

StoneSoup



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StoneSoup

*The magazine supporting
creative kids around the world*

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Editor's Note

This issue includes the winners of our concrete poetry contest; the winning poems are both beautiful visual works in their own right and inventive, singular texts. However, it is the combination of both shape (the form) and text (the content) that made these poems stand out. I hope when you sit down to write any work, but especially a poem, that you think about its form: Will it have stanzas? Will the lines be short or long? Will you use any rhyme or other sonic devices? These decisions are as important as what you end up writing. In addition to the concrete poems, there are many incredible photographs that I hope will encourage you to pick up a camera (or a phone), as well as stories and poems engaging with the theme of selfhood and belonging.

Happy reading!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emma Wood'.

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On the cover:
"London"

by Keira Callahan, 10
San Francisco, CA

StoneSoup

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Steam

First place in the Concrete Poetry Contest

by Sabrina Guo, 13
Oyster Bay, NY



are filled with the shape of hot molecules,
like an unknown message on a mirror,
a secret,
a desire for comfort I cannot place.
through as ghost, interrupt
I wait for condensed vapor to become visible in our cold house, enough to pass my hand
and why my dreams
of air the fragility as if to wonder over
On winter days when my mom heats water for tea
it is slow curling spirals,
ting its slow



The Bridge, Canon EOS3oD



**by Marlana Rohde, 12
San Francisco, CA**

Unmasked: A Collection of Short Stories

by Aditya Singh, 12
Bellevue, WA



Sun Blotches and Angelic Smiles

Everybody in my family has different hands. Mine are light brown with weaving veins, like rivers flowing through a desert. Curvy lines streak across the surface of my palm, bards silently singing the story of my life.

My sister's hands are smooth and innocent, round knuckles jutting out when she curls them into a fist, the nostrils of her nose flaring with adorable anger.

Dad's are rough with hardship, his palms jeweled with callouses. He has broad fingers and nails thick and ridged, like clam shells. His sinewy tendons bulge when he flexes his hand, strong and supporting, always ready to help.

Grandpa's hands are like sandpaper. The skin on his hands is wrinkled and blotched with sunspots. His fingers are like the gnarled limbs of an ancient oak, weathered and wise.

Grandma's are small and pudgy, the fat from the hams of her hand gently creasing as she grasps her cup of ginger chai.

Uncle's hands are light as feathers, his long and slender fingers gracefully sweeping across the keys of the piano, like a casual wind fluttering across the surface of a sandy beach. Knotted joints curl around the tips of his metacarpals and phalange bones. I want hands like Uncle, a musician's hands.

Auntie's are always gleaming with eloquence, her designer acrylic nails sparkling like shining stars. Her hands are a smooth tan, their oily surface engulfing me in a warm, comforting hug.

But Mom's hands—Mom's hands are the summer sun, soft, welcoming, and always warm, like when her eyes wrinkle with joy and her mouth peels into an angelic smile.

Everybody in my family has different hands, some lighter, some darker. Some smoother, some rougher. Some are warm, but they'll eventually become cold as old Time washes over them. Hands. They hold the marks of our past and will soon tell the story of our future.

Clocks in Tuxedos

Thick sheets of tension drape over the room as trembling fingers reach across the boards. Beams of intense concentration emanate from players' eyes, lines of focus creasing their foreheads. Shiny raindrops slip down cheeks, the result of many conceding defeat. Faces flush with a despaired red, their egregious mistakes abruptly annihilating all hopes of a trophy.

Then, the horn bellows its long, sonorous sound, announcing the time has come. The judges, dressed in their neon-green and orange vests, place down the Chronos timers. Wavering sighs of anxiety escape from many mouths at the sight of the timers. Dressed in a tight black tuxedo, my timer begins to drone in its monotonous *tick-tock tick-tock*. With each passing second, an ounce of apprehension grows, sticky sweat coating the back of my neck. My opponent is an older teenager, wearing a red-and-blue-striped shirt. Burgundy freckles are splattered across his face, and he has curly maroon hair. Behind his pair of claret spectacles, his eyes suddenly light up with joy. As his mouth peels into a beaming smile, he confidently brings his hand forth and moves his queen across the board, placing her next to my king and says the words of a chess player's nightmare: "Checkmate!"

The Tree of Salmon Berries

The tree of salmon berries is an unarmed merchant, constantly being harassed by malicious robbers. They reach in their selfish fingers and pull off its jewelry as the tree screams a silent plea. The tree's green neighbors remain in stupid oblivion, frivolously fluttering in the July breeze as they revel in the company of heaven's water. The wavering limbs of the tree shake with anger, futilely attempting to slap the thief.

But it is a tough tree. Always coming back fuller than ever, only to repeat the vicious cycle. The tree of salmon berries is the man in the maze, constantly navigating through and overcoming obstacles, only to find the next corner and hurdle. The tree sees me as yet another monster of greed. And the tree is right. I am very greedy, but I need to be. The greediest are the most successful, for without greed there is no motivation. Caesar, the indomitable emperor of insatiable greed, led the ancient Roman Empire to power and might. Without greed, one is weak and will find oneself bending to others' wills, becoming more servile with each passing day. I will continue to steal from the tree, ripping its children from their home and devouring them like a cannibalistic demon. The tree of salmon berries will remain the subject of torture, forever ruled by the great lord by the name of Greed.

Conquering Ghosts

Dear Young Aditya,

I know what you're thinking. You think that if you confess and admit you stole Maya's phone, everyone will hate you for the rest of the year. You'll lose all your friends and your reputation will be that of a malicious, untrustworthy boy. Sure, there will be some hard feelings, but it's about doing the right thing.

So stop. Don't get on the bus and go home. Turn around and tell the truth. Don't let the ghosts of your actions haunt you, weaving their threads of guilt and shame into your brain. Confront and conquer them, so you don't wage an endless war with the demons of your past. What's the worst that can happen? Mom and Dad find out and yell at you.

But, in the matter of a week or two everyone will forget about it. The burden will be lifted from your shoulders, no longer plaguing you. On the other hand, if you internalize your crime, little straws of hay will be sprinkled upon the pile of guilt every day. As time passes, and your shameful secret gnaws at your insides, that pile of hay will become a stack, which in turn will become a heap. A heap of guilt and shame so heavy that it will be too late to turn back and tell the truth. You will have to live hampered down by your impulsive, rash decision, always present and ominous, like a painful scar seared across your skin. Please don't do what I did. Don't walk away.

Your older self,
Aditya

Chalky Powder and Salty Breezes

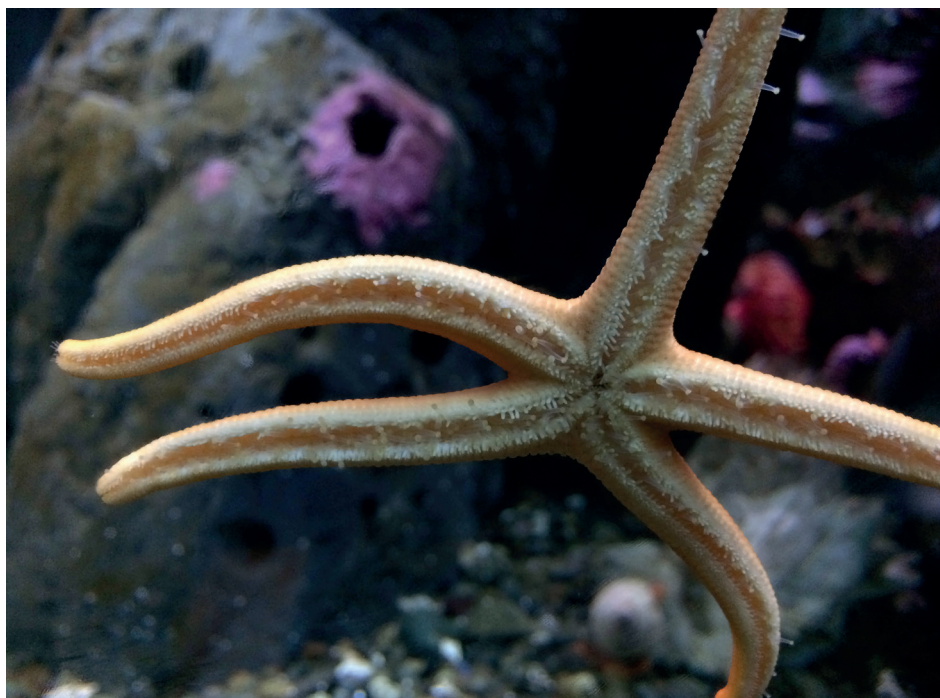
Aditya. In Hindi, it means the sun. Although I've always felt my name was more triangular than circular. Circles don't change. It's the same repetitive cycle, and if you flipped a circle upside down, it would still stay the same. But when you flip a triangle, it becomes something different. A new perspective, a fresh idea. In my religion, a triangle represents creation, destruction, and preservation. I'd prefer to create things. I think my name is a creator name. It's like the number 6. In control, with power, on top.

Aditya. To others, I believe my name is like a gray piece of grass. Unusual, yet dull. Most people I meet think it's an interesting name, although they usually say that out of politeness. My name is not flashy or exciting. Just like my personality. I'm a quieter person, who likes to observe and listen.

Aditya. My name has its ups and downs. Slide down the A only to meet the vertical face of the d, impossible to climb over. But I will persevere, turning trials into triumphs. Eventually I will get over the d and onto the dot of the i. And all the way over to the cliff of the a, with a frightening drop. In these moments of apprehension and anxiety, I will methodically weave my way past the obstacle, scaling down the spine of the a onto the welcoming ground.

Aditya. It tastes like the salty breeze near the sea. It is the stunning decorations bursting with explosions of vibrant colors, celebrating love and unity. The thick-yet-comforting smell of chalky powder. Sometimes the feel of cracked lips and cold handshakes. My name is the strums of the sitar on the radio as my father cooks lunch. Each note an expression, winged emotions, from one artist to listeners across the world. That's what I want to do. Send my emotions and ideas across the world, inspiring and motivating.

Aditya. A name that will ignite passion, drive innovation, a symbol of humanity's desire to succeed and progress. Yes. That's the legacy my name shall leave.



Trapped in Glass, *iPhone 5*



by Ava Horton, 13
Gresham, OR

Octopus

Second place in the Concrete Poetry Contest

by Marco Lu, 12
Champaign, IL



SMOOTHLY,
SWIFTLY, SILENTLY
SLIDING OVER THE
ROUGH, RUST RED ROCK,
ITS TENDER, TWISTING TENTACLES
GRASPING THE SHELLS, SHARP
SHRIMP. ITS MOIST MOTTLED
MANTLE MORPHING INTO A CRUSTY,
CRACKED CORAL, AS IT LURKS LOW,
LONE FOR ITS NEXT PREY.
SUDDENLY SENSING DANGER, IT
SLOWLY SQUEEZES THROUGH
THE GRITTY, GRIMY GRAVEL
TO DEFTLY DISGUISE
ITSELF INTO
A CHISELED, CHAPPED
CHUNK. THE DARK, DAUNTING DOLPHIN
SWIMS SILENTLY PAST, VAINLY VYING TO SPOT
ITS POLYMORPHOUS PREY. THE
OCTOPUS QUIVERS QUIETLY IN
THE DOLPHIN'S SHAKY, SHIFTING, SHA-
DOW. THE OCTOPUS DREARILY DROWSILY
DRIFTS BACK IN- TO-
ITS SMALL SAFE SNUG
SINK HOLE, TO REST
UNTIL IT IS READY
FOR ITS NE- XT
H- U- N- T.



Profile of a Guardian, Nikon Coolpix L830



by Hannah Parker, 13
South Burlington, VT

Behind

by Christine Chang, 10
San Carlos, CA



Can a missing dog bring two estranged friends back together?

The fluorescent light of the classroom made it even harder to concentrate on the fine, black print that consisted of nothing but endless boredom. My mind tried to make sense of it. The book was written long ago; the 1800s? It reminded me of when a good friend of mine pretended to travel back in time with me. My nose wrinkled at the thought of her. I remembered Alice being fierce and stubborn. Just like I didn't pay any mind to the words of this book, Alice never listened to me. I groaned just thinking about it. She was like a pestering bee. Going away but always returning. Alice had the eyes of an eagle and the ears of an owl. And, apparently, the instincts of a bee. She had those funny front teeth that jutted out at anything that didn't seem right.

Against my will, my eyes scanned the pages: "Meg, being oldest, seemed to think she could order us about . . ."

Those words hit me like the harsh wind outside, and, as the realization slowly sank in, I felt the air sucked out of me. But why had she let me boss her around? It may have given me pleasure at first, but in the long run, it definitely drove us both out of our minds! I felt lightheaded. Gears seemed to turn in my mind, contemplating this theory. A broken piano

key seemed to finally strike the string it had missed up until now and echo through my body. My ears rang. My hands trembled. The whole world spun around me, blurring my vision and clouding my head. If you looked inside my body, you would see a fogged-up window with many attempts to rub the mist off. My eyes skimmed a whole page in my book, but the echo of that dissonant piano chord in my ears was so loud, it diverted my attention so I couldn't hear the words in my mind.

For a moment, I wished I could really travel back in time and fix my mistakes. *When had I started to boss her around? One year ago? Two? Since we'd met?* No. It didn't matter. The only thing that mattered was that I had done it, and now I'd have to fix it—without time travel. I racked my brain for ideas. I didn't want to straight out say, "Did you notice I boss you around a lot?"

I came to my senses. I'd just have to stop bossing her around. Plus, now I'd have to reread a whole page in my book that I had missed, but it was too late. My teacher clapped her hands, and I was behind on my book—and my friendship.

The recess bell rang its piercing song, decimating my ears. I snapped my head up and stepped outside. A

A shiver ran down my spine and pooled on the ground in puddles of trepidation

blast of air almost blew me down. I let the door close in front of me and stood back.

"Did you hear that Linda has . . ."

"What did you get on your test? I got a . . ."

The loud sounds of the hall barely receded every time a cluster of kids exited the building and came back saying it was too cold or windy or this or that. Did I really want to go outside? I shoved the door again, willing it to open. The wind, rougher this time, whipped my face. Even so, I pushed myself through the wind tunnel and stumbled outside, tripping over my feet and using my arm to shield my face. I wished my arm were bigger. The light outdoors was bright, yet the sky was clouded and overcast. The wet dew made my feet cold, and the grass crunched beneath my shoes. The sun was low in the sky making my shadow long. My friends chit chatted as if it were a normal day. But it wasn't.

My friend, Bella, approached me. "We've been looking for you!"

"Not now. I need to find something. And no, I do not need help right now." My tense body relaxed a little on a rickety bench that looked as if it would topple over. I stayed completely still as my eyes darted around the school. *Where was she?* I studied the school. On my right, a bush covered in geraniums lined the grass. The sun was just up behind the bush. A dirt path traversed

by a stream from the recent rain led to a cluster of trees. The trees stood tall and blocked most of my view of the benches that surrounded the school. I sensed movement beyond the trees.

There.

I inched toward Alice ever so slowly, and she, of course, with her uncannily keen senses, noticed me immediately. I continued toward her, the leaves crunching beneath my boots. My arms tensed. My stomach churned, and my legs pulled at me to back up. A shiver ran down my spine and pooled on the ground in puddles of trepidation. The world spiraled about. I couldn't think straight. I uneasily twirled a strand of my hair.

"Hey Alice," I stammered. She turned her back on me. I looked down. "I'm so sorry."

Alice glared. "I can't believe I didn't stand up to you before! Why did I let you make a toy out of me?! Buzz off!"

Ha! She really is a bee. I stiffened. "I said, I'M SORRY!!!" Whoops. Now she'll never forgive me.

"Leave me alone!" Alice's mouth was a big, gaping hole. Tears formed in her eyes.

Hmm. . . I thought. Nice comeback. What else did you learn on the playground? My cheeks turned bright red. I attempted to hide my face and darted back toward the rickety bench. I could feel Alice staring after me, her eyes boring a hole in my gut. I had just lost a

friendship that was so hard to keep. A friendship that was just within reach, close enough to pull back to me; but I had let it slip away, or rather, pushed it away.

I could barely live through the next two periods. I didn't hear a word my teacher said. I probably flunked the math test I'd been studying for all week. I tuned out my friends' conversation at lunch period. I just made it through my last two classes before darting home.

"How was your day, honey?" my mom asks as I slump down in the front seat of the car.

"Shut up," I whisper. Mom glares at me, but she doesn't say anything. She's good at being quiet when I want her to. She'll scold me later. I watch out the window as the world flies by in a blur. Faster than the speed of sound. It seems slow, still, compared to how quickly I lost a friend. Slow, compared to how fast my temper slips through my fingers until it is no longer mine to control; the moment when I release it, and it is just out of reach.

The car crunches up the gravel driveway. I leap out. Before I dart off, something catches my eye on the sidewalk, haphazardly tossed under an ivy bush. I bend down to look closer. It's a dog biscuit someone must've dropped. I adore finding little "treasures" around town while I'm out exploring: buttons, coins, acorns—you never know when you might need them. I curl my fingers gently around it, though in my current state, I wish I could smash it—or any-

thing else for that matter—to pieces. I race down the street, tripping over my own feet in my desperation to burn off my frustration.

As I near the end of the block, empowered and exhilarated from my run, with only a trace left of my frustration, I slow down and begin to notice "Lost Dog" signs posted on nearby telephone poles. *Wait*, I think, a knot forming in my gut, *isn't that Alice's dog?*

Alice and her family are standing outside their house, yelling, "Roger! Roger! Come here, puppy!" As I get closer, Mr. Weston climbs into the car with Alice, setting out to look for Roger. Alice sees me out of the corner of her eye. I can tell. She clenches her jaw.

"Isn't that your friend?" Mr. Weston glances my way. The wind whips my face. I wish he would stop the car so I could have a moment with Alice.

I barely hear her reply as she murmurs under her breath: "Not anymore."

"Daddy, let's just go," Alice grabs his arm firmly.

Just then, my mom rounds the corner to Alice's block. *Ugh. She worries too much about me, always wondering where I am and if I'm okay.* She spies Mrs. Weston and begins waving. "Jennifer!" she calls.

Mr. Weston stops the car.

Alice groans.

Mrs. Weston calls back, "Susan!"

I stare. I wasn't expecting my day to turn out like this. I went to school ready to have a normal day and then go to my piano lesson at 4:30.

I watch Mom, Mrs. Weston and Mr.

Weston have their boring little adult talk about losing a dog while Alice tentatively steps out of the car's back seat.

"... Alice might ..."

"... go easy ..."

"... Roger was special to her ..."

"... miss him too ..."

I can only make out a few whispers. That leaves me to talk to Alice. We're silent. I won't look at her. After a few minutes, though, I feel her eyes on me. I look up hesitantly. Her shoulders are drooped.

For some reason, I feel the beginnings of anger boiling again in the pit of my stomach. *Is she just standing there feeling sorry for herself?* This time, my temper is close enough to snatch back. I can barely get myself to reach out and grab it. "I... I... uh..." I can't think of what to say first. *Should I ask about Roger or talk about what happened at recess? I mean, recess is more recent, right? How long had Roger been missing anyway? A day? A week? A whole month, maybe? I glance again at the signs. "Lost dog!" they read. Had I been so self-absorbed that I hadn't even noticed that Alice had lost her dog? Was that why she had been so upset at recess or was she truly angry at me?*

Suddenly, a rustling sound. Roger darts out of the bushes. His paws pat the ground, spraying up mud and clearing out the overcast sky. He wags his tail and flops his golden retriever ears. His collar jingles in the strained silence. The adults cease talking. Alice whirls around. "Roger!" Roger sticks his wet, sloppy nose into Alice's hand. "He came back!" She looks up at everyone else. Her eyes linger on me. I pat his head. Alice's parents pet him too

and hug Alice.

"I wonder how he got home?" Mr. Weston asks no one in particular.

Mom and I stand back. Mom is teary-eyed. I stand by her side, feeling the comforting warmth of her arm around my shoulder. Roger struggles to break free of the Weston family hug and looks up at me expectantly.

"Oh, Roger!" Alice pulls him back. "What're you so interested in?"

At first I'm confused, but then I chuckle and slide the dog biscuit out of my pocket. Alice looks longingly at me before breaking into a smile. I guess she still remembers what we used to do when Roger was a puppy.

I laugh. "Fetch!" I toss the treat into the air. Roger pounds the ground and jumps up on his hind legs.

"Wow! Mid-air!" Alice rejoices, waving her hands in the air and jumping up and down.

Our parents enter her house, while Alice and I stand together. I gently put my arm around her, and together we watch Roger chase his tail. A slight breeze blows my hair into my face. The skies have cleared, revealing a bright sun. Just out of reach, though it seems I could brush it with my fingertips. A feeling washes over me, and I know right then, that this moment doesn't need words. Recess didn't need words. We share our warmth, and Alice smiles. Her smile is sweet and spreads across her face, bringing out her vibrant red hair, glistening in the light of the day with an air of peace. I couldn't remember seeing this smile before. This was her real smile.

School

by Julia Li, 12
Mason, OH



What if everyone wants to be your friend . . . but for all the wrong reasons?

There is an alien among us.

She has built a wall across her heart, one made of sheets so thick others do not see her. Until they realize—

An alien is here, an alien is here—
there is the alien.

She tries to walk the halls in silence, tries to creep up to classrooms.

It works, and the alien is not noticed.

Homework.

“Damn it,” I mutter to myself quietly.

But everyone hears, and they crowd around me.

“Are you hurt?”

“Is there anything I can do?”

“If you need anything, just tell!”

I force a smile upon my face. “I’m okay—I just forgot my homework.”

A girl whom I have never once noticed in my life walks up to me. In her hand is her homework.

This alien—she is an experiment.

She is a fake, she is different. And she knows that nobody will try to

break down that wall around her.

Who can see her first behind those green paper walls?

Maybe it’s because I’m rich, because my dad is a millionaire.

I know nobody wants to be friends with a nobody. I know that nobody would willingly give their own homework away . . .

To a nobody.

Who will like me once I grow up?

Once I am not different from the rest of them?

This alien, she knows that everyone loves that wall. They probe and push and talk. They do not care.

She is an experiment, a test to see who can take away that wall first.

I walk these halls alone.

Nobody comes to me until they realize that it’s her, the girl with the money!

Soon enough, I might forget who

I am. I might just be the girl with the money.

This experiment is gone. This experiment is a nothing.



Blurred Love, *iPhone 6S*



by Daania Sharifi, 13
Gainesville, VA

Some Days

by Olivia Cadham, 11
Ontario, Canada



Some days I am a girl.

On these days I like to giggle and play with toys. I wear bright blue clothes and shirts with cats on them. When I feel like a girl, my feelings change. I feel kind and happy. I like being a girl.

But . . .

There is a downside.

My heart is bigger than on other days. It becomes too big for my body. This causes my feelings to mix together, and that results in emotional drama. This doesn't make me want to be a girl.

So . . .

Some days I am a boy.

On these days I like to be silly and play rough. I wear darker clothes, like blue, black, or red. When I'm a boy, I feel like my body fits me better. Sometimes it's as if God intended me to physically be a boy, but changed his mind at the last second. I like being a boy.

But . . .

Sometimes I feel like I'm too awkward to be a boy. I'm not a very sporty person, and I don't like jokes. This causes me to appear abnormal and too "sensitive." This doesn't make me want to be a boy.

So . . .

Some days I am a dragon.

On these days I like to stomp through the hallways and growl under my breath. I wear light clothing on these days so, being a Dutch Angel Dragon, my fur doesn't overheat. When I'm a dragon, I like to use pronouns like it, they, them, and their.

But . . .

Dragging around invisible wings, horns, and a tail all day gets exhausting really fast. I get agitated, and sometimes chirp swears (or something rude) in my language. Even though no one can understand, it is not a good feeling to be cursing, even if it's an accident. This doesn't make me want to be a dragon.

So . . . It's really quite simple. I make another choice . . . to be Olivia, who is currently a dragon (roar!!!).



Encased in Ice, Nikon Coolpix L830



by Hannah Parker, 13
South Burlington, VT

Moonlight

Third place in the Concrete Poetry Contest

by Ashley Xu, 13
Lexington, MA



Moonlight paints
the water white, rippling
like autumn frost on a window
pane, the texture of lace, or the
thin lines of froth spitting from a
creek searching for stillness in a midnight
storm, leaving the taste of wet
pavement, a pre-dawn driveway
lined by grass, milky drops
of petrichor clinging
to every green
blade in iridian teardrops of dew, light
lingering dusty lilac,
reminiscent of a
 photograph drenched
 in silver halide
fading into being, as if to say that
 no image is static,
 but always shifting,
 shimmering
 evanescence.

Figadindi

by Dennis Losett, 11
Philadelphia, PA



A stray dog begins to follow a boy and his family during their hike

I began to notice a collarless brown dog that seemed to be following us as the shadows of stucco houses became the shadows of trees and the narrow cobblestone street faded into a packed dirt path. It wasn't stray: it had a well-groomed coat of hair and was rather clean and friendly, but it wasn't quite a house dog either. I asked my mother about it, and she told me that I should ignore it—she didn't want a dog following us thinking we were its owners. My dad agreed. It seemed to run away, but then further up the trail, it sprang from the shaded understory of mulberry trees saplings and grass onto the trail with us.

I was trying to obey my mother, but it was impossible to ignore. I found that I shared many similarities with the dog. We both had boundless energy that inevitably made us centers of attention, we both ran ahead of my parents, and we both eventually brought smiles to my parents' faces.

When we passed the last human settlements, an entirely new terrain lay before us: van-sized cacti lay on bare earth scoured by drought and sunshine, semi-lifeless grass reached up from the ground like hair, and occasionally a daring tree stood beside

the trail, soaking up the cloudless sky and providing much wanted shade. Another dog, even darker than the first one, began to follow us. His hair was very well trimmed, and he kept a pace equal to that of my parents. He was a house dog, for he had a collar, but he was as dark as good dark chocolate, while the dog we had met earlier was more of a milk chocolate hue. Throughout the course of the trail so far, my father and I had been scouring the area, looking for cactus pears. We had become enthusiasts of the odd fruit since we had found them on a walk. The sweet red-violet orbs hung off cacti by the half dozen or so, and in the local Neapolitan dialect of Italian they were called "figadindis." We had taken it upon ourselves to name the first dog this, and my parents seemed to be warming up to the idea of letting him stay.

Slowly but surely, the life was seeping back into the field, in optical form. At first, the grass became greener and taller, but then flowers and plants of every kind began to carpet the sides of the trail—brooms, tulips, poppies, sea thistles, daisies. As the verdant growth closed in from all sides, the trail narrowed our group

down to single file. By this point, Figadindi was our only canine companion, for the collared dog had left. Small lizards scuttled in the fields and sunbathed on rocks, which Figadindi chased for entertainment. My dad now had a plastic shopping bag for holding cactus pears. A few wispy clouds floated on the horizon, shading faraway mountain peaks. From this altitude, the whole of the Amalfi Coast was visible. I was amazed at the beauty of the vista, though I did not show it.

We rounded a hilltop, and the trail fell into shrubbery and forest. I was intrigued by the contiguity of such drastic microclimates. Somehow, amazingly, evergreen pines had colonized the sides of the trail, and now the trail was separated from the surrounding thicket by wooden poles that lay parallel to the ground. I could sense that we were getting closer to Sorrento—a highway roared in the distance, and the sounds of wildlife grew ever fainter. We had not even so much as petted Figadindi, yet he almost felt like a family member to me. My parents implied that they felt the same way. About 50 meters from the fringe of the thicket, I heard a large rustle in a tree. Figadindi, crouching, was intimidating a large fowl sitting somewhere near the top of an evergreen. With a few barks, he sent the fowl on its way, breaking a number of branches as it scampered away. My family was awed. Figadindi, unfazed, simply returned to trotting down the path, and we soon followed.

We brushed through some bushes and branches, and a single two-lane road lay before us. Over the course of the trip, I had noticed that Italian

roads were remarkably narrow, so we deduced that it was a highway. We crossed it and followed it downhill. We then came upon an urban labyrinth of streets, upon which my parents pulled out several maps and navigated us through a winding path of narrow alleys, shady streets, and mossy stairs. In fact, another dog had joined, this one a spotted, short-haired pitbull I named Motley. Relations between Motley and Figadindi were remarkably intriguing—sometimes the dogs were indifferent to each other, sometimes they were friendly, and at some point Motley even tried to mount Figadindi, which made me reconsider the genders of both. After a walk of about a mile, we arrived at a park, where we settled down for some hard-boiled eggs and pickles.

The park was only a temporary resting place, for after lunch, it was back to a fun exploration of the streets. For the rest of the walk, we did not return to the wild hills we had been in earlier. Some areas had more plants, some had less, but the two recurring themes were stucco houses and dogs. Frightening canine guards, perched on high walls, made sure that their masters' gardens were well protected. This area was famous for its lemons and oranges that grew to great sizes thanks to the fertile ash of Vesuvius, and local gardeners made sure no one intruded. Ironically, Figadindi was nothing more than annoyed by the guard dogs and fiercely stood his ground when intimidated. Motley was indifferent to them.

We soon came across a large boulevard leading down to the sea.

We followed it down a bit and then decided to roost at a restaurant. Motley had left, and Figadindi decided to lie down in the shade of our table. I began a conversation and became happily engrossed in food and dialogue. When I looked down, I saw that the spot where Figadindi had lain was empty. He had gone quickly, silently, and unnoticed, just like he had come.



Photo supplied by the author

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.

Fiction

Leah Barrentine, 13
Claire Jiang, 12
Madeline Sornson, 11
Cathy Tu, 11
Sasha B. Wang, 12

Poetry

Shirin Gohil, 12

Art

MacKenzie Reese, 11

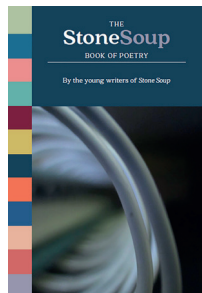
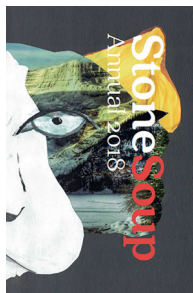
Honorable Mention in the Concrete Poetry Contest

"Snowflake" by Emma Almaguer, 13
"A Tree" by Andrew Lin, 8
"The Cloud" by Madeline Nelson, 12
"Seeing the Sea" by Maya Viswanathan, 12

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