

StoneSoup

The Magazine Written and Illustrated by Kids



APRIL 2023

VOLUME 51 / ISSUE 4

StoneSoup

Writing and art by kids, for kids

Editor's Note

In this issue, we welcome spring—with spring poems and spring art. Look again at that cover image—the wash of blue sky! The meadow full of blue, orange, and yellow flowers! That perfectly contented longhorn, gazing off into the distance! The grass is too green for it to be summer—it is still spring, and I can practically feel the sun warming my face as the crisp wind blows, smell the grass and the pollen floating through the air . . . ! Thank you, Shaivi, for this painting.

The stories and memoir in this issue are “springlike” in theme: many examine endings—which are always new beginnings. A girl who, in growing up, loses her best friend. A daddy longlegs who begins a new life outdoors. An alien who gives up a precious, ancient coin. A young girl's move to a new city. And more.

This month, meditate on what spring looks like to you—and create around it.

Warmly,



Cover:
Longhorn in Bluebonnets
(Acrylic)
Shaivi Moparthi, 12
Texas

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Stone Soup (ISSN 0094 579X) is published eleven times per year—monthly, with a combined July/August summer issue. Copyright © 2023 by the Children's Art Foundation–Stone Soup Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization located in Santa Cruz, California. All rights reserved.

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Spring Wakes



By Ruby Glenn, 11
Maine

Spring is waking up
I know
And yet
I'm not quite
Sure
For
Sometimes
In the
Frosty-cold mornings
Winter
Sneaks back
And plays
Until
Spring runs across
The yard
And Winter
Disappears.

April Thoughts



By Xi Huang, 10
New York

A window beside my desk.
the sun
the world bloomed before
the flowers flourish
beautiful white
white
April flowers
one big ball of lace—
like a *white hydrangea*
softly speckled with green.
Green shoots!
The little brown bird chirped.
bush shines so brightly. sunny
daffodils bloom, sunny
smudged grey-brown pigeon
red robin chirping
robins!
Green Gables
say
flowers
budded yet
I wonder if
love
I would have
it broke my heart to tell her
nice teal
the world has not yet begun
—flowers.



Drifting Flower (Soft pastel)
Leticia Cheng, 12
California



The Light of Magic (Watercolor)

Coins

Viewing her great-grandpa's coin collection, the narrator realizes the power of keepsakes



By Talia Tarason, 11
California

I looked up at my great-grandpa's picture. "Dad," I asked, "what coins did my great-grandpa have?"

A little while back, my dad told me a story about my great-grandpa Toby. My dad said that he used to collect golden mint coins.

"I'll show you," my dad replied.

My dad left me staring at the picture of Toby. It was a black-and-white picture of Toby in his war uniform. In addition to the black—and—white, there were hints of gray. Tiny bits of color in the light and dark canvas. He fought in the Korean War. It saddened me that people started wars. Started violence.

Suddenly, Dad came back with a big, heavy bag. "Let's go to my room," I said.

As we walked down the wooden hallway, I wondered what could be inside that bag. When we got to my room, we sat the bag down onto my spotted carpet. Slowly, we opened it up.

Opening it felt like opening a treasure chest. But not a chest of gold and silver. It was a chest of much more. It was a chest of memories.

First, we found a big thing of small, tiny coins, still in mint condition. All of them were in a flat kind of paper. The paper showed how much each coin was worth. It's funny how one coin, not of much value, can be worth so much more later.

Once we dug a little deeper, we found all kinds of small and big coins. Some in mint condition and some that were not. The ones that were not in mint condition were the ones that my dad, when he was a kid, had opened because he couldn't resist.

I looked deeper and found a brown knife-coin. It was a memory from a war of great misery, yet the coin still gave me a happy feeling. It was as if the memory wanted to be happy. After admiring the coin, I found some medals. Those medals were from the same war but a happier part. It's amazing how two memories, arising from the same place, can be so different.

About a year later, my parents and I went to Paso Robles. We decided that we wanted to go to Hearst Castle. It was a long drive to the castle. As I watched the ancient, brown trunks and lush, green leaves of trees pass, I wondered what I was going to see and do—besides touring the giant castle, of course.

When we finally arrived, I looked around the waiting area. I saw a restaurant,

As someone who loves reading and writing, I love collecting stories. And memories are parts of a story.

a ticket area, and a shop. Inside the shop were a bunch of Hearst Castle souvenirs. I was curious if I wanted to buy anything, so I took a look.

Suddenly, I was surrounded by magnets, postcards, and clothing of all shapes and sizes. It was like stepping into a Hearst Castle wonderland! Everything looked buyable, but a golden bowl of mint coins caught my attention. Suddenly the memory from a year ago flooded my brain like a single drop of water suddenly multiplying.

"Can I buy this?" I asked. So, I bought it in honor of my great-grandpa Toby.

Suddenly, the coin slipped out of my hand and fell to the ground. The plastic that was keeping it in mint condition broke! I bent down to pick up the shiny coin. The coin felt hard and cold; touching it was like touching a brand new tablet. I looked at the coin and realized that it didn't matter whether it was in mint condition or not; it still was a coin of my own.

My great-grandpa was a very important part of my dad's life, and now a very important part of mine. It was really magical going on that journey through my history. Based on the stories I hear, my great-grandpa was funny and kind. Those stories are the memories the coins have in them. The memories that need to be treasured. As someone who loves reading and writing, I love collecting stories. And memories are parts of a story. A tiny part of an even bigger picture.

Strings and a Purple Pick

A new friend inspires Alani to face her stage fright



By Riley Killen, 13
California

When I wake up on the morning of the performance, I'm fine. For about three seconds. Then I remember what day it is, and my stomach plunges up and down at the same time, going weightless. "Oh no," I mumble to myself. "It's Sunday."

"Heck yeah it is!" I look up to see my older sister, Kaulana, marching into my room, grinning at me. She tosses her long black hair over one shoulder and meets my gaze. "Time to own the stage, Alani!" My fingertips tingle, and I can feel my face going pale; her enthusiasm only makes me more stressed.

Kaulana's grin drops. She recognizes the symptoms of my nerves just as well as I do. She opens and closes her mouth, then stops trying to reassure me with a frown. She has never had enough patience to comfort someone as hyped up as I am. "There's bacon in the kitchen," she finally mumbles. She walks towards the door, hesitates, then turns back. "You're going to shine today, *haku*. I know it."

I stare at her as though she is speaking a foreign language. Before I can express my complete and total doubt in myself, however, she's gone and I have to get ready before Dad eats all of my breakfast.

I run a hand through my short, curly black hair, press the other over my dark gray eyes, and groan softly. My stomach dissolves into butterflies.

"You can do this," I lie to myself, standing up and walking into the bathroom.

An hour later, I'm cramped into the backseat of our Jeep with my guitar slung over my lap. My eyes are squeezed shut. I run my fingertips over the six strings, comforted by the hum of each one, like the laugh of an old friend. I mentally go through the song I will play in my mind: *G, then Am7, then B, back to G. The fingerpicking is like plucking...*

I quietly hum the first verse, but in the background of my mind is a steady chant of *I'm going to throw up just like last time*.

I pluck out the fingerpicking pattern on the guitar strings, trying to drown out that voice.

"You'll do great, honey," Mom promises me on my way out of the car. She wraps me in a hug that smells like plumeria. I breathe in deeply, reluctant to let go.



Gummy Bear Cave (Colored pencil)
Eva Chen, 12
Washington

“You are an amazing musician, and the only thing in your way . . . is you. What have I told you about obstacles?”

Finally, I step away.

“Make us proud, *haku!*” Kaulana yells after me.

I stumble shakily into the building. My balance always seems to be thrown off before a performance. But this isn’t just any performance; it will be the performance that puts me out into the world, the one that will determine my future.

That thought doesn’t help with my queasiness. I push everything out of my head but the song, and clench my guitar case harder as I march to meet my fate.

The Atacama Desert is supposed to be the driest place in the world, but I think it might be rivaled by my mouth, even though I’m on the coast of humid, ocean-y Kauai 6,842 miles away. My knees quake, and I literally look down at the ground to check if it isn’t an earthquake that is causing the floor to move.

“Get it together, Alani,” I mutter to myself, adjusting my guitar strap. I strum a D. It sounds good, and perfectly in tune.

Then they call my name and I forget to breathe as I peel myself off of the wall and walk out onto the stage.

Eyes.

I stare into a sea of faces turned towards me, locked onto my shaking teenage body like missiles. One wrong step and they will all launch straight at me. I take an involuntary step back, clinging to my guitar. I forget what chord I have to play.

The announcer speaks, probably asking me to start. I gulp. My voice will crack, my fingers will falter. *Too many eyes.*

I arrange my fingers into a G, not even caring if that is the right chord.

“Blackbirds singing in the dead of night,” I croak.

Then my stomach drops as a warning, and I run off the stage in a panic, straight for the bathroom.

“You did fine.”

I shake my head, clutching my stomach as the nausea slowly subsides. “I threw up and botched the whole thing,” I say miserably.

Kaulana sets a hand on my shoulder and offers me a cup of my favorite dessert ever, mango shaved ice. I don’t even look at it. I’m too dejected for sweets.

“Alani,” Dad tries. “Look at me.”

When I don’t, he tips my chin up and stares me in the eyes. Dad was the one who taught me guitar in the first place and bought me my first capo. We have a special connection over that. If Mom and Kaulana can’t get through my funk, he’s the only one who can.

He waits until he’s sure he has my attention, then says firmly, “You are an amazing musician, and the only thing in your way . . . is you. What have I told you about obstacles?”

“In the middle of every difficulty lies an opportunity,” I say automatically.

It doesn’t matter that Dad technically stole that quote from Albert Einstein—it’s become our mantra.

Dad smiles. “Exactly. So the question is, what are you going to do?”

Try again, like I always have. His smile widens; he sees the answer in my eyes. I smile back, tentatively. I’ll work harder and practice more. I’ll fight my insecurities and silence the voice in my mind. I’ll learn every groove in the strings, every chip in the wood. The pick will become an extension of my hand. I can play my guitar well, but I’ll play it better. *Be better.*

I take a deep, steadying breath and turn to Mom. “When’s the next opening when I can play?” I ask. Her smile in return is radiant.

Then I glance sideways at Kaulana. She smirks when she sees that I’m eyeing the shaved ice in her hands. “Want some?” she asks, knowing full well that I do.

I grin in return and take a bite. The flavoring blossoms across my tongue, ice cold and just how I like it. It tastes like trying again. It tastes like courage. It tastes like hope.

Twang. I wince as I slip on a chord. I’ve been practicing nonstop for hours, and by now the song “Breathin” by Arianna Grande is glued to my brain forever. I sigh, and my fingers dance over the neck of the guitar, sliding across frets as the song comes together for the millionth time.

“Lani?” Kaulana pokes her head through my doorway. Her eyes land on the guitar in my arms and she sighs. “Still practicing?”

“I’ll have to play this in front of a bunch of people in only a week,” I shoot back. “There’s no such thing as being too prepared.”

“But there is such a thing as getting yourself stressed out over nothing. C’mon, *haku.* Come with us to the market,” Kaulana pleads. “It’ll help you to get some fresh air.”

I scowl but gently set my guitar down. “Fine. But it’ll be in and out,” I order.

Kaulana winks and pulls me out the door.

As usual, the market is bustling and beautiful. A warm sea breeze rustles through my hair. I look around with a faint smile as we pass my favorite stalls, ogling at the wooden carvings, honeyed macadamia nuts, and displays of guitar picks that are gorgeous.

Dad lets me stop at the guitar pick stand because I’m giving him my best puppy dog eyes. I beam and rush forward as Mom and Kaulana leave to get some groceries. I could sit here and stare at the wooden carved ones, the thin, swirly ones, and one that is shaped like a phoenix. I gaze at it adoringly. *Will Dad let me get it? Maybe if I tell him it’ll help me play next week . . .*

I’m so lost in thought that I don’t notice that someone is standing next to me until I hear a female voice: “Pretty, huh?”

I jump, startled, then see a short girl with warm black eyes and a ponytail. “Y-you play guitar?” I blurt out.

“Oh. Uh, no,” she admits with a blush. “I just like the way they look. Do you?”

"Yes, but I can't play in front of other people." I try not to hunch my shoulders. "Stage fright."

"Ah." She smiles a little and sticks out her hand. "I'm Akamai."

"Alani."

We shake. She has a surprisingly strong grip. She grins at me, and adds, "Call me Aka if you want." Before I can respond to the gesture of goodwill, she continues, "I'd love to hear you play. Guitar, I mean."

That has me instantly shaking my head. "No no no no no. That would not be a good idea. I hate performing in front of even my family."

"Aw, come on. Please?" She blinks at me with puppy eyes. "You owe me a favor."

"What?" Of all the things I thought she'd say, that is on the bottom of the list. "I barely know you!"

She looks vaguely hurt. "We went to elementary school together." Really? I wonder, feeling embarrassed that I didn't remember her at all. But that doesn't mean that I'm playing for her. *Going to school together isn't the same as really knowing each other.* "You were sorta shy, but there was this one time—"

"Hold on. You're calling in a favor from *elementary school*?" I laugh at the absurdity of it all. "I think it's an unspoken rule that favors like that expire if they were over ten years ago."

She gives me a grin that's a challenge. "Oh, really?"

I roll my eyes. "Well, I'm not doing it."

"Please?"

"No."

"Pleeeeeeease?"

"No."

"Please."

I sigh and shake my head.

"I'll buy you a shaved ice if you do a verse for me."

"All that for a verse?" I say in disbelief.

"Yep."

There's something about her face that makes me blurt out "Fine."

"Really?" Aka beams.

I nod, surprising myself. And the deal is done.

Aka is true to her word. After a little coordination, we meet up at a shaved ice place. I carry my guitar. She carries two shaved ices. We find a secret spot where no one will hear me, tucked behind a bush. I place shaking fingers on the strings.

"Ready?" I ask, stalling.

Aka gives a steadying look. "Amaze me," she responds.

I clear my throat a little and strum the intro. I'm looking anywhere but at her as I start the verse, and my voice is weak as I stumble through two lines.

Then I dare to look at her, and her wide, trusting eyes draw me in. My voice strengthens.

"That was . . . the best thing I've ever heard."

By the time I realize I've done more than a verse, I'm almost done with the whole song, so I finish anyway. When I'm done, the final notes hover in the air.

She breaks the silence. "That was . . . the best thing I've ever heard."

"What?" Really?

"Hands down. Where did you learn to play like that?"

Before I know it, she draws me into a comfortable conversation while we finish off our shaved ices. I feel like we've been best friends for years when she stands up and offers to put away my bowl. I even forget to feel weird about the fact that I've just played a song in front of a near stranger, because she doesn't feel like a stranger. Aka has this energy that draws me in. That makes friends.

She comes back and smiles at me. "So it sounds like you've been practicing," she says, picking up the conversation again.

"Yeah. I have this important performance in a few days," I tell her. "I screwed up the first one, and this is sorta my last chance."

Her eyes widen. "Wow. Can I come and see you?"

I blink. "You want to?"

"Of course!"

I hesitate, then say, "It's on Friday. At five o'clock, in the park."

Her face splits into a wide, wide smile. "I'll be there."

We both smile. Then Aka tells me that she has to go, and I wave her off, grinning stupidly. It's only after she's gone that I realize: I played for her. And I felt great.

The days leading up to the performance are full of guitar, guitar, guitar. Aka and I text occasionally, but most of my time is spent with my fingers pressing chords into the strings. Then the day is here. And I feel like I'm not ready at all.

I button myself into some performance-worthy clothes and wobble on my way to the car. I sit down in the Jeep, struck by *déjà vu*. This was exactly what happened on the way to my last performance. The one that I failed.

I start to shake, but then I think of Aka's expression of wonder when she heard me play, and I remember to take deep breaths. Mom, Dad, and Kaulana shower me with encouragement, smiles, and praise as I step out of the car and heft my guitar.

"Love you guys," I say, and wave as I head off.

I wait by the stage, watching the others perform while gulping in air as though it's water and I haven't had a drink for days. I feel more balanced than usual, less sick, but I can feel the familiar claws of my personal monster in my throat. My insecurities whisper to me. I try not to listen.

But then the storm inside turns into a rainbow when I hear Aka's voice: "Hey!"

I spin around. "You came!"

"Of course!" she laughs, hugging me. "You look awesome."

I smile back. "Thanks so much for being here," I say shyly.

She waves off my gratitude. "What else could I have done? Hold on, I brought you something . . ." she adds.

Confused and curious, I peek over her shoulder as she digs around in her bag. Finally, she emerges with something small. When I get a good look at it, I gasp.

It's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen. Different shades of purple are set into a sleek guitar pick, which is the perfect size. I can feel myself almost tearing up at the meaningful gesture.

"It's not as pretty as that phoenix one, but . . ." Aka begins.

"Thank you!" I throw my arms around her and we both bang into the guitar. I yelp, then laugh. She laughs too.

The moment is broken when a voice shouts, "And now for Alani Song, teenage guitarist, who will be playing 'Breathin' by Ariana Grande!"

I freeze, my breathing quickening. Aka smiles gently when she sees my face. "Go get 'em," she whispers, then pushes me onstage.

I walk slowly to the center of the stage, then turn to face the crowd. They all look at me expectantly.

I'm breathing fast. Too fast. And my stomach has started to roll over and over.

My eyes skim over all the eyes, all the people staring who will see if I mess up.

But then my eyes lock onto a face that stands out from the rest. A face with warm, black eyes and a swinging ponytail. Aka gives me a wide smile. You can do this! her eyes shout. For the first time, I start to believe it.

Just keeping breathin', I tell myself.

Then I raise my hand, bring it down over the strings, and lose myself in the music.



Diversity Is Beautiful (iPhone 11)
Tanvi Padala, 11
Texas

Three Poems



By Evans Yaffee, 6
Connecticut

In the Woods

In the woods
You can see
The smile of the trees
The leaves are swaying
The wind is blowing
While we walk
There's a whole world ahead of you
Come on



Leading Bridge (Gouache)
Hannah Francis, 11
California

The World Above

High above
The world above us
Needs your help
There is so much you can do
Just take a little peek
And you can tell
How much you can do to help
Just take a little look around
At the whole world
Looking back at you

Spring Flowers

As I look around
I can see
The whole world looking back at me
The rain is coming down
On all the petals
The colors all around
Remind me of when I was small
The sun is trying to shine
I feel the raindrops on my shoulders
When I walk



Carnival (Woven and knitted wool)
Savarna Yang, 13
New Zealand



Garden (Woven and knitted wool)

Who Would Win?

The narrator wonders what to do when a competitor lies about the outcome of a race



By Sophie Li, 10
New York

What if a lobster and a crab bumped into each other? Who do you think would win? This is the usual start of a popular *Who Would Win* book series. Do you believe that in real life conflicts like this could happen? Imagine two girls confronting one another at school: will they end up pinching each other's arms or kicking each other's legs?

One warm spring day, our GT class teacher, Ms. O, informed us about an upcoming relay race. There would be two boy teams and one girl team, with four students in each. Each team could choose its own strategy, including the running sequence. So, my team decided to have an internal race to determine the relay order.

"Ready, set, go!" All four girls dashed to the finish line. I made every effort with my heart pounding, but it was as if I were running in slow motion. Everything around me became a blur.

I caught a glimpse of Girl L rush past me. I call her Girl L because she has really long legs. Every time I spot her run at recess, it reminds me of a creature called a daddy longlegs.

Girl E also outpaced me like the wind. I named her Girl E for a very obvious reason. She is very energetic and tireless.

I was running faster than Girl P. P stands for perfect. She seems so perfect at everything. I also gave myself a letter: O. O means ordinary. An ordinary girl has a lot of failures, a few successes, and some happy moments.

Surprisingly, Girl P was the last one, not me. Even more surprisingly, she claimed that I was last, totally ignoring the fact she was at least two feet behind when I reached the finish line.

At first, I was shocked and tried to persuade her to accept that fact. But she insisted she was faster. Girl L and E didn't catch sight of us, and there were no other spectators. No one could determine what happened.

"I don't mind lying, but I hate inaccuracy," Samuel Butler once stated. Maybe she was too proud to acknowledge even a small failure. I couldn't help thinking about the *Who Would Win* series. Usually, in the end, the loser of the fight would perish. Luckily, there is no fierce result here, of course. So, I gave up the meaningless argument. But who do you think actually won?

The Bush Girl

Daisy discovers a dryad in a clump of lilac bushes in her backyard



By Kana Shackelford, 13
Michigan



Fairy Home (Assorted natural materials)
Sage Millen, 13
British Columbia, Canada

Daisy was four when she first met the Bush Girl. She had learned that her mother was making stir-fry for dinner and had decided to run away. Daisy liked the idea of running away. It sounded like something a character in a book would do. It sounded like an adventure. Daisy never really ran away. She just ran across the yard and hid for a while, but it was still fun to pretend.

Daisy was a slightly chubby little girl with blonde hair and brown eyes. She wore a red dress and carried her limp stuffed bear, named “Bear-bear,” under one arm. Daisy walked out onto the porch and looked around. *I could hide under the porch, she thought. But they would find me there. Maybe I can find somewhere else to hide.* Daisy set off at a resolute trot. As she walked, she scanned the area for any likely hiding spots. Her eyes caught on a clump of lilac bushes, their purple blossoms in full bloom. The little hollow under them made a perfect hiding place for Daisy. She held onto Bear-bear more tightly and crawled into the moss-carpeted little bower.

The first thing Daisy noticed when she got in was another girl about her age. The girl had rough, brown, bark-like skin and green hair made from leaves that was held back by a headband made from the same kind of flowers that grew on the bush. Even her dress was made from plants. Daisy stared at her. “Are you a runaway orphan?” she asked hopefully. Daisy had always thought it would be fun to hide a runaway orphan in her room and sneak food to her when her parents weren’t looking.

“No,” said the girl.

“Then are you a fairy?” asked Daisy. She thought that, after an orphan, a fairy would be the next best thing.

“No. I’m not a fairy,” the girl replied.

Daisy felt disappointed. “If you’re not an orphan or a fairy, then what are you?”

“I’m a dryad,” said the stranger, hugging her knees and staring back at Daisy.

“What’s that?” Daisy inquired skeptically.

“It’s a sort of tree spirit,” answered the girl.

Daisy smiled at the other child. She wasn’t about to let on that she didn’t understand.

Once, Daisy brought crackers for the Bush Girl and the Bush Girl had to explain to her that she ate only sunlight and drank only water.

"Do you want to be friends?" she asked. "My name is Daisy, and I'm a human. What's your name?"

The dryad shyly smiled back. "You can call me the Bush Girl."

And from that point on they were friends. Daisy would go to the Bush Girl's bower every day and play with her. Once, Daisy brought crackers for the Bush Girl and the Bush Girl had to explain to her that she ate only sunlight and drank only water. This was a whole new concept to Daisy. Daisy asked what sunlight tasted like, but the Bush Girl couldn't explain it.

Another time, Daisy brought her favorite stuffed animals, Daffodil the giraffe and Buttercup the deer. The two girls spent a whole lovely afternoon playing with them . . . and Daisy's parents spent a whole not-so-lovely afternoon looking for her.

In the winter, the Bush Girl was always very sleepy, but not too sleepy to play in the snow with Daisy. In the spring they pressed flowers. In the summer they drew in the dirt and played with stuffed animals. In the fall they made soft couches and beds out of dead leaves, to furnish their bush house. The two girls grew older.

One day, in late summer, Daisy came to the bower with news. "I've got to go to school," she told the Bush Girl sorrowfully.

The Bush Girl sighed. "You'll still be able to see me on the weekends and after school," she said, trying to reassure herself just as much as she was trying to reassure Daisy.

"Can't you come to school?" begged Daisy. "It would be nice to have a friend."

The Bush Girl shook her head. "I couldn't, even if I wanted to."

"I'm scared," Daisy confessed. "I'm *really* scared of school."

The first day Daisy went to school was a lonely one for the Bush Girl. As soon as the car pulled into the driveway, Daisy hopped out and ran toward the Bush Girl's bower. "I hate school!" she proclaimed. "School is a scary place full of strangers, and I didn't even learn to read!"

Soon though, Daisy got used to school and made some friends, but even so, she never stopped coming to see the Bush Girl. On snow days, weekends, and holidays the two of them would play together for long undisturbed hours, and it was like old times. Daisy learned to read, and she would take her favorite books to the bush house and read with the Bush Girl.

Two years passed. The leaves on the Bush Girl's bower grew and then fell off; the blossoms did too. One spring, Daisy came rushing to the bush house. "I'm turning eight tomorrow!" she told the Bush Girl. "I'm going to have a birthday party! Do you want to come?"

The Bush Girl looked sad. "You know I can't leave the bush house, Daisy," she said. "But we can celebrate your birthday right here, right now."

Daisy's face broke into a smile. "Yes, let's! We can make a mud cake and put twigs in it for candles." They did just this, but they didn't eat the cake. Afterwards

the Bush Girl gave Daisy a small package wrapped in leaves. Daisy opened it and found a small necklace with a wooden charm dangling from it. The charm was carved to show a picture of a little bush like the one under which they sat. The bush was surrounded by daisies. Daisy practically strangled the Bush Girl with a thank-you hug. Finally Daisy's mother called her in and she had to leave.

"Goodbye," called the Bush Girl. Daisy didn't notice the note of deep sorrow in her voice as she said it.

The next day, after her birthday party, Daisy went to the Bush Girl's bower. It was empty. "Bush Girl," called Daisy. "Where are you?" Her voice seemed to have a hollow, lonely ring. Daisy became frantic. She searched the whole bush house, but the Bush Girl was nowhere to be found. All Daisy found was a short message carved onto a piece of bark. It read:

Dear Daisy,

You can't see me or hear me anymore because you are too old. I will miss you.

Happy birthday.

Love,

The Bush Girl

Daisy sat down on the mossy carpet of the bush house and cried. She cried because she was getting older and because she had just lost her best friend.



Harry (Oil)
Ivory Vanover, 12
Texas



Chicken Clatter (Watercolor)

Gooby's Coins

Gooby, the first alien to attend a human school, finds a valuable coin



By Jaxton Goertzen, 11
Alberta, Canada

It was a bright and sunny day, and Gooby was racing down the hot pavement. It had only been one year since humans had accepted aliens into Earth's society. The planet that Gooby was from was taken over by another species, so they had no choice but to retreat and come to Earth and ask humans for help. It had been a hard six months, and Gooby was still getting used to going to a human school. He had been bullied every single day by the other human children, but he, the one and only Gooby, had been the first alien to attend a human school.

Gooby had the highest grades of all the students at City Square High School. I guess you could say he was a bit nerdy. He had inch-thick glasses that he needed to improve the sight from his lone eyeball. His head was the size of a beach ball and he had short, yellow hair. His long arms were six feet long and had hands at the end. He always wore the same old jeans and plaid shirt every day.

Every day Gooby did not have school, he would go searching the streets for rare coins. He had been collecting for years and had thousands of coins in his basement. Suddenly, something shiny caught his eye. It was under a door that led into the skyscraper that was scheduled to be torn down next year.

Creak. Gooby opened the door and was surprised to see that the shiny coin was not there? There were some metal stairs that led down to the basement. Gooby slowly made his way down. There it was, in all of its glory: a penny over a thousand years old. Gooby's six-foot arms were trembling as he reached down to pick it up. He was too stunned to do anything else but stare at the beautiful coin. His shaky hands went to put the penny in his pocket. He put his hand in his pocket and took it out. The very rare coin was still grasped tightly in his fist. He tried opening his hand, but he could not. It seemed as though he had no control over the hand the coin was in. *Rrrrrrr!* Gooby tried to open his fist with his other hand, but his fist was still clenched shut.

He looked around and saw an old toolbox sitting on the ground. Gooby ran, full sprint, to it. He rummaged around in the box until he found a set of pliers. He carefully put the pliers into an opening in the fist and tried to pull them open with all of his strength. *Bang!* The pliers broke in half. He was starting to panic, and he had no idea what to do. He thought to himself, *I love it! I can't let it go!* and



The Hand (Watercolor and colored pencil)
Nate Varga, 13
England

“Gooby, if you do not open up your hand, then I will send you to the principal's office.”

ran up the stairs. He opened the door and ran home.

Today was a big day. It was basketball tryouts at school. Gooby still had the coin in his hand. When he got to school, his teacher started talking. “Alright, class. Today we are going to write a two-page essay about your favorite basketball team to celebrate the start of our school's basketball season.” Gooby slowly took his laptop out of his desk with his one usable hand. He started typing with one hand. As his teacher walked by, he hoped that she did not see his hidden fist. “Gooby, what have you got in your hand?”

“Um, nothing,” replied Gooby.

“Gooby, open up your hand and show what you have.”

“You don't understand. I-I-I can't.”

“Gooby, if you do not open up your hand, then I will send you to the principal's office.”

After a little more arguing, the teacher had enough and sent Gooby down to the office. He had never been there, and he was shocked that he was even going there.

“Gooby, if you don't show me what is in your hand, then you can't try out for the basketball team, and I know how much you want to be the first alien on the basketball team,” scolded the principal. Without warning, the coin dropped, and his hand was free.

“Alright. What do we have here? A coin? Well, I see no danger in that, Gooby. You shall be on your way.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“No problem. And here is your coin.”

“Um, no thanks. You can keep it.” It pained him to give up the coin, but Gooby knew that the basketball tryout was more important than some coin. After a couple of hours of school, it was time: basketball tryouts. Gooby went to the gym and saw all of the other humans. Gooby thought he would have a big advantage over the puny little humans. They didn't have six-foot-long arms. But he knew that he would have to try his best to ever be considered for the human team.

After the tryouts, cold sweat dripped down Gooby's back, evidence of the effort he'd put forth. That whole two hours had been a blur to him. He tried his hardest, but he didn't know if it would pay off.

“Man, that Gooby alien was really good! He hit ten threes in a row!”

Gooby stood in the corner of the dressing room and his mouth dropped as he overheard the human children talking about him. “He's got such long arms, it's impossible to get around him!”

“Did you hear that he blocked Oliver Oman five times in a row? And Oliver is the best player in the whole county!”

Gooby had been so focused on the tryouts he didn't even realize that he had done so well. Gooby slept well that night knowing he had a great shot at making the team.



Droplet (iPhone XS Max)
Aiyla Syed, 13

Fond Memories

Before moving to New York, the narrator recalls some of her favorite moments and places in Bellevue



By Gabrielle McCaskill, 11
New York

"GABBY!! Hurry up! We're going to be late." My sister's voice echoed from the bottom of the stairwell. I slowly got up, deciding if I should move even slower to annoy her.

My family was moving because my dad got a new job in the big city, and it felt like billions of miles away. I thought that if I could go back and change the past, I would make sure that he had never quit his old job. If he would have been happier there, then maybe, just maybe, I wouldn't be losing my entire life.

I walked upstairs to the door that I always walked out of, thinking nothing would ever be the same ever again. I slipped my shoes on, opened the door, and stepped outside on the porch. I slammed the door shut with a big boom.

I walked down the blue stairs where I would sit and watch the pouring rain smack on the ground every time the rain came pouring down. It was the best spot to just sit and listen to the pitter-patter of the rain bounce off the roof and onto the porch. All of a sudden all these other memories came rushing back to me. I thought about the red-leafed tree in my front yard where I would climb to the top just to see my neighbor's house. I thought about the rocky driveway, where I would skate down to get to the road. We passed the street where my friend and I would play and yell "CAR!" every single time there was a car. One time, my family and I bought a little green plastic man that told cars to slow down and we put him on the curb. My friend Rae and I decided to name it Slow Joe.

As we passed my friend's yard, I was transported back to the memory of when we would lay a blanket and play with our toys when we were little. I remember one time we pretended that her yard was an imaginary house. We would play house with our little plastic toy foods. I started feeling a little upset about the move. I wished I could go back. I wished I could do life over. Do it over the right way. If life worked that way, there wouldn't be so much pain in life—the disappointment and unhappiness that makes life miserable.

I'm not sure this move is the best move, I thought to myself as tears welled up in my eyes.

All of a sudden, Raeghan was rushing toward me, and I was approaching her yard. Once she had reached me, we started walking toward her front porch.

I could tell she was trying to cheer me up. She was always trying to cheer me up when I was upset.

One time I remember that we had Otter Pops. I can still taste the sweet, tangy flavor in my mouth, turning it purple. And we just sat there, not talking, just enjoying each other's company. It was those fond memories that I didn't want to leave behind, those memories I was clinging onto.

"Are you excited for dinner? We've got pizza and watermelon," Rae said to me as we walked along the sidewalk.

There was a long pause. I didn't answer. I could tell she was trying to cheer me up. She was always trying to cheer me up when I was upset. We had been friends since we were very young, so she had gotten amazing at it by now.

We approached her door, and as soon as she opened the door her dog Lila was rushing toward me and jumping on me. She had the biggest grin a dog could have on her face. Her dark brown, chocolate hair shed all over me. Her coat was so shiny it was like the sun reflecting off water, but dog hair. Her claws were sharp, but it didn't hurt. It felt pleasant to see how excited she was to see me. Somehow I was able to get out of that frenzy and get up the stairs. All with Lila on my trail.

I raced out to the deck and so did Raeghan. As soon as we got outside, we ran down the stairs and raced to her clubhouse eagerly. We started chatting.

"Hello!" My mother's soft voice filled their empty backyard as she walked through the door.

"Hey!" I said eagerly to Raeghan. "My parents are here. Come on—let's go eat!"

Not only were my parents here, but Charles was here too! Charles was my older sister Ellie's boyfriend; he was sweet but very shy. I'm guessing also overwhelmed because he has one brother. There are five kids in our house. I am the youngest. Which was very fun; usually I had someone to play with. But sometimes I didn't like having six parents instead of two.

We rushed up the stairs to go see my family and Charles. As soon as we were all here, we started to dish up. As I walked through the line of food, I could smell all these different smells. It smelled like our neighbor's cooking.

I thought about this restaurant down the block that had the most amazing mac and cheese bites I'd ever had. They were breaded and steaming hot as soon as you got them. The restaurant had this glass case of different-flavored ice cream. They didn't want anyone to touch it, so they put this sign on it that said, *Please don't tap the glass; you'll scare the ice cream*. Cloud Nine was the best restaurant. Mostly because it was like home: it was only in that location. It was one of a kind, just like the place that I call home.

The table where we sat was made of fake glass and didn't fit that many people. The seats filled up fast, and I ended up sitting across from my sister Chloe.

The table reminded me of a little table we had in our backyard. We had always used it to rest s'more stuff on top, or hot dogs and plates, when we had a fire pit. I could still taste the smoky, gooey flavor of the marshmallow when you could feel that sticky sweetness sticking to the top of your mouth as you chewed.

All of a sudden my sister was yelling at me.

"Hey, Gabby! Catch!" She was throwing a ball right at my face. I didn't realize what was going on. *Bang!* A round, red, rough-textured playground ball had hit me straight in the face.

Chloe's face turned as red as the ball. "Oops," she said, trying to comfort me.

I got angry and stormed out of their backyard through the gate all the way home.

"Sorry, Gabs!" she screamed off the deck, hoping I would hear her, which I did, but I was so busy stewing in my frustration I didn't turn back.

As soon as I got home I ran into my room and flopped on my bed. It went up then down with a bounce. A few minutes later I heard a loud creak. Footsteps walking up the stairs, the echo as they walked down the hall.

"Hey," Kristy said as she walked through my door. Right as she walked in, I immediately started to expect Rae to arrive. "Are you okay? I know this is really hard,"

There was a little pause. I knew that I thought about life a lot. I knew that this move was especially hard for me. But the one thing that turned out I hadn't thought about was that it was also especially hard for everyone else who had to deal with a person, someone who seems to be a good friend, leaving them for no apparent reason.

Was I being selfish by only thinking about my feelings? Yes... No... Maybe.

"Yeah, I'm okay." She wrapped her arms around me and gave me a big, comforting hug. I was not quite sure who she was trying to make feel better. She let go and looked me right in the eyes.

"Thank you," she choked. Tears were streaming down her face and now mine. "For being such a good friend to my daughter." She gave me one more hug and walked out the door.

After Kristy's unexpected visit, I realized that Raeghan wasn't coming to say goodbye. Still, I waited and waited and waited. The clock ticked and tocked and ticked and tocked, and finally it was time to turn out the lights. We were leaving in three days. But I guess that part wasn't on my mind. The only thing on my mind at the time was if Raeghan had a good reason for not saying goodbye to me.

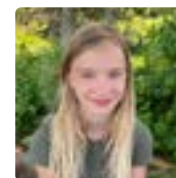
The next three days went by so quickly. It was seven in the morning on July 25 at the Seattle airport.

"Group B, please board your flight," the announcer said over the intercom.

I didn't want to move. And I didn't want my dad to have a new job, but what could I do?

Five hours later, my entire life, my house, my friends, my neighborhood—it was all 2,780.3 miles away. Somehow I knew that it was never coming back. I also knew that I would never be a New Yorker because I could never turn my back on Bellevue, the wet and cold place I call home. Even without going there, I always knew that New York would never let me fit in. Fit in with those city people.

But what was I supposed to do? My chapters were changing, and I had just lost the greatest one of my life.



Alone in a Field (iPhone 8, photo editor)
Tatum Lovely, 12
Pennsylvania

Freedom

A daddy longlegs braces himself for his fate after two girls find him in the shower



By Natalie Yue, 10
California

Bam! Crash! An earsplitting noise awakens me from my peaceful nap in the damp tub. My most feared enemy, deathly water, gushes down violently, leaving my eight nimble legs completely soaked. Oh, how cold and uncomfortable water is!

Miserably, I clamber up onto the side of some kind of bottle (I've been in this family's house long enough to understand the physics and names of objects) and wrap my delicate legs around it. Hopefully those awful humans with those horrible, daddy longleg-killing arms don't notice me.

And so it goes on for five gloomy minutes, water splashing everywhere as those happy humans jump around, too carefree that they don't even see me clinging to the bottle, even when one giant, dangerous hand clamps upon the top. I am frozen with terror, frantically attempting to camouflage, like my leaf bug friend Joe. The two humans scream with delight and disappear from the tub. Frothy water still drains below, and I don't dare crawl down. Finally. Calm once more.

Or . . . not.

There is a piercing shout, and I perk up, alarmed. Have the humans discovered me?

The door swings open, and loud footsteps follow. I cower frantically in the corner of the drained tub, hoping to conceal myself. A childish voice yells, "Ahhh! Spider!"

I'm very insulted by this incorrect statement. I'm not a spider—I'm an arachnid in the order name of *Opilione*. Spiders have eight eyes, and we daddy longlegs have two eyes. That's the irritating thing about humans—their misjudging myths.

Then suddenly another voice, deep and unfriendly, shouts, "Let's kill it! Quick! Get a paper towel!"

After water on my enemy list, paper towels are next. Those horror white sheets can squash someone as small as me in a millisecond! Nooooo . . . I think, whimpering. Well, I had a good life. At least I won't have to withstand another one of Grandma Georgia's lectures about being late home again.

And then I see it. The paper towel. Menacing and terrifying as it hovers above me, ready to strike. I poise my legs, digging the ends in and bracing for the worst.

But the worst never comes.

Because . . .

There is a protesting, high-pitched shout, and I spot the adult and taller girl with dark hair argue. The younger girl peers into the tub looking frightened and withdraws from the room. I feel hurt. *Why are humans such scared-y insects?* Soon, the paper towel retracts from the tub. *What is going on? Why haven't those unpleasant humans thrown me in the trash yet?*

The tall girl leaves and returns with a slender magazine. *Drat.* She's just decided to kill me in a different way. *Don't humans have any sympathy for us poor harvestmen?*

But then I listen closely and the firm, girlish voice returns—"I think I can scoop him up if I'm careful." My insides tingle with a tiny sensation of hope. The word *careful* means to be *controlled* and *slow*. That is a good sign.

The magazine slips under me and I crawl forward uncertainly. Should I risk it?

But I am already off the ground. The world blurs as I am brought along like an amusement park ride. I grip the edge of the magazine tightly. A breeze gusts behind me, making me feel slightly woozy. After several more bumps, there is a creak, and the magazine settles gently on the ground, waiting. The humans watch in excitement.

I gaze out beyond the wide front door at the open world before me waiting to be discovered. Lime green bushes and the endless sky stretch before me. The leaves rustle from the trees as if greeting me. Bright sunlight—much more dazzling than the dimly lit house—radiates warmth. Although my mom tolerated me venturing past our nook in the garage corner, I was never allowed to wander off somewhere entirely unfamiliar. So, this was my chance. My chance to run wild and to adventure.

Glancing one more time at the house, I crawl away silently, feeling a new thrill. Perhaps humans—ones with kind hearts—weren't so bad after all. Because of them, I am now free.



Anadromous (Acrylic)
Sophia Zhang, 12
Texas

Standing near the River



By Lilian Wang, 10
Washington

A splash in the water, breaking the silence
Before a second one follows.
Carefully I step out,
Directing my feet away from
Elusive little gray
Fish, darting to and fro, and those water bugs,
Gliding gently, before
Hastily rushing off the moment
I stamp my giant black boots. "You
Just scared them away!" And I
Know we'll always do that, and when we
Leave the park,
More fish will come, to celebrate that the
Notoriously huge people left,
Of course, falling silent as more arrive,
Particularly children.
Quite a lot of noise comes, and I can
Remember that all the
Silence is only
Temporary, and absolutely everyone enjoys
Using the water, listening to the
Valuable sound of
Water skating over the rocks like a
Xylophone's mallet flowing over it, and I
Yearn to stay, to watch water bugs
Zip away as I try in vain, laughing, to catch them.

Two Poems



By Emma Yang, 8
California

Here Comes Spring

On the trees
Sway pretty leaves,
Flowers bloom
As I look through my room.
Here comes spring,
Nature rings.

The Peace of Night

Night, oh night, the peace of night.
Not like day, with lots of light.
Night is dark,
But you see the crescent mark.
Which tends to be the moon, both light and dark.

Highlight from Stonesoup.com

From William's Stone Soup Writing Workshop #71: Stream of Consciousness (Revisited)

The Writing Challenge: Write a stream of consciousness piece for thirty minutes. This journey follows a path that is set down by the mind you are portraying in your story. That mind might, itself, not know where the ideas are coming from. Become your character, and let her take you on a journey into her mind.



Sprinting

By Pearl Coogan, 10
California

I can do it. I can win. Win the race. Beat the high schoolers.

People are cheering for me, cheering for me, of all people. My four good friends are jumping up and down, shouting encouragement. But the finish line seems a million miles away. Wait, are there even a million miles on Earth?

They are winning. The high schoolers. They are beating me. This isn't right. Just like how it wasn't right when a mean boy stole my ginormous Kit-Kat bar I had gotten on Halloween. Or was it a Twix bar? I like Kit-Kat bars better. But all chocolate bars are good.

I should've practiced more, spent more time on the track. But being on the track is so tiring, and then I go to bed early, and then I don't have time for homework, and then I get bad grades. Just because I ran.

But there is no going back, just like how there is no going back after you turned in homework and realized that it had been wrong after you left school. Once, that happened to

me and I had panicked on the bus. Everyone had laughed at me. I hate homework.

I need to go faster, as fast as the wind or as me and my friends during lunchtime on Taco Tuesday. I like Taco Tuesday. Especially the shrimp tacos, although the school doesn't always have them, even on Taco Tuesday. Not having the best kind of tacos on Taco Tuesday! Unbelievable.

Some of the high schoolers are behind me. Some are in front of me. Some look angry. Some even look amused. Amused? Doesn't that mean, like, funny? I'm not sure. I've never been good at vocabulary. I'm better at running and athletic stuff than actual school subjects.

You can read the rest of Pearl's piece at <https://stonesoup.com/stone-soup-writing-workshop/>

About the Stone Soup Blog

The Stone Soup Writing Workshop began in March 2020 during the COVID-19-related school closures. In every session, a *Stone Soup* team member gives a short presentation and then we all spend half an hour writing something inspired by the week's topic or theme. We leave our sound on so we feel as though we are in a virtual café, writing together in companionable semi-silence! Then, participants are invited to read their work to the group and afterward submit what they wrote to a special Writing Workshop submissions category. Those submissions are published as part of the workshop report on our blog every week. You can read more workshop pieces, and find information on how to register and join the workshop, at <https://stonesoup.com/stone-soup-blog/>.

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.

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