

APL'S TEEN VOICES

~ Original writing and artwork by Fox Valley teens

National Library Week Edition Spring 2007, Volume 13

POETRY

By:

Natalie D.

Frankie H.

Laura J.

Corey N.

Emily S.

She Whispered in His Ear
by Natalie D.

she whispered in his ear
telling him of the ocean inside her
crashing with feelings for him.

he painted her a picture
showing the vast cavern within him
wanting to fill it with her.

they held hands, walking through the night singing a song together as one, until their
last breath, never separated.

The Friend
by Frankie H.

THE FRIEND

I stare into your eyes and I see
My soul, I fear your face
And hide my eyes I want to say it all
But I just can't find the voice inside me.

You say be yourself,
Let it all out
I really want to but then they might laugh.
You say don't be afraid,
Live your life your own way
But I just don't have the will.

Every day I wake up and I can't wait to get away from you
But I face you to see what you see in me
I hate to admit it
But you still loved me, when they gave up
You were my hope and my rock

As you may have known,
I'm not exactly popular
But you don't really care.
You only care when I can't face you
I appreciate all you have done for me,
You helped me through the pain
And now I've gone and left you and you don't even care

I wish you could see me and how well I'm doing
Since you helped me through it
But you can't leave your life
And that's too bad
But I still want to be friends
Just like we've always been

I wish we could meet in person
Instead of behind this glass
But till you figure that out
I have to go now I'm sorry I can't stay
But I have to say goodbye

To:

My

MIRROR

The Gift
by Frankie H.

THE GIFT

Every night as I make the trip
I'm worried what is waiting
For me on the other side.

I see,
Colors and flashes
And feeling life
All around me

My life is crashing down
In this world
But in the other
I can live as I please

I'm a hero on the sea
The king of the land
I can live as I want and
See what I want to see

The world is fearful of what will happen next
But I see myself safe and sound

Hidden Away.

I will feast like a king
And decimate all who oppose
I will soar higher than the mountains
And faster than anyone ever has

This war will keep going
The world will keep turning
And the media will keep scaring us stiff

But every night
I'm glad to know
I will be starring in my own little show
That won't be rewritten
And mass produced on Broadway

Because that world exists only one place at one
Time.....

In my mind.....

Late at night...

As I DREAM

Spots
by Frankie H.

SPOTS

My Eyes meet yours
Green, Glowing, Burning to the core
As the facts fall into place,
I've come to realize that:
The lives we live are lived in fear
Of certain creatures called
Spots

Spots will ruin all who
Come in contact with them
They start out very innocent
But as you'll come to know
They rip you
Tear you
And destroy you from the inside out

They hide in the shadows waiting watching until you are ready to have one in your mind
They love to play they love to hurt
But the games they play aren't fun
And the hurt they create is very real.

They hurt your friends and they hurt your family
And when you let them they harm you to no end

We need to take action right away
Before they multiply and run away
They will run and they will hide but they always follow you from inside

Because you see, my little friend
They leave a scar that is like a light so they can find you

There are 3 simple steps to be rid of the Spots
First off you must say you're sorry
Second of all you need to admit your offense
And third you need to give yourself
A good stare down in the mirror

Because you know
Spots hate self confidence and feelings of remorse

If all else fails you need to take the Spots to where it came from
And face the fears you're trying to avoid

Spots come in many colors
Hate, Fear, Jealousy and many more
They want to wreck your life and then they leave, but one Spot
Wants to control
He wants what you have
He will rip you and shred you
And leave no hope and

Lead you into a deadly game of cat and mouse
Where either way you can't get free

He takes your life in more ways than one
He gets hold of you and doesn't let go
Till your nothing but a soulless husk and
Moves right in to self destruct

Of course he escapes as you go down
So he can go to the next in line

Yu might be asking what he looks like
But I sadly must inform you that I don't know
But I've heard his name several times and you must not let him inside
None of us must let him in because you will implode from the outside in

Now that I told you what he does
You should know what he's called
It's a simple 3 letter word

You should know it I've said it many a time
Within this poem and other times
You might be shocked to hear his name
But here goes....

His
Name
IS
YOU

The Sun
by Frankie H.

THE SUN

I'm lost within this wish
That the world has since forgotten
This fog is killing me and I just can't fight it
I'm in a mist and I just can't get out
The fire is growing bigger
The story goes against all codes
I'm the sick twisted gift to all who read it
The violet sun covers an underworld
And chokes the jungle it surrounds.

The Veil
by Frankie H.

THE VEIL

A dream that lasts forever is never
What is seems. It ages with passing time
Then it fades away.
You fall into a slumber
And you never may revive.
I love you wildly
And I'm gonna help you survive.
I'd climb the highest mountain
And swim the deepest sea.
To find the cure that's hidden
Deep within the fantasy.
I live down the street,
And watch you pass by
I live to write
Andn write to live
And you just live to breathe.
You sit right in the corner
And cry yourself to sleep.
I want to help you frequently and
Just go and end this pain.
But there is only one way
That I know will ease your pain.
I have to sacrifice the ultimate,
To go and save a friend.
I walk down the street
And then I see her standing over there.
She opened up the door
And she walked inside.
She closed and locked the door
Before I could say goodbye.
I stood out in the street
As she took her careful precautions.
She said some simple words,
And there was a flash of lightning.
A second passed
A single tear
And then I was no more.
As I fell onto the street
She opened up the door.
I saw a single tear
And the she was no more.
So if you can hear me
Please listen very well.

For the moral of the story
I tell.
So think before you act
Because it hurts not only you.
But suicide can go and hurt
Someone very close to you.
It might relieve the pressure
And even end the pain.
But you have to go and think about
The losses and the gains.
Depression, sadness,
Turmoil, strife.
It might cause someone else
To go and end their life.
So think about the people
Who love and care for you.
They might not be able
To help you now.
But they'll help you through.
A dream that lasts forever is never
What it seems. It ages with passing time.
Then it fades away.

WE
by Frankie H.

WE

Brown Hair, Blue Eyes, A bond that's forever.
They're there for me when I need them and the feeling is mutual

Together WE are one, bonded by each other
Care and love to fuse to create something that has no limits

Music can't describe the sweet sounds WE create.
It travels higher than the mountains,
Faster than technology

When one gets hurt all feel his pain
Like a beacon calling through the night
WE come
All come, to protect the hurt
Spreading a dome that is a sanctuary to those who are worthy to seek refuge within it

WE encourage all within to spread their wings and soar to their potential even if it means
Separation

All Unselfish through thick and thin always changing never moving
WE had so much time having fun
WE never enjoyed it but WE were there to help each other through the hard stuff.

WE love, WE care
WE protect, WE surround,
WE bond, WE think,
WE live, WE breathe,
WE give, WE take
WE cry, WE laugh.
WE do all of this and more
WE are all interconnected in a never ending web of who WE are
WE never leave, ever intertwined in the web like notes connected in music
Never ending,
Always spinning,
At the center of the web lies the source of who WE are,

WE ARE FRIENDS

The Wind
by Frankie H.

THE WIND

I blow, I sway,
I'm Carefree
Night and Day

I create a breeze, I control your life
If I blow too hard I'll knock you around

I'm silent,
I'm fair,
I change,
I live

You may not have noticed
But I surround
All who dare to run
A ground

I've been in movies if you have to know
I'm your life, your love, your hopes, and your fears
I shake the trees all winter bound
The endless sky is full of me.

I live in you
And see your life
Through ups and downs
I make my feelings known

You might say that I control the air
I moved heaven and earth to get you here
The more I think the more I know
That all we have we have to show

I am your life, your love
Your feelings of accomplishment
I love you deeply and you love me

You'll never guess who I am
But for sake of fate, I'll give you a try
You can answer now, I've got some time

What was your answer? It doesn't matter....

I am your guiding light everyone has,
Something you make most others can't
I am your color, your faith, your light

I Am Your **CREATIVITY**

Wish
by Frankie H.

WISH

I'm lost within this wish
That the world has since forgotten.
This claw is killing me but I just can't fight it.
I'm in a mist and I just can't get out
The staircase is growing bigger
This story goes on questioning all codes
I'm the sick twisted whisper to all who hear it.
The sleeping sun covers an underworld
And chokes the echo it surrounds.

Hopefulness
by Laura J.

Hope should be sincere and genuine
Not only caring about one.
To carry on the family line,
Like a father hoping for a Son.
An Old Testament prophet asking for a sign, God, giving one.

Feet dragging day after day,
Can one hope for a better life?
How can one change with nothing to say.
Could one's sorrow lead one to a knife?
Hope is looking out onto the bay,
The blue, the waves, full of life

As the days turn to weeks there is a glimmer, Hopefulness, could it be true?
As one's hopefulness increases, the hope becomes slimmer For there are far than few
As hope is as bright as a flicker I think this hope, this chance, is your cue

The End
by Corey N.

She says she has love
I see truth behind your lying eyes
She wants things to work
You won't help put the puzzle together
She wants to be in my arms
Cant do that when you're in his arms3
She want a break from trying
Break from something your not doing
She thinks it will help us
Can't help something that can't be helped She wants me to be ok with that How are
you ok with that if you have love?
She thinks I can't let go
You will regret everything your doing

A Couple Things
by Emily S.

The sound of your whisper
Your breath on my neck
The touch of your fingers
The touch of cool caress
I'm lost in your magic
I'm lost in your eyes.
The way you kiss me
The way you touch me
When I cry.

Your lips talk so sweet
You look at me and our
Eyes meet.

Is this love I'm feeling?
Each and everyday.
Or do I just like you
A lot more then I say?

I don't think you could ever
Feel, all the love I have to give
And I'm sure you'll never realize
You've been the reason I live.

Sometimes things don't go exactly turn out how we plan
Sometimes it turns out the right way
Sometimes it gets throne in the sand.

But sometimes love will mend the stuff
We hold in are hands. Love makes
People understand. Sometimes we
Have to get hurt in order to find the one
That's how it went for me, and I'm scared
To love someone.

Be the Best
by Emily S.

You can doubt what I say
You don't have to believe what I do
But the power of love, keeps two.
My strength keeps me stronger
Pain weakens my heart, but seeing you
Smile, keeps a beating heart.

The world, is not my home, only
For now it is, somewhere in heaven
With God, is where I am going live.
The only one who believes what I say,
Keeps me growing stronger everyday.
So put me down, try to make me sad, but
Until I get to heaven, I will no longer be mad.

Believe in yourself, make the world right, and keep
Saying your different, because you have the right.
Don't let others bother you, keep saying you are okay,
Don't let there hurtful words, hurt you today.

Keep your smile growing
Let your laughter out, keep loving one an other.
Keep the devil out. Remember the memories
Remember the days, forget about the future
Live for today.

Make someone grin, make there laughter within.
Breath the fresh air, be who you are, be the one there.
Make them believe you, do things right, because if you think
No one loves you, you aren't right. You deserve the best
In the world today, make everyone look at you, and tell them you are
Ok. Be the best, more then the world, stand up for what you believe in
Be the power in this world.

Can You Blame her? by Emily S.

She walks in and walks out
She can't say what this is about.
Bruises on her skin, broken within
How can she say if it's only a little pain?

Screaming, taunting, in bed she hides
Crying, bleeding from the blade of a knife.
People ask what's wrong for the frown on her face
She turns around and walks the other way.
People make fun of the way she talks
People ignore her and then they walk,
She asks god to heal her pain, but when she gets
Home she knows she's the one to be blamed.

Feeling death upon her, as daddy is really drunk
He puts his had on her face, then just walks away
Suddenly he gets mad, and throws her around
She gets up to walk, but he throws her down.

Why is this happening the voice in side her skull
Why did he do this, can't remember how.

She goes into the bathroom pulls out a rag, wiping the
Tears away that falls down her face.
She wipes the blood away underneath her nose
She covers it up with some make up
So no one will ever know.

She covers the place where she cut real deep
She wears a sweater so no one sees.
She walks in and walks out,
No one will ever no what she's about.

She can't tell anyone, because she will die
Daddy told her if she did, she will only cry.

Black and blue bruises that cover her arms
Cuts and only burns and only frowns.
What can you do to make it sound
So unreal, but why can you tell me
Does she frown?

The voices over the telephone ringing inside her ear,
Mommy called the other day, to say how you are dear,
She couldn't tell her, or daddy would say, hang up the phone
You're in big trouble today.

But no daddy, please don't say, I am sorry for the things that are
Wrong please don't hurt me today, I have school tomorrow
And the next day after that, everyone asks what's wrong with that.
Please don't hurt me, just let it go

I promise daddy I won't tell a soul.

Grow Up by Emily S.

I am only six years old
And I already grew a beard
I was in the bathroom with my dad
When he shaved off his ear.

Everyone wants me to grow up fast
No one wants fun times to last
Everyone wants me to change my life
But I am only six years old tonight.
I will never go back to six years old
Ever year I am older and old.

I want to play in the sand
Make castles under the land
I want to swim in the sea
I want you to look under the water
And see me.

I don't want to grow up I want to stay young
I want to play in my sand box, I want to play
Until dawn. I want to share secrets from my friends,
I want everyone to respect them.
Why do you tell me to grow up, I am only six years old
And I am fed up.

I am only six years old this year,
And my mommy tells me
Dear, I love you with all my heart,
But you're to wild, grow up.



You Are
by Emily S.

You are the one I want to love
You are the sky that shines above
You are the air that I breathe
You are the love inside of me
You are the twinkle in my eyes
You are the hand that holds my side
You are the man I love,
God has sent you from above
You are a miracle sent from the sky
You are the cutest only guy.
You are the smile that covers my face
You are the moments that time can't erase.
You are the flower that blooms
You are the bird that poops
You are the sing to my song
You are the guy who loves me long.
You are the staple in my gun
You are the bubble in gum
You are the clouds that hid the sun
You are my only One.

You are the best to my friend
You are the love that never ends
You are the smile that I hold
This is just some of those.
You are the cookie to my chip
You are the kiss on my lip
You are the hands that I hold
You are the one who is old
You are the 1 to the 2
You are my love
You are my true

You are my hero that saves me
You are the love that makes me
You are the fingers typing this
You are the letters when I'm writing this
You are the music to my soul
You are my beauty
When I don't think so

You are the laughter to my grin
You are the love within
You are the frown that makes a smile
You are my love for a very long while
You are the phone to my call
You are the one and all
You are the letters in my notes
Sometimes you don't see those
You are the ink in my pen
You are the love and then
You are the happy to my sad
You are the one who makes me glad
You are the truth that keeps the light
You are the one who's shining bright.

You are the banana to my peel
You are my love that is truly real
You are the apple to my crunch
You are love in my munch
You are the dessert in my lunch.

You are soda in my pop
You are the one I love a lot
You are the sing to my song
You're in my heart where you belong
You are the water to my sea
You are the love that's inside of me
You are the love to my heart
You are the one I don't want to part.

You are the only one....
You are the best one.....
You are.....

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FREE VERSE

By:

Melissa C.

Kiara O.

The Scarlet Letters
by *Melissa C.*

the scarlet letters
revealed the words her mind had told her all along attempted suicide in sleepless nights
led her to the answers intact hearts could never discover Only the neglected segments
searching for her soul

found the answers on the way

Watch Her Hair Sway by Kiara O.

Watch her hair sway
As she walks away
From the man she loves
Because he did something stupid
To the one he supposedly loved
She did something to his surprise
But he wouldn't believe her even though she apologized She would cry and wonder why
She knew right away he wouldn't listen To what she had to say She wanted him to
understand how much he meant to her But as he went to hug her Something sparked
her nerve She told him
1) Everybody doesn't have to love me Cause' me being loved all the time is not meant
to be
2) It is okay to make mistakes as long as no one is hurt
3) I don't have to control anyone
As long as I can control ME
She said something to him she had never said before Her knees, they start to shake
When he's in sight Her mind filled with wonder Her heart with fright He should know to
learn All things grow with love She made him not care what other people thought To
never walk away in a situation that is his fault

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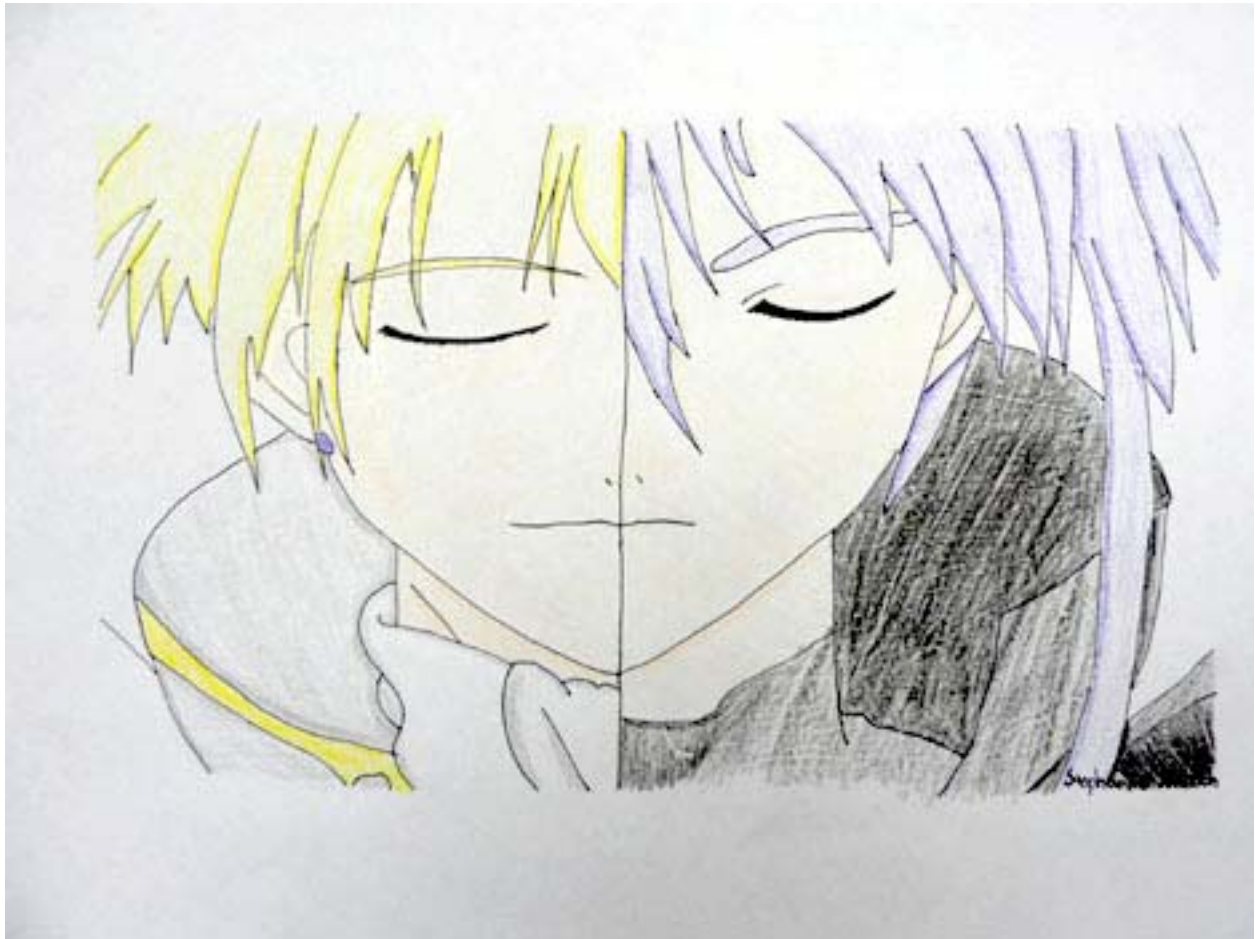
ARTWORK

By:

Stephanie K.

Kiera W.

by Stephanie K.



by Kiera W



by Kiera W



by Kiera W



by Kiera W



by Kiera W



by Kiera W



by Kiera W



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SHORT STORIES

By:

Alexandra C.

Carly C.

Chelsea G.

Catelynn H.

Iridescent Eyes by Alexandra C.

I'm a daydreamer, always have been. I can stare out of a window for hours, the glass fogging ever so slightly from my hot breath. The birds chirping somewhere off in the distance, beyond anything my poor eyesight can see. The breeze slipping beneath the window sill, chilling the edges of my skin, giving me goose-bumps. It's my one way out of reality. So obviously that's what I was doing on Friday, April 26th. The spring air was fresh and crisp, and all I could think about was the fact that soon school would be over and I would be free at last from this prison we call class.

"Kendra? Are you listening?"

I heard my name called, but didn't bother to answer, knowing that if I ignored Mr. Jackson long enough, he would go away.

"Kendra? Ugh, never mind. Will, please answer the question."

I let out a long sigh under my breath, and continued staring out the glass window, slowly tracing my fingers across the condensation that was beginning to form. The sky seemed less dark that day, a lighter shade of grey perhaps. I began to think that it was to be a good day, but doubted myself before my mind could even process the thought- I still had to deal with Ray.

The bell rang, and I frantically grabbed my scattered books and made way for the janitor's closet. I liked it in there, all secluded and isolated. It was the only place where I could be truly alone, except for the appearance of a few occasional rats. I reached for my pen, and drew a long crooked slash on the wall next to the last 276 marks that I had made, one for each day of my senior year. I sat there, staring aimlessly at the buckets of paint and floor cleaner until the bell sounded again, this time to signal the end of the school day.

I slipped out of the closet unnoticed, blending into the mindless clones in the hallway that I was forced to call my classmates. Each jabbering along, explaining their plans for the long weekend. I dodged a few football jocks and made my way to the ugliest car in the parking lot, my baby. She was a red 1984 Ford truck, so beat up and rusty that it almost looked like an overgrown trash can. I climbed in anyway, and jammed the key into the ignition. It took my car about 5 minutes to start, so while the engine sputtered, I glanced out the window yet again. This time however, something caught my attention. Two piercing green eyes were staring back at me. My gaze tried to focus not on the eyes themselves, but on who the beholder was. Scott Gable. I gasped in sudden surprise, and as my engine sprang to life, I had to rip my eyes from his face.

I drove down the spiraling road to my house as I reflected upon what and who I had just seen. Scott and I had been best friends until sophomore year. When my father passed away, Scott was always there and was the only person I could talk to. He eventually found a girlfriend though, and started spending less time with me. One night, I got angry at him, cussing him out with tears pouring down my judge-mental face. That's when I realized that I had taken control of his life.

He screamed back at me, shouting, "I have given up everything to take care of you and your pathetic life! Am I not entitled to a little happiness myself!?" After that he stormed out and I never talked to him again, never tried to beg those long forgotten green eyes for forgiveness.

So as I sat in my car, I tried to look past the sight of him, and focus on the fact that in exactly two minutes and thirty five seconds, I would be the slave of Ray.

I arrived home, gulped, and went cautiously inside. The house appeared empty from the outside, but I was no fool. I could hear Ray belch from the living room, so I avoided him by going straight to the kitchen. And what to my wondering eyes should appear, but my mother passed out across the rug with an empty bottle of vodka in her limp hand. I sighed, but this wasn't such an irregular thing for her. My mother was an alcoholic. I rolled her onto her side anyways, and tried to mop up the crust and ooze forming around the edges of her pale lips. I lifted her arm to mop up the floor, when I noticed the bruises. Anger flared up in my eyes, burning red with hate for the man staining my life with misery. I had always known deep down that he hit her, but the purple finger marks around her bicep and wrist had finally made me see the actuality. I got up and ran to my room, half out of fear, half out of shame.

My room was my safe place, a place where the world could melt away, and everything around me would be okay. I used paint to show my feelings, and my room was my own personal studio. The walls were covered in graphic designs that had changed over the past two years from picturesque flowers to grey, black, and red metaphors of destruction. I flopped onto the miniature bed that I called my own, and tried to disappear as I heard someone shout. It was him.

"GET DOWN HERE YOU GOOD FOR NOTHING LITTLE BRAT, AND FIX ME THE SLOP YOU CALL DINNER."

I rolled over knowing that the night had just begun, and trudged downstairs trying to look calm. The more you agitate Ray, the more he hits.

"What would you like for dinner?" I asked him, the disdain and hate in my voice masked by fake sincerity.

"Meat." As you can see, Ray was a talkative person, a man of many words.

"Any preference?"

"Go."

"Very well then" and I left to go make what I always make: pork and beans from a can. Of course, I hadn't had much of an appetite lately so it only took me about twenty minutes to fix it up. I brought him the disgusting dinner on a TV tray with a bottle of beer.

"Ug," he grunted when I came to him. Then after inspecting his green tinted pork and plastic utensils, he glanced at the beer and said, "Open it." It was not a question, such as "open it please?" with a raise in his voice. No, it was an order. A command that if I did not follow, I would regret. So I reached to the counter for the bottle opener and jammed it under the cap. I yanked up fast and spilled the beer. It poured over Ray's jeans, the pair that had not been

washed in three and half weeks, and trickled of them down to the carpet, creating a dirty stain almost instantly. I stared at the floor in shock, in disbelief.

THWOP

My head spun, my vision blurred over, and I was out.

I woke up slowly, to the sound of my mother throwing up. While dazed and slightly disgusted, I knew that I must have been unconscious for a few hours because it was dark outside.

I struggled to my feet, and felt my head throbbing. I brought my hand to it, gingerly gracing the large lump that had formed there.

"Aw man," I sighed. I soon followed the sound of my mothers vomiting to the bathroom, where she lay sweating on the light blue linoleum. She looked up at me with helpless eyes. The eyes that once would have shown a bright and joyous woman, had been overcast to now show only pain, agony, and an emptiness. I took a glass from the cupboard and filled it for her, bringing it to her lips. I stayed with her all night. Her violent shaking and her sudden moans did not faze me. At about 3 am, I glanced in the mirror out of boredom, knowing what I would see. My reflection was a sad sight to sore eyes. My once beautiful brunette hair was now stringy and flat, my eyes drooping, the corners of my mouth in a continuous frown. I turned away, too scared to continue looking, but unfortunately, I saw the scale, and another thing came to mind: my weight. I had lost an unhealthy 27 pounds over the last two years. I was 98 pounds as an 18 year old, and I was 5 feet 8 inches tall. I fell asleep.

The next morning was Saturday, so I didn't have to worry about school. I did however, have to worry about Ray. My head was still aching but I didn't show it, and Ray was sure to have me do some work today anyway.

I went down to breakfast, still have asleep. Ray was already at the cheap plastic table, picking at his yellowing toenails.

"Breakfast." He said gruffly.

"Eggs?" I asked in return.

"Shut up and make something!" He yelled at me. He yells quite a bit.

I decide to make scrambled eggs and toast with jelly. I knew he would be angry if I didn't make him something with a meat product in it, but we were out of "pork in a can" and I didn't feel like experimenting. Either way, I gave him the paper plate with toast, and his morning beer.

"Today you chop wood." Ray commented. He owned a small pathetic timber company on the edge of town, and was too cheap to hire many employees. That's where I came in.

We got in Ray's beat up ford pinto at 10:30 on the dot. Ray doesn't like tardy people. He drove silently down the back roads for about a half an hour, the blue paint of his car occasionally peeling off, pieces of it scattered across the street. Finally we arrived at the shed Ray called an office, and he gave me a set of instructions.

"Chop until three, then we leave."

I nodded, already dreading the noon hour when the heat of the day would make my work that much harder. I strolled cautiously down the beaten path towards the woods, while Ray walked to his "office" stiff and slow on account of his massive weight. The woods were dark, and oddly quiet, yet I would rather be terrified and alone than terrified with Ray. I picked up the saw tentatively, and began dragging it through the layers of fallen brush and branches to my destination. I arrived at the round clearing and took a gander at the trees surrounding me. Two thirds of the trees in the immediate area had orange tags gleaming in the light. The only light, or so it seemed, in the forest. The tags indicated that they were to be chopped down, by employees, a two person job that would be hard work.

I sighed; already feeling exhausted, and began to chop. What choice did I have? I worked hard, the sun burning my tender, pale skin, the sweat on my palms causing my hands to slip off the hard handle of the saw. Back and forth, back and forth. My arms and legs straining with effort in a constant rhythm. Finally, my body couldn't take it anymore and I collapsed. I lay there panting and wheezing in the sunshine; the insects crawling across my fingertips. I didn't even have the strength left in my body to brush them off. My mind eventually slipped into unconsciousness, leaving behind my work and my pain.

THWACK!

I groaned. A large branch had smacked against my head.

"SIT UP!" Oh no, Ray was back. I sat up, and noticed that it was pitch black outside. I frowned, still dizzy, and realized that Ray had intended to keep me working long past three.

THWACK!

"Uh!" the wind was knocked out of me as I flopped back to the uneven ground.

"I TOLD YOU TO WORK!!!"

"I'm sorry!" I mumbled, a tear rolling down my dirt-caked face.

THWACK!

"SHUT UP!"

I was panting with uncontrollable rage and dread. Ray was going to kill me. He was going to kill me here, all alone in the dark woods. No one would come for days, weeks maybe.

"O God," I begged, begged and pleaded as my eyes rattled in my head. My arms were shielding my face as best they could, and I rolled over the dry leaves and tried to dodge his next blow. In the background I could here Ray screaming with fury in his voice, swearing and insulting me beyond belief. I turned to him, my breathing heavy, and listened to his next sentence.

"I'M GONNA MURDER YOU, YA LITTLE PIECE OF CRAP," he grinned, his yellowing teeth glowing in the moonlight. "AND THEN I'M GONNA GO HOME AND MURDER YOUR *@!#% OF A MOMMA."

The next thing I knew, he was laying on the ground, a bloody slash consuming his face. I stared in disbelief as my mind rewind itself, and then played the scene back in slow motion. I had picked up the saw, and thrown it at his face. I was frozen. A look of shock controlling my motionless facial features. That is, until I realized what had just happened. Then I fled, scrambling to my feet as if my life depended on it. I ran to the car and realized that the keys were in Ray's pocket, but didn't dare go back. Instead I just kept on running, the cool breeze flowing through my hair as I ran for miles, never looking back.

It was morning, and I reasoned that I was probably about 20 miles from home with no water, food, or money. I shrugged, and told myself that anything was better than being dead or being with Ray. I found a town, about a mile away and started walking down the long empty road. I began to cry, the hefty tears rolling down my soiled cheeks. I had been crying every night for the past 6 weeks, but never like this. I had never cried out of shame, fear, and anger all at the same time. I thought of my mother, a drunken wreck. What if Ray came home? I had to save her.

I ran to the town in less that 5 minutes, a time I would have proud of in any other situation. I practically galloped through the streets, earning myself a few curious looks. I reached the police station in about 10 minutes though, and burst through the wooden doors, panting in relief and pure fatigue.

"Help Me!" I cried.

"Calm down ma'am. What is the problem?" The man behind the counter wore a blue uniform and an out of date mustache.

"My mother, she's in trouble!" I screamed this, using my hands to help get the point across.

"Where is she?"

"Newberry," I said, trying to calm down my beating heart.

"Okay, let's go."

I was surprise how easily he listened to me, because in my own mind I sounded like a frantic maniac. He drove in silence, and every once in a while, his radio would call out some form of police business. My heart was still pounding, but I felt oddly helpless, and could only wish that things would be okay.

After what seemed like hours, we pulled up my onto my street, the little kids playing innocently, oblivious to what was happening three houses down. We pulled into the drive way, and the cop and I jumped out of our seats, sprinting to the door.

He kicked it open and shouted to me, "Stay back!" I obeyed.

I fell to my unsteady knees at the sight before me. Ray lay passed out on the couch, bloody rags covering the kitchen floor and table. I quaked with sheer anger and vomited on my jeans while the officer called for backup. He told me to run upstairs and grab my things, and I did. I swayed with the overwhelming weight of my mother's death on my shoulders. When I got my things though, I did not go back to the cop. I was in a dream, a nightmare perhaps, and I wanted it to stop. I wished that I could end it, end the dream that had grown to control my life. I grabbed Ray's gun from the closet shelf, full of spontaneity, and snuck out of the house to my truck. It sputtered to life faster than I thought it would, and I drove recklessly out of the garage into the open air. I knew the cop would here me, so I sped down the street, leaving behind my sorrow filled life. I drove until I reached "the shelter". It was a little safe- place warehouse that I used to go when my father died. The meadow behind it would be the perfect place I decided. I limped out of my truck and yanked the gun behind me. Tears flooding my eyes for what I knew would be the last time.

I sat on the warm grass, the blades scratching my ankles, and smiled, at least I would die at my favorite place. The gun was loaded, so I flicked off the safety, and held the sleek and shiny gun before me. Then I pulled it towards my heart, something that was now so empty and cold. My hand moved in slow motion as I reached for the trigger and heard a shout in the distance.

"NO!"

The voice belonged to someone I didn't expect, and it broke the spell, piercing into my memories. The voice belonged to Scott. And then suddenly there he was, standing before me, his green eyes blurred with tears.

"Kendra don't do it, please don't do it."

And I realized the magnitude of what I was about to do.

"But Scott, I've lost everything!"

He grinned sheepishly, which was something that surprised me.

"Not everything."

That's when I saw a figure crouched behind him, my mother. I screamed in utter delight, and threw the gun into the long grass, throwing my trembling arms around her.

"I'm sorry, I'm so sorry," she mumbled into my shoulder; I knew it was sincere. We ended the long embrace, and I turned to Scott.

"B-but how?" I asked, stuttering as I spoke He dipped his head, ashamed. "I had been keeping tabs on you Kens. I noticed a change in your personality, and well, I missed you." He sighed, "I just couldn't lose you. So last night I went to your house to apologize. I tried to on Friday after school, but you left too quickly. When I got there, your mother was struggling so I tried to help her to the couch when Ray got home."

"Oh no." I whispered silently.

"He was pretty out of it, but he still tried to hit your mom, so I punched him. I brought your mom here after cleaning her up. I didn't know where else to go."

"Once again you saved me Scott." I said, and as cliché as it sounded, even to me, it was true. He always seemed to arrive just when I needed him most.

His green eyes sparkled, iridescent in the light, and he smiled, "What are friends for?"

Untitled by Carly

Just across several rolling hills on a long piece of famished farmland, an old white Victorian home was placed contently in the hazy midday sun. Scattered willows and elderly oaks swayed just slightly according to the ever-changing preference of the wind. On the barn across the field a faded red door creaked open every few moments exposing the rotting dry wood. A short distance away, a girl laid down on the edge of a dry meadow, the sun placing itself on her back so softly it put her to sleep. The sharp chirp of a cicada pierced the air awakening the girl from her afternoon nap. The gentle sweet cry of an old woman was heard yelling, "Christy! Christy!". An instinctive image came to the girl of her grandmother standing on their porch, her silver gray hair messily placed into a bun. Clinging to the paint chipped railing, she searched longingly for her missing granddaughter. A swift breeze sent a quick chill through the girl, a sign telling her it was time to go home. As Christ approached the front porch, the old woman wiped her hands on her ivory apron in a habitual manner. "Shouldn't you be packing Christy?" She asked, " your parents will be here in only a few hours." The girl sighed. The thought of going back to school soon and living in the city was nothing to look forward to. "I suppose." Christy answered solemnly and walked inside the house. Smells of her grandmothers house filled Christ with a brief moment a joy. Coffee was brewing for her parent's arrival, Apple pie was in the oven for a goodbye treat, and her Grandmother never had guests without her lavender scented potpourri set out. Christy walked up the wooden staircase covered in framed snapshots of fond memories, glancing at a particular one of baby Christy in her Grandmother's arms. How much she would miss this place after she went back to her parent's two bedroom apartment, the place she liked to think of as a "mouse cage". In the guest bedroom now, Christy stared blankly at the empty suitcase on the bed. Memories of picking raspberries early in the morning, biking on the neighbor meadow trail, and swimming in the nearby pond flooded Christy's mind. Every summer was pure peace and happiness at the farm, and every coming home was filled with grief. Christy thought of her mother, her up-turned nose twitching at anything unworthy to her. And her father, simply mother's quiet sidekick. " If only this was my true home" , Christy muttered to herself. After finishing up packing, Christy dragged her heavy suitcase downstairs and sat awhile to savor her last piece of apple pie. Finally, the hopelessly awaited sound of the doorbell announced the arrival of her parents. As usual, her mother's nose twitched when Grandmother approached the door in her heavily faded yellow dress. Welcoming them into her home, Christy's Grandmother was so kind to all of them, serving everyone coffee and pie. To Christy, this was the last supper, and the time had finally come. Christy helped put her belongings in the car, and with tears in her eyes, hugged the old woman for a very long time. Driving away, Christy looked back at the beloved farm, her Grandmother waving from the front porch. Suddenly remembering the saying, "Home is Where the Heart is" , Christy realized that her heart belonged to the place she was leaving, the place that was really her home. And for awhile she would leave it, but always to return the next long awaited summer.

The Road by Chelsea G.

Drip, drop. Drip, drip, drop.

It's a comfortable, familiar sound, the dripping of the kitchen faucet. It's something she's used to, something that doesn't surprise her, but instead, it makes her feel at home.

She's a million pieces, scattered here and there. It's her own fault she's so scattered, and sometimes she likes being a bit broken. But, maybe broken isn't the right word. Maybe it's more spread thinly than anything else.

Sometimes she wonders what it would be like to be one thing. One, whole, thing. It's a silly notion, and she casts it aside effortlessly.

She runs a finger across the laminate counter top. Caresses it. A familiar touch. A familiar feeling.

There are no surprises in her quaint studio apartment's kitchen. She studies it. Wonders how she got here.

How she got here. It's a long story with twisting roads and cliffhangers. But, somehow, she's fallen in love with it. The road. The one she's still on, the one that brought her here.

It's the road she's in love with. Not the boy, not the study, not the degrees, or the apartment, it's the road.

She studies the road. Wonders if it's made of yellow brick or merely bent branches in the thicket. She visualizes it, as though it's a real entity. She places her foot on the not-so-beaten path.

And takes another step.

How the Waterfalls Were Formed by Catelynn H.

Once upon a time there was a goddess named Janeva. She was the Goddess of Angels. Well, one day a death of a four year old baby boy occurred down on earth. Janeva had to go down to earth dressed up as a human. She found out that the young boy had died from drowning. He died in the river called All's Who's Ready. So of course she had to take his soul up to heaven with her. Janeva made sure that everyone in heaven had met the boy. She asked him what his name was and all he simply said was, "My name is Devirious." What a funny name he has she thought. Finally she had the courage to ask him why he had such a funny name. He said, "I do not know why I have such a funny name. Why don't you ask my mother?" So Janeva went down to ask his mother. All's his mother said, "He was a bad behaved little devil. So we named him Devirious."

When I got back to Mount Olympus Devirious was very rude. He also beat up Janeva's two year old daughter. Her daughter's name was Khristianna, and Khristianna was screaming. So Janeva took her to the Goddess of Health, the Goddess of Health is also a doctor, and her name was Janiece. Janiece said, "Khristianna is unconscious, but she will awaken in three hours." When they got back to their house Janeva raised her arm all ready to punish him when he instantly cried out, "Please don't punish me. I will do anything, anything at all. I will even go to be with the devil." Janeva had to agree with him. Instantly a big black hole appeared out of no-where the devil reached out for Devirious. He pulled him down the big black hole and the hole closed up.

When Zeus found out what Janeva had done he turned her into a big sloped stone. Her husband came out every night to say good-night. Then he went into the house to put his little daughter to bed. And then he never came back. Ever day Janeva would cry. The water from her tears went down the sloped stone. And that's how the waterfall was formed.

APL'S TEEN VOICES

~ Original writing and artwork by Fox Valley teens

National Library Week Edition
Spring 2007, Volume 13

WRITING CONTEST WINNERS

By:

1st Place

Untitled

by Abriana T.

2nd Place

Cake

by Susannah G.

3rd Place

Delayed Gratification

by Madeline C.

TEEN VOICES WRITING CONTEST RULES

Using the 5 words below, write a short story
no longer than 1 page, single spaced.

The 5 words are:

blog
cheetah
misfit
sock
whatever

Untitled by Abriana T.

The **cheetah** print seat covers were really corny, kind of inside joke between Gracie and Ellie. See, Ellie had this obsession with The Cheetah girls before she died, and Gracie, being the surrogate elder sister, bought them for Ellie's car. She was so happy when she saw them, and she had rushed out to put them on her seats right away.

There were pictures of the brand-new seat covers on Gracie's **blog**, but I can't look at them anymore without seeing the very same seat covers ripped and burnt and splashed with dried blood. I haven't asked Gracie to take them down, because it is *her* blog, but I look at them from time to time to try and will myself to only see the Before instead of the After.

But Gracie moved after the accident. I mentioned before that she was Ellie's surrogate sister. Gracie was closer to Ellie than I ever was. I guess the accident affected her pretty badly, but I don't know, I almost think that I've been worse off. Everything reminds me of Ellie and how I could have been a better big sister. The park, the old piano downstairs that she and Gracie played duets on, the corner on Wilson and Coolidge where she was hit by some other car on her way to a party.

I was following behind her in my car with Gracie when it happened. This guy just slammed out of nowhere into Ellie's car. Gracie screamed, but I couldn't make any noise. I was too shocked to do anything. Gracie's **Misfits** CD was skipping, and we heard the same riff over and over as I watched my little sister's car sit there, flaming and smoking. The guy had gotten out of the car and was trying to pull Ellie out. Gracie was already out of the car, trying to help him. I watched dumbly, music skipping in the background. I could hear them outside.

"Oh my god!" Gracie was screaming. "You HIT her!"

"Chill out, I didn't see her," he was yelling right back. They stood there screaming at one another, so I turned off my car, marched straight past them, and looked at the driver's side.

"Come on, Ellie," I said impatiently. "We're going to be late. Get out of there and hop in my car. You're okay."

No reply.

I felt a warm embrace. Gracie.

"Look, Marly, Ellie isn't coming out of that. That jerk hit her pretty hard."

I shrugged her off, tears stinging my eyes. I didn't move my gaze from the window. I could see her soft shape inside, and for the first time, my brain registered the blood on the window.

"No, she'll be okay. She won't die. She just needs to get out."

"She's not coming out, Marly."

Gracie yelled at me for a while, then the guy that killed my sister came and pulled me back to my car.

Gracie called the police.

"Just sit in here, okay?" he said.

I nodded dumbly and watched as he went back to Gracie and they waited.

When the ambulance and the police and everyone got there, Gracie and the boy were sitting on the curb, and I was still staring at the wreck that was my sister's car, remembering her when she was little. She hated wearing **socks**, I could remember. She went everywhere barefoot, even the park and over the little woodchips. The they dragged the mangled body of my sister out of the car, and I knew she wasn't coming back.

I remembered the last thing I ever said to my sister, and that's what's been driving me crazy.

"**Whatever**, Ellie. Could you just stop talking for five minutes?"

She had looked so hurt...and I'm starting to forget what it looked like when she smiled, what it sounded like when she laughed. But I miss her. I really do.

Cake Susannah G.

We're going to Meghan's for her birthday party, five of us packed into Jazmine's tiny two-door with the **cheetah**-print seat covers. I'm in the backseat, squished between the window and Brandon, who smells like sweaty **sock** and cinnamon. It isn't too bad of a deal. I've always thought he was rather cute, even though when Jazzy's friend from drama dated him, she said he showed up for everything fifteen minutes late. That wouldn't bother me; I'm always late anyway.

"Is there gonna be cake, or is Meghan on some crazy diet again?" Dana asks from Brandon's other side. She is inspecting her fingernails and jiggling one foot. Dana's always moving. "If she is, I'm so blogging it. That girl deserves to have her anorexic self exposed to the world."

"She's not anorexic unless she doesn't eat anything, and I saw her eat a salad the other day," Tyler drawls, as he flips through Jazmine's CDs. "And why do you **blog** everything anyway? Do you have no respect for people's privacy?" Tyler and Dana do a lot of arguing. Probably pent-up sexual tension. That's my theory, at least.

Jazmine waves a dismissive hand at all of us, and makes a sharp turn onto Oak St. "**Whatever**. It'll be a good time no matter what the cake situation." Jaz is the mediator in our little group. She's probably the only one who gets along with all of us. I turn my attention to the window and study the passing mailboxes. There is one shaped like a cow and another painted with intricate vines. Our mailbox is just a normal one. Gray and boring.

"I'm bored." Brandon has a good whine; it's effective without making you want to slap him. "Are you lost, Jazmine? I knew you should've let me drive." There is no response from the front seat, except Jaz's hand appearing in the space between her and Tyler and giving Brandon the finger. Her nails are painted a nice shade of pale green. Dana and I laugh, and Brandon mock-pouts. We are all silent for a moment until Tyler finally decides on a CD and Bowling for Soup breaks the silence.

"Hey, it's Nathan!" Dana exclaims, and sure enough Nathan from my Geometry class last year is walking along Oak. He hears her and turns toward the car. We wave and grin. I wonder if he's going to Meghan's and if he would maybe go out with me some time. He's a bit of a **misfit**, but I like the way his blond curls fall into his eyes.

Jazmine is trying to get Tyler to lean out the window and ask Nathan if he needs a ride. "Jaz, we don't exactly have room." She sighs, exasperated, and sticks an arm out across Tyler, waving Nathan down. I look up just then and there is a car coming straight toward us at a quite frightening speed and my mouth goes dry.

Dana is screaming and Brandon's full weight slams into me from the side and High School Never Ends keeps on playing. I hear Nathan's voice calling on all the higher powers he knows, and then everything goes dark and silent and I can't feel anything at all. We will never find out if Meghan had cake or not.

Delayed Gratification by Madeline C.

"The average **cheetah** weighs 69-140 lbs and has a tail length of 28.5 inches" I read in my biology textbook during study hall. The acidic smell of the book's glossy paper was making me feel sick. Quickly I shut the brown, paper bag covered book and glanced up at the clock. "It has to be broken" I thought "Maybe, it's on Pluto time or some heavenly body where days are really slow". Squirming in my desk I stretched my legs out in front of me. I carefully examined the tips of my sneakers. With dismay realized the soles were beginning curl up from use. They resembled elf shoes. I flexed my ankles until my legs hurt. I seriously considered tying bells to my shoes. This would make a pleasant jingling noise as I walked, I reasoned. Somebody sneezed and then sneezed again.

I tried to close my eyes. This made me feel seasick. I was reminded of the Pilgrims on the Mayflower. That reminded me of that old joke "Why did the Pilgrim's pants fall down? Because he put his belt buckle on his hat! ". I laughed out loud, a little louder than I'd meant. Five people ahead of me turned around to look at me. I bent over my work and pretended to be busy in scholarly pursuit. I decided to start planning out my newest **blog** entry. I was a serious blogger. My entries were well planned and grammatically correct. I take pride in this because I know what an anomaly a blog with respect for the English language is.

Someone coughed. I turned around to look, it was Eloise. Eloise was the school **misfit**, always had been. She was definitely quirky but not quirky in a hip kind of way. I had been merciless to her in grade school, tormenting her every day. Somehow in the whirl of junior and senior high she had left my radar. I had observed that Eloise's right sock never matched the left. Most people's **sock** wardrobe consists of white, ankle socks in varying weaves. Eloise however, had wild socks that would make "Dobby the House Elf" envious. Today socks with a wild African print stuck out of her high top sneakers. I wondered if she had problems lacing up her shoes from the bulk of her socks. She must have caught me staring because she gave me a questioning look. I opened my mouth and desperately tried to think of an explanation for my gawking.

Suddenly, a wave of repressed remorse came over me. "I'm sorry" I whispered. I hadn't planned those apologetic words but as soon as they came out I felt instantly renewed. The stupor I had been in all morning went away and I felt energetic. "I feel bad about all the atrocities I did to you all those years ago". Eloise blinked "**Whatever**, no biggie" she said in a small voice. "No, it is a big deal. I made you miserable for no reason but my own selfish gratification. All those times on the playground when I wouldn't let you play tag with my friends. All your art projects I mocked. The mean things I whispered during your oral reports." I was exhilarated now, confessing was a goad. There was a silence between us. I felt anxious, scared, nervous and confused at my sudden desire to make things right. Between us passed wave of understanding. The bell rang and we filed out of the room. I felt ready for anything.

APL'S TEEN VOICES

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National Library Week Edition Spring 2007, Volume 13

WRITING CONTEST HONORABLE MENTIONS

By:

Audrey B.

Alexandra C.

Beth C.

Alyssa C.

Kelsey G.

Natalie G.

Catelynn H.

Jordan L.

Lindsay S.

Joey S.

Liz Z.

Rakel Z.

Melissa Z.

The Random Tale of Three Girls by Audrey B.

It was another normal day for Kiya, Sonya and Kelsey. Well, normal in their sense of the word. Again they all walked to school, but really had nothing to say. To break the silence Kelsey, the blonde of the group, said "I have a nifty **sock** on today."

"Oh really," said Sonya, the supposed smart one, "What about the other one?" Kelsey just smiled at her and said "Oh, that one is just normal. My left one is the nifty one." She reached down to her pants and pulled up the bottom to show that her left sock was grey and yellow with flying pigs and gummy bears all over it. "Wow," Was all Sonya had to say.

Soon Kiya, the retarded and insane one, went into another one of her spastic attacks. Her body fell to the ground and started to quiver and shake like there was an earthquake underneath her. After she was done she screamed "Oh my gosh! I left my **cheetah** on! I gotta go give it some oil so it will survive the coming onslaught of pigmy penguins," and ran off towards the school. Sighing Sonya and Kelsey chased after her.

When the girls finally arrived at school they quickly went to their exploratory classes. Now Kelsey was in a rather fowl mood this day, and felt like not answering any of her teacher's questions. So in math class when the teacher asked her what x was she simply stated "A letter." Finally the staff got so frustrated with her that they sent her to the principal's office.

Once there the principal called down Kiya and Sonya since they were the only ones that could seem to handle this off-the-walls girl. When the two girls arrived they knelt down by Kelsey's chair as she started to cry. "What is the exponent of a kangaroo in Alaska," Kiya asked softly. Through her sobs Kelsey spit out "My **blog** was left running and I couldn't reach the fire hydrant." What met the principal's ears next was nothing but wails of agony from the blonde girl. "Muffin," she screamed "**Whatever** happened to the poor little butterfly!"

"It flew away with Peter Pan and his tribe of beef on a stick," Sonya sadly stated. Kelsey stopped the hysterical act and looked at Sonya. A watery smile was playing on her lips. "The land of the forbidden spells cast by the owls back in 2349," she asked like a little child. "Yes," Audrey answered, "To the land of the **misfits**." With that Kelsey gave a huge grin and skipped happily out of the principal's office. The two girls followed shortly behind.

Sitting back in his chair the principal sighed and shook his head. No matter how long he knew these girls he would never understand the way they talked.

The Girl Who Cried Wolf by Alexandra C.

"Help me," she cried. Although she cried quite a bit these days, it seemed as though this time was different. A subtle sense of urgency cascaded from her voice, a tone of imperative need. She was an outcast, a **misfit** perhaps. Her days were spent paging through magazines; her eyes lingering over every picture of those she so desperately wished to become, dwelling upon every word of fashion and beauty tips. Her body had been shaped to resemble a shriveled cadaver, for she was a subject of anorexia nervosa. The few friends she had once possessed were long gone, repelled by her obsessive lust for attention. And because she had no one to love, that craving grew to control her.

"What is it Sheryl?" The attentive care of a nurse was no comparison to the love of a parent.

"I'm nauseous, and the fever has returned!" She screamed this. A few nurses passed in the nearby hallway, but their curious looks were hidden from the view of girl's hollow eyes. "It is appendicitis; I swear to you it is! I have read about it in my books. I'm dying! I'm dying!!"

"Oh for goodness sakes Sheryl you're hysterical!" The legs of the helpless girl began thrashing about as the nurse, Mary as she was known around the Institution, tried to quickly keep the fever under control. The Institution was an infamous place. Children with mental disorders around the country came only as a last resort and were well aware that death was not uncommon. Sheryl had lived there for three weeks when the tantrums started.

In a panic, Mary swept aside the sweat-soaked sheet that covered Sheryl's tiny body. Her heart was pumping, and while in her head everything was deafening and cloudy, her eyes merely screamed in silence as Mary watched her most vulnerable patient suffer. The next sheet was swept aside in urgency when suddenly, abruptly, something fell to the ground: a hot water bottle.

It seemed, for a moment or so, that everything stood still, Sheryl's head dipping ever so slightly.

"Sheryl.?" inquired Mary.

Her head bobbed with confirmation as Mary sighed, this had happened before. Sheryl nervously played with a hole in her **sock**, never making eye contact with Mary, for she knew that the approval she craved would no longer become a reality. As Mary walked from the lonely room, Sheryl wished, willed her legs run after her, faster than a **cheetah**, and willed her voice to say the two words that were forbidden to her lips.

Turning her attention to her laptop in shame, Sheryl scanned the internet for pictures of celebrities, or on occasion a **blog** about them, feeding the ever hungry beast inside her mind.

An hour passed, and clicking onto another page, Sheryl realized that she was uncontrollably shaking. From her forehead dripped warm pellets of sweat. Confusion overtook her mind as a lurching pain in her stomach caused her to vomit. Her head was spinning, but even so she understood the truth, as ironic as it was, she really was sick. She screamed in pain and in joy, for she realized the fault in her actions. She vomited again slipping out of consciousness and cried out, "Mary!"

No less than seventy yards away, Mary shook her head, and sighed, "**Whatever.**"

Untitled
by Beth C.

"Miss Peters. Miss Peters!"

My friend Katie jabbed me in my side and she whispered to me frantically "Get up Anna!" I woke up with a jolt.

My teacher, Mrs. Forster glared at me. "So glad you could join us."

I blushed deeply and looked down.

"I called on you to answer my question."

"Umm could you please repeat that?"

Mrs. Forster sighed heavily. "Next time you won't be so lucky."

The room was silent for a moment. Then, the crackly intercom buzzed. "Could Anna Peters be sent to the office immediately?"

My teacher paused. "Yes. she will be down in just a moment."

I stood up slowly and I grabbed my books. After dropping my books off at my locker, I stepped into the office.

"Anna?"

"Yes?"

"Your mom left a message. You need to go home right away - it's an emergency."

"Okay. thank you."

I walked outside of school. In the distance I heard a siren wailing. Instinctively I picked up my pace. I began to run, I ran faster than ever before in my life. As I neared home my lungs felt as though they were going to burst, I wondered if a cheetah for that matter ever felt this way.

I arrived home in a state of panic. I saw an ambulance in front of my house. About ten people were racing around, including my mom.

"Mom? What's going on?"

"Anna. thank goodness you're here. Your grandma. Grandma had a stroke."

"Is. is she dead?"

"No. but she's in critical condition and she's on her way to the hospital. We'll follow."

The next few hours passed in a blur. I sat down in the waiting room while my mom talked to some nurses and doctors. I glance around the room in a daze. I was definitely a misfit. Little kids played with blocks and cars while parents talked in low voices.

I glance down at my feet - my socks had daisies on them - Grandma's favorite. One sock had a hole in the bottom of it. I suddenly felt exhausted. In the last few hours I had grown up more than I had in the last year.

"Hi sweetie" my mom spoke softly.

"Is grandma better?"

"She is comatose, but stable"

"That's good" I whispered, relieved.

But it wasn't good. In the next few days grandma worsened. Machines were doing everything for her. The doctors were considering turning off the machines so she wouldn't suffer.

Mom posted a blog on the internet, and soon our church and many others were praying. A few of my friends called, to see what was up, but I didn't feel up to talking to people.

"Anna...grandma is very old...and whatever the doctors do may not be enough. Even if she gets out of the coma, she will probably be disabled for life....sweetie are you okay with turning the machines off?"

I pursed my lips and I slowly said "I want what's best for grandma."

"Okay...we'll give it a few days and then grandma deserves peace."

On the second day I walked upstairs, I was ready for whatever was to happen.

Samba's Socks by Alyssa

Not long ago, there lived a cheetah named Samba. He was the slowest member of his family and struggled to catch his meals. When Samba tried and failed, his grandmother had to hunt for him. Samba was humiliated by this and became a social outcast. Though he was a slow runner, he *was* able to help cheetah mothers by babysitting their cubs while they hunted. The adults liked that Samba was sweet and kind, however, none of the cheetahs his age wanted to hang out with him. He was also polite, gentle and a good listener. Unfortunately, none of the kids understood his other qualities and they judged him solely on his running ability.

One day Samba was out playing with a few younger cubs and one of his classmates trotted up and taunted, "You must be the famous Samba, the slowest cheetah in Africa." When Samba heard this, he ran home crying. Even though he knew it couldn't be true, he still felt hurt. After this incident, he didn't feel like babysitting and spent many hours alone. His mother understood what he was going through, but was unable to comfort him.

A few weeks later, after Samba finished writing another woeful poem about his troubles on his blog, he received an email from his only friend, Oliver, describing *The Amazing Speedy Socks II*, new footwear designed to increase running speed. Oliver found success using *The Original Speedy Socks* and hoped that Samba would too. Samba knew he could trust Oliver for they had been friends since they were cubs. He was the only kid who understood his pain and didn't tease him, because Oliver was slow himself. Desperate, Samba ordered a pair.

The socks were expensive, but worked well and tripled his speed. Samba was now the fastest cheetah in the herd. During a game of tag, he was called to lunch and left his socks in the grass. When he came back for them they were gone. He started to worry that he'd never get them back. He couldn't afford another pair and didn't want to be a misfit again.

Samba and Oliver searched the play area, but found nothing. A few days after the socks went missing, Samba and Oliver were surfing the internet and saw an article about a fast zebra named Zack. Samba wanted to investigate if this suspiciously quick zebra had his Speedy Socks.

When Samba and Oliver found where Zack lived, they spoke to Zack's mother and found out he *did* have a new pair of socks. After thanking her for the information, they set out to catch Zack. Catching him was hard, for without his speedy socks, Samba was slow again. Oliver was faster but because he wore an older pair of Speedy Socks, he didn't do much better. Zack was swift *and* sneaky, making the chase more difficult.

During the pursuit, whatever direction Samba and Oliver ran, Zack darted away. Just when they were about to quit, Zack stopped, walked over, and asked why they had been chasing him for two hours straight. As soon as Zack came close, the cheetahs saw Samba's socks. Samba then asked politely, without accusing, for his socks back. Zack apologized for taking them, explaining that he saw them on the ground and didn't know who they belonged to. Even though Zack was sorry, he was reluctant to part with the socks, for with them, he was able to outrun predators easily.

Samba then made a deal that if Zack gave back the socks, his family wouldn't hunt his herd. Zack accepted and Samba was once again the fastest in his family. His relatives were never happy about this arrangement, but they weren't mad at him for his decision. They understood that it was the only way to get back the socks and they wanted Samba to be happy. Samba became a legendary hunter and wrote a book about how Speedy Socks changed his life.

Untitled by Kelsey G.

It was Emily's first day of tenth grade at a new high school. She had just moved from a small city in Wisconsin to San Francisco, California. Her dad had gotten a job transfer and so they had to move. Her little sisters, Natalie and Natasha, were eight year old twins. They were really excited about the move, which was typical for them because they made friends easily wherever they were. Emily was very timid and it took her a long time to make friends. She had promised her friends to check their **blogs** and IM them regularly, but she didn't think that would last that long. The one thing that she was happy about was that the school had a cross country team. She loved to run more than anything and she was fast too, like a **cheetah**. Her old school was small so there were never enough people to have a team.

Emily walked into the school's office to pick up her schedule and figure out where all her classes were. Her first class was chemistry, she was happy about this because chemistry was her second favorite subject. Her favorite subject was trigonometry, but that wasn't till the end of the day. As she walked into class a girl said, "You look new, what's your name?"

"My name's Emily", she replied quietly.

"Could you speak up please I didn't hear you"

"My name is Emily", she said a little bit louder.

"Oh, I like that name, my name is Isabelle. Are you new?"

"Yes, my family just moved here from Wisconsin."

"Wisconsin, what state is that in?" Just then the bell rang and Emily rushed to her seat. Isabelle was a pretty name and it fit her well. She had long hair that was a pretty chestnut brown. Her eyes were a beautiful dark brown eyes. Did she really not know where Wisconsin was?

Just then the teacher walked in. Her name was Mrs. Zulager; she was young with blonde hair which she wore in a neat bun. Emily knew she was going to love her. She had an energetic and exciting aura about her. Since it was the first day of school they went through all the rules of the classroom and talked about what they would be doing for the rest of the year and what was expected of them. It was easy to tell that everyone liked Mrs. Zulager, everyone paid attention to what she was saying the whole time.

Before her next class Isabelle stopped her in the hall again.

"So where is Wisconsin?" she asked. Emily couldn't believe it she was really serious when she asked what state it was in.

"Umm, Wisconsin is a state."

"Oh, okay, well I gotta go, bye!" Well that went well now she felt like a **misfit** and she didn't think she was going to be seeing or talking to Isabelle again. She went through the rest of the morning feeling gloomy, until lunch. She saw a big bully about to **sock** a girl in the stomach.

Surprisingly she heard herself yell, "Hey stop that!" A teacher looked over and saw what was going on and the bully got in trouble. The girl walked up to her later and Emily found out her name was Sammi. She was in all the same classes as Emily was and she also liked to run, she was on the cross country team too.

Emily was in a great mood the rest of the day because she new she had made a new friend. Cross country practice was really fun and she was glad she had decided to try and be optimistic about the whole moving and new school situation. Emily learned an important lesson, it's easier to make friends if you just be yourself and speak up when something wrong is going on. She knew that with **whatever** happened (good or bad) she was going to love living in California.

I'm No Misfit Natalie G.

"That's it!" Susan McCaster said, stomping her way up the stairs to her room. "Why do I tolerate it all? I'm no **misfit!** I have to prove to everyone that I'm smart!" she said, slamming her pink and purple striped door and throwing her schoolbooks on her orange and yellow bedspread. "But what could I do?" She threw her clothes to the floor that had been on her black aired-up chair, so she could sit. "I've got it! I could do a **blog!** That would be perfect. A blog about **socks,**" she said, looking at her socks scattered around her room. "Everybody has socks and like socks." Susan raced to her computer. Just as she was going to sit down, someone knocked on her door. "Come in," Susan said, sighing.

"Hi Susan," Katy Lynne said, closing the door behind her and scanning the room. "Your mom let me in and said you were here."

Susan looked up and rolled her eyes. "What do you want?"

"I just came...um...because I wanted to say...um...that I'm sorry for what the other kids and I said to you at school. It was wrong and mean."

"Well, you won't think that anymore! Because I'm doing a blog about socks."

"Why socks?" Katy asked.

"Because I like socks! Is there anything wrong with that socks?"

"Not really, but why don't you do it about **cheetahs?** That would be a lot better."

"No way!" Susan said, slamming her hand on the desk and looking up at Katy. "Just stay out of my business!"

"Fine! **Whatever!**" Katy said, putting her hand up.

They both stood there for a couple of seconds, staring at the socks on the floor. Katy looked up at Susan and said, "Well, I do like socks, especially toe socks!" She giggled.

"Me too!" Susan said as she stood and chuckled. For a couple of minutes they stood there laughing over their silliness.

When they calmed down, Katy said with a grin on her face, "Well, should we get started on our blog?"

"I think we should!"

My Lovely Cheetah Sweater by Catelynn H.

My lovely cheetah sweater is absolutely a misfit.

I put it on and off it fell.

I asked my mom if I could get a new one, but all she said no.

Then, I put on my lacy blue socks, but I could not find them.

I found them in the hamper with a blob of wet paint and they were a misfit, too.

I told my mom and asked for some new ones all she said was whatever, you're not getting a new one.

Great my lovely cheetah sweater is a misfit and so are my lacy blue socks.

I can't replace them 'cause my mom said no

Untitled
by Jordan L.

It all started when I was looking at a myspace blog and I saw something interesting. So I went to hang with my firends. I told them I read something about the Cheetah Rider. He comes out at night, he is misfit wild man riding a cheetah. So one night we stood outside in town central. No one was outside. My fiend Tedd was break dancing and his sock fell off. My friend Andrew was acting like a bird and trying to fly off the fountain. I was there trying to be like Fonzey, AYYYY. The Cheetah Rider came. His Cheetah was huge and he was fierce. He charged us and when he did his Barbie collection fell out of his pack. He said they were not his. He had every type of them. I said whatever and he ran out crying and nobody saw him anymore.

Little Henry by Lindsay S.

There was once a small little boy who, in his town, was considered a **misfit**. People would not hesitate to tell him this and seemed to say to him **whatever** would pop into their heads at that precise moment. Well, one day that all changed for Little Henry, as he found out about the wonderful world of a **Blog**. Henry found himself laughing with glee and merrily typing along to people who would actually listen and read what he had to say. He had a jolly good time and soon came to find that these friendly strangers not only listened intently to him, but were actually interested in what he had to say. One person asked about his hobbies, another asked what he wanted to be when he grew up, and yet another asked him what the one thing he wished for was. Little Henry was absolutely mystified and overjoyed that these people cared! He had never had anyone care that much about him. He diligently set to work answering the questions. He explained how he liked knitting **socks**, and he wanted to be a zookeeper, and his passion was to see a real, live **cheetah**. As soon as his fingers began flying over the keyboard answering questions, his imagination also began flying and he found himself in a strange place. Flat, grass-covered earth surrounded him. Then, suddenly, out of nowhere his dream came true. A real, live, and wild cheetah darted out of a grassy clump. Now, as you can imagine, Little Henry was in a state of shock and disbelief. The only thing he could do was think, and the only thing he could think was, "I don't believe it!" Suddenly the swift cheetah came to a halt, let out a deafening roar, and came charging, top speed, toward him. Henry tried to scream, but somehow couldn't get it out. Then, in a flash, everything disappeared and he found himself at his computer, staring blankly at a picture of a cheetah running at him. He soon realized that he had been day dreaming and the picture was sent to him by one of his friends from the shop of their local zoo. Little Henry was slightly confused, but wasted no time to tell his "Blog Buddies" all about the marvelous experience.

Untitled
by Joey S.

Four-thirty a.m. The **Cheetah** grumbled, rolling onto his side before extending his arm and coaxing the alarm clock back into its quiet slumber. Through groggy eyes, he shifted from his position on his warm, comforting bed to the unwelcoming wooden planks of the floorboards. He made his way over to his dresser, seizing a **sock** or two to fight off the creeping chill of the morning. He shuffled down the deceptively small hallways of his house, stopping only to turn on his computer before entering the kitchen. As he crossed the threshold between the rooms, the pleasant aroma of coffee caught him, flirting about his nostrils in wisps, tantalizing and seducing him. Smiling gently, the Cheetah accepted the coffee's proposal, pouring himself a generous mug of the renewing liquid. He calmly made his way over to the welcoming glow of the computer monitor, sipping his early morning elixir as he sat down. He stared out of his first story window, watching the world pass by as he waited for his computer to boot up. As he surfed the internet, he noticed hundreds, no, thousands of blogs- online journals written by independent sources. The Cheetah thought to himself, Why would you want to spend your time writing to other people over the internet, especially since you will probably never meet most of the people you are writing to? This issue persisted in his mind, gnawing away at his thoughts until he could think of nothing else. He hunted for explanations on the internet, coming up with a handful of different reasons. The most popular, reason that he found was that any topic under the sun could be covered in a **blog**; you could write about events in your life, you could write reviews on various forms of media, you could write about a good deed that someone did for you, you could even write a blog giving homage to a certain item or event, or **whatever** else that came to your mind. People seemed to love the freedom to say what they willed, with no boundaries; they didn't have to oblige to politics or leaving good impressions for companies. They were, more or less, free to say what they willed- they could express themselves as they felt fit, breaking free from the shackles of restraint created by society's standards. The second explanation that he found was that people felt it easy to socialize over the internet. Some people have nervous breakdowns when speaking with people face-to-face, and make bad impressions on the people they are trying to talk to, causing them to be treated like **misfits** by everyone around them. Those people enjoyed the indirect contact provided by the internet; it was a comforting barrier to them. The third and most practical reason he found explaining why people write blogs was that it was an easy way to share their works and receive critiques from other people. By putting your own work- for example, a piece of poetry- on the internet, you could simply and efficiently receive feedback on your work; your strengths, weaknesses, and other attributes could all be easily judged by others, letting you improve on your work. As The Cheetah saw these explanations, he pondered, thinking, Hmm. I suppose those are fairly good reasons, aren't they? Freedom to express oneself, easy sociability, and the possibility to improve on your work through the suggestions of others. I guess those aren't exactly time-wasting activities, necessarily. The Cheetah finished up what he had logged onto his computer to do, and then went to the main menu to shut down his computer. However, he hesitated before powering it down; he had become highly intrigued by the concept of a blog. Nevertheless, he knew he needed to get to work soon, so he shut down the computer, never fully releasing the thought of a blog from his mind. As he walked toward his door, he resolved to himself, After work, I am going to find a website where I can make a blog of my own. Cherishing the thought, he briskly closed the door behind him, willing the day of work ahead of him to hasten to the end quickly.

Lishi76, the Magic Blog by Liz Z.

"Attention citizens of Weinerschnitzingalslavonia," What looked like a red pig-shaped water-float the size of a blimp circled the capitol city of the little-known European nation, dangling a huge TV screen displaying the speaker. "This is your leader, Ronald Fifinschlitz, however you pronounce it. I'm here to announce that that the new punishment for accessing websites not authorized by the government, is unspeakably severe. Two words; Country Music. That is all. Hail me!" the screen turned to static, and the pig blimp departed.

On the 145,678th story of a skyscraper, Pete slammed down the window of his apartment. "Phht.

Whatever."

The 19-year-old spun in his computer chair, back to the first screen he'd been watching. He was hacking through government filters on the Internet, to find out what was really going on in the world. This was not just for himself, but also for the daring customers of he and his friend Marina's black-alley sock puppet series, Misty's Enchanted Jungle. Since all versions of Sesame Street were illegal, Pete and his roommate had decided it was up to them to secretly teach children and their parents about individuality and equality.

He needed more than just written facts, he decided. He needed to talk directly to people who lived in free countries like America and Taiwan, to find out how it really was. Pete searched for blogs, message boards, chat rooms. Unfortunately, the government's filters got cleverer each time. Whenever Pete clicked on a site, it was blocked. He tried every hacking trick he could think of, and invented a few new ones. None were working this time.

"COME ON!" He stood up and tossed the keyboard away in a rage.

The keyboard soared about a foot, then choked on the cord attaching it to the computer and swung down under the desk. It smacked against the bottom of the desk's drawer, hitting a chunk of random keys. The computer screen entered a new search: **lishi76**. Two English sites came up-**LISHI76, The Magic Blog!**, and **liShi76_..?HeheheKatNlp=funkeystuf!**-followed by several websites written mostly in some foreign language (or maybe Morse Code, Pete wasn't sure). He scrolled up to the English sites. (Of course he could read English; only Americans are monolingual). Blinking curiously behind his thick glasses, Pete clicked on the first site. A white page came up, giving him a choice of languages. It included his own, which was interesting, as Weinerschnitzingalslavonian isn't one of the more common languages spoken in the world. It also included tongues like Cat, Dog, Klingon (for the Trekkie community), Pixy, Pig Latin, and Goldfish. Pete frowned. How's a goldfish gonna use a computer?

The next page offered a summery of the site. **Talk directly to individuals from anywhere on the planet, in any language! Before entering, you must choose an avatar. Please type your desired Avatar below. (If you suffer from motion sickness, we suggest taking a Dramamine before continuing.)**

"..okaay.." Pete chewed his tongue for a moment. Thinking of his favorite sock puppet, he typed, **mint-blue cheetah with hawk wings**, and hit **Enter**. He leaned back in his chair and folded his hands behind his neck, waiting for the bizarre flash-video that would probably follow. Why else would they have mentioned motion sickness?

The screen blacked out. What looked like a black vacuum-cleaner hose emerged from the dark screen, and stuck its face right up to Pete's.

"What the hell?!"

The vacuum started sucking. His brown hair blew forward, and his glasses flew off into the tube. The hacker soon seemed to be getting sucked headfirst into the mystical cyber world. Marina, hearing the noise, entered the room to find her roommate asleep at the computer. Again.

The whole vacuum ride took less than ten seconds. Pete skidded face-first into-a pile of leaves? His glasses sat a few feet away, but he could suddenly see perfectly without them. He stood up on all four legs and shook himself off. Hold the phone. Pete looked around. He was in a forest filled with every animal imaginable, human and nonhuman, realistic and otherwise. Violet clouds passed over a black sky. Pete just had to look down at his spotted, mint-blue legs, and flex his feathery wings, to know that he was either in another dimension, or dreaming. Or both.

"Hi, I'm Rosa." A preteen with colorful butterfly wings fluttered down from a tree branch.

Pete stared.

"Ah, this is your first time isn't it. Yeah, we're all kind of weird here. It's like a haven for **misfits**, I think. Anyways, we were just having a heated debate about violence in the media. You wanna join us? Otherwise, I think those people by the waterfall are talking about the difference between science fiction and fantasy."

"Thanks." Pete followed her up to the tree branch, climbing like a cat halfway and flying the rest. "Uh, how'd you all find this place? Are lots of blogs like this, or is this like a secret cult, or what?"

An opossum hanging upside-down answered him. "There's other blogs like this too, but they're hard to find. Nothing this crazy would be accepted in most places, so they're kept hidden. But they are there. Strange things are everywhere. You just need to learn how to look for them."

Why I Live In Wisconsin by Rakel Z.

I am not originally from Appleton, Wisconsin. Everybody knows that. People are always asking, "Where are you from?" and "Why did you move here?" To tell you the truth, the questions are getting old. So I've decided to come out in the open with all the answers and write them down here once and for all. You may also get a copy of this story from my [blog](#) and share it with your friends.

I was raised in Chilpancingo, Mexico by my two loving parents on a small jalapeno farm. We were very poor and there wasn't much to eat, besides jalapenos of course. So when a traveling circus came to Chilpancingo, my parents made me join in hope for a better future for their only daughter. My job in the circus was to tame any wild **cheetah**, mend any clown's torn **sock**, and **whatever** else had to be done. The circus took me to many strange and interesting places. We went to New York, where I married a wonderful man, named William, who also became part of the circus-performing the tight ropewalk. He was a good man, my dear William; rest his soul. He only had one fault. He was allergic to jalapenos and for that he always seemed to be a **misfit** in my mind. The circus' next stop was Wisconsin. While we were canoeing across the Great Lakes, William fell into the freezing water and drowned. This was very painful for everyone, but we had to keep paddling, after all, the show must go on with or without the tight rope act.

When we got to Wisconsin, we hitchhiked our way to Appleton. As we were setting up the large circus tent, I was kidnapped by two farmhands, who took me to the owner of a dairy farm, the Boss, as they called him. His business was failing for two reasons: a labor shortage and not enough publicity. The Boss figured that I could solve his publicity problem. How? Simple. He was going to kill me. What better way to get publicity for his business than by killing me?

Before the ordeal was to take place, I was tied to a chair and asked if I had any last wishes. I answered, "Yes, I have a few. I want to make the Guinness World Record for the most jalapenos eaten in a hour without throwing up. And I've never bungee-jumped off the Empire State Building or gone to a Pink Floyd concert or shook hands with the pope or been admitted to Oxford University or won an award for the best Elvis impersonation or any of the things that make life worth living. And I haven't spoken to my parents in years!" The Boss and his evil henchman, as they referred to themselves, discussed my wishes privately and when they returned, informed me that my only grantable wish was to speak to my long-lost parents. The short fat henchman handed me his cell phone, but I told him my parents couldn't afford a phone. In fact, when I started talking about my parents, I couldn't stop!

As it turned out, The Boss actually knew my parents quite well. He met them at a Universal Farming Convention. So we flew to Chilpancingo and I led them to my old home. After hours of negotiation and persuasion, my parents finally convinced The Boss not to kill me. However, in return for my spared life, I had to solve his other problem. I will be working at The Boss' farm for eight years.

So, there...that is my true story. After years of secrecy, I have finally gotten it all off my chest. This, my dear friends, is why I now live in Appleton, Wisconsin.

Are You Ready by Melissa J.

It was a dark and stormy night. The wind howled and the rain beat against the roof like bullets. Okay, scratch that. I thought that lying might make this more interesting, but I was wrong. That opening line is soooooo overused. Let's try this again.

It was a bright and sunny morning when I woke up to the sound of an obnoxious morning DJ talking about American Idol, a show that I had never particularly cared for. I rolled out of bed and onto the floor. Ouch. Mental note not to do that again.

I stood up, shaking the sleep from my body. Today was the day; I looked at the calendar even though I knew it was; the day before spring break and the day of the final battle of the war.

I hurried through getting ready, throwing on my warrior clothes; jeans covered with stars and a **cheetah** print shirt, symbolic of the fierceness that lurked inside women, kind of like cancer, only good. But it was also deadly, very deadly. You know what they say; hell hath no fury. It's true.

I checked my watch. I had fifteen more minutes before the bus came. Plenty enough time to check my **blog** for comments; I had posted an entry about the war last night.

The computer was fast this morning compared to its usual archaic speed and I had my blog up shortly. It was a pretty purplish scheme. I had three comments; I clicked on the link excitedly. I was greeted by the words of my three friends: Jamie, Sam, and Abbie. Jamie and Sam had posted comments on my side, of course, but Abbie (I get a kick out of the fact that he goes by Abbie) had posted that we were going down. I glanced at the clock again. Rats. I x-ed it down and ran off to the bus stop.

The day passed so slowly. It took forever; the clock literally stopped at one point, but they were only resetting it. The day finally ended and we met in the street, the tumbleweed blowing across, the gun holsters at our sides. Okay, really self, this lying thing doesn't really make it more interesting.

We really met at the gym. I slipped my shoes off near the door, because I preferred walking around in socks. One of my socks slipped off as I pulled them off, but I slipped the offending **sock** right back on. I slid along the surface of the gym floor as the girls gathered behind me. The boys were gathering on the other side with Abbie as their leader. Abbie and I approached each other. "Well, well, if it isn't **Misfit** Mary."

"Annoying Abbie," I spat back at him.

"**Whatever**," he shrugged and continued. "Are you ready?" He gestured back to his people and they advanced. My girls instantly had my back. There we were, about to fly into a furious brawl, actually, no, we practically were at the point of brawling. I had lunged forward at Abbie, but there appeared, all of a sudden, out of nowhere, the principal. People dispelled quickly, leaving only Abbie and I behind.

We ended up with two weeks detention, but it was worth the scar that Abbie got from the bite I managed. But it's on. Next time. Detention's the perfect place for planning.

APL'S TEEN VOICES

~ Original writing and artwork by Fox Valley teens

National Library Week Edition
Spring 2007, Volume 13

WRITING CONTEST HONORABLE MENTIONS

By:

Audrey B.

Alexandra C.

Beth C.

Alyssa C.

Kelsey G.

Natalie G.

Catelynn H.

Jordan L.

Lindsay S.

Joey S.

Liz Z.

Rakel Z.

Melissa Z.

TEEN VOICES WRITING CONTEST RULES

Using the 5 words below, write a short story
no longer than 1 page, single spaced.

The 5 words are:

blog
cheetah
misfit
sock
whatever

The Random Tale of Three Girls by Audrey B.

It was another normal day for Kiya, Sonya and Kelsey. Well, normal in their sense of the word. Again they all walked to school, but really had nothing to say. To break the silence Kelsey, the blonde of the group, said "I have a nifty **sock** on today."

"Oh really," said Sonya, the supposed smart one, "What about the other one?" Kelsey just smiled at her and said "Oh, that one is just normal. My left one is the nifty one." She reached down to her pants and pulled up the bottom to show that her left sock was grey and yellow with flying pigs and gummy bears all over it. "Wow," Was all Sonya had to say.

Soon Kiya, the retarded and insane one, went into another one of her spastic attacks. Her body fell to the ground and started to quiver and shake like there was an earthquake underneath her. After she was done she screamed "Oh my gosh! I left my **cheetah** on! I gotta go give it some oil so it will survive the coming onslaught of pigmy penguins," and ran off towards the school. Sighing Sonya and Kelsey chased after her.

When the girls finally arrived at school they quickly went to their exploratory classes. Now Kelsey was in a rather fowl mood this day, and felt like not answering any of her teacher's questions. So in math class when the teacher asked her what x was she simply stated "A letter." Finally the staff got so frustrated with her that they sent her to the principal's office.

Once there the principal called down Kiya and Sonya since they were the only ones that could seem to handle this off-the-walls girl. When the two girls arrived they knelt down by Kelsey's chair as she started to cry. "What is the exponent of a kangaroo in Alaska," Kiya asked softly. Through her sobs Kelsey spit out "My **blog** was left running and I couldn't reach the fire hydrant." What met the principal's ears next was nothing but wails of agony from the blonde girl. "Muffin," she screamed "**Whatever** happened to the poor little butterfly!"

"It flew away with Peter Pan and his tribe of beef on a stick," Sonya sadly stated. Kelsey stopped the hysterical act and looked at Sonya. A watery smile was playing on her lips. "The land of the forbidden spells cast by the owls back in 2349," she asked like a little child. "Yes," Audrey answered, "To the land of the **misfits**." With that Kelsey gave a huge grin and skipped happily out of the principal's office. The two girls followed shortly behind.

Sitting back in his chair the principal sighed and shook his head. No matter how long he knew these girls he would never understand the way they talked.

The Girl Who Cried Wolf by Alexandra C.

"Help me," she cried. Although she cried quite a bit these days, it seemed as though this time was different. A subtle sense of urgency cascaded from her voice, a tone of imperative need. She was an outcast, a **misfit** perhaps. Her days were spent paging through magazines; her eyes lingering over every picture of those she so desperately wished to become, dwelling upon every word of fashion and beauty tips. Her body had been shaped to resemble a shriveled cadaver, for she was a subject of anorexia nervosa. The few friends she had once possessed were long gone, repelled by her obsessive lust for attention. And because she had no one to love, that craving grew to control her.

"What is it Sheryl?" The attentive care of a nurse was no comparison to the love of a parent.

"I'm nauseous, and the fever has returned!" She screamed this. A few nurses passed in the nearby hallway, but their curious looks were hidden from the view of girl's hollow eyes. "It is appendicitis; I swear to you it is! I have read about it in my books. I'm dying! I'm dying!!"

"Oh for goodness sakes Sheryl you're hysterical!" The legs of the helpless girl began thrashing about as the nurse, Mary as she was known around the Institution, tried to quickly keep the fever under control. The Institution was an infamous place. Children with mental disorders around the country came only as a last resort and were well aware that death was not uncommon. Sheryl had lived there for three weeks when the tantrums started.

In a panic, Mary swept aside the sweat-soaked sheet that covered Sheryl's tiny body. Her heart was pumping, and while in her head everything was deafening and cloudy, her eyes merely screamed in silence as Mary watched her most vulnerable patient suffer. The next sheet was swept aside in urgency when suddenly, abruptly, something fell to the ground: a hot water bottle.

It seemed, for a moment or so, that everything stood still, Sheryl's head dipping ever so slightly.

"Sheryl.?" inquired Mary.

Her head bobbed with confirmation as Mary sighed, this had happened before. Sheryl nervously played with a hole in her **sock**, never making eye contact with Mary, for she knew that the approval she craved would no longer become a reality. As Mary walked from the lonely room, Sheryl wished, willed her legs run after her, faster than a **cheetah**, and willed her voice to say the two words that were forbidden to her lips.

Turning her attention to her laptop in shame, Sheryl scanned the internet for pictures of celebrities, or on occasion a **blog** about them, feeding the ever hungry beast inside her mind.

An hour passed, and clicking onto another page, Sheryl realized that she was uncontrollably shaking. From her forehead dripped warm pellets of sweat. Confusion overtook her mind as a lurching pain in her stomach caused her to vomit. Her head was spinning, but even so she understood the truth, as ironic as it was, she really was sick. She screamed in pain and in joy, for she realized the fault in her actions. She vomited again slipping out of consciousness and cried out, "Mary!"

No less than seventy yards away, Mary shook her head, and sighed, "**Whatever.**"

Untitled
by Beth C.

"Miss Peters.Miss Peters!"

My friend Katie jabbed me in my side and she whispered to me frantically "Get up Anna!" I woke up with a jolt.

My teacher, Mrs. Forster glared at me. "So glad you could join us."

I blushed deeply and looked down.

"I called on you to answer my question."

"Umm could you please repeat that?"

Mrs. Forster sighed heavily. "Next time you won't be so lucky."

The room was silent for a moment. Then, the crackly intercom buzzed. "Could Anna Peters be sent to the office immediately?"

My teacher paused. "Yes.she will be down in just a moment."

I stood up slowly and I grabbed my books. After dropping my books off at my locker, I stepped into the office.

"Anna?"

"Yes?"

"Your mom left a message. You need to go home right away - it's an emergency."

"Okay. thank you."

I walked outside of school. In the distance I heard a siren wailing. Instinctively I picked up my pace. I began to run, I ran faster than ever before in my life. As I neared home my lungs felt as though they were going to burst, I wondered if a cheetah for that matter ever felt this way.

I arrived home in a state of panic. I saw an ambulance in front of my house. About ten people were racing around, including my mom.

"Mom? What's going on?"

"Anna. thank goodness you're here. Your grandma. Grandma had a stroke."

"Is. is she dead?"

"No. but she's in critical condition and she's on her way to the hospital. We'll follow."

The next few hours passed in a blur. I sat down in the waiting room while my mom talked to some nurses and doctors. I glance around the room in a daze. I was definitely a misfit. Little kids played with blocks and cars while parents talked in low voices.

I glance down at my feet - my socks had daisies on them - Grandma's favorite. One sock had a hole in the bottom of it. I suddenly felt exhausted. In the last few hours I had grown up more than I had in the last year.

"Hi sweetie" my mom spoke softly.

"Is grandma better?"

"She is comatose, but stable"

"That's good" I whispered, relieved.

But it wasn't good. In the next few days grandma worsened. Machines were doing everything for her. The doctors were considering turning off the machines so she wouldn't suffer.

Mom posted a blog on the internet, and soon our church and many others were praying. A few of my friends called, to see what was up, but I didn't feel up to talking to people.

"Anna...grandma is very old...and whatever the doctors do may not be enough. Even if she gets out of the coma, she will probably be disabled for life....sweetie are you okay with turning the machines off?"

I pursed my lips and I slowly said "I want what's best for grandma."

"Okay...we'll give it a few days and then grandma deserves peace."

On the second day I walked upstairs, I was ready for whatever was to happen.

Samba's Socks by Alyssa

Not long ago, there lived a cheetah named Samba. He was the slowest member of his family and struggled to catch his meals. When Samba tried and failed, his grandmother had to hunt for him. Samba was humiliated by this and became a social outcast. Though he was a slow runner, he *was* able to help cheetah mothers by babysitting their cubs while they hunted. The adults liked that Samba was sweet and kind, however, none of the cheetahs his age wanted to hang out with him. He was also polite, gentle and a good listener. Unfortunately, none of the kids understood his other qualities and they judged him solely on his running ability.

One day Samba was out playing with a few younger cubs and one of his classmates trotted up and taunted, "You must be the famous Samba, the slowest cheetah in Africa." When Samba heard this, he ran home crying. Even though he knew it couldn't be true, he still felt hurt. After this incident, he didn't feel like babysitting and spent many hours alone. His mother understood what he was going through, but was unable to comfort him.

A few weeks later, after Samba finished writing another woeful poem about his troubles on his blog, he received an email from his only friend, Oliver, describing *The Amazing Speedy Socks II*, new footwear designed to increase running speed. Oliver found success using *The Original Speedy Socks* and hoped that Samba would too. Samba knew he could trust Oliver for they had been friends since they were cubs. He was the only kid who understood his pain and didn't tease him, because Oliver was slow himself. Desperate, Samba ordered a pair.

The socks were expensive, but worked well and tripled his speed. Samba was now the fastest cheetah in the herd. During a game of tag, he was called to lunch and left his socks in the grass. When he came back for them they were gone. He started to worry that he'd never get them back. He couldn't afford another pair and didn't want to be a misfit again.

Samba and Oliver searched the play area, but found nothing. A few days after the socks went missing, Samba and Oliver were surfing the internet and saw an article about a fast zebra named Zack. Samba wanted to investigate if this suspiciously quick zebra had his Speedy Socks.

When Samba and Oliver found where Zack lived, they spoke to Zack's mother and found out he *did* have a new pair of socks. After thanking her for the information, they set out to catch Zack. Catching him was hard, for without his speedy socks, Samba was slow again. Oliver was faster but because he wore an older pair of Speedy Socks, he didn't do much better. Zack was swift *and* sneaky, making the chase more difficult.

During the pursuit, whatever direction Samba and Oliver ran, Zack darted away. Just when they were about to quit, Zack stopped, walked over, and asked why they had been chasing him for two hours straight. As soon as Zack came close, the cheetahs saw Samba's socks. Samba then asked politely, without accusing, for his socks back. Zack apologized for taking them, explaining that he saw them on the ground and didn't know who they belonged to. Even though Zack was sorry, he was reluctant to part with the socks, for with them, he was able to outrun predators easily.

Samba then made a deal that if Zack gave back the socks, his family wouldn't hunt his herd. Zack accepted and Samba was once again the fastest in his family. His relatives were never happy about this arrangement, but they weren't mad at him for his decision. They understood that it was the only way to get back the socks and they wanted Samba to be happy. Samba became a legendary hunter and wrote a book about how Speedy Socks changed his life.

Untitles by Kelsey G.

It was Emily's first day of tenth grade at a new high school. She had just moved from a small city in Wisconsin to San Francisco, California. Her dad had gotten a job transfer and so they had to move. Her little sisters, Natalie and Natasha, were eight year old twins. They were really excited about the move, which was typical for them because they made friends easily wherever they were. Emily was very timid and it took her a long time to make friends. She had promised her friends to check their **blogs** and IM them regularly, but she didn't think that would last that long. The one thing that she was happy about was that the school had a cross country team. She loved to run more than anything and she was fast too, like a **cheetah**. Her old school was small so there were never enough people to have a team.

Emily walked into the school's office to pick up her schedule and figure out where all her classes were. Her first class was chemistry, she was happy about this because chemistry was her second favorite subject. Her favorite subject was trigonometry, but that wasn't till the end of the day. As she walked into class a girl said, "You look new, what's your name?"

"My name's Emily", she replied quietly.

"Could you speak up please I didn't hear you"

"My name is Emily", she said a little bit louder.

"Oh, I like that name, my name is Isabelle. Are you new?"

"Yes, my family just moved here from Wisconsin."

"Wisconsin, what state is that in?" Just then the bell rang and Emily rushed to her seat. Isabelle was a pretty name and it fit her well. She had long hair that was a pretty chestnut brown. Her eyes were a beautiful dark brown eyes. Did she really not know where Wisconsin was?

Just then the teacher walked in. Her name was Mrs. Zulager; she was young with blonde hair which she wore in a neat bun. Emily knew she was going to love her. She had an energetic and exciting aura about her. Since it was the first day of school they went through all the rules of the classroom and talked about what they would be doing for the rest of the year and what was expected of them. It was easy to tell that everyone liked Mrs. Zulager, everyone paid attention to what she was saying the whole time.

Before her next class Isabelle stopped her in the hall again.

"So where is Wisconsin?" she asked. Emily couldn't believe it she was really serious when she asked what state it was in.

"Umm, Wisconsin is a state."

"Oh, okay, well I gotta go, bye!" Well that went well now she felt like a **misfit** and she didn't think she was going to be seeing or talking to Isabelle again. She went through the rest of the morning feeling gloomy, until lunch. She saw a big bully about to **sock** a girl in the stomach.

Surprisingly she heard herself yell, "Hey stop that!" A teacher looked over and saw what was going on and the bully got in trouble. The girl walked up to her later and Emily found out her name was Sammi. She was in all the same classes as Emily was and she also liked to run, she was on the cross country team too.

Emily was in a great mood the rest of the day because she new she had made a new friend. Cross country practice was really fun and she was glad she had decided to try and be optimistic about the whole moving and new school situation. Emily learned an important lesson, it's easier to make friends if you just be yourself and speak up when something wrong is going on. She knew that with **whatever** happened (good or bad) she was going to love living in California.

I'm No Misfit Natalie G.

"That's it!" Susan McCaster said, stomping her way up the stairs to her room. "Why do I tolerate it all? I'm no **misfit**! I have to prove to everyone that I'm smart!" she said, slamming her pink and purple striped door and throwing her schoolbooks on her orange and yellow bedspread. "But what could I do?" She threw her clothes to the floor that had been on her black aired-up chair, so she could sit. "I've got it! I could do a **blog**! That would be perfect. A blog about **socks**," she said, looking at her socks scattered around her room. "Everybody has socks and like socks." Susan raced to her computer. Just as she was going to sit down, someone knocked on her door. "Come in," Susan said, sighing.

"Hi Susan," Katy Lynne said, closing the door behind her and scanning the room. "Your mom let me in and said you were here."

Susan looked up and rolled her eyes. "What do you want?"

"I just came...um...because I wanted to say...um...that I'm sorry for what the other kids and I said to you at school. It was wrong and mean."

"Well, you won't think that anymore! Because I'm doing a blog about socks."

"Why socks?" Katy asked.

"Because I like socks! Is there anything wrong with that socks?"

"Not really, but why don't you do it about **cheetahs**? That would be a lot better."

"No way!" Susan said, slamming her hand on the desk and looking up at Katy. "Just stay out of my business!"

"Fine! **Whatever!**" Katy said, putting her hand up.

They both stood there for a couple of seconds, staring at the socks on the floor. Katy looked up at Susan and said, "Well, I do like socks, especially toe socks!" She giggled.

"Me too!" Susan said as she stood and chuckled. For a couple of minutes they stood there laughing over their silliness.

When they calmed down, Katy said with a grin on her face, "Well, should we get started on our blog?"

"I think we should!"

My Lovely cheetah Sweater
by Catelynn H.

My lovely cheetah sweater is absolutely a misfit.

I put it on and off it fell.

I asked my mom if I could get a new one, but all she said no.

Then, I put on my lacy blue socks, but I could not find them.

I found them in the hamper with a blob of wet paint and they were a misfit, too.

I told my mom and asked for some new ones all she said was whatever, you're not getting a new one.

Great my lovely cheetah sweater is a misfit and so are my lacy blue socks.

I can't replace them 'cause my mom said no

Untitled
by Jordan L.

It all started when I was looking at a myspace blog and I saw something interesting. So I went to hang with my firends. I told them I read something about the Cheetah Rider. He comes out at night, he is misfit wild man riding a cheetah. So one night we stood outside in town central. No one was outside. My fiend Tedd was break dancing and his sock fell off. My friend Andrew was acting like a bird and trying to fly off the fountain. I was there trying to be like Fonzey, AYYYY. The Cheetah Rider came. His Cheetah was huge and he was fierce. He charged us and when he did his Barbie collection fell out of his pack. He said they were not his. He had every type of them. I said whatever and he ran out crying and nobody saw him anymore.

Little Henry by Lindsay S.

There was once a small little boy who, in his town, was considered a **misfit**. People would not hesitate to tell him this and seemed to say to him **whatever** would pop into their heads at that precise moment. Well, one day that all changed for Little Henry, as he found out about the wonderful world of a **Blog**. Henry found himself laughing with glee and merrily typing along to people who would actually listen and read what he had to say. He had a jolly good time and soon came to find that these friendly strangers not only listened intently to him, but were actually interested in what he had to say. One person asked about his hobbies, another asked what he wanted to be when he grew up, and yet another asked him what the one thing he wished for was. Little Henry was absolutely mystified and overjoyed that these people cared! He had never had anyone care that much about him. He diligently set to work answering the questions. He explained how he liked knitting **socks**, and he wanted to be a zookeeper, and his passion was to see a real, live **cheetah**. As soon as his fingers began flying over the keyboard answering questions, his imagination also began flying and he found himself in a strange place. Flat, grass-covered earth surrounded him. Then, suddenly, out of nowhere his dream came true. A real, live, and wild cheetah darted out of a grassy clump. Now, as you can imagine, Little Henry was in a state of shock and disbelief. The only thing he could do was think, and the only thing he could think was, "I don't believe it!" Suddenly the swift cheetah came to a halt, let out a deafening roar, and came charging, top speed, toward him. Henry tried to scream, but somehow couldn't get it out. Then, in a flash, everything disappeared and he found himself at his computer, staring blankly at a picture of a cheetah running at him. He soon realized that he had been day dreaming and the picture was sent to him by one of his friends from the shop of their local zoo. Little Henry was slightly confused, but wasted no time to tell his "Blog Buddies" all about the marvelous experience.

Untitled
by Joey S.

Four-thirty a.m. The **Cheetah** grumbled, rolling onto his side before extending his arm and coaxing the alarm clock back into its quiet slumber. Through groggy eyes, he shifted from his position on his warm, comforting bed to the unwelcoming wooden planks of the floorboards. He made his way over to his dresser, seizing a **sock** or two to fight off the creeping chill of the morning. He shuffled down the deceptively small hallways of his house, stopping only to turn on his computer before entering the kitchen. As he crossed the threshold between the rooms, the pleasant aroma of coffee caught him, flirting about his nostrils in wisps, tantalizing and seducing him. Smiling gently, the Cheetah accepted the coffee's proposal, pouring himself a generous mug of the renewing liquid. He calmly made his way over to the welcoming glow of the computer monitor, sipping his early morning elixir as he sat down. He stared out of his first story window, watching the world pass by as he waited for his computer to boot up. As he surfed the internet, he noticed hundreds, no, thousands of blogs- online journals written by independent sources. The Cheetah thought to himself, Why would you want to spend your time writing to other people over the internet, especially since you will probably never meet most of the people you are writing to? This issue persisted in his mind, gnawing away at his thoughts until he could think of nothing else. He hunted for explanations on the internet, coming up with a handful of different reasons. The most popular, reason that he found was that any topic under the sun could be covered in a **blog**; you could write about events in your life, you could write reviews on various forms of media, you could write about a good deed that someone did for you, you could even write a blog giving homage to a certain item or event, or **whatever** else that came to your mind. People seemed to love the freedom to say what they willed, with no boundaries; they didn't have to oblige to politics or leaving good impressions for companies. They were, more or less, free to say what they willed- they could express themselves as they felt fit, breaking free from the shackles of restraint created by society's standards. The second explanation that he found was that people felt it easy to socialize over the internet. Some people have nervous breakdowns when speaking with people face-to-face, and make bad impressions on the people they are trying to talk to, causing them to be treated like **misfits** by everyone around them. Those people enjoyed the indirect contact provided by the internet; it was a comforting barrier to them. The third and most practical reason he found explaining why people write blogs was that it was an easy way to share their works and receive critiques from other people. By putting your own work- for example, a piece of poetry- on the internet, you could simply and efficiently receive feedback on your work; your strengths, weaknesses, and other attributes could all be easily judged by others, letting you improve on your work. As The Cheetah saw these explanations, he pondered, thinking, Hmm. I suppose those are fairly good reasons, aren't they? Freedom to express oneself, easy sociability, and the possibility to improve on your work through the suggestions of others. I guess those aren't exactly time-wasting activities, necessarily. The Cheetah finished up what he had logged onto his computer to do, and then went to the main menu to shut down his computer. However, he hesitated before powering it down; he had become highly intrigued by the concept of a blog. Nevertheless, he knew he needed to get to work soon, so he shut down the computer, never fully releasing the thought of a blog from his mind. As he walked toward his door, he resolved to himself, After work, I am going to find a website where I can make a blog of my own. Cherishing the thought, he briskly closed the door behind him, willing the day of work ahead of him to hasten to the end quickly.

Lishi76, the Magic Blog by Liz Z.

"Attention citizens of Weinerschnitzingalslavonia," What looked like a red pig-shaped water-float the size of a blimp circled the capitol city of the little-known European nation, dangling a huge TV screen displaying the speaker. "This is your leader, Ronald Fifinschlitz, however you pronounce it. I'm here to announce that the new punishment for accessing websites not authorized by the government, is unspeakably severe. Two words; Country Music. That is all. Hail me!" the screen turned to static, and the pig blimp departed.

On the 145,678th story of a skyscraper, Pete slammed down the window of his apartment. "Phht.

Whatever."

The 19-year-old spun in his computer chair, back to the first screen he'd been watching. He was hacking through government filters on the Internet, to find out what was really going on in the world. This was not just for himself, but also for the daring customers of he and his friend Marina's black-alley sock puppet series, Misty's Enchanted Jungle. Since all versions of Sesame Street were illegal, Pete and his roommate had decided it was up to them to secretly teach children and their parents about individuality and equality.

He needed more than just written facts, he decided. He needed to talk directly to people who lived in free countries like America and Taiwan, to find out how it really was. Pete searched for blogs, message boards, chat rooms. Unfortunately, the government's filters got cleverer each time. Whenever Pete clicked on a site, it was blocked. He tried every hacking trick he could think of, and invented a few new ones. None were working this time.

"COME ON!" He stood up and tossed the keyboard away in a rage.

The keyboard soared about a foot, then choked on the cord attaching it to the computer and swung down under the desk. It smacked against the bottom of the desk's drawer, hitting a chunk of random keys. The computer screen entered a new search: **lishi76**. Two English sites came up-**LISHI76, The Magic Blog!**, and **liShi76_..?HeheheKatNIp=funkeystuf!**-followed by several websites written mostly in some foreign language (or maybe Morse Code, Pete wasn't sure). He scrolled up to the English sites. (Of course he could read English; only Americans are monolingual). Blinking curiously behind his thick glasses, Pete clicked on the first site. A white page came up, giving him a choice of languages. It included his own, which was interesting, as Weinerschnitzingalslavonian isn't one of the more common languages spoken in the world. It also included tongues like Cat, Dog, Klingon (for the Trekkie community), Pixy, Pig Latin, and Goldfish. Pete frowned. How's a goldfish gonna use a computer?

The next page offered a summary of the site. **Talk directly to individuals from anywhere on the planet, in any language! Before entering, you must choose an avatar. Please type your desired Avatar below. (If you suffer from motion sickness, we suggest taking a Dramamine before continuing.)**

"..okaay.." Pete chewed his tongue for a moment. Thinking of his favorite sock puppet, he typed, **mint-blue cheetah with hawk wings**, and hit **Enter**. He leaned back in his chair and folded his hands behind his neck, waiting for the bizarre flash-video that would probably follow. Why else would they have mentioned motion sickness?

The screen blacked out. What looked like a black vacuum-cleaner hose emerged from the dark screen, and stuck its face right up to Pete's.

"What the hell?!"

The vacuum started sucking. His brown hair blew forward, and his glasses flew off into the tube. The hacker soon seemed to be getting sucked headfirst into the mystical cyber world. Marina, hearing the noise, entered the room to find her roommate asleep at the computer. Again.

The whole vacuum ride took less than ten seconds. Pete skidded face-first into a pile of leaves? His glasses sat a few feet away, but he could suddenly see perfectly without them. He stood up on all four legs and shook himself off. Hold the phone. Pete looked around. He was in a forest filled with every animal imaginable, human and nonhuman, realistic and otherwise. Violet clouds passed over a black sky. Pete just had to look down at his spotted, mint-blue legs, and flex his feathery wings, to know that he was either in another dimension, or dreaming. Or both.

"Hi, I'm Rosa." A preteen with colorful butterfly wings fluttered down from a tree branch.

Pete stared.

"Ah, this is your first time isn't it. Yeah, we're all kind of weird here. It's like a haven for **misfits**, I think. Anyways, we were just having a heated debate about violence in the media. You wanna join us? Otherwise, I think those people by the waterfall are talking about the difference between science fiction and fantasy."

"Thanks." Pete followed her up to the tree branch, climbing like a cat halfway and flying the rest. "Uh, how'd you all find this place? Are lots of blogs like this, or is this like a secret cult, or what?"

An opossum hanging upside-down answered him. "There's other blogs like this too, but they're hard to find. Nothing this crazy would be accepted in most places, so they're kept hidden. But they are there. Strange things are everywhere. You just need to learn how to look for them."

Why I Live In Wisconsin by Rakel Z.

I am not originally from Appleton, Wisconsin. Everybody knows that. People are always asking, "Where are you from?" and "Why did you move here?" To tell you the truth, the questions are getting old. So I've decided to come out in the open with all the answers and write them down here once and for all. You may also get a copy of this story from my [blog](#) and share it with your friends.

I was raised in Chilpancingo, Mexico by my two loving parents on a small jalapeno farm. We were very poor and there wasn't much to eat, besides jalapenos of course. So when a traveling circus came to Chilpancingo, my parents made me join in hope for a better future for their only daughter. My job in the circus was to tame any wild **cheetah**, mend any clown's torn **sock**, and **whatever** else had to be done. The circus took me to many strange and interesting places. We went to New York, where I married a wonderful man, named William, who also became part of the circus-performing the tight ropewalk. He was a good man, my dear William; rest his soul. He only had one fault. He was allergic to jalapenos and for that he always seemed to be a **misfit** in my mind. The circus' next stop was Wisconsin. While we were canoeing across the Great Lakes, William fell into the freezing water and drowned. This was very painful for everyone, but we had to keep paddling, after all, the show must go on with or without the tight rope act.

When we got to Wisconsin, we hitchhiked our way to Appleton. As we were setting up the large circus tent, I was kidnapped by two farmhands, who took me to the owner of a dairy farm, the Boss, as they called him. His business was failing for two reasons: a labor shortage and not enough publicity. The Boss figured that I could solve his publicity problem. How? Simple. He was going to kill me. What better way to get publicity for his business than by killing me?

Before the ordeal was to take place, I was tied to a chair and asked if I had any last wishes. I answered, "Yes, I have a few. I want to make the Guinness World Record for the most jalapenos eaten in a hour without throwing up. And I've never bungee-jumped off the Empire State Building or gone to a Pink Floyd concert or shook hands with the pope or been admitted to Oxford University or won an award for the best Elvis impersonation or any of the things that make life worth living. And I haven't spoken to my parents in years!" The Boss and his evil henchman, as they referred to themselves, discussed my wishes privately and when they returned, informed me that my only grantable wish was to speak to my long-lost parents. The short fat henchman handed me his cell phone, but I told him my parents couldn't afford a phone. In fact, when I started talking about my parents, I couldn't stop!

As it turned out, The Boss actually knew my parents quite well. He met them at a Universal Farming Convention. So we flew to Chilpancingo and I led them to my old home. After hours of negotiation and persuasion, my parents finally convinced The Boss not to kill me. However, in return for my spared life, I had to solve his other problem. I will be working at The Boss' farm for eight years.

So, there...that is my true story. After years of secrecy, I have finally gotten it all off my chest. This, my dear friends, is why I now live in Appleton, Wisconsin.

Are You Ready by Melissa Z.

It was a dark and stormy night. The wind howled and the rain beat against the roof like bullets. Okay, scratch that. I thought that lying might make this more interesting, but I was wrong. That opening line is soooooo overused. Let's try this again.

It was a bright and sunny morning when I woke up to the sound of an obnoxious morning DJ talking about American Idol, a show that I had never particularly cared for. I rolled out of bed and onto the floor. Ouch. Mental note not to do that again.

I stood up, shaking the sleep from my body. Today was the day; I looked at the calendar even though I knew it was; the day before spring break and the day of the final battle of the war.

I hurried through getting ready, throwing on my warrior clothes; jeans covered with stars and a **cheetah** print shirt, symbolic of the fierceness that lurked inside women, kind of like cancer, only good. But it was also deadly, very deadly. You know what they say; hell hath no fury. It's true.

I checked my watch. I had fifteen more minutes before the bus came. Plenty enough time to check my **blog** for comments; I had posted an entry about the war last night.

The computer was fast this morning compared to its usual archaic speed and I had my blog up shortly. It was a pretty purplish scheme. I had three comments; I clicked on the link excitedly. I was greeted by the words of my three friends: Jamie, Sam, and Abbie. Jamie and Sam had posted comments on my side, of course, but Abbie (I get a kick out of the fact that he goes by Abbie) had posted that we were going down. I glanced at the clock again. Rats. I x-ed it down and ran off to the bus stop.

The day passed so slowly. It took forever; the clock literally stopped at one point, but they were only resetting it. The day finally ended and we met in the street, the tumbleweed blowing across, the gun holsters at our sides. Okay, really self, this lying thing doesn't really make it more interesting.

We really met at the gym. I slipped my shoes off near the door, because I preferred walking around in socks. One of my socks slipped off as I pulled them off, but I slipped the offending **sock** right back on. I slid along the surface of the gym floor as the girls gathered behind me. The boys were gathering on the other side with Abbie as their leader. Abbie and I approached each other. "Well, well, if it isn't **Misfit** Mary."

"Annoying Abbie," I spat back at him.

"**Whatever**," he shrugged and continued. "Are you ready?" He gestured back to his people and they advanced. My girls instantly had my back. There we were, about to fly into a furious brawl, actually, no, we practically were at the point of brawling. I had lunged forward at Abbie, but there appeared, all of a sudden, out of nowhere, the principal. People dispelled quickly, leaving only Abbie and I behind.

We ended up with two weeks detention, but it was worth the scar that Abbie got from the bite I managed. But it's on. Next time. Detention's the perfect place for planning.