



# StoneSoup

JANUARY 2019

VOLUME 47/ ISSUE 1



# StoneSoup

*The magazine supporting  
creative kids around the world*

Editor:

**Emma Wood**

Director

**William Rubel**

Operations

**Jane Levi**

Education & Production

**Sarah Ainsworth**

Design

**Joe Ewart**

*Stone Soup* (ISSN 0094 579X) is published online 11 times per year—monthly, with a combined July/August summer issue. Copyright © 2019 by the Children's Art Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, located in Santa Cruz, California. All rights reserved.

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

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Stone Soup*, 126 Otis Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060. Periodicals postage paid at Santa Cruz, California, and additional offices.

*Stone Soup* is available in different formats to persons who have trouble seeing or reading the print or online editions. To request the Braille edition from the National Library of Congress, call +1 800-424-8567. To request access to the audio edition via the National Federation of the Blind's NFB-NEWSLINE®, call +1 866-504-7300 or visit [www.nfbnewsline.org](https://www.nfbnewsline.org).

Check us out on Social Media:



## Editor's Note

In January, the days are already getting longer but it doesn't feel that way! This issue has some short short fiction—the winners of our 2018 contest—to match the season's short short days, as well as wintry, dark landscapes in both art and poetry. It also has three longer stories that matched the seasonal mood in a different way; their "darkness" is more metaphorical, but each one still leaves you with a feeling of hope and the presentiment of longer, lighter days ahead.

Here's to some fireside reading!

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

**Letters:** Do you have something to say about something you've read or seen in *Stone Soup*? If you do, we'd love to hear from you, and we might print your letter on our Letters to the Editor page! Post a comment on our website, or write to us at [editor@stonesoup.com](mailto:editor@stonesoup.com).

**Submissions:** Our guidelines are on the Submit page at [Stonesoup.com](https://stonesoup.com), where you will also find a link to our Submittable online submissions portal.

**Subscriptions:** To subscribe to *Stone Soup*, please press the Subscribe button on our webpage, [Stonesoup.com](https://stonesoup.com).



On the cover:

"Fox on a Snowy Night"

by Sloka Ganne, 9  
Overland Park, KS

# StoneSoup

## Contents

### FICTION

#### 7 The Pendulum

by Sabrina Guo

*Prompted by her cat, a writer meditates on time*

First Place in the Short Short Fiction Contest

#### 8 The Greater Good

by Valentine Wulf

*Miss Plum's company starts as a tiny, innocent store, but soon grows into a massive, destructive corporation*

#### 13 The Sycamore Tree

by Mira Johnson

*A sycamore tree protects a bunny from a baying dog*

Second Place in the Short Short Fiction Contest

#### 14 The Power of Nature

by Adam Smith

*A boy finds happiness in a magical spot in the forest*

#### 15 The Deadly Storm

by Madesyn Fogg

*After Elizabeth's father dies, she and her mother struggle to survive—until a terrible storm changes everything...*

#### 20 A Dinner Party

by Anyi Sharma

*An old man, recently released from prison, decides to throw a party for his old friends*

3rd Place in the Short Short Fiction Contest

#### 25 The Hummingbird

by Clare McDermott

*A hummingbird brings its light, joyful presence to the forest*

Fourth Place in the Short Short Fiction Contest

## 26 Hide-and-Seek

by Eva Juette

*It's 1943 in Denmark, and Freja's best friend, Madeline, a Jewish girl, is in danger*

### POETRY

## 4 Silence/Ages

by Eleonore Lecue

## 11 In the Mirror

by Anna Calegari

## 22 Snow

by Eliza Wagner

## 23 Night

by Mae Gesser

### ART

## Cover: Fox on a Snowy Night

by Sloka Ganne

## 6 Tick Tock

by Marco Lu

## 12 The Lonely Tree

by Tessa Papastergiou

## 16 The Cuts of the Blade

by Delaney Slote

## 21 Silent Stalker

by Elizabeth Hedge

## 24 Optimistic Darkness

by Daania Sharifi

## 29 HONOR ROLL



# Silence/Ages

by Eleonore Lecue, 6  
Asheville, NC



Silence shine

When the silence goes over the mountains  
And when it goes down into the sea  
We never know how far it's going to go  
In the sea or in the trees  
And the silence spreads so far away  
That no one can say  
When you look over and around  
You'll see a rainbow that shines with silence  
And you'll see everywhere this thing wherever you go  
Then think about it in your mind  
If you look at the sky in your silence  
Why does the silence shine all over  
'Cause silence is so beautiful and fun  
And silence goes all over the world where you can see

Silence trees

Trees have silence in them  
Trees spread the silence and the wind all over  
In perfect silence  
Of the leaves in the trees  
You know why  
Well, you'll see  
How cool is this world with these trees  
These trees bring everything to you  
These trees shed you from the sun  
If it's so sunny  
That's right  
Do you want to see more with me?

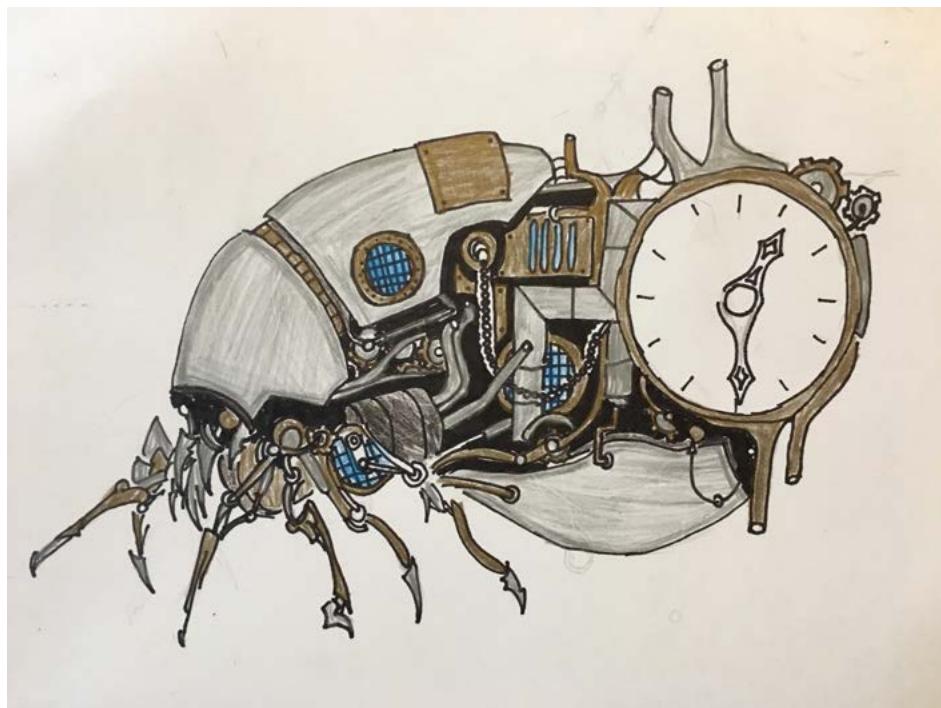
Shining rainbow

Rainbows spread across the world  
Even with a bit of silence  
And you know that already  
'Cause silence is everywhere  
'Cause everybody sings songs of silence

You already know that  
Yes, that's true  
Would you like to come with me  
To see a bit more?  
You would?  
Then just come with me to see more  
And more and more and more

The leaves and the trees  
When the leaves go in the trees  
They make a cradle  
They make a sound like a lullaby  
They make the cool wind  
And the air for us to breathe  
And they make you sing a song  
That's what everybody says  
And so that's true  
While they whisper in the breeze  
And while they sing songs  
That's the truth  
Oh yes, you say

The ages  
While you grow and grow and grow  
While you continue growing forever  
But one day you'll die  
Yes, that's true  
All of that is true  
Yes, yes, yes  
Okay, okay  
Let's continue  
This fabulous day  
Let's continue traveling past this song  
Quietly  
Like silence  
You know that already  
Now that is true  
Oh yes, oh yes  
Yes, yes, yes  
Okay, okay  
That's the song  
That we are done with today



Tick Tock, colored pencil



by Marco Lu, 12  
Champaign, IL



# The Pendulum

1st Place in the Short Short Fiction Contest

by Sabrina Guo, 12  
Oyster Bay, NY



*Prompted by her cat, a writer meditates on time*

Most nights, my cat stares at the grandfather clock in the living room. She is a grey tabby with splotches of black and white. Her eyes are golden and edged in greenish blue, like a miniature painting of the sun over a forest, or a mood ring, because you never know when the colors will change.

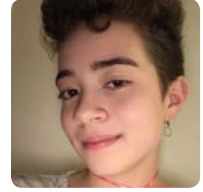
When she is calm, you see more of the gold, flickering. But when she is scared, her pupils are large and black, and you notice more of the green, which is the way she looks before the clock at night—her back arched, her fur raised like small tufts of grass. She stares at the oval shape of the clock as if it is the moon revolving around the earth and the earth around the sun. When the clock sounds on the hour, her ears twitch, but she doesn't move. She simply resets her eyes, refastening them to the pendulum's sway.

Unlike my cat, I think this time might have been better spent outside in the fresh air like my mother always wants me to do. But for my cat, no second is wasted; she merely sees and does: when she is hungry, she eats, when she is tired, she sleeps, and when she is frisky, she scratches the furniture, no matter how much we scold her.

When she is happy, she purrs, or she brushes her side against my leg, nudging her head and nose into my wrist when I reach down to pet her as if she is pleading, but for what I am never sure: more food, a toy, my lap? I never know exactly what she wants except that when I am with her, I am warm and calm, certain there is still enough time for everything.

# The Greater Good

by Valentine Wulf, 12  
Seattle, WA



## *Miss Plum's company starts as a tiny, innocent store, but soon grows into a massive, destructive corporation*

Lizard Corporation started as a tiny, innocent store in Miss Angelica Plum's basement when she was only 18 years old.

"Want an invention of your very own? A novelty item to show off to your friends? Come on in!" she shouted, in her loud voice with an accent nobody could identify. Those were the first words she mentioned about her company, back when she was young and innocent and didn't know the horrible things she would go on to do. She stood outside, twirling a bright, colorful sign advertising her products. With her dark hair in a ponytail tied off with a pink ribbon, too much lipstick, and a skirt so short it would earn her a very long lecture from an old lady, she didn't look like someone who could turn the world into a wasteland in just seven years. Not at all. This was back when the world was sunny and pure. When the world was full of light and hope. When the sun shone bright in the sky and cast black shadows across the ground. When she was just a kid with an impossible dream.

"This is never going to happen,"  
"It's impossible," "You're just a kid,"

people said, sometimes with a condescending laugh or a wink. But she didn't listen. Her first customer was an old man by the name of Frederick Lizardworth. He bought a device she had nicknamed "voiceover." It was practical, it was useful, it was amusing. He was impressed with her. He told her that when you have a dream, you don't let anyone stand in your way. Mr. Lizardworth told everyone he knew about the remarkable young lady over on the corner of Starling and 34th, and soon, people were coming in great crowds to get a genuine hoverboard or the 100 percent authentic "glove phone." She made enough money in just one week to open up a real store in an old garage. People came from miles and miles to see her and buy her products. She hired workers, got clients, and sponsored sports teams. She was a local celebrity. Until one day, she wasn't just local anymore.

Word went overseas, and gossip spread like wildfire. Pretty soon, people were flocking in from other countries just to see her, and soon she opened her first factory and named it "Lizard Corporation," in honor of Mr. Fred-

erick Lizardworth, the man who got her started. Her dream of a world-wide company was now a reality, and bright-red Lizard Corporation logos began appearing everywhere, plastered across billboards, airplanes, and buses.

After a while, other people sponsored Lizard Corporation and made new stores all over the world, and Miss Plum made more and more money. The factories began spewing smoke into the air, and though some people complained, Miss Plum just said it was “for the greater good.”

The demand for Lizard products grew so high that they began making factory workers go faster and faster, and paid them less and less, the lowest wages they could get away with. There were casualties, there was pollution. In only a few weeks, the complaints began. They came in the mail, pouring out of mailboxes like flocks of birds. In white envelopes with colorful stamps and *Angelica Plum, 9924 Lobster Way, Yellowseed, NX, lot 511* scrawled across all of them in a myriad of different handwritings. They looked like pretty white snow as they were dumped into the recycling bin. And the ones that came in person, from the workers themselves, were not treated with any more thought. When an enraged worker, overworked and underpaid, came up to her and demanded a change, Miss Plum just laughed and told them, “It’s for the greater good!” before tossing them a buck or so, then walking away to go count her money.

That’s when billboards started popping up, with the brand-new Lizard Corp slogan: “For the greater good”

and Miss Plum’s face showed up in magazines, in newspapers, on TV with the words next to it, reassuring people.

The factories went up everywhere, lining every cityscape in the world. The sky turned black, and the oceans turned brown. Sometimes people worried about it. Sometimes they said it was dangerous. Sometimes they questioned it. But then they saw Miss Plum’s face up on a billboard, or in a news report, with her accent, her warm smile, and her eyes sparkling and full of dreams, they reminded themselves that it was for the greater good. After all, nobody that sweet and innocent could cause something so horrible. So people ignored it. After all, she was just a kid. A kid with a dream that maybe wasn’t so impossible anymore.

And now, only seven years later, Miss Plum has the world under her illusion. She’s smart. She’s rich. She’s powerful. She’s admired. People want to meet her. People want to be her.

People will do anything to defend Lizard Corporation, because without Lizard Corporation, we wouldn’t have glovephones or hoverboards or all these magnificent things. We like to say we’re just buying these things to support Miss Plum, and sometimes it really seems like we’ve even convinced ourselves of that.

In fact, every month Lizard Corporation comes out with a new and improved version of an old product and people just *have* to buy it. Because buying things is fun. Thrilling. *Trendy*.

Every time they launch a shiny new product, the blue plastic trash cans lining every alley in the city are

piled high with the old, “inferior” products as the looming Lizard Corporation factories start up for the day, spewing their smoke into the already black sky. Cardboard boxes roll out with the new device, and they’re loaded into trucks and distributed all over the world.

Huge mobs of screaming people pour through the gleaming glass doors into the immaculate Lizard Corporation shops, and the telephones in each shop ring furiously with excited consumers on the other side, ordering the new trend. Customers scream, employees scream, and telephones scream, till the whole city echoes with the cacophonous din.

Sometimes people complain of the noise. Of the screaming. But then Miss Plum comes on the news and reminds us of the Lizard Corporation slogan. Reminds us that what we’re doing is okay. Reminds us that a few people suffering is *for the greater good*.

The Lizard Corporation trucks pollute the streets with their signature red logo, standing out against the gray city. Even at night they run, under the bright nighttime sky, stained with the light of a thousand glowing cities. The trucks swarm through the streets all day every day, rushing to deliver to greedy and impatient customers.

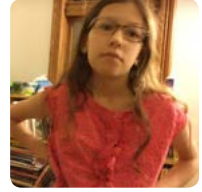
Sometimes the trucks crash because they’re going so fast. Sometimes workers die. Sometimes innocent people die. Either way, nobody tells them to slow down. They can’t. We buy so much. We buy so fast.

Because we don’t really want the products after all; it’s the buying them that’s so thrilling. So we do. We buy and we buy and we buy as the sky

gets smokier and the air gets colder and the world gets greedier as Miss Plum and Lizard Corporation continue their sugar-coated reign of terror. And nobody even so much as tries to stop her. Because she’s doing all this *for the greater good*.

# In the Mirror

by Anna Calegari, 12  
Chicago, IL



It's not surprising  
I look like a monochrome:  
The only colors are pink laces on my shoes  
And purple bags beneath my eyes.

Like an old-fashioned photograph—  
"Subject stares beyond the camera.  
Subject seems so sad."  
The people in the pictures never smile.

Their faces stay stony and unreadable  
Even though they see everything,  
Forever watching, like me.

Smiling is hard when it looks so wrong.  
My best face is my frown.  
So I wear my frown as I walk away  
And the monochrome behind the mirror disappears.



The Lonely Tree, iPad



by Tessa Papastergiou, 11  
Ontario, Canada



# The Sycamore Tree

*2nd Place in the Short Short Fiction Contest*

by Mira Johnson, 8  
New Braunfels, TX



## *A sycamore tree protects a bunny from a baying dog*

Once upon a time, there lived a bright and cheerful sycamore tree named Triffle. Triffle was bewildered by the rapid ripples at the edge of the clear blue river. She was very astonished at how rapidly the river was moving.

She spotted a baying dog and a squalling bunny running away, trying to resist from getting caught. With lots of sympathy, Triffle waved her ancient branches to try and coax the frightened bunny in a safe domain under her broad roots. Triffle noticed a wound on the bunny and used her special soap as a liniment to heal the injury.

The eager dog was full-fledged on catching his prey but he'll have to hunt another day.

# The Power of Nature

by Adam Smith, 10  
London, UK



## *A boy finds happiness in a magical spot in the forest*

The water gushed from the waterfall that I could just about see and it formed a sapphire river feeding life itself. Dark green shrubs poked their beautiful heads out of the ground pleading with the smiling sun to grow and live. Just by looking at this beautiful jewel, a feeling of pure happiness washed over me. Birds sang an orchestral song and they fluttered over me while the wind blew a gentle gust of wind as I slept, not to wake for eons to come. The bridge's planks were strong and sturdy like bodybuilders. Small fish gently swam and talked in an indecipherable language. Reeds waved to the wind, sang from sleep, and smiled a green leafy smile. The flowers all radiated beauty and life. Ants skittered to and from their anthill, all serving their queen, while a pretty butterfly alighted on my finger. All evil fled into the dark pits of hell to meet the devil while God in his heavenly throne granted the hope, wishes, and prayers of all. This was a nearly sacred idyll, undisturbed by tourists and their noisy cameras. Smoke floated up from the chimneys of the nearby village and the forest replenished the air while creatures squeaked as they ran in and out of trees. Cows mooed and talked and played with their calves. Flicks of migrating swallows showed their skill on the wing and their tails directed them home. I trotted home only to in the night dream about going to that ball of magic again.

# The Deadly Storm

by Madesyn Fogg, 10  
Thorndale, PA



*Elizabeth and her mother struggle to survive in the years after Elizabeth's father dies—until a terrible storm changes everything...*

"It's so dark tonight," said Elizabeth to her mother. Elizabeth is an only child. She's 12 years old. Her dad died from a heart attack when she was only four years old. They were on the way to the hospital because her dad was having severe chest pains. Two years before he died, the doctors told him he needed a pacemaker, but he refused. But, to this day, they still didn't know why he hadn't wanted a pacemaker.

When her dad died, they had to move from their massive house in Thorndale to a little broken-down house in New Jersey. Their new house was on a tilted, cracked cliff. They lost all their money when the father died. He was a scientist; he created things like computers, phones, and more. He got paid about a million dollars a month. He created something new almost every day. Also, when Elizabeth's dad died, her mom didn't remember their bank account number, and that was the only way to get into your bank account in 1866. Elizabeth and her mom, Sally, barely had any money.

Since the night her dad died, eight years ago, Elizabeth didn't talk to her mom at all. They were both so de-

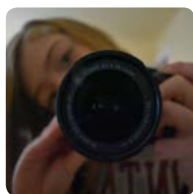
pressed. It just made Sally even more depressed when her own daughter didn't talk to her. Elizabeth had just started talking to her mom a few days ago. The first words Elizabeth said to her mom were "Why do the good people have to die?" Now, Elizabeth was mad about how she treated her mom those past years. To make up for all of those years, she now cares about her, is respectful, and is a big help.

That night, in 1874, Elizabeth went outside to get the snow and ice from the gigantic river they live near. When she brings it home, they put it on the counter until it turns into water. They're poor, so they need some water to drink. She had her one foot in the rim of the river, which was freezing water. Then, out of nowhere, she slipped on the rock that her foot was on. She fell into the water. She could barely see the water around her, but she did see that it was dark—a deadly bloody red. The tide was pulling her under. She couldn't swim. Elizabeth felt herself getting weaker and weaker. Then, she couldn't move; she was sinking.

Elizabeth's mom was sitting on a



*The Cuts of the Blade, Nikon D3400*



by Delaney Slote, 12  
Missoula, MT

wooden chair, drinking river water and looking at a picture next to the chair. The picture was of Elizabeth and her nine years before. After about 30 minutes, Elizabeth's mom started to get worried. She put on her faded coat and gloves and stepped her foot outside the door.

There were big streaks of lightning and loud roars of thunder. It was sunny out, but sleeting. When she was about to go down the stairs, she saw Elizabeth in the river, and the rest of her body was going under. There was blood surrounding her. Elizabeth's mom started screaming. Then the house started shaking rapidly, and there was blood surrounding the river now. Elizabeth's mom ran over to the river and jumped in. She twisted her ankle, but as bad as it hurt her, her daughter was still more important to her. She dragged Elizabeth out.

After she dragged Elizabeth out, she realized that her head had a horrible, bloody gash in it. Elizabeth's mom was determined to get her inside. Elizabeth just got inside and was on the kitchen floor when Sally heard the thunder and got struck by lightning. Then, she fell and passed out.

It started to hail, snow, rain, thunder, sleet, lightning, and was windy all at once. Do you know what happens when they all come at once? A hurricane! All of the sudden the house started to rumble, the house started to shake when BOOM! The house went off the edge of the cliff, and BAM went into pieces. Elizabeth went off the edge first, then right after Elizabeth, went her mother.

The weather stopped, everything

stopped. After about 30 seconds, it was pretty and sunny. A horse-and-buggy was driving by the house when he saw the last bit of the house go off the edge. The guy, whose name was Matthew, ran out of his horse-and-buggy over to the edge, looked down, and right away saw two bodies lying on the ground. Right away, he got in the horse-and-buggy and went off to get help. But right after the horses started to run, something flew through the cloth on the buggy. What was it? It was a huge piece of sleet. Luckily it didn't hit him, but it was so large and sharp, it went through his seat.

He started driving faster and faster. The weather got worse and worse. Now there was sleet, snow, rain, hail, every different kind of weather. Right after he got off their property, it was sunny out. Matthew looked behind him at the property and heard thunder and saw lightning. That's when it came. The tornado! He smacked the reins on the horses as hard as he could, and they ran the fastest he has ever seen them run. He needed to get someone, and it needed to be quick.

He drove to the police station and talked to Officer Tom. Matthew said, "There's a giant storm about 16 miles west, and two bodies lying on the ground."

The police officer asked, "Where are their bodies?"

"Their house fell off a ginormous cliff, and so did they," Matthew replied.

Immediately, Tom asked Matthew if he could borrow his horse-and-buggy because the other policemen were using the other ones. There were other horses, but they don't go so fast any-

more. Matthew allowed Tom to borrow his horse-and-buggy. As Matthew was riding, Tom was asking him questions about the house, the bodies, and the weather. When they finally arrived he looked off the edge of the cliff, and there were the two bodies and the little broken down house in little pieces.

Then it happened again. The lightning, thunder, hail, rain, snow, and that caused a tornado. It started off little. They sprinted back to Matthew's horse-and-buggy. That wasn't it for Tom. He got back out of the buggy and said, "This is my job. Stay in the horse-and-buggy, and don't come to find me if I don't come back."

Tom got out of the horse-and-buggy and saw that the tornado had gotten bigger. Tom was determined to save the two girls at the bottom of the cliff. Tom climbed as carefully as he could, but as quick as he could down the cliff. It took him about 15 minutes to finally get down. Tom grabbed Elizabeth in one arm and her mom in the other, and he climbed up the cliff. It took him 20 minutes to climb back up because of how determined he was.

When he got up the cliff, the tornado was giant. He had to resist it, though. It took Tom so long to get back, but he did get back. Tom did have scars on him, though. When he got the two girls back in the buggy, they rushed to the hospital. It took about a half hour to get to the hospital.

Right away, they came in with

Elizabeth in Tom's arms and her mom in Matthew's arms. Immediately, the doctors got them to a room and asked Tom and Matthew many questions about what happened. They answered the questions the best they could. After that, they told Tom and Matthew to go into the waiting room. They did some type of surgery on both girls, but Tom and Matthew didn't understand what the surgeons were talking about, but apparently it helped them.

When their scars healed up a little bit, one of the doctors, named Chelcy, said that she knew Elizabeth's mom and that her husband was the person who invented all of the different medical supplies, but then had passed away. The first question she asked Chelcy was if she knew their bank account number. Chelcy thought and thought, but didn't remember it. But, she did remember one thing. She remembered that Elizabeth's dad trusted her with all his heart, and he let her take \$2,000 out of the account because she saved him from his first heart attack. Chelcy knew three of the numbers but forgot the other two.

She went under a wooden chair and grabbed her purse. It was a mess. She dumped it out on a table and found a little scrap piece of paper. She looked at the numbers and gave her the paper. The numbers were 34679. Elizabeth's mom gave her a hug and thanked her so many times.

When they got to the bank, Eliz-

*When they got to the chairs, they both started to cry. It wasn't a bad cry; it was tears of joy!*



abeth's mom said that the numbers were 34679, and a girl named Linda told her that her total in the bank was \$300,000,000! Elizabeth and her mom's jaws dropped!

Linda asked if there was a problem, but Linda didn't believe how much money that was herself. Elizabeth's mom said that there wasn't a problem; she just didn't know that she had that much money in her bank. Linda asked, "How much money would you like out of your bank?"

"Ten million dollars," she replied. Linda asked for a minute.

Elizabeth and her mom went to sit on a couple of wooden chairs lined up in the corner. When they got to the chairs, they both started to cry. It wasn't a bad cry; it was tears of joy! About 15 minutes later, Linda said in her crackly voice, "Your money's ready." They both ran up, Elizabeth's mom grabbed the money, thanked Linda, then left.

Elizabeth and her mom got a new, gorgeous, three-floor house. Also, they donated \$2,000 to charity. They got new outfits, toys, and everything they wanted. Still, they had to be careful not to use their money on unnecessary things. Elizabeth and her mom kept trying, not to forget, but to keep their minds not always on her dad. Although he passed away, Elizabeth and her mom were thankful for every moment he had been with them.

Two years later, about 35 minutes after they went to bed, Elizabeth felt the house shake. She looked out of her window, and it all started over again. . .

# A Dinner Party

3rd Place in the Short Short Fiction Contest

by Anyi Sharma, 10  
Greenwich, CT



*An old man, recently released from prison,  
decides to throw a party for his old friends*

The old man tidied his home for his dinner party. Slowly, the guests trickled in, and a subtle murmur bubbled across the room. He stepped across his woven carpet, antique and intricate like moss burnishing a forest floor.

The guests seemed uneasy, whispering amongst themselves around the oaken table. The old man pulled in his ragged coat, concealing its tattered holes.

"Are you adjusting well?" He turned around and saw an old classmate.

"To tell you the truth, they're taking away my house and car soon to cover attorney costs," he replied quietly. "I'm really glad you guys came out here."

"Must have been hard . . . 25 years locked up in p-prison . . ." His friend smiled nervously, glancing down at his cell phone.

"I mean—"

"Sorry, I have to run. Family emergency, you understand," his friend stuttered. They stared at each other for a brief moment before he vanished, the door creaking in his wake.

Suddenly, the old man realized that all the other guests were glancing at him. He padded around the room unsteadily. Somehow he felt their stares following him, cold and cautious, betraying the veneer of their smiles.

"Sorry to leave early, something last-minute came up," someone abruptly exclaimed.

"I need to babysit for a friend," his co-worker apologized.

"My wife has something she needs help with." The chairs scraped against the ground.

Confused, the old man gulped in the heady, wet-soil air as everyone began to vanish. The chandelier creaked with every slight breeze, bathing the dinner table in warm moonlight.

The chairs, rocks, gazed at him with hollow expressions. The walls of his house, towering trees, enveloped him, trapping him with their tall, spectral frames. The plants whispered, glanced, stared endlessly.

The hermit was alone in the forest. He had always been alone.



Silent Stalker, iPhone 7



by Elizabeth Hedge, 12  
Alberta, Canada

# Snow

by Eliza Wagner, 8  
West Hartford, CT



drifting

falling

a small  
voice calling

through the wind  
through the  
clouds

snowman  
made  
on the ground

a snowball  
fight  
begins

a cold ball  
hits  
me on the chin

# Night

by Mae Gesser, 9  
Brooklyn, NY



The stars stood gleaming  
Like sequins  
On a black cloth

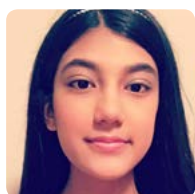
The moon came to rest  
On the surface  
Of a pond

The grass swayed  
From side to side  
Like a rocking horse

The night was as quiet  
As an empty page.



Optimistic Darkness, iPhone 5



by Daania Sharifi, 13  
Gainesville, VA



# The Hummingbird

4th Place in the Short Short Fiction Contest

by Clare McDermott, 12  
Madison, WI



*A hummingbird brings its light, joyful presence to the forest*

As I walked along the trail, the wind rustled the deep-green leaves in the tall trees. I could sense everything in the forest that day; the soft whispers of the tall grass, the chipmunks that silently skittered across the trail, the lullaby of the creek as clear water trickled over smooth stones.

But there was something else. A light, joyful presence, a presence that made the whole forest stop to look. It made me stop and look too. I stood in place, still as a statue, looking for whatever creature created this magical atmosphere.

And then I saw it. Quick as a flash, a burst of color in the green leaves above. It zipped past me, and towards the small patch of flowers on the edge of the trail. Only then was I able to get a good look at it.

A hummingbird, each feather meticulously crafted by Mother Nature herself, shimmered in the dappled green-gold light of the forest. Miniscule bright eyes glinted mischievously as iridescent wings moved back and forth so fast that they were merely a blur. Its tiny body shimmered in the sunlight, capturing all the colors of the rainbow.

It perched gracefully on in a nearby bush, and that bush seemed to quiver with delight at this pint-sized miracle. The hummingbird chirped sweetly and fluffed itself out.

And just like that, the hummingbird spread its miniature wings and was gone as quickly as it had come.

# Hide-And-Seek

by Eva Juetten, 11  
Singapore



*It's 1943 in Denmark, and Freja's best friend, Madeline, a Jewish girl, is in danger*

*For my Opa*

"Faster, faster, faster!" Carlotta squealed, her eyes shining with excitement. Freja Larsen and Madeline Aaron, best friends since birth, laughed at the silliness of Freja's younger sister. Giggling and talking, they rode home on Farmer John's hay cart every day after school. "Three, two, one and . . . jump!" All three of them, Freja holding her little sister's hand, jumped off the hay cart as they reached their home. Running with the hay cart to give Lily the cow a little pat, they finally waved goodbye to the cart that moved into the distance, dust trailing behind it.

As they walked to the door, Carlotta blabbed on about what they were going to play once they got home. "We can play dolls!" she exclaimed.

"Lotta, no, nobody wants to play dolls."

"I do." Carlotta stuck out her tongue, held her nose in the air, and walked toward the house, her arms crossed stubbornly across her chest.

"Lotta, c'mon, can't we play anything else?"

Slowly, Carlotta turned on her heel and eyed Freja suspiciously.

"Like what?" she asked, squinting

at her older sister.

"What about hide-and-seek?"

Freja suggested. Carlotta's face fell then lit up.

"I know where I'm going to hide! In our closet upstairs! The latch right at the back of the closet opens up and a hundred people can fit in!"

"Lotta, you're not supposed to tell the seeker where you're going to hide. And anyway, it's barely big enough for two!"

"I bet you still can't find me. It's so . . . hidden!"

Freja's mother, Marie, was waiting for the girls at home and greeted them warmly as they came in. They walked straight into the kitchen, their mouths watering as the smell of freshly baked *wienerbrød* filled their noses.

"Oh girls, what have you done?"

Marie said, trying to suppress a smile. "Not one day goes by without you getting yourselves dirty. Now, who's going to help me cook tonight?"

---

"And . . . done!" Freja had been helping Madeline get ready for Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish new year. This year, 1943, it was on the 29th of September.

Freja had helped prepare the apples, pouring honey into a pretty jar big enough to dip the apples in. Madeline's mother, Grace, had baked honey cake, which Carlotta was trying to nibble. Grace had also baked fresh, round challahs, and the girls couldn't wait to eat the sweet cinnamon treats. The girls also laid out the head of a fish and some pomegranate and many other goodies. Madeline looked stunning in a beautiful but modest dress, and so did Grace. Now everything was finally set. Grace had invited the Larsens to share the first, special evening of Rosh Hashanah with them, and the best friends were excited for the first time celebrating together.

*Ring, Ring, Ring.* The doorbell rang and everyone froze. Slowly, her heels clacking, Marie walked to the door and peeked through the keyhole, holding Carlotta by the hand. It was so silent you could hear a pin drop. Marie let out a sigh of relief and mouthed "Kasper." Freja's mother was in the *modstandsbevægelsen*, the Danish resistance, a group of people who fought secretly to protect the lives of Danish Jews. She opened the door a crack and then swiftly let the young man in.

"*God aften, Kasper,*" she bade him good evening in Danish. Even though he was not who she had feared, Marie didn't look very pleased. Her face showed no concern, but her eyes were filled with worry.

Kasper talked quickly and secretly to Marie, not taking off his coat or hat or coming any farther than the hallway. He whispered something, and Marie's face turned pale and her lips dry. She bade him goodbye and moved

quickly back into the living room.

"We cannot stay here. You must come with us to our home."

---

Marie drove everyone back to the Larsens' home—the car was the family's only piece of luxury—as it was faster than walking. She told Carlotta to stop fussing about wanting to hide in the closet and ordered the girls to go to bed straight away. Madeline and her mother squeezed into the secret back closet that was Lotta's favorite hiding spot. Freja and Carlotta went straight to bed, as it was late anyway. In their room, Lotta cuddled up to her sister and fell asleep soon, but despite the fact that Freja's eyes felt like lead, she could not bring herself to sleep.

There was a firm knock on the door about an hour later, and Freja still lay awake. She could hear her mother's footsteps move across the tiled kitchen floor, out into the furnished living room, down the hallway, and to the door. Muffled sounds of voices and then boots scraping against the burnished wood floorboards. Freja imagined what Carlotta would have thought about this. In her mind, she could hear Carlotta's young voice stubbornly refusing to let them in without taking off their shoes and throwing a tantrum when she saw how they were treating the beautiful house.

The footsteps came closer, and Carlotta started to fuss. Knowing it would be dangerous if Lotta were to wake, Freja held her close, and Lotta's breath slowed once more. Freja shut her eyes tight and turned the oppo-

site way of the door. The door opened loudly and light flooded into the room. Two uniformed officers, one stout, one lanky, closed the door and shone their torches on the bed.

"Please, my children are sleeping, don't wake them." Marie gripped the lanky soldier's wrist and moved the torch's glare away from the bed. Only now did Freja dare to open her eyes.

"We have nothing to hide. Now please—leave my children to sleep."

The soldiers started to back out but then suddenly walked towards the closet. The uniformed officers opened Lotta's beloved closet doors with a bang.

Freja's body tightened against her sister's as the tall Nazi felt around the closet. She could faintly see his fingers streaking the outline of the secret opening where the Jewish mother and her daughter were hiding. Freja's body tensed and her heart pounded. She thought: *It's funny: when you play hide-and-seek, the fun in it is being found, but in real life, you hide and pray that they don't find you.* If the officers found Freja's friend, they would be torn apart forever, but even Freja knew that that would not be the worst part. The lanky Nazi reached toward the dresses that covered the tiny wooden knob, and Freja felt that her heart was going to jump out of her chest. Closer and closer his hand moved, now touching the fine silk embroidery of Carlotta's favorite princess gown.

As quickly as his partner had opened it, the stout soldier slammed the closet doors shut, and a wave of relief came over Freja. She closed her eyes and heaved a silent sigh of relief.

The Nazi shone his torch on the bed once more and then led the way out. The taller one followed behind, still looking suspicious. Mama glanced at the bed and then shut the door, enclosing the room in darkness once more.

---

In the morning Freja woke up to find the room exposed to light. Sleepily, she walked into the living room to find Mama and Carlotta sitting at the dining table.

"They are in the basement and have eaten. They will stay with us for a couple of weeks," Mama explained, without having to be asked. Smiling bleakly, Freja asked her sister: "Do you want to play hide-and-seek?"

# 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

Lucy Hart, 13  
Chloe Meyer-Gehrke, 12  
Talia Scott, 13  
Juliana Yang, 8

## Poetry

Henry Arledge, 11  
Alice Bennett-McMyne, 7  
Elize Brazier, 12  
Margo Tolla, 10  
Ronan Tolla, 13

## Art

Natalie Bekker, 11  
Abhi Sukhdial, 10

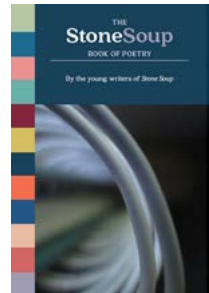
## Honorable Mention in the Short Short Fiction Contest

"Potato Diaries" by Christian Goh, 10  
"The Mystical Trees" by Hannah Lee, 10  
"Symbiotic" by Madeline Pass, 13

Visit the *Stone Soup* store at [Stonesoupstore.com](http://Stonesoupstore.com) to buy:

- Magazines: Individual issues of *Stone Soup*, past and present.
- Books: Our collection of themed anthologies (Fantasy, Sport, Poetry and more), and the *Stone Soup Annual* (all the year's issues, plus a flavor of the year online, in one volume).
- Art prints—high quality prints from our collection of children's art
- Journals and sketchbooks for writing and drawing

... and more!



Don't forget to visit [Stonesoup.com](http://Stonesoup.com) to browse our bonus materials. There you will find:

- 20 years of back issues—around 5,000 stories, poems, and reviews
- Blog posts from our Young Bloggers on subjects from sports to sewing—plus ecology, reading, and book reviews
- Video interviews with *Stone Soup* authors
- Music, spoken word, and performances





CHILDREN'S ART FOUNDATION