

# StoneSoup



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# StoneSoup

*The magazine supporting  
creative kids around the world*

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## Editor's Note

What unites these pieces of writing and art is their close, careful attention to the natural world: to migrating birds, to trees we see outside our window even if we live in a city, to the stark beauty of a desert sunset and the tragedy of changing weather patterns, to snowflakes and cut flowers, and even to the worlds we invent in our fiction. Each of these pieces enables me to see something I have seen thousands of times, like the sunset, in a new way. They also serve as necessary reminders, as the weather gets colder and the leaves begin to fall, of the beauty and significance of each season. After reading this issue, I hope you will feel inspired to look more closely at the world you see outside your window or on your way to school.

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

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On the cover:  
“Mirror Mirror”  
Copic markers and pen

by Avery Multer, 12  
Chicago, IL

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*A Lonely Girl, pencil*



by Sloka Ganne, 9  
Overland Park, KS

# The Ghost of the Forest

by Carmen Flax, 10  
Liechhardt, Australia

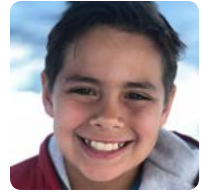


*A mysterious, ghostly figure wanders the forest at night*

The woods glowed that mildewy night in October as the transparent, lilac-colored figure hovered eerily between dense thickets of elegant dark green pine trees, whose rich aroma curled through the forest. The lady waded through roaring black-colored rivers, tearing through the determined barriers of water. She stopped, but only to lean against an ancient, knobbly tree, and let out a choked cry that rears up in your ears only to come rolling into your heart and leave it weeping the purest and most tender of tears for the lost caller. The pale being looked up at the luminous, pearly white moon and flinched, as if something so bright and hopeful had wounded her permanently and forced her to live in such darkness and be so helpless. Suddenly, the figure stood up and slunk away into the shadows where all strange things are called.

# In a Jar

by Hudson Benites, 11  
Excelsior, MN



## *Before a long heat wave turned the Earth into a desert, one person preserved each season*

I live in a tiny town. It's not on any map you'll ever see—except these days a map won't help you. Everything looks the same. There are no landmarks. Things are being destroyed as fast as they are being built. The world is barren.

I'm so old I'm the only one left who remembers why it happened. It happened because of us. The wildfires, the hurricanes, occurring one after the other, the heat wave that began when I was 12 and never stopped.

I knew something like this might happen. I was very curious in my day. 'Pensive' might have been a better word. You might say I was a scientist, or I would have been one if my parents had been able to send me to college. I studied weather patterns and read books on every topic you could imagine. In autumn, I watched the apples fall from the trees. In spring, I watched the children jump in mud puddles. In summer, I saw the rabbits frolicking in the dancing grass. And in winter, I saw the seasons die. The seasons were transient but transcendent.

Then things began to change.

I knew it had been mentioned in books. I had not thought much of it. They said one day it would ruin Earth.

I thought it was a hoax. When the weather patterns started to change, the polar bears began to die, the biomes grew desolate, I started to believe. And then when the migratory birds stopped coming I had to believe it. The oil companies tried to suppress why this was happening, but everyone knew there was an impending doom chasing behind us. By the time the oil companies claimed that fake news was being published about them, everyone had a deep and passionate aversion toward them.

When the weather patterns started to malform, I started to plan ahead. I wanted a way to remember the seasons when they were gone because this change seemed inexorable. As a way of not forgetting the seasons, I decided to put a memory of each season into its own, separate jar. I collected some mud from spring. And then in the summer, I scrambled through a hurricane to get a dandelion. In the fall, I raced through a flood to get the most beautiful leaf you could ever imagine. Green, orange, and red. Then when winter came, there was a snowstorm, and I collected a prism-like ice crystal. I put these all in jars. Ever since the seasons died, there was this



**Magic Flowers, pencil**



**by Analise Braddock, 8  
Katonah, NY**



## *There was tumult all around me as people experienced spring for the first time in many years*

abstract feeling of dread—dread that the seasons would never come back as I remembered them.

I still have those jars—well, except for one. I have no one else left in this world who loves me as much as I love them.

There is something odd about the jars though: The dandelion hasn't wilted, and the mud hasn't dried. The ice hasn't melted, and the leaf hasn't become crinkly. Maybe it's magic, maybe there is a scientific explanation for it. I don't know.

Some people ask me why I kept the seasons in the jars. I did it because I don't want anything from before to go away. I knew I couldn't stop what was happening. It was like a train, and it wasn't going to stop. So, I did what I thought was best. I didn't pray to God for everything to stop. I didn't cry for Mama. I decided to take matters into my own hands. I said to myself *I will have these memories forever, no matter what happens*. So, I tried my hardest to make that dream come true. I meant to keep that dream to myself, but that's not how it went.

One morning I turned around to grab my tea from the kettle when I noticed the spring jar that was on the windowsill was gone, and I became very scared. I heard a crash outside. I ran to the door and saw the jar on the ground and the mud lying on the hard

earth in a blob.

Then something started to happen. There was a flash of brilliant light. Then there appeared lush green grass, verdure, streams, the gleaming sun. There was a moment of silence. Not a forced silence, but completely necessary and natural. After about five seconds, my neighbors ran out in disbelief and sat down in the grass, ran their hands over the leaves, and stood with their arms outstretched toward the sun. There was tumult all around me as people experienced spring for the first time in many years. I just stared. Everything I had hoped for as a child, a teen, and an adult, memories that had once seemed remote, had just come true before my eyes. It was manifest that these children would have the same memories that I have today.

In contrast to the felicity all around me, a boy was sitting against a tree crying. I walked over to him.

"I did it," he said. "I broke your jar."

"I'm not mad at you," I said. "I'm grateful."

"Why?"

"Because I had been living off of memories of the past, but now I am really experiencing it for the first time since I was a child. So come and enjoy it."

As he went out to play with his friends, I felt the part of me that had been missing had finally returned.

# The Mountain

by Rhône Galchen, 11  
New York, NY



I sit alone.  
The only thing I see is the mountain I always run into.  
Time.  
I am the only person that I know who has not seen black.

I want the waves to hit me, but they miss.  
I will not force the wave,  
but it shall come to me.

Because why stay in the white,  
when you have no yellow to be with you.

For my white has turned black.  
The black will turn white.  
But the mountain will never stop.  
It will always stop me,  
until I am gone with the wave.

# The Tree Outside My Window

by Daniel Shaw, 11  
New York, NY



*As he moves to a new room in a new house, a boy recalls the view from his old window*

As I stood in my new room, as decided at Burger Heaven on Tuesday, I looked around and saw a blank white wall, two closets, and two windows. I looked out the window on the left and saw a beautiful tree outside my window. It was gently swaying in the wind.

I remembered the other tree outside my window in my old room. You could see the roughness of the bark, and the leaves slowly turned yellow, orange, and red as we got closer and closer to the end of the fall. The tree was wise and old. It had a posture that was relaxed but knew everything at all times, like Yoda!

One day, I asked my dad if I could go play laser tag with my friend Michael.

"You know why you can't," he said. Unfortunately, I did. My dad was against all types of guns or weapons. I understood why, but I was still frustrated.

"But all of my friends are going and I don't want to be left out because everyone will be talking about it at school," I told him.

He said: "Just because you're friends do it doesn't mean you have to."

I stormed into my room. Then I looked out the window, and I thought about the tree. It couldn't do anything people did. And people didn't respect it. They even had their dogs pee on it. But it was content to just watch the world go by.

Another time, I was watching the news with my mom when they said a hurricane was going to hit New York. I asked my mom if we'd be safe. She said we would but we went to the store to stock up on canned food. At the store, I asked her, "Can a hurricane kill someone?"

"Yes, if you're not careful."

Now I was so scared I didn't go outside the house at all the next few days, and school was closed, so my parents couldn't make me.

As the storm was raging outside my window, I thought about what would happen if my building fell over. With those thoughts of destruction, I fell asleep. Hours later, I woke to an ear-splitting snap. At first I thought it was lightning, but it was sunny outside. I slid off my bed into the slippers I got for Christmas, and I walked to my window, careful not to step on the

Lego creations I had made the day before. I looked around. Something was missing, but I couldn't quite figure out what it was.

Then I realized. "No, no, no, no, no," I muttered under my breath, progressively getting louder as I went on. I look down at the ground. The tree, my true friend, always loyal, never faltering, so wise, had split in half. It was just lying there helpless, cracked in half, gone. Gone forever.

I went into my mom's room and shook my mom as I did if I'd had a nightmare. I showed her the tree and then she called the super to take the tree off the sidewalk. We watched out our window as he struggled to push it to the side of the road. It was hard to be too appreciative of the beautiful sunny day because my tree was gone.

But now, in the present, I had a new tree, even better than the old one. Elegant and graceful. And no storms are going to hit New York anytime soon, so it should be safe for at least a while. Over the years I have learned more and more that you appreciate things more when they are gone, so you should try to appreciate them as much as you can before they leave.

Then my mom walked into my room and asked me if I wanted to have lunch. I realized I was very hungry since I had spent the whole morning packing up our stuff from our old apartment. As I walked out into our new living room, I saw boxes upon boxes and even more boxes. I looked in one, and I saw the back of a picture frame. The photo was of me playing in my room in my pajamas with yellow stripes. I was playing with my train

tracks, and I was holding my favorite train, Thomas. In the back of the picture, I could just make out the tree. Suddenly, I remembered one day when I found out I hadn't made the soccer team. I had been outside my old building, and I had kicked the tree repeatedly in my anger.

I went back into my room and put the photo on the radiator next to my new tree. Then I ran back into the living room because I was very hungry, and I smelled quesadillas so I knew this would be a good lunch.





Snowflake Hiding in Blues, *Nikon Coolpix L830*



by Hannah Parker, 13  
South Burlington, VT

# Northern Night

by Poppy Lowenthal Walsh, 12  
Minneapolis, MN



Flashlight  
light  
draws two silhouettes  
walking side by side.  
As the canvas of this heavy darkness  
turns to this silent night  
tonight  
I gaze  
into the sky sweet face  
sprinkled with freckles of stars.  
The crickets sing  
and spread their wings.  
Whose song, they ask,  
is most true?  
It's true  
when the day fades  
there's a special way  
that the sky is  
the brightest blue.

# Migration

by Sierra Glassman, 13  
Watsonville, CA



## *A crane braves hazardous conditions to complete his first migration*

The crane cocked his head and sighted the mountains just below, the great Himalayas. They stretched into the horizon, as far as the eye could see. The sun slanted over a peak, giving an eerie green-gray glow to the crisp morning air. The wind was blustery, rushing hard against the crane's feathers. Sometimes the cold pierced his skin, and he had to shiver to keep warm. His wings were numb with cold, but at the same time were burning with the endless, tedious flapping. As the mountains grew larger, the crane in the front of the formation grew tired. It let itself drift to the back, and the next crane, hesitating at first, flew to the front.

Each crane took its turn flying in the apex. It was the crane's turn to go in the front when the lead crane tired. He stared at her tail, half awake, flapping just when needed. At the beginning of the migration, he had been boisterous while the older cranes had conserved their energy. The crane shook his head; he had heard keee-kee-ke, an eagle's cry. But there was nothing the flock could do. Their only defense was in numbers. The crane was drifting left too much; he flapped back into position.

Suddenly, the flock came into a dense cloud. He shivered as the cold dew clung to his feathers, soaking him to the skin. They flew through the cloud for a very long time, and eventually the exhausted crane at the apex of the V flew towards the rear. It was the crane's turn. He felt a shocking burst of cold as the wind and water droplets blasted his face. His feathers blew into his eyes, further obscuring his visibility. He flapped on. The clouds seemed endless. He closed his clear eye membrane to shield his eyes from the savage wind. He thought he saw a flash of brown feathers, but dismissed it as a shadow. He persevered through the soaking cloud. Eventually, it was too much for the crane; he started to move back to let another crane take his position.

An eagle's talons ripped the air where the crane had been flying. Realizing its mistake, the eagle dove again. Forgetting his fatigue, hunger, and thirst, the crane swooped right, and the eagle dove past him, snatching up the next crane by the neck. The eagle, clutching its prey, disappeared into the clouds.

The crane croaked quietly, in shock. Everything had happened so

fast. But the crane was tired. He drifted to the back and flew on numbly. His toes were cold, hanging limply behind his tail, exposed to the open air. When eventually they broke through the heavy cloud, the mountains were considerably smaller.

When the crane was in the front again, he realized it was less windy. An older crane shrieked the stopping call: *kleu-ka-ka-kee*. The crane considered the land below. Before him lay an open field with a few cranes already on it, their silvery feathers shining in the warm, golden sunlight. The crane descended, crying out in excitement. He put on a burst of speed, landing on his toes and flapping to keep his balance, his primary feathers brushing against the soft earth.

He scanned all around him. There were plenty of plants and seeds, and there was a stream flanking the edge of the field. The crane hopped over to it and gulped water, feeling the cool, refreshing liquid flow down his parched throat. He ruffled his feathers in satisfaction. His instincts told him there were no threats to them in this place. They would have to risk the journey back in spring; for the rest of their lives, they would fly this dangerous route. But, for now, they were safe, and the migration was complete.



# Artist Portfolio

Sierra Glassman, 13

Watsonville, CA

Camera: Nikon Coolpix P900



# Editor's Introduction

Sierra has submitted artwork to *Stone Soup* a grand total of 11 times, and nearly all the paintings, drawings, and photographs she has sent in share a single subject: birds. Birds flying, birds swimming, birds eating fish, birds protecting their chicks, even birds attacking other birds.

I have to admit that, before seeing Sierra's artwork, I had not given birds much thought. Sure, I admired hummingbirds enough to set a feeder outside my desk window, and, if I saw a hawk, I would follow it with my eyes until it drifted out of sight. But I was also somewhat afraid of birds—even of the hummingbirds, who dart out, as if it to attack me, whenever I take the feeder down for a refill. And I certainly didn't think of birds as having distinct personalities. To me, they seemed expressionless and inscrutable.

But seeing Sierra's photographs made me realize that I was wrong, that birds didn't lack personality—I simply hadn't looked at them long enough to see it. In her photographs, Sierra captures this personality. Her burrowing owl is endearingly goofy; her blue heron, pensive; her Anna's hummingbird has its tail saucily fanned out; and her silver-beaked tanager seems to stare "petulantly" at the camera, as she observes in her accompanying text.

In her cover letter to this submission, Sierra wrote, "I have loved animals for as long as I can remember. Birds fascinate me. Their evolution and behavior—how they fly and how they sing has captured my imagination. I hope to continue to help educate people about birds and make new discoveries about these awe-inspiring animals in the future."

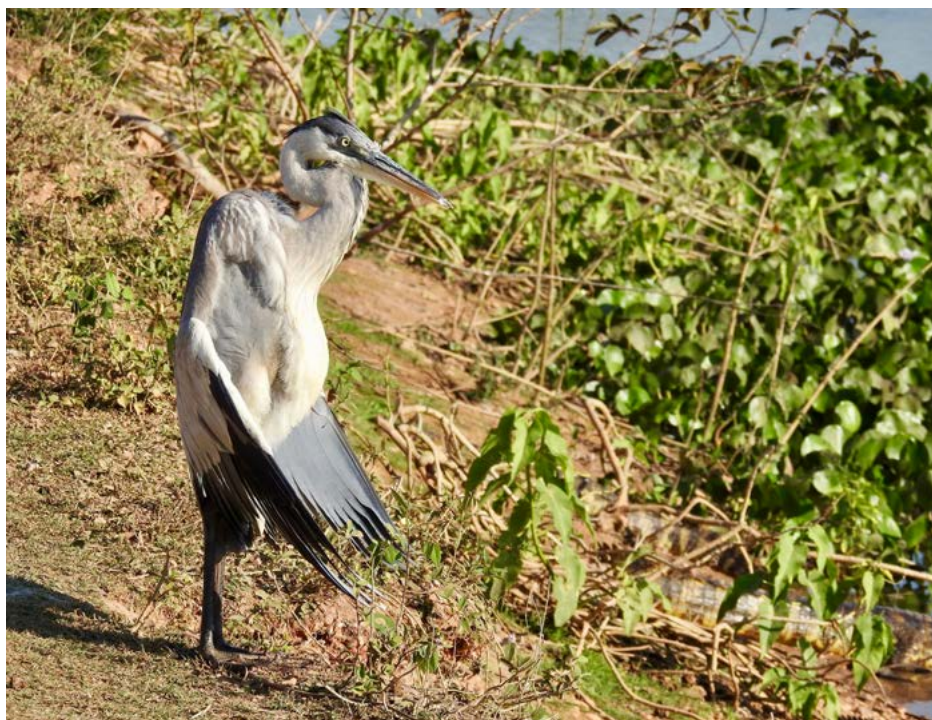
I know she has already educated at least one person about birds (me!), and I hope that you will also learn from this portfolio—in addition to simply enjoying Sierra's beautiful, perceptive, funny photographs.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emma Dod". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "E" and a stylized "D".



## Wink

This charismatic burrowing owl winks for the camera. I noticed these owls seem to only blink one eye at a time!



## Sun Worshipper

Birds are descended from reptiles and, like them, use the sun to raise their body heat. This great blue heron heats up by facing the sun with wings outspread.





### A Small Tail

Hummingbirds are feisty creatures with racing metabolisms. This female Anna's hummingbird has just spotted an intruder on her territory. She prepares to take flight.



## Head On

This crimson-headed silver-beaked tanager stares at me straight on and petulantly as I, the photographer, have disturbed its feeding. This swift moment passes by as the bird flutters up to the safety of the trees.

# Land of the Giiants

by Alex Berman, 13  
New York, NY



## *A description of the fantastical creature the giiant and its remote island*

Once upon an hour, there was a town called Chocolate Lemon. No, not “Chocolate Lemon,” but *chO-co-laht leh-mOne*. This town only lasted for an hour in our time, but for millions of years in the time of the giiants. And no, that was not a typo: they are called giiants. Why? I’ll tell you why. Unlike the giants you know, giiants not only have (had, I should say) two eyes, but also two i’s.

This town was not unusual in any way you would think. It was occupied by giiants: small, wiry creatures that always floated an inch off of the ground. This town was on an island in the middle of the sea, the farthest away it could possibly be from wherever you live. From above, the island looked like a French horn, its coils wrapping in and around itself like intestines. On the kind of triangle-shaped part, the mouthpiece of the horn, lived the prime ministers, six of them to be exact. To be a prime minister, you had to be in your prime. You had to be in the prime of your career and the prime of your life. The prime of your life was hard to predict, but for most giiants it was around 30. Due to this prime predicament, the prime ministers were always changing. One

could never remember more than three of the names of the current prime ministers, let alone all of them.

Now, you may recall earlier that I said that the land of the giiants only lasted for an hour in our time. That is completely true. In fact, this story is all about how Chocolate Lemon came to an end. You might have just gasped and wiped a tear from your eye, for you think that endings are very sad indeed. If you are that kind of person, I suggest you stop reading this story right now.

Let’s begin.

It all started in a children’s school on the east side of the island. The students were listening to a very important safety lesson on zombie apocalypses when a young giiant raised her hand.

“What is it, Gary?” said the teacher. “Is it a question about zombie apocalypses?”

“No.” Gary shook her head sadly. She was going to ask why giiants had two eyes.

“Ok,” said the teacher. “Let’s get back to our lesson. Let’s run through the drill one more time . . .” She turned around to face the wall, and then suddenly jumped back around and yelled,

“Zombie attack!”

“Ahhh!” all the kids screamed and crawled under their desks.

“Good, good, good . . .” said the teacher, scanning the rows of huddling children. She came across a boy kneeling outside of his desk, struggling to get his rather large head under it. “Suzie . . .” she said warningly to the cowering boy. “The zombies have eaten you by now. Go sit in the time-out chair.”

Suzie stood up and walked over to a wooden chair in the corner, sitting down on it with a thud.

“Wait!” he said, raising his hand. “How will I be able to get under my desk quickly when the zombies come?”

The teacher thought for a bit, processing it. She knew it would make no difference to Suzie, for it took him so long to get his head under the desk. Suddenly, she had an idea.

“Class,” she said, “from now on, we’ll have our whole class under our desks. You have time to get under now so that when the zombies come, you’ll be ready.”

The kids all groaned and crawled under their desks. They hated being under the desks because their heads always got smushed against the top. On the ground they’d be fine, but their floating inch pushed them up just enough to be squished.

One good thing about lessons under the desk is that there were no lessons. The teacher’s desk was the kind of desk where the part where the chair goes is open, but the part in front of your legs is closed off. The teacher taught lessons upon lessons from under that desk, but nobody

could see or hear her. To pass the time, the students talked, knowing that the teacher couldn’t hear them behind the thick desk.

“Hey,” said Gary to the boy next to her named Lily. “Do you know why we have two eyes?”

“Dunno,” said Lily. “To see stuff I guess.”

“Want one of mine?” said Gary, popping out one of her eyes. This might sound kind of gruesome to you, but for giants it was normal. Their eyes popped on and off cleanly and painlessly, so they popped them off all of the time. They took them off to go to sleep or during a scary movie.

“Sure,” said Lily, taking it and sticking it on his forehead. Now he understood what the strange blank space above his eyes was for.

Well, that sweet little classroom scene was, as they say, the beginning of the end. Gary’s one-eyed fad became the look of the year. EVERYONE was doing it.

Soon, a new dump was created in the middle of town solely for throwing away unneeded eyeballs. Sadly, Lily’s three-eyed statement was short-lived, and eventually, even he got rid of his two extra eyeballs.

It was three years and two days after that scene when the giants not only took away their extra eyes, but also their extra i’s.

Later that year (in giant time), the issue of having only one eye was brought up between the prime ministers. They were evenly divided on the issue, which brought up the issue of hiring another prime minister to make an odd number so that this would not



happen again. This brought up the issue of whether seven or even six prime ministers were too many, which brought up the issue of the disastrously huge population of giants in Chocolate Lemon. This brought up the issue of expanding into another country, which brought up the issue of possible war. This brought up the issue of Chocolate Lemon not actually having a military, which brought up the issue of . . . well, you get the picture.

It was years (in giant time) until the prime ministers finally got back to the topic of one-eyedness. By then the prime ministers were different, and they decided that one-eyedness would become a regular part of giant culture. "Why do we need two?" they said. "One is plenty!" They also brought up the issue of foreheads being useless, but by the time they would've resolved that, the giants were long gone.

Now the extra eye was being popped out when babies were born, just like how umbilical cords are cut out when human babies are born.

In the year of the end of the giants, a huge issue came along that not even the prime ministers could solve. The number of eyeballs in the dump was so great that they had overflowed all over the town, into the streets and into the schools, and even into people's homes. Finally, there was only one thing to do.

The giants fled to places all over the world. No one would take in these strange, one-eyed creatures, so they lived in the wild. Over deserts, jungles, mountains, and plains they wandered, trying to find a place to call home.

Over the years, evolution changed

the giants to fit their one-eyed preferences. To compensate for their only being one of them, their eyes grew MUCH larger and moved to the middle of their foreheads. Their bodies grew bigger and bigger to make up for their one eye. Their weight made them no longer able to float, so to compensate for both this and their width, the giants grew to be taller than anything else on Earth.

Oh, and another thing had changed. Now when humans saw them, they wouldn't say, "What a weird little one-eyed creature." They would scream, "CYCLOPS!"

### Epilogue

A million years after the giants left Chocolate Lemon, the zombies invaded the little island. There were no giants, but there were millions of eyeballs for them to feast on. After they ran out of eyeballs though, they were hungry again for human flesh.

I'm not pointing any fingers, but don't you think it's funny that sailors lost at sea are always last seen right near Chocolate Lemon?

# Why Frogs Croak in Wet Weather



by Malcolm Dillehay, 9  
Gardiner, NY



by Bryan Lux, 9  
New Paltz, NY

Once there was no rain in the rain forest and then  
the cloud was being mean to god and god started  
to cry and the clouds felt bad so they  
turned gray and all the frogs croaked  
*it's okay it's ok it's ok*



*Lady in Red, soft pastel*



by Alexa Zhang, 9  
Los Altos, CA

# Windsong

by Emma McKinny, 13  
Old Fort, NC



## *Anticipation builds as Emma awaits her father's opening-night performance in a new opera*

A sweet summer wind tore through the desert, flinging dust and small rocks into the night air. Flying over fields of cacti, across Los Alamos, and finally making it to the open back of the Santa Fe opera house, it tousled the hair of the many stagehands, all dressed in black. It breathed life into the bells on the ceremonial clothing of the three different indigenous tribes that had been invited to perform in the show, and as I stepped out of the car that my father had driven us in, it stroked a gentle hand across my face.

---

"It's beautiful . . ." my Grandma Laura breathed, looking up at the magnificent structure that towered above us, with its rafters, all shaped like the sails on a boat, lit up with a warm laughing glow. My face curved into a soft smile as I too gazed up at the familiar building I had used as my second home that summer.

"It is, isn't it," I mumbled.

"I have to go get into costume now," my father called to us. I nodded, a grin starting to appear on my face as I remembered the uptight suit Dad had to wear for the opera. Grandma

beamed.

"Of course!" she exclaimed, hugging him. "Good luck! I'll just be at the lecture with Emma," she said, the smile never leaving her face. I gave him a one-armed hug, chuckling slightly at my overly excited grandmother.

Dad started to walk towards the stage door, but before he got out of earshot, I called out my own good luck: "*In bocca al lupo!*" His face lit up at the familiar phrase, a bit of secret code between opera singers that means "in the mouth of the wolf," and he replied in the way he had thousands of times before:

"*Crepi il lupo!*" ("Bite the wolf!")

And with that, he turned to the waiting door and disappeared from sight.

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Grandma and I hiked up the steep hill the opera house was built on and into the plaza. We walked straight past the iron gates, welcoming to me, but intimidating to the strangers all gathered at its feet, and to the employee entrance that was guarded by two junior ushers.

"Hello, Emma!" the boy greeted, smiling as he opened the gate. "Here to

see your Dad?" I nodded, grinning.

"Julia and Dan too," I said, waving as Grandma Laura and I walked right on through. There were a few people there for the lecture by Peter Sellars, all of them in a large blob of a line, an air of excitement and impatience at the prospect of being able to meet the director of the show.

"Are you coming too?" Grandma asked as she joined the line. I smirked.

"Nah, I already know everything there is to know about Dr. Atomic," I said, smiling. "I'll probably just walk around a bit, and meet back up with you afterward, okay?" I asked, looking at her face, glowing with anticipation, for confirmation. She nodded quickly, slightly too eager to pay attention to a word I was saying.

I giggled and waved goodbye to her as I strode over to the terrace, my shoes making a soft clicking noise on the stone courtyard. A few employees glanced at me, sizing me up, as if deciding if they should tell me that this place was only for adults, but all of them quickly decided otherwise. My mother had taught me the art of looking like you belong. Chin up, shoulders back, back straight. I leaned on the wall, its rough and bumpy surface scratching my hands, but I didn't care. I gazed out at the sunset, its colors lighting a fire on the desert sand, arcing over the few clouds that coated the light-blue and lilac sky. Orange, pink, and red flames danced across the sailboat roof for the last time as the sun gave way to a dark blanket of navy blue, littered with tiny glittering gems sprinkled across the night sky. I tilted my head up to the wind, breathing

in the smell of rain and lavender that seemed to be an ever-present scent here, in this magical place.

I was gently reminded that I was here, not out on the open plains painted dark blue with the lights of Los Alamos in the distance, as the orchestra started to tune itself. The sweet melodies of the violins, the flutes sounding like a choir of songbirds, and the strong embracing arms of the percussion welcoming me home. I smiled as the friendly wind nudged me toward the main entrance where Grandma Laura and Mister Verm would be waiting. I strolled past the families of both young and old, and laughed internally at their excitement to see a performance like this, perhaps for the first time. I didn't actually know which show was my first, or where the houses first welcomed me into their never-ending hearts. I didn't know when I first became a daughter of the opera.

"Emma! Over here!" The voice of a baritone singer pulled me out of my musings. Mister Verm was waving at me from the front steps, his green-and-blue eyes shining with amusement and laughter. I grinned and made myself a path toward him, my eyes still sweeping across the large crowd, searching for Gram. I finally found her, waiting not too far from the Verms. I pulled the Verms over to her, and they were just getting introduced when the chime of the 10 minute bells rang over the chattering crowd.

"We should get going," I said, grinning at the ever-growing impatience. "Can you get to your seat alright?" I asked Grandma Laura. She nodded

## *Orange, pink, and red flames danced across the sailboat roof for the last time*

quickly, her movements becoming fidgety.

"Yes, of course!" she exclaimed. "You go on, have fun!" She gave me a quick hug and tottered off. I giggled and made my way to the VIP lounge with Mister Verm. When we got there, I once again recognized the ushers and smiled at them.

"Here," Mister Verm muttered, showing the girls his ID. "And the young lady is with me."

"Of course." The one on the right smiled. "Enjoy the show!"

We walked in, and I looked around, grimacing at the very obvious absence of anyone under the age of 18. I shook my head and made my way up the stairs onto the upper level of the lounge. I pulled a chair over to the wall and positioned myself so that I could see the show. The lights went down, and a hush fell over the crowd. The only set the entire show used was a gigantic metal sphere hanging from the ceiling. It had a mirrored surface, and it sparked the interest of everyone in the vicinity, except for me. I had spent all summer seeing the rehearsals of Dr. Atomic. My dad was playing the lead role, Oppenheimer, after all.

But as the show went on, even I became captured by the story. The people it spoke of were not yet gone, the effects of the testing had not yet ended. People from the Santa Clara, San Ildefonso, and Tesuque Pueblo were still dying because of the radioactive energy emanating from the

test site, and a group of people called the Downwinders were suffering the same fate. Intermission came and went, and at the very end of the show, a young woman's voice sounded across the audience, bringing tears to my eyes. She was speaking in Japanese, and she was speaking from Hiroshima. She was asking where her son was, she was begging for water, she was praying for help.

Then, as she fell silent, a terrible scream of a hundred children sounded over the loudspeaker. It rang through the night, flying on the wind, angry, scared, sad. It made its way to the lights of Los Alamos, to the ancestors of the people responsible for their pain, and it shook me to my core. Others in the audience had tears of wonder in their eyes as they leaped to their feet to applaud the singers, the tribes, and the Downwinders, but as I clapped, the tears I forced away were not of joy, or wonder. They were born of anger so deep, I didn't recognize my own emotions. The anger screamed for recognition: it didn't want to be shut away, it didn't want to be channeled into something else. It wanted to be set free, and then it wanted to force my country to take responsibility for all the harm it had done.

I locked it in a chest and saved it for later. I put on my best smile and waltzed out of the lounge as if I were simply intrigued by the show. I didn't say anything about it when Grandma or Mr. Verm asked me what I had



thought of the show. I just smiled and said I had loved the performance, just as I had during rehearsals. When Dad came over to us and offered to show us backstage, I beamed and acted just like my usual happy self. He showed us the stage and introduced Gram to our friends and two of the other main performers in the show, Julia and Dan. We also got to meet some of the dancers, but we, of course, had to leave eventually. So we made our way to the car, and Dad waved goodbye to his colleagues, still blind to the turmoil boiling in the pit of my stomach.

The wind felt it, and so did the house. They wrapped me in their embrace, reminding me I wasn't alone in my anger. The wind wanted its people back, and the house did too. And so I got into the car without complaint, and as the wind hugged me for one last time, I looked back at Los Alamos and smirked, knowing what would eventually come.

*"In bocca al lupo,"* I whispered to the wind and got into the car.

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A sweet summer wind is tearing through the desert, throwing rocks and sand into the night air. It's angry for its people, and when the wind is angry, all of the world feels it. The wind has never been alone in its anger, and it never will be. It has an ally, who is lying in wait, searching for the perfect moment to bring all the secrets to light. Until that day, the wind will hold onto its anger and keep its best friend, the opera house.

# 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 that comes our way. We want to commend some of these talented writers and artists and encourage them to keep creating.

## Fiction

Tristan Hui, 13  
Akshara Kambam, 10  
Lindsey Liu, 11  
Adam Smith, 12  
Aayati Vijayakar, 8  
Sasha B. Wang, 13

## Poetry

Nora Finn, 6  
Addy Lee, 11  
Beatrice Lundberg, 10  
Grace McAllister, 4  
Annabelle Pugh, 12  
Kathleen Werth, 9

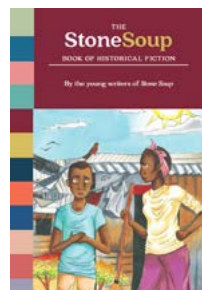
## Art

Anaya Ajmera, 6  
Claire Jiang, 12  
Tara Prakash, 12  
Shanaya Saraiya, 6  
Rocky Wang, 12

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