

Fingers Made of Sunshine and Silk

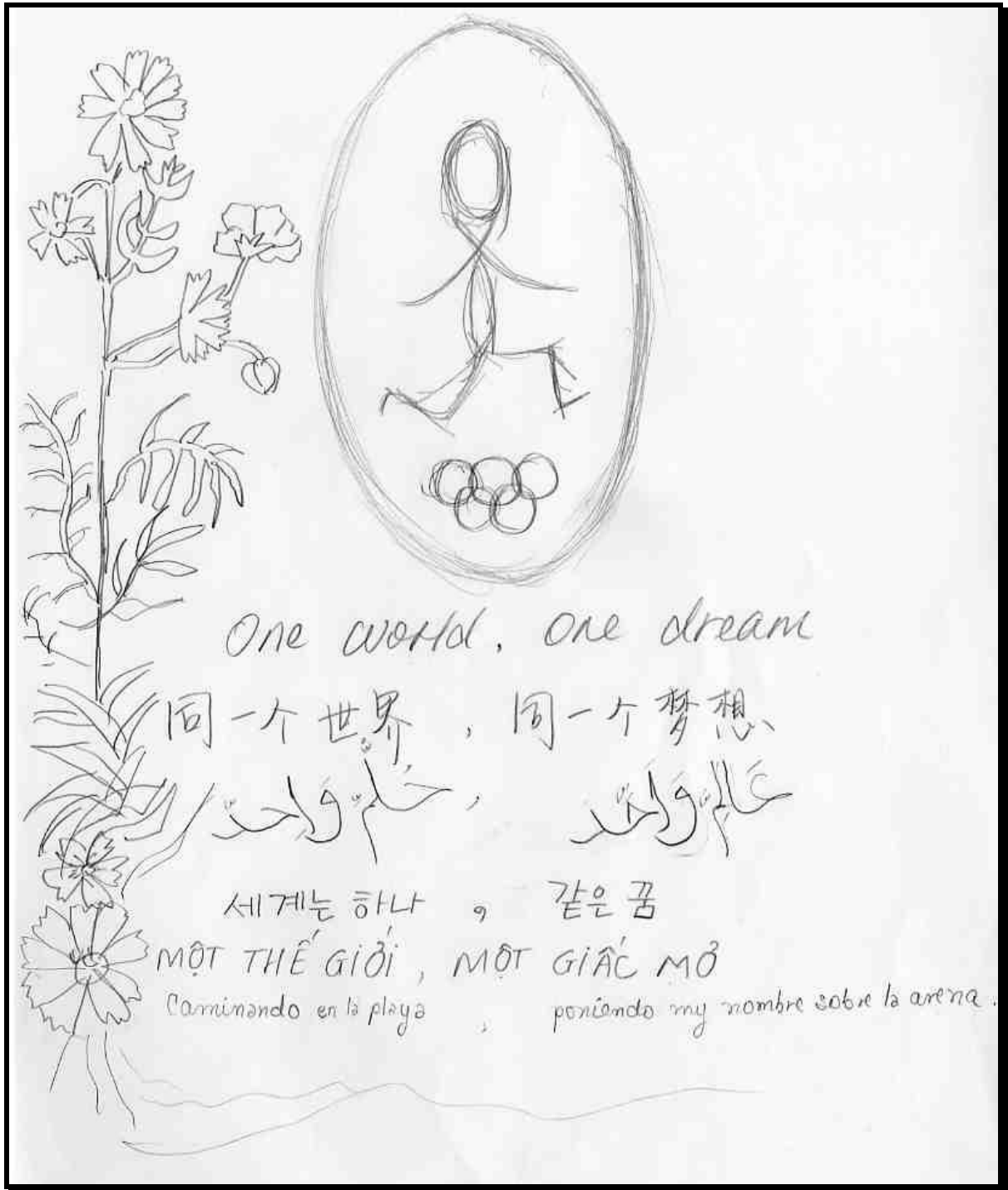
*A Holiday Collection of Creative
Writing and Other Things*

By Students in
the *English Language Program*
at *Kansas State University*
and Their Teachers and Friends

Manhattan, Kansas
December 2007

Introduction

Welcome to our holiday collection, in which you can see the effects of many pencils dancing on paper.



Drawing and concept by Erin and ChengCheng

Section One

Read and Fly

They are beautiful poems. When the paper is in your hands, you will have a warm feeling and be full of love in your heart. You will enjoy it.



Photo by Osamah Ahmed Alhamdan

Your Time

**this is your time
to let your light shine
to take part in a perfect design**

**this is your time
as you submit to your creator's perfect plan
to spread joy in a way that only you can**

**this is your time
to be nothing less than who you are
captivating, fascinating
the crowning touch**

**as a beautiful star
as a rosebud**

**slowly unfolding
surrendered in the light
stretching your petals
fragrance filling the room**

**you are coming alive
in full bloom**

Butter Softening

Sometimes I forget
to put the butter out.

Too hard to spread
on toast for breakfast
it can go
for a quick melt
in my microwave.

My mother
doesn't have
a microwave.
"Never had one
never want one."

And sometimes she forgets
to put the butter out.

She takes a
blue and white saucer
and puts on it
three thin pats
cut from the hard stick
then gently places
the saucer on top of her
just poured cup of tea.

The steam slowly
softens the butter
though not as slowly
as one might think.

And then
my mother
sits down,
carefully butters her bread
adds her favorite jam
(homemade black raspberry)
and with tea
sweetened to perfection
(a tablespoon of honey)
quietly eats it.

She proudly showed me
her technique
for butter softening
one morning
and together we had
toast and tea.

Since then
my microwave
sits idle
more
and
more.

Ann L. Carter
Jan. 2001

Mohammed alrabia

Another beautiful day,,
yet with a lonely rose
I wait and no more to say,,
it's a one thing I've chose
Happiness I want for thee,,
if only the stars could agree
Inside of me .. feeling s grows like a small tree ..
Just come and see.. how beautiful became the tree

Fire is what the heart seeks..
Require a kiss on the cheeks..
When thee looks at my eyes..
For thay I melt like the ice..

And I gave you the lines.. of my heart.. so keep it right !
Don't be frighten.. if you saw me dying.
I'll fall with a big smile .. like a happy childe

People think I'm a "stupido".. doing what I have to do
In life, passion guides me. A lot of sin's for one revenge
Walking away is what I always do,,
But the steps keeps ending up with you,,

By my friend Saeed.

Metamorphosis

**to be free
to be me
to let go
to be transformed from head to toe
and not afraid to let it show**

**but I scream
I cry
feeling helpless
feeling denied
locked in
walls closing in
consumed with rage
like a wounded animal trapped in a cage**

**then I saw your light
pure white
penetrating into my darkest night
stronger than my strongest fight
and the chains broke
and I awoke
to a brand new day**

**searing hot wax
but I am held
molded
loved
rage, fear, envy
stripped away
true beauty revealed
unveiled, here to stay**

**raw
unashamed
filled with awe
unafraid
to face sorrow
ready to follow
ready to fly**

Leslie Hanson

New Way

Into the wood across the brook
Into the village over the hillock

My way, new way
Which I took yesterday and take today

Where dandelions bloom, magpies fly,
Maidens pass, and winds rise

My way is always a new way
Also today...and also tomorrow...

새로운 길

내를 건너서 숲으로,
고개를 건너서 마을로.

어제도 가고 오늘도 갈
나의길, 새로운길.

미동레가 피고 까치가 날고
아가씨가 지나고 바람이 일고.

나의 길은 언제나 새로운길
오늘도, 내일도.

내를 건너서 숲으로,
고개를 건너서 마을로.

This poem was composed in Korean by Eunju Lee earlier this year in a Korean literature class at her university. This semester she translated it into English, consulting by e-mail with her Korean professor to try to maintain the same style and phrasing appropriate to the period.

Canh Le

Confident versus confidential

A young boy coming back from school said to his dad: “Today, I had a quiz in which the question asked about differences between CONFIDENT and CONFIDENTIAL. Could you please give me a simple answer?”

After a short moment, the father said: “You are my son. I am confident about that. Your friend next door is also my son, but that is confidential”.

A Special Note to my Mother

by Vilelmina Romero

Your words touch my life,
but your presence is always with me,
all the time you have sweet words for me.

I love you with special care.
When I talk to you ,you always share
something with me.

I always enjoy your presence,
You always have a good heart.
You are a treasure for me.
Thank you, Mom, each day for
what you mean to me.

You are always so sweet and special that
no words can describe more than your
presence.

From a long distance your love is always

appreciated and this is the time I express my
gratitude.

Your picture evokes tender feeling for me.

Your love is always faithful through the changes in
life.

You are beautiful like a bouquet of flowers that I
hold in my heart.

You are a special friend with a special touch of love.

You have a heart that understand,

Your words never hurt others.

I love you eternally.

On Worn-Out Images

David Murphy

Sometimes through fields,
sometimes through alleys,
a black Victorian coach trots,
its driver hunched like a tired Spaniard,
a buggy whip in one hand, the reins in the other,
a black cloth like a whirlwind around his body.
And the horses, the carriage: black too.
They clip-clop to orphan the people who are passing.

The colorful, fleshy thought of Death, of moths
fluttering to bare lightbulbs, of a barefoot
man before a flickering fire—these images
and their brothers and sisters are family to me,
dear to my heart, as enduring in my mind as
framed photographs. When I see them scrawled
again and again, I want to kiss their pretty heads,
pull the covers up to their chins,
and set their canes within easy reach.
I'll tell them I'll see them in the morning;
it will be another bright day.

David Murphy

Blue

Along Malaysia's white sand lies a cerulean ocean,
blue until the water touches the blue sky.

Endless blue: water speared by luminous scales of fish blue;
shoreline women stating fashion, blue silk against brown skin;

and the wiry blue line on the fishing reel: long-sleeve, thin
white shirt, rod held swaying over water on a cobalt night.

Along beaches, at restaurants, folks hawk blue,
so even the paper lanterns glowing yellow seem sapphire.

Night and day stumble blue, snagged between purple and green,
and the sun moon tides roll between cerulean and steel-grey blue,

their waves flecked with white foam,
and even that white tinged ultramarine.

The Day the Al Matar Family Fed Us

Fried chicken with special spices
Lots of fried chicken
Grape leaves rolled individually
Dozens and dozens of these
Chicken and rice, chicken and rice
A never-ending giant pan of "Kapsa"
Thick slices of potato
garnishing the grape leaves
Did I mention the grape leaves?
A delicious salad filled another pan
And a deep collection of vegetables yet another
Did I mention the grape leaves?

"My family and I wish to express
our profound gratitude for all that
you, our teachers, do to help
us in our learning of
the English language."

A sincere gesture, a simple statement
We teachers eating with glee
Smiling, talking, positive sounds
Optimism ruling the day
Carrying the feeling into our
afternoon classes
Happy teachers, happy students

A Thanksgiving Day echo
Remembering what's most important
Human relationships, living well
And did I mention the grape leaves?

Nature is Always Hungry

A car is parked there;
its wheels are under leaves.
The natural world is
consuming the metal shape.
Grey steel melds with oak;
a late Autumn breeze blows.
Flakes of paint, flakes of snow
falling through the air.
"Where did I leave my keys?,"
asks the owner, five days later.
"Where did I leave my car?,"
asks the owner, five weeks later.

A Visit From Arthur Short Bull

Soft-spoken grace
The audience warms to his words
An artist explaining a new world

Filling the chalk-board with wind-horses
Our names etched along each of their manes
Millions of buffaloes are no longer here
That's why the animal's majesty evokes sorrow

Porcupine quills were once used for beading
"We lost the wars after we changed to round
beads," he suggests

The Ogala band of the Lakota Sioux, horse-riders
Grant Short Bull fought against, then for the U.S.
Sorting out the ancestral story
Bridging the past with the present

A spirit trying to become a human
That's any child until age five
So do not correct or punish them

A wise man predicted
the coming of white, black, and yellow people
In a vision ending with red people living in boxes
These four colors are important

One early morning in December
The trees were bare and the air was cold
Blue is for the sky and green is the earth

IGNITE: A Six Step, Rapid Problem-Solving Process

1. Identify a problem.
2. **Get** the facts.
3. **Numerate** options.
4. **Imagine** consequences.
5. **Take** the best option.
6. **Elaborate** a plan.

Items on this page were composed by Robb Scott

Just Test Yourself

1. What's the most beautiful drive you've ever taken?
2. How will our culture change in the next 100 years?
3. What quality do you think is most important in a marriage?
4. If you had only five more years to live, would you change anything about your life?
5. If you could rename yourself, what name would you choose?

Name: **Yuan Wei-fan**

F: Yuan Wei-fan

L: Lavinia

F: Hello, long time no see, how have you been?

L: So far so good, just a little tired.

F: Tired? Why I thought ELP is pretty easy? Isn't it?

L: Yeah. Kind of, you know I put a lot effort in it; I want to pass it as soon as possible. And I do work at the same time.

F: Then I can understand, I know that ELP is not really hard, but if you want to do well in it you really need to study. Where do you work by the way?

L: I work in the Derby dining center. And how are your classes?

F: Oh, my classes are hard and too many tests all the time. But, still under control.

L: Sounds good. How is your girlfriend?

F: Oh. We broke up 3 days ago.

L: Sorry about that.

F: That's alright, things happen. We just stay faraway of each other and recently I notice that we don't have any common language any more.

L: That's true, anyway good luck.

F: Thanks. Right. Do you go to the Rec. center often?

L: Sometimes, and Friday night.

F: Were you there when Han Leeway twisted his ankle?

L: Yeah I was there at that time. And Han seemed in so much pain that time. How long do you think it will take for his recovery, since you major in kinesiology?

F: To be honest, I don't know. But it's not too bad because he can walk. I think he really needs a rest.

L: Right.

F: How do you like exercise?

L: That is a good question; I like exercise because it makes me look good and healthier.

F: That is good, you know exercise is the best pill for heart disease.

L: Really? I don't know much about that!

F: Yes. Exercise can help us to live longer, so take some time to do that.

L: Ok. Exercise for a longer life.

F: Here you go.

F: Alright, my class will start in 5 minutes so I'd better go; it's nice to talk to you.

L: Ok. Take it easy and talk to you later.

F: Ok. See you.

L: Bye.

Section Two

Winter's Big Deal

Short Essays and Impressions



Photo by Osamah Ahmed Alhamdan

Ann

Anzhi Chen
Ann

This is the first Thanksgiving since I got America. The dormitory almost empty, all the third floor just me, one person. All the five days, I just stay with my friends. We ~~buy~~ bought food, cooked, washed dishes, played ~~and~~, that's all. Just like a circle, do the same things everyday. But during that, we also have been to Topica and Kansas City to shopping, to buy some cheap clothes. I just ~~eat~~ ate the Thanksgiving dinner on Thursday before the holiday in Derb. It was quite rich and I also ~~be~~ was full very much. But it steal not in someone's home, it steal not means gather together of a family. The Thanksgiving Festival just like Chinese Spring Festival, ~~A~~ all the family get together. But at that time of ~~this~~ next year, I will be in America. That will be the first that I don't stay with my family in Spring Festival. I may miss my parents, all my family, but I also like the life here, everything is new, everybody is friendly, everywhere is interesting.

A Cooking Accomplishment

Over the Thanksgiving Break, I have accomplished something significant. I cooked for five days and I finally learned how to cook chicken wings. I still can remember the first time I tried at Chengcheng's house, it tasted bad. However, Thanksgiving Break provided me a perfect chance to practice. I practiced twice and finally figured out how to cook chicken wing. I do not want to be a professional cook, but I know one thing. Mankind cannot survive without food and we need at least some skills to please our stomachs. Over all, I love food.

Liwei Han

My Frist Thanksgiving Days In America

I didn't travel to anywhere during the Thanksgiving Days. That's not a very good experience to live in the dormitory alone. When I have ridden a bike for one and half hour, I found no restaurant is opening in the night. I really understand why person cannot live by ~~the~~ oneself. The most amazing thing is the "Black Friday". When I went shopping on Friday, I saw a really large group of people, such as in China. I wondered whether today is for free or not. It takes me for a long time to line up in the Walmart. That's really a crazy day.

Green Olympics

I still remember clearly that in the Athens 2004 Olympic Games, when Liu Xiang stood up on the award platform, he was wearing a coronet, which made by olive branch. Does this green olive branch stand for the "Green Olympic"? Olive branch is the symbol of peace, and the Olympic Game is the carrier of the "peace". We should not just simply think, "No war is the meaning of peace". "Nature and human beings living in harmony" is also the root meaning of "peace". "Save the resource, protect the environment", this kind action of pursuing "Nature and human beings living in harmony", is the way that shows the core of the Olympian spirit. So we say, peace is the spirit of Olympic, Olympic is the carrier of peace, and "Green Olympic" means that we are standing in a higher platform to seek the peace.

Zheng Xin

Secret Love

When a girl likes a boy
she wants to do everything she can to make the boy happy
even though he has had a girlfriend.

When a girl likes a boy
she wants to accompany him even though it's deep into the
night and just on line.

When a girl likes a boy
she want to see his smile even though
the smiling is not for her but another girl.

When a girl likes a boy
when he has another girl ...

What can she do
what can she do ...

Just like, like in her heart
can't say, can't show
Just like in her heart.

Do you know?

It's a secret

A secret and can't say.

Elsa Su

Mrs. Robinson

By David Murphy

Adapted from Simon and Garfunkel's "Mrs. Robinson"

The sunset and city stretch long, long before your eyes, the scrapers colored black and blue and gold. Along the rooftops black phone wires wave in windy skies, and inside the buildings the floors are cold, cold. Along Manhattan's streets you are wrapped tight in a shawl; the cars and snow and people move too fast. You walk past grocers and barbers who you don't recall; has everything you've known become the past?

Saint Patrick's steeples are covered with two feet of snow, even the sidewalk looks a little new. The city might just look different each winter, but maybe it seems strange only to you. Where have you gone, Joe Dimaggio? Yankee Stadium fields a strange new cast of stars. What's that you say, Mrs. Robinson? A nation's gone and left you far behind. There's no need to cry, Mrs. Robinson, Jesus loves you more than you will know. God bless you, please, Mrs. Robinson, the tides will turn again for you, ya know.

In Pat's empty cathedral your voice echoes off the walls; the Lord can hear your lilting voice sing hymns. Shadows stretch long, long, as Monday's sun finally falls; hold the whole note before Tuesday begins. Hard winds make the church doors heavy against your push. Folks and vendors ignore you in the streets. It's only three steps to the top of your apartment stairs; you can make it, dear, if you just lift your feet. And here's to you, Mrs. Robinson, Jesus loves you more than you will know. Whoa ho ho!

God bless you, please, Mrs. Robinson. Heaven holds a place for those who pray. Hey, hey, hey! Hey hey hey.

Two Countries, One Heart

Marcelo Coronado

Panama and Puerto Rico are separated by the sea. However, distance has not anything to do with people and their features: there can be similarities, whether they can share food, way of life and feeling.

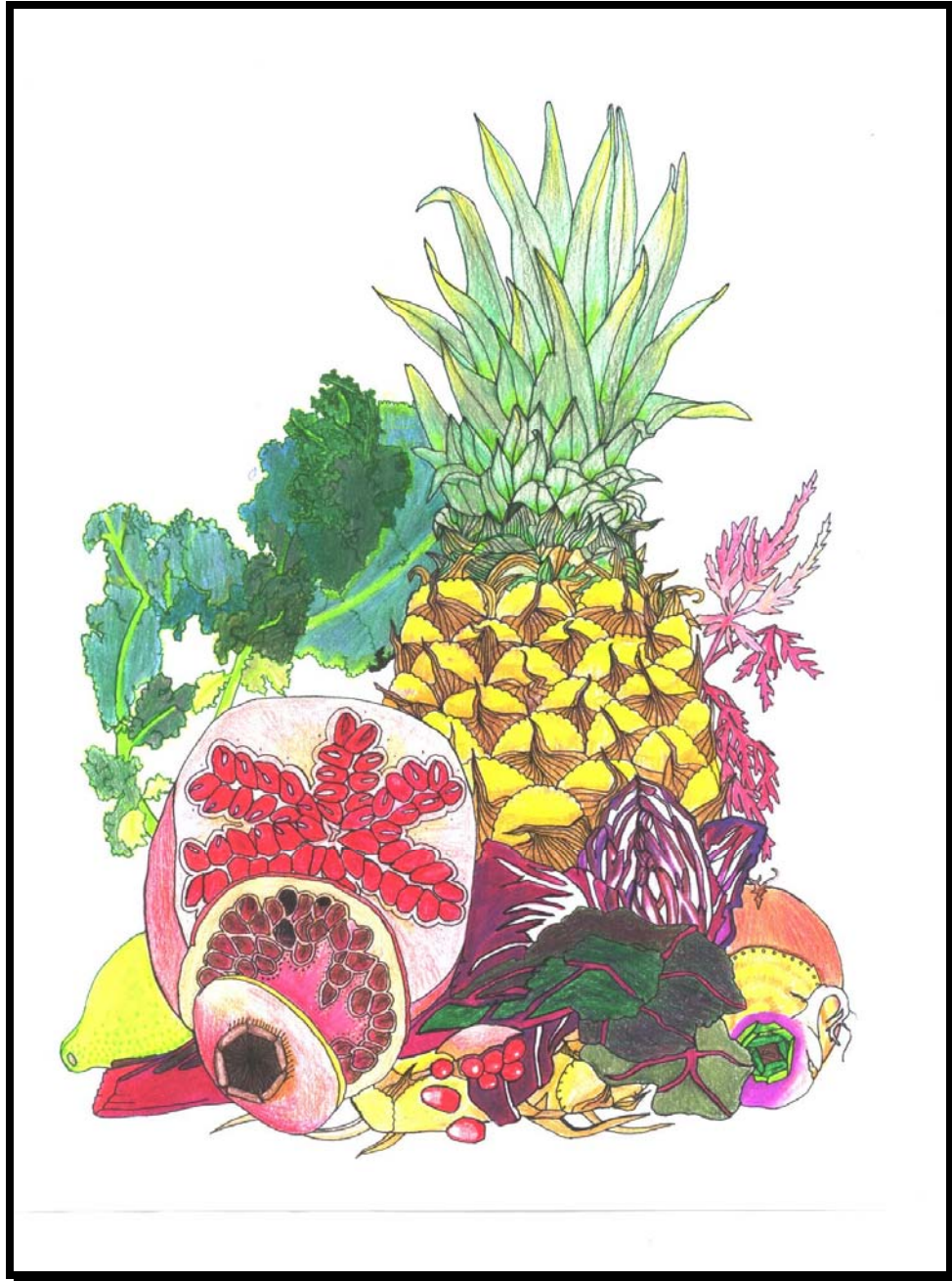
Through the years these countries have shared a lot of things. One of them is the music that they like: salsa, how people call this dancing music, is a kind of music that was made famous by people like Willie Colon and Ruben Blades. The first one is from Puerto Rico and the other is from Panama. Both of them found their dreams in New York City a few decades ago.

They lived many years out of their countries, but the music was the way that allowed them to share feelings with relatives and also with other unknown peoples. "Viva la Salsa."

Section Three

Memories

Longer Essays and Articles



Drawing by Mary Giles

Sarah Brink
25 November 2007

Thanksgiving with the Brinks

I've always thought it was fun to compare my Thanksgiving plans with my friends. We all have different traditions and seem to celebrate Thanksgiving in a unique way. My Thanksgiving is always with just a few close family members. My parents are divorced so my sister, Hannah, and I get to have two Thanksgiving dinners. On Thanksgiving morning we drive to my Dad's house where we spend the day helping my Dad's girlfriend, Jackie, put together gift boxes for her church's charity drive and watching old, black-and-white movies. We do our best to stay out of the kitchen. My dad likes to be in total control of his workspace and he takes cooking very seriously. This year, like always, my dad decides to make a dinner that is very un-Thanksgiving. Instead of turkey, mashed potatoes, and pumpkin pie my dad makes prime rib and baked potatoes. It tastes amazing but without the turkey it doesn't quite feel like Thanksgiving.

Hannah and I celebrate our second Thanksgiving on Saturday with my Mom and my Grandma, on my mom's side. Hannah and I consider ourselves Christmas tree experts so put the tree up by ourselves. Hannah always helps Mom make Thanksgiving dinner. I always pretend that I cannot cook so I can get out of helping. Grandma spends hours showing us her old photos and I usually end up doing more Christmas decorating. My mom makes the same thing for Thanksgiving every year: turkey, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, cranberries, rolls, stuffing, and pumpkin pie. It's always delicious and I always eat way too much. After dinner we drive Grandma back to her apartment while going out of our way to look at all the houses that have put up Christmas lights. Though my Thanksgivings are not fancy they are always fun and I'm always sad when it's time for me to return to school.

Erin

Amazing Holiday

It's the first time we spend American's traditional Festival--- Thanksgiving Day. I'd heard about others or watched T.V. before I came here, and the books said Thanksgiving Day is a big festival in American, people are busy in preparing foods, such as sweet potato, pumpkin pie and so on. But it's hard to imagine what kind of the situation is, how they celebrate and what are they usually do. After I came here, we had a chance to go to American's house and celebrate the big festival with them by the traditional way.

Last Thursday was Thanksgiving Day, we went to an American friend's home. When we arrived their farm, his parent had already begun to prepare the big meal. There was a big table, and fourteen chairs. On the table, there were two plates, a fork, a knife, a spoon for each people. They put them neatly and cleanly. I was curiosity with those new things. The design of their house has a big difference with China. In China, we usually live in an apartment,

and our design style is modern style. But American's house has many rooms and a big basement. It was the style of casual.

The meal started. They prayed at first, the expressions on their faces were pious. Then they passed dishes one by one, politely and carefully. There were many delicious food: turkey, corn, cornbread, stuffing, gravy, salad, potato, sweet potato and many food that we didn't know their names. It's the first time we ate American traditional food formally. I think it couldn't be bought with money, it's really a special experience.

Then we learned a lot knowledge about Thanksgiving Day, including the culture of Thanksgiving, the religion history, the development of it and other from Bible.

But I think the most valuable thing in this trip is to feel the different culture and feel the warm of an American family, their enthusiasm and their friendly. From this trip, I feel different things deeply that I never felt. It made a deep expression on my mind and I'll never forget this trip and the amazing holiday.

The Special Thanksgiving Dinner

Last Thursday was the North American traditional festival—Thanksgiving Day. Normally, Americans have a big dinner at this day. However, as a Chinese who was in the United States for the first time, I had a fantastic and unusual Thanksgiving dinner with my friends.

One day before Thanksgiving day, Ann's uncle, who is an engineering professor in Kansas State University, had invited us to have dinner at his home. On Thursday morning, we five people arrived at his home at 11 o'clock. Ann, Elsa, Liwei, Sue, and I went there together by car.

Before we came, Ann's uncle—Dr. Cai— had prepared all the materials already. But all of us helped her uncle to clean and cut food. Ann and Sue did cleaning, Elsa and Liwei did cutting, and I separated the food onto plates. Of course, Ann's uncle was the big chef. He cooked the original soup, which is the significant part of the traditional "hot pot." After one hour, we finished preparing, and our big meal had begun.

In this big Thanksgiving dinner, we had a traditional North Chinese hot pot, which included lots of food, such as tofu, cabbages, pieces of fish, shrimp, seaweed and lamb. Everyone ate a lot, and there were also four kinds of alcohol—German beer, whisky, apple beer and grape wine—for the adults. We ate this meal for three hours, and we all appreciated our special celebration of a American festival.

Even we didn't have turkey, cranberry sauce, and apple pie, I still enjoyed my Thanksgiving dinner. I thank Ann's uncle for bringing me an unforgettable memory.

Qinxi Fan

My America Friend: Luke

Thanksgiving Break was both an enjoyable and relaxing time for me. I was able to go home Wednesday afternoon and help get the house ready for the twenty-six family members coming to our house on Thanksgiving. Thursday morning I went pheasant hunting with two of my brothers and sister-in-law. Although not a shot was fired, we enjoyed the time together and worked up an appetite for the Thanksgiving feast.

When we got back to the house, we got ourselves ready for the afternoon and helped make final preparations. Soon the family arrived and the turkey was ready. The afternoon was filled with food, fellowship, and football - on tv and in the yard. As the evening approached, seconds were served and goodbyes were said, another Thanksgiving was complete.

On Friday, I was able to sleep in and do very little. My little brother and I dug a hole for a new hydrant and I helped dad put it in. That evening I was able to play basketball versus my little brother in our high school's first alumni basketball game. Even though we lost pretty hardily, it was fun to play and see old friends.

I slept in again on Saturday and tried to do a little homework, but football got in the way. I did get some homework done, but I also watched a lot of football. Go Missouri!

Sunday morning I was able to do some studying before heading to church with the family. We ate and then watched the Chiefs lose. I used the afternoon to get ready to come back home and left after eating supper. Thanksgiving Break was an enjoyable time with family and friends and also relaxing with plenty of sleep and little homework.

Dear death

There is something makes you cry without tears, There is something makes you go without back, There is something makes you speak without voice, and there is something makes you live without life. Do you know what is it? It is the death. Here my story start.

One day I have had a good friend, his name Alaa. We were born in the same date. We grown, played , fight , live, sleep, and eat together. We almost did every things togothre.until the death came to Alaa.

In one dark day, Alaa went to his job as always. On his way saw an accident , he went to help the people in the car and take them far from the danger. During that, another car came and crashed Alaa. After a few hours the polis called me. I went to the location and I can not belief what happened. I couldn't know my friend Alaa, because he became to many Pieces. I knew him when I saw his head in the other side of the rood.

Now what?! This is the death. He always take the people whom we love. I hit the death because he took from me every thing. I'm not afraid of it, but I'm waiting for him to fight.

Abdulmalik

My Worst Experience in My Childhood

The worst experience in my childhood is what happened on the Children's Day. Every year, June 1st is Children's Day in China. And on that day, children will get together with their parents and enjoy the children's festival. I was six years old. My mama and I went to amusement park together on Children's Day.

It was so crowded, and I was separated from my mama soon. I became very worried and I didn't have money with me. I kept walking and finally found a bus which led to my aunt's shop because every ticket was free on that day only for children. I got on the bus and got off at my aunt's shop. Then I had some food.

Since my mama didn't have a cell phone at that time, we couldn't get in touch with her. So I had to go to my grandma's first. We just waited until she would call my grandma for help in the afternoon. At the time she called, everyone was relaxed. When mama heard that I was all right, she cried. She said that she was afraid that she cannot see me anymore. And I also cried. I couldn't imagine if I was abducted by a bad person or just had some accident. In a word, it was the worst Children's Day I have spent and it was the worst experience in my childhood.

Diana Fan

Thoan Nguyen

Sad story

This story took place 15 years ago, when I was a little girl.

One day, when I was walking near some trees at the edge of a farmer's rice field, I heard some strange noise coming from the grass. The noise sound like a bird, but I could tell that there was something wrong by the kind of noise I heard.

I crept over for a closer to look and I was really surprise, there was a small bird in the grass. I could tell right away that he had been broken wing. I did not know what to do, but decided to take him home to see if I could help it to get better. The bird stayed quiet in my hand all the way home.

When we got home, I gave bird water, and brought its worms to eat. After a few days, the bird seemed to be better. It was so excited and I carried back the bird to where I had found him. I put him down and walked a little distance away to see what would happen.

Suddenly, a cat jumped out and grabbed the bird. I ran follow the cat, and she became so frightened that she dropped the bird. But it was too late! The poor bird was dead! I think that must been the same cat that broke the bird's wing before. Poor bird!

Heff.

Holiday Collection

an unforgettable spoon game.

There is my first time to celebrate a foreign festival in a foreign place. Of course, I was also treated as a foreigner here in Manhattan, Kansas, USA

Thanksgiving Day is the second largest festival in America. Every family member get together, they have turkey, sweet potato and a lot of delicious food. I was also invited by my friend Becca Lund. Her hometown was in the country side, we drove there. There were more than 25 people in her family involved us.

The Great meal began, there was really too much food, I was amazed that I could have a great meal. Although there were not cooked by my mother, I was still very happy.

The "unforgettable spoon game" started after meal. The rule was simple, for example: there were fifteen person on the table so put fourteen spoons on the table. Pass three card of poker, then the host began to pass one by one the rest of card, the winner was someone got three same cards, He or she know the table, then began to catch the spoon. At this time, the other people can also catch the spoon. Someone who do not get the spoon is out of game.

This game's rule seems simple, but very excited. Nobody wants to out of game. Their eyes, hands concentrate on his card and the spoon, once who try to get the spoon, it's a chance, grab it!

The spoon game leave me the first memory of Thanksgiving. I won't forget that crazy afternoon.

A PERSONAL OPINION

By Johanna Laitinen

I think learning foreign languages is very important for anyone who wants to have international experiences. English is probably the most important language around the world to master, because it's so widespread and influential. By learning English you learn to communicate with people from immensely diverse backgrounds and different geographic locations. However, I do think that English is best when used for communication with native English speakers or people whose culture you only want to know superficially. It is an entirely different thing to communicate with a person in their own language than it is to use English: it shows your willingness to get to know the culture from within. Learning a new language requires effort, but the reward is valuable: it is a great achievement to familiarize yourself with a language that was previously unfamiliar to you. In doing that, you also ~~open~~^{create} new possibilities to get to know other cultures and experience their way of thinking.

Sarah Brink
Movie Review

I had some free time over the weekend so I decided to finally sit down and watch the German movie, *Good Bye Lenin*. Kara, a friend of mine majoring in German, has been urging me for weeks to watch this movie. Now that I have seen *Good Bye Lenin*, I wish I had taken Kara's advice sooner. *Good Bye Lenin* was an amazing film! If I were a film critic, I would give it five stars, easily! The film tells a story about a man named Alex who lives in East Berlin during the Cold War. His mother, a staunch supporter of the socialist values and practices seen in East Germany and the rest of the USSR, has a heart attack and goes into a coma. A few days later the Berlin Wall falls and with its collapse, the USSR and everything Alex's mother believes in. Alex's mother wakes up eight months later to a Berlin very different from the one she has always known. The doctors warn Alex that his mother's heart is still weak and any excitement could trigger another heart attack. Thus begins Alex's task of hiding the fact that East Germany is a completely different place. He tries to recreate, for his mother, East Germany while it was under Soviet rule. The movie is very emotional but it also has some very funny parts, especially Alex's antics to keep his mother in the dark. I thought that the actor playing Alex, Daniel Bruhl, was especially talented and I have already asked my friend, Kara, if she knows any of his other movies. *Good Bye Lenin* does a good job of showing the feeling of nostalgia some East Germans felt once Western capitalism came into their lives. I do not think they missed the USSR's strict government or crippled economy. Instead, I think they missed a slower, simpler time when they felt more connected with each other and there was a sense of togetherness that most do not experience living in a fast-paced, capitalistic society. *Good Bye Lenin* is one of those few movies today that really makes you think; not that I do not enjoy chick flicks and action movies but it is nice to watch a clever, thought-provoking movie now and then.

Section Four

Adventures and Connections

Extended Articles and Short Stories



Photo by Osamah Ahmed Alhamdan

Bethany Moore

Welcome to Paradise Island

Take a few seconds to think of a place you have been that has been beautiful, warm, inviting, and fulfilling with things you have always wanted to do and food you have always wanted to eat all in one. If you can not think of a place, allow me to help you out. Perhaps for your vacation this year, you will arrive in the Bahamas, a country made up of 700 tropical islands southeast of the Florida coast. One of the popular islands of the Bahamas is Paradise Island. Paradise Island is not only popular because of its glamorous beaches, but also because of Atlantis. Atlantis is a five star resort located along the beach of Paradise Island. Year round sun and crystal clear warm water of all shades of blue surround this luxurious resort. Countless luscious palm trees and pools for all ages paint a dazzling picture. Oxford English Dictionary defines paradise as “A place or region of surpassing beauty or delight, or of supreme bliss. Now also: a peaceful unspoilt place.” Atlantis was probably chosen for Paradise Island because it puts this definition into real life. Paradise is often used to describe a part of heaven; a place no living person has experienced. Thankfully, God has blessed us by providing numerous beautiful places on earth to give us a taste of what this paradise will be like. Although not paradise itself, Atlantis is a taste of paradise, a place of surpassing beauty, delight, and supreme bliss.

As the boat glided across the Bahamian water towards the island, my fellow classmates and I were about to arrive at the destination of our senior trip. We could see the peach colored hotel from a distance. Its color imitated the color of a conch seashell and its size compared to a skyscraper placed amongst palm trees. As we arrived in our boat, I looked down and could see all the way to the bottom of the turquoise ocean. As

we road in a bus to Atlantis the scenery gave us a glimpse of what the next three days would be like. Palm trees, beaches, beach houses, and shops made us forget our homework and jobs we had left behind in Kansas. Nothing could quench our senioritis more than the Bahamas. It was like a picture being painted before our eyes as the many shades of greens, blues, and reds came alive upon our arrival at Atlantis. Apart from the colors, awaiting us were pools, rides, restaurants, and activities for all ages. We arrived, unloaded, and immediately jumped in our bathing suits to catch some rays.

The attraction that caught our attention first was the Leap of Faith-one of many slides at Atlantis. The color of this pyramid-like structure was the same as the color of the hotel. Like the hotel, it accented the rich blue color of the water below. Anticipation was building up as we climbed the stairs to the top. What sounded like a waterfall grew louder as we began to reach the top. We could hear scream after scream as each person plunged down the slide. As I watched one after the other of my friends step up and disappear over the top, adrenaline began rushing through my veins as my fear of heights was at its peak. Knowing I could not just cop out now, I stepped up to the front of the slide and peered down. The slide looked as though it disappeared in midair. In front of me was a 90-foot vertical drop, and before I could stop myself I leaped with faith over the edge. What I could not see as I sped down the slide and through the tunnel, was that the tunnel carried me through an aquarium filled with sharks. You shoot so fast through the tunnel that you cannot see what you went through until you are actually looking back at the scene of the slide. Some sharks swim by the side of the aquarium and others right up next to the tunnel where only a thin piece of glass separates you from these feared creatures.

Thankfully, the pools do not have sharks, but some pools do have other ocean characteristics about them. We swam from pool to pool by little ten foot slides, and landed in one pool that tasted like the ocean. We immediately realized that this pool was different. What looked like all the other mini pools, felt like the ocean as the taste of salt water came to our lips. "This place never gets old," I said in disbelief. Even the water in the pools added a different flavor to the resort. Of all the water attractions, nothing was as beautiful as the ocean. The bottom of the deepest parts around the island could be seen as the bright sun peered down through the waves of the clear blue water. The sand was my favorite detail. Its soft, white, pink-tinted texture was much more unique than any other sand that had slipped through my fingers. Normal sand along the beaches of the U.S. is a tan color and at times coarse, but the sand in the Bahamas had a pink tint and was so fine it ran through my fingers like liquid. We were told that the pink specks were finely ground up conch shells from the bottom of the ocean. It was amazing how the manmade beauty of Atlantis accentuated the natural beauty of the ocean.

Besides the pools, the slides, and the pink sand, the best part of Atlantis are the aquariums. These are not just 10 foot long aquariums that people have in their houses. Some are aquariums the size of ponds and are scattered around Atlantis with different creatures such as hammerhead sharks that dart through the water and manta rays that scan the bottom of their habitat with their fins gracefully rippling through the water. They are everywhere, filled with large tortoises, sawfish, spotted rays, bright blue lookdowns, lionfish, and so many more. A dark tunnel that felt gloomy and solitary came to life with little aquariums along the wall filled with purple jelly fish, mini seahorses, glow in the dark fish, clown fish, and more. Each aquarium was filled with probably one hundred of

the same fish. However, my favorite was the bright tunnel beneath the one of the aquariums. It was a long tunnel stretching across the largest of the aquariums. It felt like I was walking underwater with the turquoise surrounding me and sharks skimming the top of my head as they swam above. Other large fish and small fish swirled around the tunnel walls and it felt as if I could reach out and touch their colorful scales. These aquariums were all around the resort. We spent a day trying to master all of them, but it would take more than two days to see each one in detail.

The aquariums were even scattered around the restaurant areas. We decided to splurge one night and eat at the Great Hall of Waters. This restaurant was surrounded by aquariums. The blue tint of the water glowed off the white walls as we sat to enjoy our gourmet dinner. Our plates were served with organized slices of duck, crab cakes, lobster, gourmet crab, and lobster. Our best outfits did not compare to the elegant evening dresses and suits other couples were wearing. The Great Hall of Waters was just one of more than fifty restaurants in Atlantis. These restaurants range from a grill inside a cave to ocean front dining to the traditional burger and fries. Satisfying the appetite was not the only delightful satisfaction in Atlantis. The Casino and bars were activities I was not allowed to participate in; however, walking through the casino was amazing to see hundreds of slot machines occupied with people. The ceiling was three stories high and the room contained over 800 machines and 78 tables. Almost every machine and table was occupied with old and young who could not be deterred from the game. To me, it did not make sense seeing people spending their time and money inside when they could be enjoying the beautiful aquariums, soaking up the warm Bahamian sun, or snorkeling

among dolphins and schools of fish. But, that is the beauty of Atlantis. Whatever your interest is, they have it.

This once in a lifetime experience (at least for me) does not come without costing a pretty penny. Prices are split up between the four different towers. We stayed at the beach towers, which are the cheapest accommodations ranging from \$370-\$485 a night. The Coral tower rooms range from \$475-\$1,300 a night. And depending on what part of the Royal towers you stay in, prices range from \$500- \$2,600 a night. Although these prices sound outrageous, special rates at certain times in the year make staying at Atlantis more affordable. Another option is to stay at another hotel on the island and purchase day passes to tour, swim, and participate in the activities at Atlantis.

It would take days to actually do everything that Atlantis offers. And it would take pages for me to share all of the unique details of Atlantis. I can promise you that you will not be disappointed if you check this place out. My suggestion is to plan beforehand what sounds fun or interesting and take your time and enjoy it. Nothing in Atlantis is designed half way. From the location of the resort to the water in the pools, they know how to make paradise come to life.

From *Frank of the Flower*, chapter 3

Frank was trying his best to be quiet walking up the stairs with a computer in his arms. He made it to the top of the stairs and was almost to his door when the keyboard fell off the CPU. He dropped the monitor, but managed to keep hold of the CPU. He set it down by the door and fumbled with his keys. Creaky stuck his head out the door.

"Hey, Frank you OK?"

"Sorry. Yeah, I'm fine."

"Thought you were coming in drunk. What's that?"

"Come on in. It's a computer. I couldn't sleep so I went out and found this at a garage sale. I bought it for \$25"

"Great deal, I guess. It looks a little old."

Frank sat down on the floor and started attaching plugs. "Yep. This baby's got some history. I can hardly wait."

Creaky sat on the bed and rubbed his face. Frank flipped a switch and the monitor lit up. "Good. I was afraid the fall might have done it in."

"That's windows 95, man."

"Yeah. It's a treasure."

Creaky got up off the bed and looked over Frank's shoulder. It didn't seem to be booting up right. "Maybe you did damage it."

"Nah. I only dropped the monitor." He was punching some keys as letters and numbers scrolled by. "Dang it. There's an operating system here, but it's a little holey."

"Holy?"

"Yeah. Parts are missing. Don't think I've ever seen this before. Doesn't really seem like there's enough here to run, but it does."

Creaky looked around behind the CPU. He picked up a power cord. "Could this be the problem?"

"Did I forget to plug that in?"

"You've got to have it plugged in some other way, right?"

"I don't know." They both started pulling on cords and poking around the back.

"No, man. This isn't plugged in anywhere," said Creaky.

"Oh."

"How could that be?"

"I don't know."

"Have you ever seen this before?"

"No."

Creaky studied the plug. "Is this a signal input problem?" he asked.

"I wasn't really talking about current, but electricity's a kind of input signal, I guess. Plug it in."

"OK."

Creaky plugged it in. The monitor and computer shut down.

"Unplug it." Creaky did. The monitor and CPU started up again.

"Hey, that's downright creepy. I say we take a sledgehammer to this."

"I don't know. It's interesting."

"I'm serious. This thing needs to be in pieces."

"It creeps me out a little bit, too, but it's shown some resistance to the usual methods of shut-down. I think we'll need to study this a bit. For now, plug it in."

Creaky did. It shut down.

"Out the window, man, I'm serious."

Frank shrugged. "It's OK for now." He looked at his watch. "And I need to get in the shower and get cleaned up. I've got a placement exam today." He looked at the computer.

"Maybe this is some form of good luck."

"I don't know about that. How can it work when it's not plugged in? It's haunted."

"It doesn't seem like it should work. But it's not haunted. There's no such thing."

"Whatever you say, but I'm not setting foot inside this room again until it's gone. In fact, I'm out of here now." Creaky left.

- Jenell Williams

Pirate's Gold

One of the qualities that links all humanity is the ability to tell a story. Think about your day. How much of your day do you spend listening to or telling a story in some form? I bet our little brains spend more energy on stories than on anything else; each person knows a countless number of them. So, I wonder what makes some stories better than others? I mean, I'll admit that some stories I've heard are just plain dull, but is it just action that makes a good story? I don't think so. I think that by passion, good stories rise above the endless drudge of the mundane ones that saturate our lives. Passion instills a story with a spark, a spark that can trigger a beautiful reaction, a reaction that slices through the layers of apathy and disassociation that surrounds the heart. Well, I have a story. I hope that it sparks that beautiful happening inside of you, but I won't be sad if it doesn't happen. You see, when I tell you this story, I get to rekindle the spark the memory holds within my own heart. Is this a selfish end for storytelling? I suppose so. But what do we look for more in life, a storyteller or an audience?

* * * * *

I was nine years old and doing what every child does during summer vacation, facing the challenge of filling another day with activity. It was mid-July, and I began to feel the dreadful shadow of the upcoming school year. My mom had the pleasure of working a full shift at the town's textile plant, and my dad had the pleasure of doing whatever he did. I don't actually know what my dad did that summer; when I was five, I remember seeing him go through our door with a tattered brown suitcase in one hand and a bundle of shirts in the other. He left the door open, and I watched as he put the bundles in the passenger seat of his '71 Cheyenne truck with rust-hole air-conditioning. He shut

the door, walked toward me, smiled, and ruffled my hair. That was all. I watched him drive away; months passed before I admitted he wasn't coming back.

With the absence of mom from eight in the morning until five in the evening, my summer vacations were always a practice in fighting away the loneliness. There was no possibility in my mom affording a babysitter for six days a week, so she left me every morning except for Sunday to my own devices for nine hours. I know this practice would be considered neglect by social standards, but I usually had no trouble passing the time. Usually. Anyway, I had the entire house to play in, although "entire" yielded not much more room than a portion would. A single minimum income can only buy so much length of wall before strained to instability.

On this particular day, I had a plan. I was going to ride my bike the four-block length to the neighborhood playground and fight imaginary hordes of assaulting pirates from my stronghold, the playground's termite-ridden log cabin. I had already defended this crumbling structure from imaginary invaders seven times by that point in the summer, and I was beginning to run out of ideas for villainous troops. Since the summer's beginning, I had fought a legion of skeletons trying to steal my body organs for their own use, a fleet of spaceships bent on conquering our planet, a band of Vikings lusting after the imaginary women within the cabin's interior, a tribe of Indian warriors trying to scalp the final soldier of Custer's army, a brigade of Nazis attempting to destroy the last building of Allied resistance, a pack of ravenous wolves intent on sampling me as a morsel of grub, and an entire cemetery's worth of zombies desiring to do the same. Needless to say, when you have to spend extended periods of time entertaining yourself, your imagination strengthens just as your bicep does from curling weights.

I had pumped my imagination to Schwarzeneggerian bulk, and when I entered into these solitary struggles, reality quickly became pliable. I didn't see an empty playground; I looked upon the legions of enemies with excitement and even fear. The war cries, gunfire, and clash of steel all assaulted my senses. At times, I honestly forgot my fights weren't really happening. I emerged from each of these confrontations as the victor, and all of my glory in battle was due to my sidearm, a stick of about four feet in length with the magical ability to transform from long sword to musket to machine gun to laser cannon. Anyone who had a lonely childhood understands the magic of a good stick.

One can only hold the forces of evil off for so long before appetite gets the best of him. I started to feel a slight tremor in my stomach mid-battle and decided that breakfast would be a good idea. Curious about the time, I checked my plastic Spider-Man watch with the wall-crawler's picture on the side of the watch's rubber band. The watch had been a present for my ninth birthday, only three months prior, and the watch's face already had a small web of cracks from striking a rock. I didn't mind; to me the cracks made it look like some of Spider-Man's webbing clung to the watch. Besides, I could still read the time. 9:15. I had defended my fort from pirate attack for 45 minutes, and I decided that this was not too shabby for a morning's work before breakfast. Laying my stick inside the ancient-looking log cabin, I climbed onto my bike and pedaled toward Fay's Kitchen.

One thing you have to know about Fay's Kitchen, I was fascinated with it. The interior of the restaurant was wooden walls, and a yellowed-white vinyl floor stretched across the one room dining area. Scattered across the wooden walls was a hodgepodge of items eccentric enough to captivate a child's attention and gaudy enough to ensure only a

disturbed glance from adults. Race car pictures with scribbled signatures occupied the better portion of one wall, and I wondered how someone could collect so many famous racers' signatures. I didn't yet realize that the penmanship in each signature was the same; this epiphany came years later. On the opposite wall was a clock in the shape of a rabbit wearing a blue suit with a white collar. The brown fur peeked out of the suit's ends, and the feature that I thought was the neatest was the movement of the rabbit's eyes from left to right, each sway marking a second's passage. The number one reason I came to this place, though, was not the décor and certainly not the food. I enjoyed the joint's pancakes, but the enjoyment was not love. The first time I ever went to this restaurant was with my mom when I was seven, and I knew that the waitress who would serve us would be named Fay. It was her kitchen after all. I was shocked when our waitress had a blue nametag with "Sue" stamped in white letters upon it. I asked her where Fay was, and she answered, "Fay's out of town, sweetie," without moving her eyes from my mother. I made a promise to myself, for a reason I don't even know, that I would meet Fay and she would be my waitress. Fay had been out of town for almost two years on this particular morning. I still hadn't given up.

I leaned my bike on its kickstand at the side of Fay's and pushed open the heavy, metal-framed door, shoving with both arms and an arched back. I heard the immediate rattle of the rusted Christmas bell hanging above the door, and a head immediately poked into view from the back area of the kitchen. It wasn't Fay; I knew this particular waitress as Ronda. She greeted me with the usual "hello, hon, have a seat." Ready for pancakes, I climbed into a corner booth, one of the only available booths left, and sipped the glass of water Ronda soon brought me.

After eating the syrup-slathered pancakes, I decided that duty called, and I should get back to my defensive position at the park's log cabin. I heaved open the weighty door, hearing the farewell bell-jingle and bid hello to the sun, already cooking in the morning sky. I rounded the corner of the building where I had propped my bike and stopped. The bike wasn't there.

Panic began to trickle into my chest, squeezing all of the breath out of my lungs. I knew I had left the bike at that spot, and for a moment I just stood motionless, thinking that the bike would just reappear where it was supposed to be. Nothing reappeared, and I began pacing around Fay's Kitchen to make sure it wasn't parked anywhere else. After three loops around the building, I accepted that my bike was not leaning against the building as I had left it. Someone must have taken it, and I felt the full weight of my loss. To a nine-year-old boy, a bike is a friend. Any object that instills you with the speed necessary to explore where you need to explore quickly develops sentimental ties to the owner. I had even given my bike a name.. And now Speedy was gone, bearing the rear of some punk thief God knew where. I sat on the sidewalk in front of the restaurant in despair, not knowing what I should do next. Thinking into the future, I knew my mom would kill me when she heard about Speedy's theft and that I would be without a bike for a long time to come. Money was much too tight for such expenses. Thinking of nothing better to do, I stood and began my walk back to the park, eyes searching for Speedy in all directions.

By the time I returned to the park, I was still without my bike. I felt defeated, and the idea of continued battle against pirate hordes was not as appealing as it had been when I had finished my breakfast. I returned to the wooden cabin to get my stick and

decided to just wander around the park for a little while and think about what I could do about my bike. Looking around at the park, I noticed that only a few parents were around today and most of the playground equipment was unoccupied. The swing set was full of children with a line of parents behind them, arms outstretched in anticipation. Other than that, the equipment was free, and I knew that such opportunities did not happen often. I had learned about the institution of lines while waiting for a turn on one of the various wooden constructions of that playground. At that time, however, in a moment when the playground stretched before me free of the frustration of lines, I didn't feel like playing. If I had known what irony meant, it wouldn't have been lost on me. I did see a pair of wooden benches, an old man already sitting in one of them. Sitting seemed like a good idea, an idea that would let me focus on what I could tell my mom when she asked me where my bike was. Approaching one of the benches, I scanned it for an area free from bird droppings and squatted into the wooden seat, letting a sigh escape as I did so.

The old man sitting next to me looked over at me when I sat. He grinned at me and said, "You sound like I do when I sit down. You're way too young to sound so old. I hope, though, that you don't have as much trouble standing back up as I do."

I wasn't in the mood for jokes, and I answered the man "I can get up just fine" flatly and without turning my head to look at him. He continued to look at me, the grin still on his lips. I held my stick in my lap, examining it with pride even in the sadness I felt.

"Say, that's a nice stick you found there, kid! When I was your age I would have loved to have a fine stick like that."

The old man's words had won me over, and I looked up at him with a smile of gratitude. I thought to myself that this man was an arborary connoisseur who could appreciate my superior specimen.

"Thanks. My dad got it for me when he had to cut down a tree. He told me it was the best piece of wood in the whole tree and that it was as strong as metal. Wanna see it?"

"Sure, I'd love to." I handed the stick to the old man, noticing how bad his hand shook as he outstretched it. "Mind if I try her out?"

"Go ahead!" I answered, laughing at the sight of the old man wielding the stick as if it were a sword, much in the same fashion as I did. He handed the stick back to me, nodding to me in thanks.

"Glad I got you to brighten up a bit. Say, kid, if you don't mind me asking, what's got you so sad? It ain't right for a kid to be sad on a beautiful summer day, such as we have."

"My bike's gone. I don't know what I'm gonna do. My mom is gonna kill me! I had it this morning, but when I came out of breakfast, it was gone! My mom is really gonna kill me! She was always telling me that I should chain it, and she even bought me a chain I could lock around it, but I'm not too good with combinations, you know?"

"Hold on there, kid...say, what's your name?"

"Jake."

"Well, hold on there, Jake. First of all, nobody's gonna kill you. Your ma might get mad, but that will pass. It always passes with moms. Second, your bike might turn up yet. You know, I've been around on this earth a long time, going on seventy-eight

years, and one thing I've learned is that surprises happen when you least expect them. You just have to stay open to them and enjoy them when they happen."

The old man stopped talking, closing his eyes in reflection. I looked at him and thought about what he had said, realizing that it was profound in some way but not knowing how. After a little while, the old man reopened his eyes and turned to me, asking, "Where's your ma right now, Jake?"

"She has to work."

"And your dad?"

"I don't know where he is."

"Ah, I see. So you come here to pass the day away, killing time already. Nah, I shouldn't say killing time. A kid your age has fun doing everything. It's a gift, I tell you. Let me tell you, Jake, when you get to be my age, you have to decide whether you spend your days having a good time or killing time. I have to make that decision every morning, whether I'll have a fun day or spend it killing time."

"What did you decide to do this morning?"

"Kill time. But, it's looking like I might have a change in plans. I can't tell you how important it is to have a good day. You're still young, so I bet that there are many days that you remember as good days. Well, let me warn you that the older you get, the faster those days melt away. Before you know it, your body is old, and you realize that thirty years have gone by so fast that you still look into the mirror expecting to see the sharpness of a twenty-five year old looking back. But your eyes dull with time, and when you think back about the days that were simply good, you can't think of all that many.

But I shouldn't go on, worrying a young kid like you. You got plenty of time to enjoy before age slows you down."

"Well, how do you spend the days when you decide to kill time?"

"Usually, I don't even remember. The day just gets all smashed up into a few minutes of memory. Some just disappear altogether."

I asked the next question with the pardon that only a child's bluntness warrants.

"Don't you have kids or grandkids to spend time with?"

The old man chuckled, his teeth peeking through his lips. "No, Jake. I don't really have anybody but myself. But I keep myself good enough company, so I'm not complaining. The only thing that gets me down is knowing that when I leave this world, nobody is going to notice. Well, that's not true. For a couple of weeks my butcher will wonder where I've been going to get my meat. The checkout lady over at the grocery store will wonder why I haven't come in to shamelessly flirt with her while she rings up my purchase. But after awhile, they will forget about me. I'll be erased from the story that time creates. Gee, listen to me, would you? I'm getting too sentimental in my old age. Anyways, any company for me is good company."

"I guess I know what you mean."

"Well, I hope you don't. You know something though, kid? This playground has been around for a long time. I used to play here when I was your age. Not too many things in this town have been around for so long. Of course, when I played here, all of this plastic and metal stuff they have here now for the kids to play on wasn't here. Everything was wood. Wooden seesaw, wooden swing set, an old tire swing, all that kind of stuff. All of it is gone now, except for that old log cabin. Now that beauty was

here seventy years ago, same spot and all. That little house has help up all this time, a little worse for the wear now, but still in good shape.”

“I love that cabin! This morning I protected it from pirate invasion! It was great!”

“Ah, really? And what did you use to keep those nasty pirates away? That stick there?”

“Yes sir!”

“See, I knew that was a good stick.”

I would have told the old man all about my morning warfare if something hadn't have caught my eye at that moment. I saw speedy roll by on the street right in front of me, a kid named Gary Wyatt riding on top. I shouted out, “Hey, that's my bike” and ran out into the street, panting to catch up to Gary as he pedaled away.

A note concerning Gary Wyatt: he was a bad kid. Every town has at least one kid who is known for trouble. Our town had thirteen-year-old Gary Wyatt, the most feared individual at school. I had received my fair share of shoves, punches, and insults from Gary simply because I was smaller and younger than him. In short, he was the last person I wanted to see on top of Speedy; I had rather have seen Satan himself atop it.

I ran after Gary, shouting for him to stop. Gary ignored me and was getting further and further away, so I knew I had to get his attention. I thought of the first bad thing I could say to him and shouted, “Too bad your brain's not as quick as you are on that bike, Gary!”

I heard the squeal of Speedy's handbrakes as Gary stopped in the road. He wheeled around to face me, forty yards in front of me. I could see the anger in his eyes even at that distance.

"You want your bike, geek? Alright, I'll let you have it then." After Gary had finished his sentence, he began pedaling towards me, strait at me, to be honest. He was going to run me over with my own bike. I realized that I still had my stick clutched in my hand; I had not dropped it before I ran after Speedy. I waited until Gary was almost on top of me and shifted as quickly as I could to the left, avoiding the Bike just barely. As I moved, I swung my stick as hard as I could at Gary's leg, connecting with it at the side of his kneecap. I've always wished I could have seen myself make this move because I bet it was one of the most graceful moments in my otherwise clumsy physical life. Gary yelled in pain. I heard a crack as my stick snapped in two, and Gary lost control of speedy, tilting too far to one side. Gary fell to the ground, skidding across the pavement a short distance.

I knew that Gary would pummel me as soon as he got to his feet, and I didn't have my sidearm anymore. I didn't wait for him to get up, but grabbed Speedy and pedaled as fast as I could back to the park. The old man was still at the park bench, a grin stretched across his face. He had been able to view the whole incident from his seat, and he greeted me with, "Good shot, Jake!"

"Thanks."

"You know, you better make yourself scarce, because that bully will probably come looking for you now. I wouldn't be too scared of him, though. Fear will set in with

him tonight when his leg really starts hurting, and I doubt he'll give you too much trouble after that. He won't want to get a thwack like you gave him."

"Well, what do I do?"

"Go hide in the cabin, and take your bike in with you. I'll keep watch." I began walking Speedy over to the cabin when I heard the old man call. "Hey, Jake. It's just occurred to me that you are now without a stick. Check in the log cabin at the bottom right corner of the back wall. You'll see a piece of wood nailed in that's got an "X" carved on it. Use a rock to break the piece of wood; it shouldn't be too hard. I left something there when I was young that you may have a use for."

I answered him "O.K.," and I grabbed a good-sized rock before running into the cabin, pushing Speedy in with me. I crouched in the corner waiting for the old man to give me the clear. After about ten minutes, I heard the old man call, "O.K., the coast is all clear. You can come out. I gotta be going, kid, but don't forget what I told you about the cabin. Thank you, kid. This will be a day I will remember as good instead of killing time."

I came out of the cabin, seeing that the old man was already walking away. I called out to him, "Thanks!" to which he just raised a hand, not turning around. I watched the old man walk down the length of the street, eventually disappearing around a corner. I stood a moment longer and then remembered the secret within the cabin. I rushed inside and located the panel of wood the old man had described, complete with the "X." I raised the rock high in one hand and brought it down against the wood, dust flying as the wood gave way and my hand went through the panel.

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I never saw the old man again, but I have often thought about him. I didn't even know his name, but he had allowed me to live a real adventure, an adventure that I didn't have to imagine. And what was in the secret panel? I found a revolver wrapped in a cloth, the firing pin filed down to prevent lethal use of the weapon. Years later, a friend of mine who is a history buff told me that the revolver is the kind given to majors during the Civil War. I guess that the old man received the gun from his father, but I can only guess. I still have it in a drawer, and I occasionally oil and polish it to keep it looking nice for my son. I had countless good times playing with my new sidearm, and I continued to keep the pirates at bay with the imaginary bullets fired from the revolver. I wish I could tell the old man that he won't be forgotten, that I continue to remember him and appreciate the time we spent together. That's why I tell the story, so others will continue to think about the old man. I won't let him be forgotten.

by Jay Stringfield

Miss Mayflower is a beautiful woman.

How old is she? No one knows. She says that a real lady never tells her age.

Every day, she goes to the big hotel for tea. She carefully chooses the right outfit.

Today it's a peacock-blue dress with matching shoes and hat, silver necklace and earrings, white stockings, and white gloves. They match her peacock-blue eyes and silver hair and perfect white white skin.

A neighbor asked her, "Miss Mayflower, what is your secret? How can we women look lovely and stay lovely like you?"

Miss Mayflower said, "To be beautiful, look only at beauty -- never at ugliness.

For example, when you ride the subway, be careful to look only at attractive people.

Maybe in summer, here's a pregnant girl standing in the aisle. She is nursing one baby and leading another, holding a diaper bag, dropping a toy or bottle on the floor. Often a young mother's hair and clothes are messy. So, I turn my eyes away.

Maybe in winter, there's a veteran riding the train to stay warm. He was drinking alcohol, and can't sit up. He is talking in a confused way about the war. I'll move away from him.

At the hospital station, pale people get on with wheelchairs or oxygen tanks. It's bad to let them ride with us; we healthy people could catch a disease! So I will go to some other car in the train. Look only at attractive people! That is the secret of eternal beauty."

Nurse Mila is a beautiful woman.

How old is she? She says that she is thirty. But she looks a little tired and pale.

Every day she goes to the big hospital for work. She carefully chooses the right outfit.

Today and every day it's a white coat, a stethoscope, rubber gloves, and a mask.

A patient asked her, "In America, where are the real ladies? In my country, every woman dresses up and applies makeup before leaving the house. To show respect for ourselves as women, we show that first we are ladies. American women do not dress up. Their appearance seems disrespectful to themselves, and disrespectful to me. It's depressing."

"You know," I said to the patient, "The documentary 'Miss Sarajevo' shows a beauty contest during wartime. People were in terrible danger, but the women took one day as a holiday just to dress up. It was important to their morale."

"Yes!" said the patient. "Exactly. Even in wartime, a woman is first a lady."

Nurse Mila was busy cleaning this patient's badly infected foot. She said "I am from Sarajevo. Some doctors and nurses there saw a bombing; they ran to help, they stayed, they opened a kind of clinic. One doctor said to me "Hurry up! Help me!" That was the beginning of my nursing school. From then on, I cleaned wounded people all day every day. I was 15. I missed the beauty contest. We all did. We never even thought about it."

"How terrible!" the patient said. "A young girl is sensitive. She must not be exposed to such terrible sights."

Nurse Mila bandaged the patient's poor foot, removed her gloves, washed her hands, helped the patient to stand up, and gave her a hug and a smile. "But in all my life, I have never seen an ugly person. When I look at any human being, all I can see is beauty."

What is the true secret of eternal beauty?

What do *you* think?