young girl with thick, straight, black hair. She sat alone and noticed something glistening in the sand. She put down her book and walked over to see what it was. She picked it up and found it was a clock. She ran back to her seat and put it in her bag. Her parents soon walked up and said, “Let’s go home, Cecilia.”

At home, Cecilia marched to her room and began to examine the clock. She soon fell in love with it, and then felt a sudden comfort and control of her emotion. The clock had bonded with her, because she had loved it and gave it a home in her heart and mind.

The Moon and My Heart

The moon ate my heart.
My vision was tainted.
I staggered forward, uncertain.
I heard something disappear.
I think—
I am myself.

I taste the hole in my chest.
The moon's smile mocks me.
I know, I know
I am not myself—
I am merely a whisper
Of a husked heartbeat.

by Rebecca Beaver, 13
Tenafly, NJ



Miss-takes

Miss-takes are like tissues instead of icing on a cake.

Tying balloons to a garbage can made of aluminum.

Take a miss

Miss a take

Tiss a make

Aiss a ike

Eiss a takm

These are all...

Miss-takes

Dad Cut My Nails

way too short
and
now there's this feeling
you know the one
that's like scratching
sandpaper
with your teeth
or really more like
where your teeth
used to be.

by Ari Martinez, 9
Long Island City, NY





Peering Out, photograph, Nikon D3400



by Delaney Slote, 12
Missoula, MT

The Cryptic Crypt

by Sydney Burr, 11
Chino Hills, CA



One day, while writing about a girl lost in an Egyptian pyramid, a writer gets sucked into her own story

The river was my refuge. It was more of a stream, really, a tiny but powerful stream tucked into a corner of the Cascade Mountains. While my dad argued with my mom and my mom argued with my six brothers and sisters (and they argued with each other), I slipped out of the house and walked two miles to be at that magical place with the dozens of small waterfalls cascading into the water. I imagined some explorer discovering this place, long ago, and naming the entire mountain range after it. Cascading waterfalls... Cascade mountains.

I brought my journal, pen, and ink: nothing else. My “lucky rock” was a particularly large one in the center of the stream. I had to skip across stones that I had carefully placed to get to it, risking being swept away if I fell. I sat on my lucky rock and let the words rush out of my pen like one of the waterfalls around me. I wrote about everything: my pesky siblings, the beauty around me, and things I had never seen, but knew better than the real world. Some things about my writing were difficult to explain: like my use of a dip pen, or why I literally refused to write anywhere other than here. Maybe the answer to the latter question was simply that I couldn't

focus in the constant noise of home or school.

One day, I was writing about a girl lost in an Egyptian pyramid:

With each tentative step forward, Kara became more and more aware that she was hopelessly lost. Although Kara understood the many hieroglyphs on the walls, they bore no information that could help her escape. The skeletons and mummies piled in the corners didn't suddenly come alive and tell her which way to go (although Kara was glad that didn't happen, because it would have been creepy). Kara tried hard not to panic, but she couldn't help it when...

I stopped writing. The ink on my pen dripped onto my journal, making a large blot that covered up the last line I had written, but I didn't notice. Something smelled strange. It was an underground, earthy sort of smell that filled my nostrils. When I closed my eyes, I could see an underground tunnel stretching out before me.

The source of the odd smell wasn't in sight. I looked down at my journal with the intent to keep writing, but the contents began spinning before my eyes in a tornado of words, commas, and periods. They all jumbled together, and the rushing water became

inaudible.

I screamed, but my voice sounded distant and garbled, as if I were on the phone and the connection was wavering. What was happening? Was I going insane, and losing my hearing too?

I blinked, and the stream was gone. I was in a dark corridor with dust and cobwebs all around me. All I had in my hands was a torch. For a moment, I wondered where I was, but I wasn't left wondering for long once I turned to look at the wall and saw hieroglyphics there. I knew then for sure where I was, and I wasn't thrilled about it. I was inside my story, "A Cryptic Crypt."

The pyramid carried the same smell that I had caught a whiff of back in the mountains, in the real world. I never thought I would long for my siblings, or want to escape one of my own stories. It was practically my dream to be transported into one of my stories, but I never expected to feel so stuck if I was. I thought that I'd feel free, ecstatic. How I wished that I had been writing about what I usually wrote about: friendship and everyday courage and trying to make it through middle school, and those things that seemed so simple compared to this. While observing my dire predicament, I paced around the corridor and almost tripped over a cold, round object. I picked it up and dropped it with a small shriek when I realized it was a skull.

Then I felt like something was crawling up my neck. I slapped it, and it fell lifeless into my hand: it was a beetle the size of my palm, and I now noticed thousands more

creeping along the walls and floor. I really started to freak out when the torch sputtered, flickered, and went out. I tried desperately to reignite it by dragging it along the floor, but I didn't produce a single spark. All the torch gathered was beetles. I was trapped in blackness with huge beetles and skeletons, armed with nothing except for what was basically a beetle-covered stick.

"Take me back!" I shouted into the darkness. My voice echoed for several seconds around the catacombs. I didn't really expect an answer, but I was panicked.

I nearly dropped the extinguished torch when the wall was suddenly emblazoned with giant, glowing hieroglyphs that weren't there before. I couldn't read hieroglyphics, but I knew someone who could. Trying not to think about the beetles that were probably all over me, I started running down the passageway with my hands out so I wouldn't run into a wall. My own shallow breathing and the pattering of my feet were the only sounds, but I hoped to hear something else—or rather, someone else. I had to find Kara.

The pyramid seemed bigger than the entire state of Washington. I wandered around through its winding passageways for hours. Once, I came to a five-way fork in the path. I listened at every corridor, one by one, for any sounds that might indicate another human's presence, but none of the corridors looked promising. I just muttered "eeny meeny miney moe" and took the path I ended up pointing at. It proved to be a mistake, because I was more lost than ever.

Here was someone that I had created on paper as a living, breathing, three-dimensional human being standing right in front of me.

I was in such a terrible situation that the sound of someone yelling a little further down the passage excited me more than it frightened me. Who could it be except Kara?

Someone almost knocked me over as they barreled past me. Whoever it was held a torch, which illuminated the passage around me. It also meant that they could see me, and so they screeched to a stop.

The stranger was a girl in faded blue jeans, a plain black T-shirt, and suspenders. This was very confusing to me, because I had never seen someone in suspenders except in photos. I lived in Washington, not Kansas. The girl also had hazel eyes, raven-black hair held up in a messy ponytail, and a tan.

“What are you doing here?” asked Kara.

I couldn't believe it. Here was someone that I had created on paper as a living, breathing, three-dimensional human being standing right in front of me. There was something else that shocked me even more, though: other than the obvious difference in what we were wearing, Kara looked exactly like me.

We stared at each other for a moment.

“Okay, whoever you are, a long-lost twin sister of mine or someone who just happens to look just like me—RUN!” Kara ended with a yell. She grabbed my hand and pulled me down

the passageway behind her.

“What's going on? What are we running from?” I asked bewilderedly, trying to keep up so Kara didn't accidentally pull my arm out of its socket.

“The skeletons are alive!” she hollered. I noted that the skeletons we were now passing by seemed about as alive as my little sister's Barbie dolls, but the crashing from behind us, skeletons or not, was enough to keep me moving.

“What are you doing here, anyway?”

“I'm from Oklahoma. I had to be stupid enough to go and sneak inside the Great Pyramid. Some vacation this is shaping up to be! Say, what are you doing here?”

“I'm from Washington—” I hesitated for a moment. Should I make up a story quick, or be honest and lose the little trust that Kara had in my sanity? I probably should have thought more about it before I blurted out, “I created you!”

“What? You're crazy!”

“We're in a story I wrote.” I stopped dead and wheeled around to face behind us. Kara stopped, too. I must not have been the only one to hear it: a rattling, whirring noise, different from the crashing we had been hearing. It sounded strangely like my family's washing machine.

“What's that?”

A pile of something rained on us,

and it wasn't water. It was a pile of words. I could make out the words "vacation," "Washington," "created," and "story."

"This has happened every few minutes since I got to Egypt. I don't get it at all. Is it a thing in the desert or something?" said Kara, breaking into a run again as the crashing of the skeletons grew louder, and dragging me along.

I laughed.

"What's so funny?" asked Kara. "We're being chased by skeletons here!"

"We're in a story I wrote, but we're writing more as we speak! That's why it keeps raining words!"

"Okay, fine, let's just say I believe you now and leave it at that. So you're making the skeletons chase after us?"

"Well, no..."

"But you said we're in a story that you created."

"That doesn't mean I can keep it from taking on a life of its own!"

"You can't control it anymore?"

I chuckled nervously. "Not exactly—" I was cut off yet again—this time by a slimy hand grabbing me by the ankle. "Help!" I shouted, trying to pull my ankle out of the skeleton's grip as another hand curled around my other ankle.

"Help you? I hardly know you!" said Kara, but she stopped running anyway and turned to face the skeletons. "I must be crazy," she muttered, and she pulled something out of her back pocket. It was a scroll, and I could see hieroglyphs on it as she unrolled it. She started reading the scroll, and it almost sounded like an incantation. "Arwah almawtaa..."

"Hurry up!" I screamed, as another bony hand closed around my throat. Struggling to breathe, I wondered what would happen if I died in the story. Whatever the answer was, I didn't want to think about it.

Kara finally finished with a fierce cry of the words "...min ayn atayt!" The skeletons crumbled to dust. Gasping for breath, I stared at Kara in awe. "How'd you do that?"

"It's ancient Egyptian magic," answered Kara, panting.

"Like in the *Kane Chronicles*?"

"What are the *Kane Chronicles*?"

"They're books by Rick Riordan... What year is it?"

"1965. Why do you ask?"

"Just curious. Say, I'd been looking for you for hours before I bumped into you. There's something I need to show you, and I think it could help us both get out of here if you can decipher it!"

We set off again through the catacombs—but this time, I was leading.

Bugs are the Future!

A Screenplay

SYNOPSIS

When two boys sit down in a school cafeteria for lunch, one gets a lesson he'll never forget.

Author's note: When the topic of food stability comes up, I always point out that insects are better for us and more sustainable. I get reactions close to this every time I bring it up. This scene is an exaggerated version of that reaction.

CHARACTER LIST

BENJAMIN Male, ten years. Always the guy in the background. The guy that helps people when they're hurt. The kind of guy that doesn't like being "in the light," so to speak.

JACOB Male, nine years. Would be considered a "nerd." Is very smart, and talks very fast. Gets bullied a lot.

by Oliver Jacobs, 12
Tallahassee, FL





Among the Asparagus, photograph, Canon Powershot Elph160



**by Ula Pomian, 12
Ontario, Canada**

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

TWO FRIENDS, JACOB and BENJAMIN, are sitting down to eat their lunches. JACOB takes the meat out of his sandwich and puts it to the side with disgust.

JACOB

I wonder why the cooks always put meat in these sandwiches.

BENJAMIN

(Looking confused)

Yesterday you were wondering why they didn't put more meat on the sandwiches.

JACOB

(Still looking at the sandwich, more disappointed than disgusted)

I thought this school would have made the change.

BENJAMIN

(Looking even more confused)

What change!

(Looks around, getting more and more confused)

Does this have to do with school?

JACOB looks at BENJAMIN, surprised that he didn't hear the news that everyone knows about.

JACOB

Come on! We should all reduce our carbon footprint.

BENJAMIN

Wait... what does meat have to do with our our carbon footprint?!

JACOB looks up as if making a list in his head.

JACOB

Well, cows, chickens, and like, sheep are causing global warming!

BENJAMIN

Has...

(sighs)

Has your sister told you this?

JACOB

(Looking at BENJAMIN with disbelief)

NO!

(Calmly)

I saw it on the TV.

BENJAMIN

Really? So, what did it say?

JACOB

Well...

(tilting his head)

...it said something about farts, nutrition, factory fumes...

BENJAMIN

HOLD THE PHONE! Farts?

JACOB

(Fast-paced and excited)

Did you know that cow and sheep farts are releasing methane into the air?! Whatever that is.

BENJAMIN

Isn't that a gas?

JACOB

I think so.

BENJAMIN

Wait! Nutrition?

JACOB

Yeah! Nutrition. It said something like... we should stop eating land-based backboned animals, and we should all start eating INSECTS!

(BENJAMIN'S face sinks into horror.)

Yeah, I've been doing some research....

BENJAMIN

WHAT! WHAT!! INSECTS!!!

JACOB

(Calmly)

OK... So I was saying...

BENJAMIN
WHAT IS GOING ON IN MY LIFE?!?!?

JACOB
(A little bit aggravated)
Yeah, and I was going to—

BENJAMIN
(Cutting off JACOB for the third time)
NO!!! I AIN'T GOING TO DO THAT, NO WAY, NO WAY! NO NO
NO!

(Getting faster)
NO, NO, NOOOOO!

JACOB
(Aggravated)
YEAH, and I was going to ss—

BENJAMIN
—No way I'm eating spiders!

BENJAMIN closes his eyes and takes a deep breath. A couple of beats pass.

JACOB
You're calm now, right?

BENJAMIN
(Still taking deep breaths)
Yeah. I'm still not eating spiders.

JACOB
(In a "matter of fact" voice)
Well, Spiders are ARACHNIA, not insects—

BENJAMIN
Whatever! Anyway, you get what I mean.

JACOB
No, I don't "get what you mean."

BENJAMIN
I AM NOT EATING ANY INVERTEBRATES!

JACOB
Why?

BENJAMIN

What do you mean, “Why”

JACOB

Why?

BENJAMIN

(Very certain)

They’re spiders.

JACOB

(Exasperated)

Once again...

(sighs)

spiders are—

BENJAMIN

NO!

(Aggressively but softer, softly and grumbly)

I don’t care or know about any of that until now.

(Louder)

I don’t trust this TV show.

JACOB

It was on National Geographic!

BENJAMIN

(Slowly)

OK, that’s a little bit better.

JACOB

(SLOWLY at first, then FAST)

I’ve been doing some research on food sources, especially incredibly sustainable ones, and I think I have found the perfect spot to find the perfect food!

(Waits a couple of seconds then says a little too loud than allowed for the cafeteria)

COCKROACHES!

JACOB points off-screen. BENJAMIN’S face sinks into disbelief and horror. BENJAMIN starts to take deep breaths, but his whole body is tightening up.

BENJAMIN

(Very softly)

Wh—wha—what—?

JACOB, completely oblivious, picks up a container with some MEALWORMS in it.

JACOB

Sadly I could only find some mealworms at the pet store.
They were out of cockroaches...

BENJAMIN

(Still taking deep breaths)

B—b—bu—but... B—b—but...

JACOB

(Still COMPLETELY oblivious)

Mind you there are quite a lot of cockroaches in the kitchen,
but they most likely have diseases, because they're not
farmed. It wouldn't be much of a change because—

BENJAMIN holds his stomach as if almost regurgitating.

JACOB (CONT'D)

We already eat about half a cockroach a day!

BENJAMIN gets more and more horrified.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Through breathing!

BENJAMIN stops breathing and opening his mouth.

JACOB (CONT'D)

And just opening and closing our mouths.

BENJAMIN takes both of his hands and claps them over his mouth. JACOB shrugs then picks up his sandwich (without meat) and adds mealworms to it. As he bites into the sandwich, BENJAMIN faints, his face falling into his food.

CUT TO BLACK

THE END

The Avocado Tree

by Sara Chebili, 13
Washington, D.C.



The chair by the avocado tree had turned a faded green from wear
For years it sat untouched behind the orange-red sunsets
Built for the old lady with the fishing hat who kept forgetting
Its purpose was to help her remember
To stay in the present of the ink-washed sand
And it stayed there till the time of her grandson
Sitting by the murky green water with his homework
Reminding them of all the beautiful sunrises and afternoon checker games played
And his days looking at the intriguing graphite numbers on bleached paper
But before then he would wonder if his grandmother would ever be the same again
If she would ever remember who he was without a lost look on her face

One day

Looking at the plants by the seaweed strewn about
He took a nearby avocado seed and buried it into the sandy ground
He began to take the wood from his backyard to build a chair
Hoping it would help her remember
He tended to them day by day
From the mornings spent on his work
To the afternoons sat with the wood
Sanding and painting it as the tree grew
And he worked right by the shore with the graphite numbers and the wood
Making progress as time went on
Eventually the chair sat next to the tree
And one day the lady with the fishing hat sat in the chair with the tree
And remembered the difference that was made

Light and Darkness



by Carly Vermillion, 10
Indianapolis, IN

I was at the pond one day, feeding the fish, under the hot sun. When clouds have a conversation with the sun. A cool wave of air touches my fingers and toes. The fish swim down to the bottom of the river.

I was at the dinner table one night, eating the fat fish I caught, under the stars, the only things lighting the sky. When the lights shut off and flickered. My family rushed to their bedrooms, scared and worried. Even me, the bravest of the group, put down my fish liver.

I was in my bedroom one morning, staring at my light switch. "What am I going to do in this hatred?" I thought. So I went to my window and spread out my curtains. My next trip was to flip up the light switch.

I was at my desk one afternoon, thinking about my math, when it started sprinkling. "Anything but rain," I moaned. Suddenly, it started to storm with thunder and lightning partnering together. Maybe the Sun and Moon now switch.



Untitled, *tempera, watercolor, cellophane*



by Reed Skelton, 8
Santa Cruz, CA

Swept-Up Fish

by Sabrina Feldberg, 12
Potomac, MA



Her family has just left freezing Chicago for sunny San Francisco, and Carrie is like a fish out of water in her new home

The beach was gorgeous. The glittering blue waves lapped onto the shore; they kindly slapped away small children who got too close to the foamy current. Up where I was watching the scene, the sand was lying peacefully, a tinged butter-yellow color, burned as a victim of the Sun, sifting like powder through my toes and occasionally producing a tiny crab here or there. The faint breeze carried a strong scent of sea salt from the coast, and I gazed again upon the children who had gone all the way down there, deeper to the cold, wet, sand. I thought of when I had charged my toes under it for a few seconds before (and had then quickly run up to the warm sand), watching the current make the sand appear as if it was escaping me, as if I was sliding further away, sweeping shells and fish that belonged there. If only a current could sweep me back into Chicago again, I thought. If only. But here, as if to taunt me, I saw a sign flapping in the wind by the beach gate. “Welcome to San Francisco Bay!” it read; and enough said, too. I did not need to be reminded.

As I ate my shrimp po-boy, which was also emitting a salty fume—only a stale reminder of the fact that I was here, not at home—my mother, father,

and twin brothers chatted next to me with food cramped in their mouths. They didn’t mind being stuffed; I think they wanted to “do as the Romans do” in Rome, except San Francisco, of course. In unison, other families were either docked under an umbrella to eat or playing at the shore, vulnerable to being swept up by a salty wave.

It was a “celebration” of our moving here, and my family posed as ordinary Californians retiring to the beach during the long summer holiday. No wonder we, former Chicagoans, blended into the crowd; there were so many people that were minding their own business here. They would never guess that we had actually moved here in the midsummer; my mom had found a new job. I clenched my teeth inside my mouth at the sight of how pleased she looked. It was all her fault; all of the moving, everything—even choosing such a breathtaking place to replace home. Nothing will make me want to replace Chicago, though. When my ears came back to their senses, I heard the chatter of my family.

“Can Henry and I go to the water?” my brother, George, asked with pleading eyes to my mother. They were both 12-years-old, but George

was just a minute older. I was 15, and already considered myself (if I were to be a Californian, after all) a sit-and-sunbathe kind of teen. At least they had apparently not been in Chicago long enough to miss its long winters.

"Of course. Carrie, would you like to join?" my mom asked. She had chestnut-brown hair and eyes like me, and a sort of electric, party vibe came from her. I knew she was already loving this more than Chicago.

"No thanks," I grumbled. "This is the worst vacation ever. Take me back to Chicago!" I spat, feeling a lump of angry heat in my throat as I said it. I didn't want to take it back. My parents put on empathetic frowns and offered me ice cream, but I dismissed that as well. I'll admit, I wanted it, but I continued to glare at my parents and pretend in my head that they were the meanest people on Earth.

I bathed in the sun afterward, and the heat seemed to steam around me. It also made my skin look pinkish. Strange, I thought. Sunburn doesn't happen that quickly. Soon, I noticed my sunglasses were beside me, and my skin a scaly texture. To my horror, I saw my arms turn to tiny fins and my legs into a small tail. I was becoming a fish. And when I had transformed up to my mouth, I had trouble breathing. Water, is all I thought. Water. I need water. Flopping (literally) breathlessly around the sand, I assessed my situation. Closest water? Nowhere. This was it, and I didn't want to die a fish. I was hyperventilating, my gills opening and closing rapidly.

Just as my eyes started fluttering, and I felt a harsh feeling of restfulness

and giving up, I felt a human hand squeeze me gently. Then I heard my body "plop" into a pail of salty water, and it felt amazing. My savior was a small child that looked like a toddler, and he peered into my new tank as if I were a lab specimen. For all I knew, I could have been. Then, with a giddy smile, he called his parents and showed them me. I was on display, and my fish nerves didn't like it. Unluckily, my fish nerves also wanted to skedaddle, and do so they did. I sprang out from the bucket and onto the scorching hot sand. If I had not been in a bucket of water before, I wouldn't have had enough time in consciousness to gather myself and create a somewhat plan (though, for a fish, I reflect that I couldn't have thought of anything better). First, with my fish eyes alert for finding water, I found a sandcastle moat, a watery hole someone was digging, and, for closers, the coast of the ocean. This meant a journey of hopping from water to water to get to the coast.

After taking these quick notes, I flopped up to the moat. Easily enough, I slid in. I was just swimming around to the other side when my fins froze in the action—I was having one of those tense, instinctive moments. I shivered, and my eyes darted fearfully to my left, where I had felt something alongside me. A crab, about twice the size of my fish form, had crawled its way right up next to me! My body shook, and again I sprang inconveniently out of the water.

Unfortunately, this crab could, too. And breathing. I flopped away from it quicker than ever before, in the

direction of the watery hole I had seen before. The crab was too fast, and I figured I would have to use the small sense of human knowledge I still retained. I decided to flop on top of the sand just enough to get under it. By the time the crab came crawling along, I was quite covered in sand. Once he had scampered away, I flopped rapidly to the watery hole and swam peacefully for about five minutes. There were two people going to and from the coast to gather buckets rimmed with water, and I enjoyed the water the people brought to me. In the moment of relaxation, I gathered my thoughts and thought more like a human. I wondered if I would always be a fish, and if I would never see my family again this far down the beach. They might always remember me as the annoyed teen that I was before I mysteriously left. My moment of quiet did not last for long though, because the current took an unexpected sprint toward the hole, going a long way from the shore and filling up the hole with sand. I, meanwhile, had been taken and, to my delight, was now on the coast at last. I swam around the shallow bits, searching for where on the beach my family would be. All of a sudden, I saw a surfboard come toward me, and my world turned blank.

I don't know how long I was unconscious as a fish, but when I awoke I was back into a human again. But I was wet. According to my mom, I had been floating in the water knocked out, and the person who was in charge, a surfer, took me to the lifeguards who then brought me

to my family. And my mom, I quote, had "just known" when she heard an unconscious teenager was found "alone, hopelessly about to drown" that it was me. My cheeks burned slightly red when I heard the last part, and I was glad the change didn't mean turning into a fish. I smiled and thanked my family for helping me, and they accepted my change in attitude. As the waves curved around and swept up many stray fish in the ocean, I admitted how beautiful it was.

"The beach was gorgeous," I remarked, when we had returned to our new home at dusk. I was already forming a story about the day in my head that would start with just that.

The City

Stoplights reflect off the bay
The faint sound of glasses clinking and people talking is carried on the breeze
The moon is shrouded by clouds
Towering buildings blink with neon lights
A lone car drives across a scarlet bridge

Wildfire

Say one sentence
An ember sparks
Say another
Wind blows and swirls
One more
A wildfire



by Karinne Ulrey, 10
Los Gatos, CA



Orange Landscape, watercolor and colored pencils



**by Eli Breyer Essiam, 10
Cambridge, MA**

The Missing Piece



by Lucy Zanker, 11
Houston, TX

What will happen when Laika's mischievous robotic brother accidentally launches them into outer space?

"Wake up, Tommy," I said. Tommy, my thirteen-year-old robotic brother (he really is a robot—no kidding) needs to wake up! He always walks with me to school. He likes to sleep, though. And eat. And sleep some more. Oh, and get into trouble. It's not like our dad cares. He's too busy being the Big Cheese at NASA. Not that I care. He never pays a bit of attention to us. I mean come on, it's not like paying us attention costs \$100.

"Laika, school was cancelled in Houston today because the Astros won the World Series last night," Tommy mumbled into his pillow. That was when I hit the roof.

"But we have our fifth grade bake sale at school today!" I groaned. "Why did the Astros have to win?" I muttered.

"Why did the Astros have to win? So I could sleep in!" Tommy pumped his fist in the air.

"You and your darn sleep," I muttered under my breath.

"Hey, I heard that!" Tommy threw a pillow at my face.

"Laika, you and Tommy are going to have to come with me to the office because there is no school today," Dad said as I stomped downstairs.

Nooooooo. I hate the office. It's so boring. Too much math and calculations.

"What about a babysitter?" I asked nervously.

"Are you kidding me? After how you two were playing hide-and-seek in the washing machine? Absolutely not," Dad said.

"Mom would have gotten us a babysitter."

"Can you not bring up Mom's death every time we argue?!" Dad huffed. Man do I wish that Mom hadn't died because Dad really just lost the ability to love and care.

As I looked out the window of our car, I thought about all the other kids in Houston who are sleeping in or watching a movie or playing video games while I have to go to the most boring office ever. Life is really annoying sometimes.

"Okay, Tommy, at the office you're not going to do anything that will get me into trouble. Go reboot or update yourself. I don't know, just don't get into trouble," I said.

"All right, sheesh. Don't get yourself in such a frenzy," Tommy huffed.

I tried to prepare myself for the

office. I brought a stack of books by James Patterson. I hoped that having the books would help with the boredom.

"We're here," Dad said.

Dad's office was big. I had to give it to him. The ceiling was a huge cupola like the churches you see in movies. The office smelled of brain power, math, and rockets. I'm not sure if a room can smell like those things, but somehow it did. I hate those smells. The room had white walls and machines everywhere. Every nanometer was covered by a machine. Oh, and coffee. There were scientists running around with coffee in plastic cups, mugs, and thermoses. Actually, it also smelled like coffee.

"Alright, kids: listen up. Stay where I can see you. NO MESSING AROUND. You hear me? I am working on a rocket that will go up into outer space in three days and we only have to install the return gear. So I need this work day. Got it?" Dad drilled.

"Chill, Dad. We get it," Tommy said.

"That's what you say every time..."

"Dad! I'm going to go read!" I called out. Two hours later, I finished my books. I looked around to make sure that Tommy was within Dad's peripheral vision. But, as usual, he wasn't there. I didn't worry. Yet. I just assumed he went to recharge at the power station. I checked there, but no robot. That's when I began to worry.

"Tommy, Tommy! This isn't funny anymore! Come out from your hiding spot right now!" I hollered. I peeked around a corner hoping that Tommy would be there. But nope. I checked around every door. Or so I thought... I popped my head around the last

corner and... Oh, wow. I saw a huge room with a rocket that almost scraped the paint off the ceiling, with a catwalk that led into it.

Then I heard a banging. I cautiously crept inside to go investigate. "Hello? Is there anybody there? I'm looking for my robotic brother," I called out. The inside was round and filled with buttons and switches and technology. There was a cockpit, a fridge, sleeping quarters, and a tube-like thing. I looked out a window, and I saw a bunch of scientists in white coats scurrying around. Then I heard the banging again and followed it. It led to... Tommy. He was camouflaged with all the buttons!

"Tommy, what on earth are you doing here?!" I yelled.

"I was bored. Duh. Weren't you?"

Tommy shrugged. I was so mad. If we had been in one of those cartoons on television, steam would have been coming out of my ears. Actually, steam was coming out of my ears.

"Sir, you're coming with me. We're getting out of here before Dad realizes we're gone. And don't even think about touching anything," I commanded. We passed by another window that I hadn't seen earlier. As I looked out the window, my mind began to wander and think about how cool it would be to go to space.

"I wonder what this big red button does," Tommy said.

"Tommy, don't touch the launch button!" I cried out. Too late. He had pressed the button. Then I felt a deep, low, hollow rumble. The rocket was beginning to launch. We ran for the doors, but they closed just as we got

there.

“Now commencing countdown. Ten, nine, eight, seven, six...” a female voice said over a loudspeaker.

“Tommy, what are we going to do?”

“This is awesome! We’re going to fly on a real rocket!”

“Super helpful, Tommy.”

The rocket rose into the sky like a giant coming out of his 200-year slumber. I looked out the window and the houses, fields, and buildings shrank and got warped as they got blasted with ignition fire. As the rocket lifted into the sky, it got darker, and darker, until it was as black as obsidian, with millions of tiny glittering diamonds flashing in space.

The next thing I knew, I couldn’t feel my body. I felt weightless. I was floating! “AWESOME!” I said. After a moment, I realized how quiet it was. You could have heard a pin drop. Actually, you couldn’t because there wasn’t any gravity so it would just float around.

Suddenly, I thought about how worried Dad probably was. “We should try to contact Dad at NASA,” I said. I floated to the cockpit to see if I could find something to contact Dad with. But there were so many buttons and latches and switches that I got dizzy. I sat down in the pilot’s seat and tried to find something that could help. I found a compartment with a latch that said COMMUNICATION. I opened it and found a headset with a mic attached to it and a sheet that said who to call. Thank you universe! I put the headset on and then I heard Dad’s voice.

“Laika, is that you?” Dad’s voice rang in my ears.

“Yeah, Dad, it’s me,” I answered.

“Laika, are you and Tommy okay? I was really worried about you guys. Especially you,” Dad said.

“Gee, I didn’t know you would be so worried about me,” I quipped.

“Laika, of course I was worried about you!” Dad exclaimed.

“Well, Tommy and I are okay. Thanks for asking.”

“Let’s talk about how you will get home,” Dad said, moving along. “First off, I have good news and bad news. Bad news first: the rocket you are flying in has a major problem. It is missing a vital piece. The part that enables you to get home. Good news: the part is with you. Not you but with Tommy. Correction, in Tommy. You will have to dissect him, find the part, and put it in the correct spot. Then you will have to press the right button to get home. But when you dissect him, he will be gone. We won’t be able to get the part back. I’m sorry that it will have to be this way,” Dad affirmed. I fell back against the seat, stunned. I looked up at Tommy. I felt a medley of stunned, angry, melancholy, and shocked.

“Laika, are you okay?”

“Yeah, I’m fine,” I said. I didn’t notice it but I was crying, silently. Quiet tears ran down my cheeks, as if they wanted to escape my eyes.

“Laika, are you sure you’re okay?” Dad asked again.

“No, I’m not okay! I am about to lose my big brother and you expect me to be okay? You’re a heartless father!” I yelled.

“I’m sorry, Laika, I—”

Was that crying I heard from Dad? I didn’t mean for him to cry. I know

But if I don't do this, we will both die. I'm going to have to take you apart.

Dad was sensitive since Mom's death. I didn't realize he was that sensitive. But I guess I am the one who was insensitive about Dad. I should have known that he would get upset. I also should not have kept all those feelings bottled up inside.

"Dad, please. I'm really, really sorry."

"Laika, it just hurts me so to hear how you think of me. I try so hard to be a good father," Dad sniffled. I was so remorseful at that moment. I felt so bad!

"Dad, can we get back to the whole getting-back-home thing?" I asked.

"All right, let's get to that," Dad said. "You unfortunately have to disassemble your brother. Fortunately, it will not be bloody. It will just be very metallic."

"Haha. So funny, Dad," I said sarcastically. "Tommy, come here!" I called. Tommy sauntered in with this I-am-so-cool kind of attitude. "Tommy, I'm going to have to do something very unpleasant. But if I don't do this, we will both die. I'm going to have to take you apart," I cried.

"I understand this is very important. I just want you to know that, as your brother, I'll always be there for you. Even if I'm not there physically, I'll be there mentally," Tommy acknowledged.

"Thank you for understanding, Tommy."

"Laika, there's a little button that says POWER. Press that."

"I'll miss you, Tommy," I sobbed.

"Same here," Tommy answered. I threw my arms around his neck and pressed the button. His eyes went dark, his arms stopped mid-hug, his eyes closed shut, his body slumped forward. He was gone.

"Did you do it?" Dad asked.

"Yes," I whispered.

"Now get a screwdriver to undo Tommy's screws," Dad directed. I found one in a compartment and began to undo all the screws.

"Are you done?" Dad asked.

"Yeah, what's next?"

"Well, the piece you're looking for looks like a cylinder and it's about as big as your hand," Dad instructed.

"Got it."

"Good. Now, do you see the part on the control panel that says DESCENT with a little hole?" Dad said.

"Yes," I replied.

"Put the piece there," Dad responded.

"Okay. Next?"

"Check the computer screen to see if something pops up," Dad said.

"It says DESCENT ENABLED," I confirmed.

"Now, when the ship turns around, you will go through the atmosphere and the parachute will deploy. It will be a water landing," Dad said.

"What should I do?"

“Just follow the instructions on the manual. I will come pick you up in the water.”

The ship began to ever-so-gently turn itself around. We started heading back home. Suddenly, I fell to the ground. I was okay, but I realized that the rocket had already gone through the Earth’s atmosphere. I rushed to the pilot seat and buckled up. We began to pick up a bit of speed. The rocket began to shake and heat up. I was worried that I may be reunited with Tommy sooner than I thought. I mean, sure, I read what to do. But I was still scared. I saw out the window that we were approaching the Earth. I felt myself being pulled towards my seat. It felt like somebody had put an elephant on my body. The rocket was tumbling and rolling this way and that, while being tossed around like a hot potato. It felt like the Roller Coaster Ride of Death. Then I felt something jerk me upward and realized that the parachute had deployed.

“Prepare to make a splash landing,” a robotic female voice said.

As the rocket drifted toward the ocean, I was relieved to be finally getting back home. I had really missed my dad. I never really thought I would miss him as much as I did. The Earth got closer and closer until... BAM! We hit the water. The impact knocked me out cold.

The next thing I remembered was waking up in my bed. I looked up and saw Dad. I hugged him tight.

“I missed you. I was worried that I wouldn’t see you again.”

“I missed you, too. You took a

pretty hard fall last night,” Dad joked lamely.

“Yeah. I miss Tommy, Dad. I want him to be here but that’s impossible because he’s at the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico.”

“Look, I’m sorry about what happened to Tommy. I really am.” Dad said, “I miss him, too.” This was a surprise. I never really knew that Dad cared a lot about Tommy. I mean, sure, he was his kid (sort of). “I’m also sorry about not being a very attentive father. I guess that after Mom’s death, I sort of closed up feelings-wise,” Dad confessed.

“I’m sorry I wasn’t the nicest, too. I had a lot of feelings bottled up inside and when I let them out, I don’t think I did it in the best of ways,” I conceded.

“You think so?” Dad tried, yet failed, to be funny.

“Can I have a hug?” I blurted. That’s just what he did. He gave me one of the best hugs of my life.

After breakfast, Dad walked in with this big, long sort of metal rod with a magnet attached to it. “What’s that Dad?” I asked.

“We’re going fishing in the Gulf of Mexico,” Dad said with a wink. I smiled.

*Dedicated to Laika, the real hero.
May you live forever in the sky.*



Church at Sunset, *photograph*



**by Cordelia Athas, 10
San Jose, CA**

Queen of the World

by Ana Carpenter, 10
Chicago, IL



Sometimes I pretend I am the queen of the world
Gliding in a silver sleigh of dreams
My dress is made of ripped up clouds
And my crown is woven with moonlight
I float above the sun each day
Watching over my empire
I can feel every triumph and every
Disappointment ripple through me like a
Stone cast into a deep crystal pond
But as time steals by it is not so wonderful
To hold the weight of the world
And I would much rather be a normal girl
Bound to life and nothing more
So I raise my lips to the velvet sky
And gently kiss each star in the Milky Way farewell
I suppose that even the queen of the world
Grows weary of her place in the universe

Review

A Gritty but Triumphant Return to Avonlea:
A review of the Netflix Original *Anne with an "E"*



I remember reading *Anne of Green Gables* when I was younger. I would sprawl across the couch and slowly flip through the delicate pages, savoring the words like candy. This is why when I noticed Netflix's 2017 adaptation, entitled *Anne with an "E,"* I had to watch! Set in Avonlea, a fictional town on Prince Edward Island, *Anne with an "E"* tells the heartwarming story of a 13-year-old orphan. After bouncing between orphanages and foster homes, Anne is sent to elderly siblings Matthew and Marilla Cuthbert to assist on their farm. Here, throughout seven 45-minute episodes, Anne navigates the road of adolescence and learns what it feels like to belong to a family and a place.

The coastal and rural setting is gorgeous, but the show's true beauty

lies with the emotion and passion of the actors. One especially moving scene occurred mid-first episode when Marilla (Geraldine James) relays to Matthew (R.H. Thomson) that skinny and loquacious Anne would be no help and should be returned to the orphanage. Matthew's face, partially lit by candlelight, strains as he looks down at his hands. After a few seconds of silence he responds, "Well, we might be of some good to her." These words were so passionately put that, paired with his emotive expressions, I found myself fighting back tears.

Additionally, *Anne with an "E"* explores valuable themes, like acceptance, that are as meaningful today as they were in the late 19th century. At first, Anne, like many of us, doesn't fit in at school; she's

Reviewed by
Neena Dzur, 13
Toledo, OH



ridiculed and excluded because she's an orphan with raggedy clothing and conspicuous red hair. Then she meets and befriends Diana, a girl her age who consistently makes an effort to include her. Whether it's sitting next to her in class or making room for her at the lunch table, Diana's acceptance helps Anne hold her head high.

Still, despite the uplifting messages, some critics argue that *Anne with an "E"* is too negative for the usually younger *Anne of Green Gables* fans. Anne often has violent flashbacks about being beaten by a foster parent and tormented by other kids at the orphanage before living with the Cuthberts. While it's true the novel doesn't depict these barbaric acts, the television version uses them to develop Anne into a complex, compelling, and resilient character. Anne may be haunted by her past, but she perseveres and maintains a vivacious, imaginative personality—one I grew to side with during the series.

All in all, I thoroughly enjoyed *Anne with an "E."* Sure it's gritty, but the talented cast, realistic writing, and multifaceted characters prove that it is, without a doubt, a worthwhile show to watch.

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, so we want to recognize some of these talented writers and artists.

Fiction

Cassidy White, 13
Renatka Maria Kozłowska, 12
Ethan Li, 11
Gabe Rini, 10
Emily Hou, 13
Taylor Fujihara, 13
Claire Klein-Borgert, 7
Sophia Cossitt-Levy, 12
Mercer Goldmann, 10
Fannie Liu, 11
Olivia Luyando, 12
Ashley Xu, 13
Hannah Rubin, 12
Alyssa Ao, 11
Jeffrey Liang, 13

Poetry

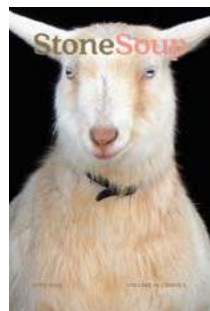
Sophia Schaffer, 11
Shiva Rahel Swaminathan Strickland, 10
Brooks Robinson, 12
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Cristiano Alvarado Ramos, 8
Lysandre Marot, 9
Whitney Turner, 11
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Gavin Jarvis, 12
Annabel Cooley, 11
Surya Odom, 10
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Art

Sreenika Perumalla, 9
Chuiyee Kong, 11
Udit Vaishnav, 7
Nevaeh Santiago, 9
Alexis Forman, 11

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